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**THE PERCEPTION OF TRANSITION FOR DOUBLE-A
MALE PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL PLAYERS**

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

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Jay Neil McKnight

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents

Mr. Neil Frederick McKnight

and

Mrs. Donna Anne McKnight

for giving me the opportunity to reach toward my potential.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was twofold: (a) to gain insight into the perceptions of transition of professional baseball players, and (b) to determine enabling factors which affect/effect the players' eventual post-career decisions. The participants were seven professional minor league baseball players. Since the perceptions of the athletes were the basis for this transition study, qualitative methods were selected. This study was conducted using a semi-structured interview guide across three sessions with the athletes. In the first session, information about the athletes and their athletic backgrounds was determined. In the latter two sessions the athletes were asked to clarify and/or elaborate on specific parts of the previous session. The athletes described transition as change, and that this change involved a movement from an unstable lifestyle to a more normal lifestyle. Although the athletes had some ideas of what they would, or could, do after they finish playing professional baseball, not one player had concrete plans. Some of the athletes maintained that their goals were to make it to the Major Leagues, while some thought they would try and stay within baseball. Athletes received social, and transitional, support. Several enabling themes were identified. Social support from their families was very positive and helpful, however, some athletes contended that some of the support from their parents was overbearing. Those athletes that were married or engaged, described their spouse as very supportive and understanding, and influential on post-baseball career decisions. The players felt that coaches were helpful because of their experience and understanding of difficult situations. The players stated that the organization encouraged and facilitated their movement toward becoming Major League baseball players, however, they also provided

the players with opportunities that facilitate the development of second careers when their playing days were over. Paying for the players' educations, and getting the players out into the public to meet influential people were the primary opportunities that the organization provided for the players. The players realized these opportunities were there and suggested that it was up to each person, and not the organization, to ensure that they take advantage of these opportunities.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Athletic careers are comprised of many ups and downs. Most athletes have experienced winning and losing, good and bad relationships, and feelings of joy and agony. In each case the athlete has been affected in either a positive or negative manner. It has been suggested that the termination of an athlete's career can be traumatic, relieving, or both, depending on the athlete's individual perception of the situation (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). It is this individual perception that creates unique career adjustments across athletes in all sports (Baillie & Lampron, 1992). Transitions come in all forms. Moving to another city, starting a new job, and/or losing a loved one, are among several types of transitions most people face at some point in their lives. Going from being an active participant in sport to another role, either within or outside of sport, is one form of transition that an athlete must face at one time or another in his/her career. This inevitable transition athletes must make has been given much more attention in the literature in the past decade.

Researchers in the areas of sport sociology and sport psychology have studied athletic transition from different viewpoints. Earlier research in athletic transition was based on gerontological (Atchley, 1980; Kuypers & Vengston) and thanatological (Lerch, 1984; Rosenberg, 1984) theories. Athletes' transitions were viewed as grounded in a "crisis" adjustment which was considered traumatic and negative (Ogilvie & Howe, 1982; Rosenberg, 1984). Alcohol and drug problems have also been documented for athletes who experienced difficult transitions (Mihovilovic, 1968; Rotella, 1984). Botterill (1982) reported that a high

percentage of athletes have trouble with sport career termination and that "many of these athletes are ill prepared to handle life without sport" (p.8).

Other researchers have viewed transition as not necessarily difficult or traumatic (Allison and Meyer, 1988; Coakley, 1983). Some have even suggested that the end of the athletes' career is potentially a "relief", especially from the time constraints and rigorous lifestyles associated with sport participation (Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). Nearly three quarters of Blinde and Greendorfer's (1985) sample of over one thousand collegiate athletes reported that they were either extremely happy or felt no feelings at all toward their sport career termination.

Although there have been different views on what occurs to an athlete following his/her competitive career, "athletes often must cope with events and issues... that either exacerbate or add new dimensions" (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990, p. 8). The fact that any athletes, past, present, or future, may have problems because of their transition warrants further concern and investigation.

The current term to best define an athlete's leaving his/her sport career is transition. Sinclair and Orlick (1993) suggested that transition should be looked at from a *process* point of view rather than as an *event* that automatically causes tension or relief. Transition in sport, although not clearly defined, can be considered as the process of changing from the stage of being a competitive athlete to another stage outside of participating competitively. All professional athletes ultimately must transition from their sport. In the present study, Professional athletes are considered to be elite sport performers who are currently being paid to play in his/her organized sport. Transition is considered to be the process of change because it can be flexibly applied to many situations such as those that professional athletes face.

Many elite and professional athletes are susceptible to problems when faced with the end of their competitive careers. Reasons for this susceptibility include: (a) the commitment to the sport, (b) length of career, (c) financial stability, (d) the abundance of younger athletes, and (e) the athlete's narrowing of his/her focus on sport-related skills.

In order for a successful athlete-sport relationship to exist, there must be a high level of commitment. It is not uncommon to hear some athletes state that they *love playing the game*. Obviously leaving anything that someone loves is difficult, and in some cases their sport is the love of the athlete (Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993). Many athletes in sports such as baseball and hockey, in which minor league systems flourish throughout the United States and Canada, support this notion of "love-for-the-game" by playing rigorous schedules for relatively small salaries. In many cases, the love affair the athlete has with his/her particular sport can lead to long competitive careers (Chartrand & Lent, 1987).

The longer the career, assuming it was enjoyable for the athlete, the more likely that it would be difficult for the athlete to adjust to not playing again at that level. Further, those athletes with potentially long professional careers who never make it to the pinnacle, e.g., minor league baseball players trying to make it to the Major Leagues, may have a transition that is exacerbated by the disappointment of unmet goals. These feelings of low self-efficacy, the athlete's perception of his/her own ability to perform a particular sport (Bandura, 1976), may lead to a lowering of self-esteem; the athlete's general feelings about him/herself (Dishman, 1988).

Financial stability may also be a major concern for many professional athletes (Baillie, 1993; Swain, 1991). It is also common knowledge in sports, such as baseball and hockey, that the majority of minor league players do not

make enough money from their salaries to retire, let alone to get by for a short period of time until another career is determined. Ogilvie and Taylor (1993) suggested those athletes that do not have the financial stability to meet their basic needs, e.g., survival, may find themselves even more stressed after their career is terminated. Moreover, only less than one-half of a percent of these athletes will actually make it to the level of financial stability for these particular sports (Leonard & Reyman, 1988).

The multitude of elite-level athletes in North America to replace older athletes has kept the focus on the athletes in the current spot-light. Thus, the ex-athlete tends to be unnoticably pushed out of the spot-light. Minor league baseball is continuously bringing in new players. The huge draft of 1996 had 100 rounds with 1,740 players selected (USA Today, 1996). Due to such factors, Ogilvie and Taylor (1993) have suggested that American athletes may be prone to more difficult post-career adjustments.

Athletic retirement could be considered "different" than other career terminations due to the demands of excellence in their physical performance. The athlete usually has to narrow his/her focus as they progress through various competitive levels. This "focusing provides the successful athlete with a sense of accomplishment" (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990, p. 8). Remer, Tongate, and Watson (1978) mentioned how the segregation of athletes via "dense social systems", where the members are more homogeneous and may be in continuous contact with each other, restricts the amount of time and information these athletes have to broaden their skills. This tends to restrict their alternative actions through the transition from sport. Given this influence, many athletes fail to explore other areas of interest that are outside of the sport realm.

There are several reasons why athletes are forced to finish their playing careers. Professional minor leagues, e.g., hockey and baseball, are systems in which any player can be released from the team and organization at any time, for any reason. Some of these reasons include: (a) deselection, (b) physical injury, (c) age, and (d) free choice.

Deselection in sport usually occurs as the result of being cut or being demoted to the status of a non-starter. It has been suggested that deselection may very well be one of the major factors contributing to difficult transitions for athletes across all levels of sport (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990).

Since professional athletes perform at high levels of skill, any decrements in their performance (e.g., due to injury) may result in their inability to perform at those levels. Moreover, even the slightest of injuries may prevent an athlete from performing at the elite level (Svoboda & Vanek, 1982).

Retirement due to chronological age is also considered to be a primary cause of termination (Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993). The older professional athlete, whose ability has decreased due to physiological changes (e.g., flexibility, strength, speed), is usually forced into retirement or is deselected.

Another viewpoint of career termination is that it is the free choice of the athlete, or a decision that is within the athlete's control. Athletes may choose to end their career for personal (e.g., change of careers), social (e.g., spend more time with family), or sport-related (e.g., loss of enjoyment of the sport) reasons (Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985; Coakley, 1983; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993).

It is evident that pre-transitional planning for athletes is becoming a concern (Baillie, 1993; Haerle, 1975; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). Because each individual brings his/her own unique past experiences and perceptions into the transition process, it is necessary to have an understanding of "the individual, the

resources available to and used by that individual, and the type of transition encountered, that mediates adaptive success or failure" (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993, p. 139). Further, Neugarten (1977) suggests that athletes may reduce the stress associated with transitions if there is adequate preparation. Transitional preparation for the athlete can come from several sources. These sources include: (a) family and friends, (b) education, and (c) the organization and its members (e.g., coaches, managers, owners, etc.).

Support from family, including spouse, is especially needed for athletes entering the process of transition (Neugarten, 1977). Although professional athletes spend much of their time doing their sport, which can involve large amounts of time on the road, the support received from family and friends can have a major effect on the success or failure of the athletes' transition. Athletes have stated that their largest support systems have come from family, spouse, and friends (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). Ogilvie and Taylor (1993) suggest that education is a form of pre-transitional planning. In fact, the level of education the athlete had prior to transition was a significant predictor of his/her second career success (Haerle, 1975; Lerch, 1981).

Although the focus of an athletic organization is to produce the best athletes it can, it has been suggested that these systems should pay more attention to preparing their athletes for transition (Baillie & Danish, 1992; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). Blann and Zaichowsky (1986) found that the majority of the NHL players that they interviewed, concerning their existent program, felt the need for more transitional preparation from their organization.

Building a theoretical framework that determines which factors predispose athletes to difficult transitions is a growing concern for researchers. Knowing about the athlete's past and current situations and future predictions (goals),

through interview techniques, may create a framework for understanding this transitional phenomena.

Parker (1994) noted that studies that have dealt with post-careers of former athletes took a reductionist approach in trying to find a cause-effect relationship without really understanding the process itself. Additionally, it has been proposed that researchers delve into qualitative methodologies that would look at the athletes' perceptions of and reactions to their own experiences (Allison & Meyer, 1988; Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985; Parker, 1994).

Quantitative and qualitative research in the area of athletic career transition have focused on athletes' experiences after the transition period has already started. One empirical study (Blann & Zaichowsky, 1986) used professional hockey players, from the National Hockey League Players' Association (NHLPA), prior to the start of their 1985-86 season to determine career awareness and career needs. Although the study involved athletes who were currently involved in their playing careers, and valuable information was obtained, it focused primarily on the athletes' attitudes toward an already-developed workshop, using a Likert scale. There appears to be no qualitative studies dealing with athletes' perceptions of transition while they are currently playing their particular sport.

As with any social psychological phenomena, such as an individual's transition from one type of situation to another, there is the potential for an overwhelming combination of variables that can be amassed and analyzed (Haerle, 1975). Furthermore, the individual's perception of the situation only adds to the mixture. One way to start to understand this phenomenon is to identify how the athlete "sees" his/her transition, how they are preparing themselves, and how support groups, e.g., family, spouse, organization, etc., are

helping them prepare. Although support may be provided, and even used by the athlete, it is still his/her perception that determines the usefulness of support.

The athletes' perceptions of support may, in turn, help determine the success or failure of the athlete's transition.

Since minor league baseball players, i.e., Double-A, are predisposed, in a theoretical sense, to potentially suffer difficult post-career transitions (e.g., instability of job, low pay, difficulty of obtaining major league status), they appear to be a population for which transition is a salient prospect. In addition, determining the athletes' perceptions of their transition while they are currently involved in their careers appears to warrant investigation.

Purpose of Study

The purposes of this study are: (a) to gain insight into the perceptions of transition of Double-A minor league baseball players who are currently playing, and (b) to determine enabling factors, that is, those individuals, or organizations, that affect/effect the motivations of the athletes' career alternatives and their eventual post-career decisions.

Definitions of Terms

The following theoretical and operational definitions are used throughout this qualitative study.

Competitive Sport- A form of sport in which a stake (e.g., money, rings, etc.) is vied for between two or more sides (i.e., individuals or teams). In this study, it refers to professional minor league baseball.

Double-A- The third level of professional baseball leagues (i.e., Rookie, Single-A, Double-A, Triple-A, Major Leagues).

Enabling Factors- Factors that affect/effect the performance of an action by individuals or organizations. In this case, enabling factors included types

of support from family, friends, and those involved with the baseball organization (e.g., coaches, managers, owners, etc.). Enabling factors may be of a positive or negative orientation.

Transition- A movement, development, or evolution from one form, stage, or style to another.

Perception- How the individual athlete sees him/herself in different situations, usually based on past experiences.

Professional Athlete- An elite performer who is paid to play his/her sport.

Minor league baseball players are the professional athletes used in this study.

Assumptions of the Study

1. The subjective experiences of the athletes are important in understanding the perceptions of career transition of minor league Double-A baseball players.
2. The athletes who participated in this study were able to articulate their perceptions of transition.
3. The interview schedule is a valid method of eliciting information about subjective experience.
4. The participants honestly reported their thoughts and feelings regarding their perceptions.

Scope of the Study

This was a qualitative study that included seven professional minor league baseball players. This was considered to be a specific subgroup within the entire athletic population. Interviewing of subjects continued until redundancy was attained. This study was designed to retrieve as much insight about these particular athletes' perceptions of their eventual transition so that the body of knowledge within this area of research could be expanded.

Significance of Study

This study will provide awareness to families, spouses, organizations, sport psychology counselors, and others involved with professional baseball players about how these athletes perceive their own transition. Further, this study will provide insight into how the athletes believe they are being facilitated to prepare for their transition. Such information may be useful in determining what types of perceptions of transition, and what types of facilitations to prepare for transition, would enable some athletes to make less difficult career transitions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this review, studies attempting to identify the transition process of professional and elite athletes using differing theoretical premises are included. Next, research on the transitional experiences of elite and professional athletes, including studies about professional baseball players, is summarized. Also, factors that: (a) contribute to the athletes' susceptibilities to difficult transitions, (b) create barriers to the athletes' transitions, and (c) cause athletes to retire from their sport are discussed. Finally, a summary of the review of literature is presented.

Early Theories of Athlete Transition

Although the literature in sport career termination is relatively young, several theoretical premises for this occurrence have been introduced. These include: (a) a thanatological view, (b) a gerontological view, (c) rebirth theory, and (d) a transitional view for explaining events prior to, during, and after athletic careers. Only an overview of each of these theories is included because some of the previous transitional research studies are grounded in these frames of reference. However, they are not the foundation nor directly related to the present study.

Thanatological Theory

Thanatology, also known as social death, is concerned with the description or study of the phenomenon of death and of the psychological mechanisms for coping with death (Kastenbaum, 1981; Charmaz, 1980). Social death occurs from *social isolation*, *ostracism*, and/or the loss of other individuals.

In sport, this could be analogous to an athlete's departure from their team, and those associated with the athlete's particular sport. Rosenberg (1984) stated that the thanatological viewpoint to sport may suggest, in a physical sense, that death has no options, whereas athlete's do have options. On the other hand, the thanatological view may consider athletic career termination as a temporary death that the athlete must live through.

Lerch (1984) and Rosenberg (1984) suggested that an athlete going through the transition out of sport is quite similar to a patient facing death. That is, patients who are aware of their inevitable end tend to cope with it through specific stages (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance), such as that presented by Kubler-Ross (1969) in the human grieving model. Furthermore, Ogilvie and Taylor (1993) suggest that the psychosocial process that athletes face when their competitive careers are over could be conceptualized within this model. The five sequential stages, modified for athletes who face potentially difficult transitions, are: (a) denial that the career is over, (b) anger that there was some type of injustice, (c) bargaining to stay on, (d) depression due to the realization that the career is over, and (e) acceptance of career termination and motivation toward another career. The stages are somewhat heirarchical, in that one stage usually occurs before the other; however, the length of time an athlete remains within one stage is not necessarily the same for all individuals.

Rosenberg (1984) suggested that athletes who experience difficult transitions probably do not complete all five stages. It could be assumed that the fewer steps completed, the more difficult the transition. Moreover, athletes facing the end of their careers often deny that they are losing their ability to perform at elite levels. In fact, many athletes will train even harder to return to the form they

once possessed. When the athlete becomes more aware that their career is over, frustration and anger often prevail with the athlete at times blaming others for their downfall. In some cases, athletes will attempt to hang on by playing at lower levels of competition, less playing time, or playing for less money.

Once the end is inevitable, there is the potential for the athlete to fall into depression which could lead to other social problems such as the misuse of alcohol and drugs (Rotella, 1984). Those athletes who do not reach the final stage of acceptance may find themselves lost with no hope to return to a normal life. Even those athletes that do accept that their careers are over do not necessarily find the transition into another career to be that easy. Therefore, the grieving model may represent the path taken by athletes with different levels of difficult transitions.

Some researchers in sport sociology and sport psychology (Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985; Parker, 1994) have suggested that the thanatological viewpoint is an overly negative view of the sport retirement process. While the Kubler-Ross (1969) model may fit those athletes that experience difficult transitions, it does not appear to fit those athletes that experience little or no difficulties with their transition.

Gerontological Theory

Another view is that of social gerontology; the relationship between aging and life satisfaction. Baillie and Danish (1992) reviewed four social gerontological approaches to sport retirement.

The first, the disengagement theory of Cummings, Dean, Newell, & McCaffrey, suggested that "the individual and society mutually withdraw from each other for mutual benefit" (Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985, p.102), and that this withdrawal invites other individuals by allowing for a continuation of jobs in the

workforce while at the same time providing a means for the retiree to enjoy his/her remaining years. Although this may apply to those athletes that have voluntarily retired from sport, Rosenberg (1981) indicates that few professional athletes voluntarily retire from their sport. Further, most professional athletes find other major occupations once their sport career is over.

Second, activity theory, also known as substitution theory, (e.g., Havingurst & Albrecht, 1953), suggests that people substitute roles that fulfill their desired activity levels. Rosenberg (1981) stated that athletes who experience successful transitions usually have found a new role to substitute for professional sport. However, he also suggested that the sport retirement transition could be traumatic for the athlete if a meaningful and satisfying new role is not found. This in itself may be difficult for many athletes since the activity levels, both physical and psychological, and the desire for notoriety and wealth of many athletes are so extreme that finding a career replacement as exciting to them as sport may be improbable. This may also explain why so many ex-athletes (e.g., George Foreman, Magic Johnson, Gordie Howe, etc.) continue to return to their sport.

Thirdly, the theory of continuity (Atchley, 1980) proposes that the flexibility of peoples' skills allows them to focus on one skill if another fails and/or ends. That is, the pressures of winning call for precision of skill(s), and the belief is that increased focus on specificity of skill(s) increases the probability of success. To extract a portion of an athlete's focus on skills outside of his/her sport domain could be considered taboo for many athletes, coaches, and administrators alike. The extra time and energy used to perfect an athlete's skill leaves little room for the development of new skills outside of the sport domain. Furthermore, athletes may be predisposed to difficult transitions, or continuity of roles, if their role as an athlete was extremely important to them (Rosenberg, 1981).

Finally, social breakdown theory (Kuypers & Bengston, 1973) suggests that people will perceive their retirement as a negative act and that others will also look at them in a negative manner, thus, they may display negative and withdrawing behaviors. Bandura (1976) proposes that this negative process begins with the lowering of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the athletes' perception of their ability to perform their particular sport. Therefore, those athletes unable to perform at their desired and/or optimum levels are subject to low self-efficacy. This reduction in self-efficacy can lead to a lowering of self-esteem, or the athletes' general feelings about themselves (Dishman, 1988; Hines & Groves, 1989). The lowering of self-esteem may lead to behaviors that inhibit the athlete from pursuing other careers.

Blinde and Greendorfer (1985) suggest that although aging is often a critical element for athlete's sport retirement "the athlete who retires from [elite level sport] is still chronologically and biologically younger by at least 20 years than the retiring worker" (p. 88). Gerontological theory has been helpful in describing life-satisfaction from retirees who have had "full" careers. However, most retiring athletes, i.e., those retiring after college; those not making it to the top, have not really had a first career, let alone a full career. Curtis and Ennis (1988) state that these theories were developed to study consequences involved with "final" retirement, whereas in most cases, an athlete's retirement from sport is not facing final retirement, but rather a transition toward another career. Moreover, the gerontological approach does not "provide for the intense commitment and narrow self-identity of athletes" (Parker, 1994, p. 9).

Blinde and Greendorfer (1985) suggest that the thanatological and gerontological viewpoints of athletic termination may have "colored and narrowed interpretations of the process of leaving sport" (p. 88). That is, these theories

look at sport retirement as an abrupt event, thus, leaving the athlete disconnected to his/her sport altogether.

Rebirth Theory

One of the first perspectives to challenge the negative viewpoints given by gerontological and thanatological theories was rebirth theory (Coakley, 1983). Rebirth theory suggests that retirement from sport should be viewed as a new beginning- something to look forward to. The athlete leaves his/her sport-structured environment to be "reborn" into normal society. He discovered that past research viewed final retirement as difficult and troublesome to the individual, thus suggesting a parallel expectation of a difficult transition experience for athletic retirement. However, he noted that more recent literature did not view the "event" of retirement as the cause of difficulties. Greendorfer and Blinde (1985), supported the notion of rebirth using survey data from 1,123 former intercollegiate athletes. They indicated that "the majority of athletes did not experience strong feelings of loss or disruption upon leaving sport. In fact, several indicated some relief..." (p. 107). Allison and Meyer (1988) conducted a qualitative study on elite female tennis professionals and found further support for the notion that athletic retirement may not be as difficult or traumatic as once thought. Although the athletes in this study initially claimed they were frustrated and anxious at the thought of their transition, they still "saw retirement as an opportunity to reestablish a normal lifestyle in which relationships could be strengthened and stabilized" (p. 219).

Although rebirth theory provides more of a positive outlook at athletic retirement, research indicates that many athletes still have difficulty with leaving their sport. Sinclair and Orlick (1993) surveyed 199 retired high-performance athletes using a 34-item Athlete Retirement Questionnaire that they developed

for the study. Almost half of the sample (46%) of the athletes reported "experiencing a fair amount to a great deal of stress" (p. 141) following their sport retirement. More recently, Parker's (1994) qualitative study on ex-collegiate football players and McKnight and Beitel's (1995) qualitative study with an ex-professional football player demonstrated high levels of stress for the athlete upon their sport retirement.

Transition as a Process

The current term to best define an athlete's leaving his/her sport career is transition. Sinclair and Orlick (1993) suggested that athletic transition be viewed from a process point of view rather than as an event that automatically causes tension or relief. Transition in sport, although not clearly defined, can be considered as the *process* of changing from the stage of being a competitive athlete to another stage outside of participating competitively.

Earlier research viewed athletic retirement as a singular, abrupt event. However, research in sport sociology and sport psychology suggest that it is a process that involves the continuation of, rather than a termination of, behaviors and goals (Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985). Kubler-Ross' (1969) human grieving model, as stated earlier, suggests a process connotation toward athletic retirement for those athletes experiencing different levels of difficulty in their transitions. The five sequential steps involved (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance) only reaffirm the notion that athletic retirement may be a process.

Coakley (1983) argued that athletic transition is a process that occurs on an individual basis in which individual characteristics, timing, and the type of retirement (e.g., injury, deselection, etc.) will determine the level of difficulty or ease of the transition. Furthermore, Schlossberg's (1981) Model of Transitions

has been used for supporting athletic transition as a process (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Swain, 1991). The model concerns the individual athlete, his/her perceptions of the transition, and changes that occur over time. Swain (1991), in a qualitative study on ten elite athletes who had voluntarily withdrawn from their particular sports (i.e., hockey, horse racing, football, and racquetball), suggested that Schlossberg's model was helpful in developing an understanding of the sport retirement process.

More recently, Parker (1994) introduced the term *liminality* to sport sociologists and sport psychologists studying athletic transition. Liminality in athletic transition is the period which begins at the time the athlete leaves his/her athletic status, during which they have a clearly identified social status state, to the beginning of another career, or another social status state. She suggested that athletes who leave their competitive role must *learn* how to behave within the new social norms, which could potentially create confusion and anxiety. She further commented, "in many cases, where the liminal person is an athlete, it is not merely a matter of changing a social status state, but of changing who (s)he is in totality" (p. 5). This theory may very well apply to athletes who have completed their sport and have not yet entered a new career. However, it may not apply to the transitional processes that occur while athletes are still currently playing their sport (e.g., preparation strategies).

Elite/Professional Athlete Studies

Greendorfer and Blinde (1985) surveyed 1,123 male and female ex-intercollegiate athletes about their perceptions of the process of transition from their competitive playing days to post-career adjustments. Both females and males equally experienced little adjustment difficulties. Greendorfer and Blinde suggested that athletic transition may be sport specific.

Allison & Meyer (1988) investigated 20 (77% response) female ex-elite tennis players using an open-ended questionnaire. Perceptions of the athletes' competitive years and subsequent transitions revealed that "the athletes did not find disengagement from their competitive years traumatic, but rather found it as an opportunity to reestablish more traditional societal roles and lifestyles" (p. 212).

Swain (1991) interviewed 10 ex-elite athletes to determine the applicability of Schlossberg's Model of Transitions as a model for identifying the process of athletic transition. The diversity of responses from this small group supported the notion that transition is a process that is determined by individual athletic experiences. Furthermore, Schlossberg's model was found to be applicable for studying the process of athletic transition which also includes preparation strategies available and utilized by the athlete, and changes in their transitional perceptions over time. However, Swain suggested that the model may be more applicable to athletes who experience difficult transitions.

Sinclair and Orlick (1993) explored the transitional experiences of 199 ex-elite athletes utilizing the Athletic Retirement Questionnaire developed specifically for the study. The 34-item questionnaire addressed athletes' career success, transition factors, and the importance of providing transitional services. Tired of the circuit or lifestyle and goal attainment were the most significant factors related to sport retirement decisions. Financial difficulties, current job pressures, and missing the social aspect of sport had the largest effect on transitional difficulties. Finding another career and staying busy were the most used coping strategies by the athletes. The athletes considered spouse, family, and friends to be the most important support networks. Athletes who had

achieved sport, or sport-related, goals tended to have less difficult transitions, and in some cases, no difficulty at all.

Parker (1994), in one of the more recent qualitative studies in athletic transition, examined the experiences of seven ex-collegiate football players. Her interviews were divided into: (a) a phenomenological interview section in which athletes were able to discuss any aspect of their transition, and (b) an ethnographic interview section in which the athletes were guided to talk about certain aspects of their transition. Themes that emerged included: (a) increased media and fan pressure from high school to college football, (b) negative or non-existent relationships with coaches, (c) sense of powerlessness with coaches and administrators controlling their lives, and (d) negative accusations of being treated unfairly. Parker suggested that the "process-oriented frameworks which take an interactive approach were more applicable to the data than uni-dimensional theories" (p. 89).

Studies On Professional Baseball Players

While there were a few studies conducted with professional baseball players in the 1970's and early 1980's, there has been relatively little research examining this athletic subgroup in the past decade.

Haerle (1975) examined the preparation strategies and attitudes toward transition of 312 ex-professional baseball players. His results indicated that three quarters of the players did not even consider preparing for their transition until the late stages of their playing days. Further, half of these athletes were trying to cling to their sport instead of planning for another career. Although baseball success determined initial post-careers, education was a significant predictor of later careers. Haerle suggested that those players who completely withdrew

from baseball had more stable career paths than those athletes who stayed within the sport.

Arviko (1976), examined the occupational and life satisfaction of 153 ex-professional baseball players and found that sport-related factors did not predict post-career job or life satisfaction. However, those players who developed social roles, such as offseason jobs and marriage, while they were still involved in their playing careers, were more satisfied with their lives and new careers following athletics.

Lerch (1981) applied continuity theory, from gerontology research to examine a group of ex-professional baseball players. Of the 1128 questionnaires he mailed, 511 (45.3%) were returned completed. The players were divided into three groups: (a) those permanently retired and out of baseball for at least 20 years, (b) those who were currently working but had been retired from baseball for at least 20 years, and (c) those who were currently employed and had been out of baseball for less than 20 years. The results revealed that length of sport career, level of sport success, and commitment to sport were not related to post-sport life satisfaction. Health, post-career income, level of education, and pre-retirement attitude collectively explained 15% of the variation in post-career adjustment scores.

Rosenberg (1981) used a questionnaire, submitted to team public relations directors, to determine initial post-athletic career job status of 400 ex-professional baseball players from 24 of the then 26 teams in the Major Leagues. The combined directors were only able to obtain information on 102 players (25.5%). Of these players, 67 had remained in some capacity within baseball. Rosenberg suggested that the lack of information on these ex-players may be the

result of the organization's low level of concern for, or lack of awareness of, their ex-athletes.

Susceptibility of Athletes Prior to Transition

Many elite and professional athletes are susceptible to problems when faced with the end of their competitive careers. Reasons for this susceptibility include: (a) the commitment to the sport, (b) length of career, (c) financial stability, (d) the abundance of younger athletes, and (e) the athlete's narrowing of his/her focus on sport-related skills. Although a number of these reasons can actually be interrelated (e.g., love of sport can create longer careers), each are discussed somewhat individually.

Commitment emphasizes the strong relationship between some athletes and their sport. In order for a successful athlete-sport relationship to exist, there must be a high level of commitment. Chartrand and Lent (1987) suggest that an athlete's commitment to his/her sport can produce positive outcomes; however, it can also create transitional problems for the athlete. "Restricted career decision making, biased information interpretation, and insufficient consideration of alternatives after athletic retirement" (p. 165) are consequences that can occur from athletes' love and commitment to their sport. It could be assumed then, that as an athlete progresses to higher levels of competition, the feelings of the athlete about his/her particular sport may also have progressed and been strengthened. If so, the affects of a break-up of that relationship could leave the athlete susceptible to transitional difficulties as stated earlier (Chartrand & Lent, 1987).

In many cases, the love affair the athlete has with his/her particular sport can lead to a long competitive career (Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993). The longer the career, the more likely that it would be more difficult for the

athlete to adjust to not playing at that level again. Further, those athletes that see the end of their careers coming may spend even more time and energy on their particular sport in an attempt to return to their top playing form (Svoboda & Vanek, 1982). This could further reduce the time and energy needed to find or develop alternative skills and careers. It could also be assumed that those athletes who spend several years in the minor leagues (e.g., baseball and hockey), and do not reach their pinnacle (e.g., Major Leagues, NHL) may have a transition that is exacerbated by these unachieved goals. Having not met one's goals may affect the individual's perceived ability to not only perform his/her particular sport, but other facets of life such as alternative careers. As explained earlier, feelings of low self-efficacy may lead to a lowering of self-esteem- the athlete's general feelings about him/herself (Dishman, 1988). This potential lowering of self-esteem could create problems for the athlete during the transition process. That is, if athletes spend much of their time and energy perfecting skills in a particular sport, such as many elite athletes do, and they never reach their ultimate goal (e.g., minor league baseball player not making it to Major Leagues), they may have little belief in their ability to successfully enter into another career.

Financial stability may be a main concern for many professional athletes (Blann & Zaichkowsky, 1986; Haerle, 1975). Werthner and Orlick (1986) concluded that finances not only played a major role in the athletes' decision to retire from their sport, but it also had a negative effect on the athlete. In a qualitative interview study conducted by McKnight and Beitel (1995), an ex-professional football player expressed the opinion that many athletes, including some who made six and seven figure salaries, were not responsible with their money and ended up broke and/or bankrupt. It is also common knowledge in the minor league systems, such as baseball and hockey, that the majority of minor

leaguers do not make enough money from their salaries to retire, let alone to get by for a short period of time until another career is determined. Although some who maintain longer careers in the minors make decent money, most require an alternate career when their professional playing days are over. Ogilvie and Taylor (1993) have suggested that those athletes who do not have the financial stability to meet their basic needs (e.g., survival) may find themselves even more stressed after their career is terminated.

As the rewards of obtaining elite athletic status increase, so does the number of athletes that attempt to achieve it. The USA Today (1996) reported that 1,740 players were selected from 100 rounds in the 1996 Major League baseball draft. The amount is stifling in itself, let alone the number of these athletes that will not make it to the Major Leagues. This is one example of a sport that puts pressures on it's athletes simply by continuously recruiting and, in many cases, paying substantial signing bonuses. Ogilvie and Taylor (1993) suggest that the multitude of elite-level athletes in North America that are available to replace older athletes has kept the focus on the athletes in the current spot-light. Thus, the ex-athlete tends to be unnoticably pushed out of this spot-light. Due to such factors, American athletes may be prone to more difficult post-career adjustments.

As athletes advance to higher levels of their particular sport, the amount of time and energy spent on perfecting skills within that sport also increases (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990, p. 8). In a qualitative study of six ex-elite team sport athletes, McKnight (1994) noted that all of the participants agreed that they had to increase their training regimens in order to compete with the higher level of competition. Remer, Tongate, and Watson (1978) added that this increase of time within the sport has created "dense social systems" which, in turn, reduces

the time and energy athletes have to develop other skills that may be valuable once their careers are over.

Barriers to Transition

Neugarten (1977) categorized barriers to transition into 3 categories: (a) transition-based, (b) physical and social-based, and (c) individual-based. Transition-based barriers were further classified as ontime or offtime life events. Ontime events are those that are more *predictable*, therefore, the stress that may be associated with a certain event (e.g., retiring by choice) may be reduced if there is adequate preparation for this event. Offtime events are those that could be considered sudden or *unpredictable* (career-ending injury). If the athlete is prepared for an event such as professional athletic transition, then what may have been an "offtime" event could possibly be perceived by the athlete as more of an "ontime" event. This may make the athlete's transition less difficult.

Physically-based, e.g., adequate trainers and equipment, and/or socially-based, e.g., family, general managers, coaches, etc., barriers can either help or hurt the individual as it pertains to his/her transition. An athlete who plays for an organization that provides a complete and experienced athletic trainer and medical support system may recover better from a career-hampering injury, e.g., shorter recovery time, less chronic difficulties, etc., than an athlete who plays for an institution with little supplies and/or experience. Also, an athlete who has a strong social support system (e.g., less time away on the road, family nearby, etc.) may find the transition out of sport less difficult than an athlete who lacks this support.

Individually-based barriers include adaptive skills, attitudes toward help from others, and "entitlement". Research has shown that athletes who rated high on general adaptive skills had easier transitions out of sport (Ogilvie & Howe,

1986). Also, the "rugged individualism", i.e., control of self, that is supposed to be inherent in the athlete may also create transition problems. That is, if an athlete turns down "all suggestions that do not relate narrowly to technical aspects of performance [they are] apt to turn away emotional, material, and informational sources of assistance helpful in coping with sport- and nonsport-related life transitions" (Ogilvie & Howe, 1986, p. 369). Furthermore, some athletes, high in skill, have been overprotected and expect the same type of "cushion" when their playing days are over. That is, the higher the level of sport that is achieved by the athlete, the less responsibilities, e.g., meals, laundry, travel, etc., they will have to take on. Organizations will take care of these responsibilities to enable the athlete to spend more time and energy on training.

Reasons for Leaving

Although it is usually a combination of factors that leads an athlete to end his/her athletic career, the most frequent in the sport literature include: (a) deselection, (b) physical injury, (c) age, and (d) free choice.

Svoboda & Vanek (1982) suggest that deselection may be one of the most significant factors contributing to difficult transitions for athletes. Deselection, or being "cut" or demoted, is a process that could be analogous to Darwin's survival of the fittest philosophy in which the strongest *will come out on top*, and the weak will be forgotten (Ogilvie and Howe, 1982). Pearson and Petitpas (1990) have suggested that "the consequences of this selection process on the self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, and life options of survivors, as well as those cut, may be far reaching" (p. 8). In minor league professional sport (e.g., baseball) small term contracts (usually month-to-month) increase the potential for being cut without notice. The sudden shock of such an event could create early difficulties in the transition.

Injuries have both plagued and ended the careers of many athletes. Such stars as Bobby Orr (National Hockey League) and Bo Jackson (Major League baseball and National Football League) have had their careers shortened or hampered because of some type of injury. Since elite athletes perform at high levels of skill, any decrements in their performance (e.g., due to injury) may result in their inability to perform at those levels. Moreover, even the slightest of injuries may prevent an athlete from performing at the elite level. It is estimated that approximately 3-5 million recreational and competitive athletes are injured per year (Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993). Thus, researchers in sport psychology have delved into areas concerning: (a) causal factors of injuries, and (b) problems associated with the injured athlete. Studies have shown that the injured athlete who is faced with career termination may be susceptible to problems such as an identity crisis, social withdrawal, and/or anxiety (Allison & Meyer, 1988; McKnight & Beitel, 1995; Rotella, 1984). Moreover, these effects on the athlete may lead to other problems found to be associated with some athletes facing career termination. Such problems may include depression, alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, or a combination of these conditions (Rotella, 1984). Although the highly paid professional athletes of the 1990's receive the best medical care for their injuries, that in many cases return them to the game, most professional athletes (e.g., minor leaguers) are unable to afford the best care, thus, ending many careers.

Another major factor contributing to the termination of one's athletic career is chronological age (Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993). As older athletes "lose a step," it becomes harder for them to compete at elite levels. Even more so, it is difficult for sport organizations and coaches to keep athletes who no longer perform at their top level, especially with younger talent waiting in the wings. Werthner and

Orlick (1986), from a study dealing with former Olympic athletes, suggested that as athletes age they may tend to lose their motivation for training and competition. However, Svoboda and Vanek (1982) found that approximately ninety percent of the athletes they studied increased their training regimens when they felt their skills were beginning to diminish. The exact stages in their careers that these perceptions from both groups of athletes came, may have had an impact on their perceptions of themselves with their sport at the time. For example, when an athlete becomes aware that their skills are diminishing, they may "frantically" try to maintain their elite-level status by training harder and longer. Eventually they may realize that they will not perform at the level they once did, accept it, and thus may lose their motivation to try to get back to that level.

Probably the most desirable way for athletes to end their careers is free choice. This usually occurs with athletes who have obtained their sport goals, and have achieved a satisfactory level of financial security (Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993). However, another cause of termination that may fall under the "free choice" category includes problems with player-coach relationships (Werthner & Orlick, 1986). At the professional level, difficult player-coach and/or player-organization relationships may result in the athlete being traded or in a loss of "playing-time". Thus, professional athletes may not need to end their careers due to poor relationships. However, at the lower levels (e.g., minor leagues), in which there are few long-term contracts and salaries are usually low, such as in minor league baseball, bad relationships with coaches and administration may create an unfavorable environment for the athlete which could result in loss of playing time or complete dismissal.

Summary and Critique of Athletic Transition Research

Research on the process of athletic transition has produced both answers and questions. Much of the theoretical bases for studying this phenomena have been discounted for lack of empirical evidence to support their notions. More recently, it has been accepted by sport psychologists and sport sociologists have suggested that athletic transition is a process that must be examined from pre, during, and post-transitional viewpoints.

Much of the evidence supporting both negative and positive effects on the athletes' transition have been quantitative and/or anecdotal in nature. Also, the low response rates of the studies examined have lead researchers to question the ability of the results to be representative of these different groups of athletes. Although these studies have enabled researchers to identify certain factors associated with transition, the results have done little to capture the essence of the athletes' perceptions of their transition from survey and/or Likert scale responses. Qualitative research in the area of athletic transition may not only identify common factors, but also allow for in-depth responses that adds another dimension to the existing data collected from athletes.

There also appears to be a tendency for researchers to view athletic transition as a whole without examining the idiosyncratic differences between sports. There appears to be enough evidence to support the notion that transition is a combination of the individual, the situation, and the reactions he/she has to this process. Thus, athletic transition should probably be studied within sport specific categories.

Although the results of many of the previous studies have been inconsistent, it appears that the level of sport career success and/or fame is not associated with post-sport career success. In fact, non-sport related variables,

such as preparation strategies and level of education, had an effect on the upward mobility of the athletes' post-career occupational status. Researchers examining the perceptions of professional athletes have also indicated that athletes may require more organizational and league support when it comes to transitional assistance. Private counseling and workshops have been identified as one form of needed support for these athletes.

Relying on past experiences to identify preparation strategies for the transition of current and future elite and professional athletes is only one approach to understanding the process. Another is to ask someone who is at an earlier stage of the transition experience. How currently-active athletes perceive their transition, what preparation strategies they are using, and how they perceive others are (or are not) helping them prepare for life after sport was the focus of this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purposes of this study were to gain insight into the perceptions of transition from Double-A minor league baseball players who are currently playing, and to determine enabling factors, that is, those behaviors that affect/effect motivations of the athlete toward career alternatives and/or facilitate the players' eventual transition and post-career decisions. In this chapter, discussion of the rationale for choice of population, the development of the methodology, pilot testing, the establishment of trustworthiness and credibility, the selection of participants, the interviews, and data analysis is provided.

Rationale for Choice and Development of Methodology

The research was based on data collected from professional baseball players currently playing Double-A. These players were chosen because of: (a) their elite athletic status; (b) their predisposition, in a theoretical sense, to potentially suffer difficult post-career transitions (e.g., instability of job, low pay, difficulty of obtaining major league status); (c) their playing status as an active professional athlete at the time of the study; and (d) using a limited population will allow for possible shared perceptions. In addition, this population was most suitable for this investigator for two reasons: (a) I have good connections with a number of professional Double-A baseball players within my region of residency; and (b) I have had an extensive baseball career, including playing with many of these participants in college and semi-professional leagues.

In order to describe and explain the transition perceptions of these athletes, semi-structured interviews were used. The research design consisted

of an orientation to the study, in-depth audiotaped interviews, preparation of transcripts, content analysis, and presentation of results. Potential problems during the research steps were addressed in a manner compliant with qualitative research methods. That is, consideration was given to the athletes' use of language, and to the accuracy and authenticity of the interview data. Every effort was made to ensure that the information about the athletes' perceptions of transition were presented in the context of their lives as athletes and as social individuals.

Perceptions are, in large part, based on past experiences, and current situations, which together tend to motivate future behavior. One definition of perception is:

The integration of sensory impressions of events in the external world by a conscious organism especially as a function of nonconscious expectations derived from past experiences and serving as a basis for or as verified by further meaningful motivated action (Webster, 1986, p. 1675).

An understanding of an individual's perception about a future event (e.g., transition) will have to take into account both past and current experiences of the individual. Quantitative methodologies may demonstrate a reasonably good description of an individual's past life experiences, current situations, and future perceptions; however, reality is created primarily from the researcher's point of view. Obtaining perceptions of reality from the participants' point of view requires in-depth interviewing and probing with reaffirmation from the individual.

Therefore, qualitative approaches, involving the interaction of the inquirer, the participant, and the phenomenon being inquired, i.e., the future transition, were used in this study to identify and explain such experiences and perceptions.

Qualitative methods allowed each individual to explore his own values which led to a number of individual constructs, and thus contributed to the themes found across all the individuals in this study.

Constructivists (e.g., Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Guba, 1990) suggest that it is necessary to reconstruct the world only as it exists in the minds of individuals. When dealing with an athlete in difficult or easy transition, it cannot be assumed that he/she will have the same experiences as other athletes. Therefore, constructivism lends itself to the understanding of experiences and perceptions of individuals.

Pilot Testing

Over the past few years, three pilot studies, and several practice interviews were conducted to study the transitional experiences of ex-elite athletes (McKnight, 1994; McKnight & Beitel, 1995). These acted as preparation for the experience of building relationships with participants, conducting interviews, and understanding the use of tape recorders and transcribers. Other skills learned from these experiences included listening, understanding, probing to further understand certain thoughts and ideas, and creating an environment conducive to the participant. Furthermore, these studies and practice interviews contributed to the assembly of the interview guide based on certain emerging themes, e.g., education, professional baseball organization, and family.

The pilot studies, and practice interviews combined with the literature concerning athlete transition, led to a methodology that allowed investigation of the experience from an ethnographic perspective, which is explained later in this section.

Establishing Trustworthiness and Credibility

Guba & Lincoln (1989) refer to the basic questions of trustworthiness as:

How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of? What argument can be mounted, what criteria invoked, what questions asked, that would be persuasive on this issue? (p. 290)

To determine the participants' realities, the inquiry followed certain guidelines. Theory building methods (e.g., qualitative research) rely on trustworthiness to help establish the closest proximity to truth. This qualitative study attempted to obtain trustworthiness through the use of the following three perspectives.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing is a process of exposing one's perspective to a peer, not otherwise involved in the study for the purposes of exploring the inquirer's biases, clarifying the inquirer's interpretations, and generally playing the role of the devil's advocate (Striegel, 1992). "In actuality, bias exploration should be a continual process throughout the data gathering and data analysis procedure" (Parker, 1994, p. 50). Prior to the initiation of data collection, I had one doctoral candidate colleague, who is knowledgeable about the subject of athletic transition, do the debriefing. From this debriefing, I was better able to refrain from putting my influence on the interpretation of the data.

The debriefing suggested that I expected to see that the participants to not be prepared, nor be preparing, for the time they would end their professional playing careers. I believed that the time and energy constraints put on these individuals to perfect their baseball skills would not allow them to consider retirement possibilities. From the debriefing, I became more aware of my bias, and tried to be more careful when asking questions and when probing in order to avoid influencing the interpretation of the data. Also, it was clear to the peer reviewer that I was quite familiar with the game of baseball and the unique language used by those who follow the game.

Credibility

Credibility required the qualitative researcher to ensure that the data, or reconstructions of the realities, were "credible" to the original constructors (Guba

& Lincoln, 1989). That is, those being inquired , including the inquirer, agreed that the data really indicated the reality of the participants. There were two ways I earned credibility. First, member checks allow for clarity of their data to be established and confirmed by the participant. This was done continuously throughout the inquiry, i.e., initial, second, and third sessions, by clarifying words and statements, sharing the my summary, and offering the interview transcripts so that the participant and I maintained as close a proximity to the reality of the participant's constructs and perceptions as possible. A group of one professional and three doctoral students with experience in qualitative research were also used to help evaluate my accuracy of the interpretation of the transcripts and determination of themes. Each of the group members received copies of the transcripts approximately one week prior to the meeting to give them ample time to read them and make notes. The meeting started with myself offering ideas on potential themes that I saw in the data. The group members confirmed my ideas and presented some of their own. After exchanging ideas, I became aware of other potential themes that emerged from the data. Again, the group confirmed that the data and potential themes were valid.

Triangulation

With respect to the data compiled, other studies in transition using similar populations and research methods were used to help determine or confirm approaches, rationale, and/or findings. This provided a frame of reference for the methodology used in this study. Further, links to the findings herein to other literature concerning the process of transition are handled in the discussion.

Selection of Participants

Seven male professional baseball players who have played a minimum of one year of professional baseball prior to this study, and were currently playing

Double-A baseball were the participants in this study. Participants were volunteers and selected from two teams located in the Southeastern region of the United States. Identification of previous teammates, and referrals from these past teammates were the only methods used to select participants. The participants were informed about the study individually at the baseball field prior to a game. Follow up phone calls and a second visit to the baseball field were made: (a) to ensure understanding of the study, (b) establish willingness of players to participate in the study, (c) to obtain signed informed consent statements (Appendix A), and (d) to determine the time and place of the interviews.

The Interviews

"There are many qualitative techniques available to the researcher, but one technique particularly suited to obtaining an understanding of human experience and perception is the interview" (Parker, 1994, p. 53). Interviewing allows the researcher to make sense of individuals' perceptions and experiences and the way they intersect (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Further, interviewing offers researchers access to individuals' ideas, perceptions, and thoughts in his/her own words rather than in the words of the researcher (Reinharz, 1992).

Ethnographic Interviewing

There are two primary types of interviewing that may be used to determine participants' perceptions of a phenomenon: (a) phenomenologic, and (b) ethnographic. Phenomenological interviewing is an open-ended dialogic technique built around one guiding question that aims at allowing the participant to control the interview (Ihde, 1986). Once the question is asked, the interviewer becomes active only in providing a trusting atmosphere, and in maintaining conversation. Ethnographic interviewing, although still dialogic and open-ended,

requires the interviewer to become more active in that he/she asks questions about specific topics derived from current knowledge and literature (Parker, 1994). Although the participant is still the "expert", the interviewer attempts to focus the conversation within the specific topics of interest.

In this study, an ethnographic interview process was used in which certain questions were raised during the individual interviews to follow up comments made by the participants. The process of analyzing this type of data is continuous, therefore, the ethnographic interview guide might include specific questions for certain, but not all, participants. That is, if a participant talked about something unique in their experience that was not mentioned by other participants, that unique experience was probed further.

Interview Process

Structured, open-ended interviews were conducted based on an interview guide (Appendix B) with the intent of allowing participants to present information dealing with their perceptions of the transitional process. Information was subjectively experienced and recalled during the interviews in the form of quotes, stories, or terms. Interviews consisted of three interview sessions from which data were compiled, read over, synthesized, interrelated, and confirmed by the participant and myself.

Prior to beginning the first interview, the participant selected a pseudonym, and read and signed the informed consent statement (Appendix A). He was then asked to talk about: (a) his background (e.g., sport, family, etc.), (b) his perception and definition of transition, (c) how he is preparing for the end of his professional baseball career, (d) enabling factors (e.g., team, coaches, friends, etc.) which are affecting/effecting his preparation for life after baseball, and (e) how he feels about his and others' future(s) after baseball. The audiotapes of the

interviews were transcribed by myself, and the transcriptions examined for potential topics which were explored further during the second interview.

The second interview began by clarifying information from the first interview. The participant was then given the opportunity for clarification, explanation, and/or provide examples regarding specific aspects from the first interview. The tapes from the second interviews were then transcribed and the transcriptions examined to identify potential probes for the third interview.

The participants were given copies of the transcripts from their first two interviews to read and provide clarification prior to the third interview. The third interview was primarily used to clarify information from the first and second interviews. Then the participant was asked for additional clarification, explanation, and/or examples regarding specific aspects from the first and second interviews. After the interviews were complete, the participant was given the opportunity to review the transcripts again to ensure clarity of the information.

Data Analysis

"Qualitative data analysis might best be thought of as a spiral process which precedes and follows data collection, rather than as a linear progression associated with quantitative methods" (Parker, 1994, p. 59). As with this study, most qualitative studies become exhausted when emergent themes become prevalent and redundancy is attained. Qualitative procedures, discussed by Glesne and Peshkin (1992), Ihde (1986), and Reinharz (1992), were used for analyzing the data of this study.

Tapes were transcribed after each interview and the data were summarized. I then reviewed the transcripts and determined whether clarification and/or more in depth of understanding was needed in subsequent interview(s). The data were presented in narrative form supported by evidence from

statements and behaviors in the transcripts (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Emerging themes were noted and refined in a systematic manner. These themes were either confirmed or rejected from existing themes, or used to develop new possibilities. During this period triangulation methods were used.

CHAPTER IV

THE PLAYERS

Group Description

The participants in this study included seven male professional Double-A minor league baseball players from two different organizations (Table 1). In order to preserve their identities, and the identities of the organizations for whom they play, pseudonyms were used instead of their real names. The players were referred to as *Gerald, Butch, Colby, Jason, Cliff, Keith, and Ricky*.

The players all played in the Southeast region of the United States, however, they were raised in different regions. Two were from the Southeast, and one each was from the Midwest, the South Atlantic Coast, the South Pacific Coast, the Mideast, and the Southwest. Six of the players were caucasian, and one was an Hispanic American. These baseball players were not expected to be spokespersons for their sport, team, organization, or region of the country. The purpose was to determine the perceptions and experiences of these players as it pertained to their transition with no emphasis on determining cross-cultural, demographic, or regional differences.

The athletic backgrounds of the players were very similar. All had played a variety of sports at a very young age, and five of the players admitted to having been very successful in baseball ever since they were young. All of the players started playing organized baseball by the age of six, and all except one stated that they enjoyed the game as a youngster. Although one player admitted that he never won any awards, or championships, in baseball, the other six players

Table 1. Demographics

PLAYER	AGE	# YEARS PRO	# YEARS DOUBLE-A	HOME REGION	RACE	MARITAL STATUS
GERALD	24	3	2	Southeast	Caucasian	S
BUTCH	24	4	2	Midwest	Caucasian	M
COLBY	24	4	2	S. Atlantic	Caucasian	S
JASON	22	3	2	S. Pacific	Hispanic	S
CLIFF	23	3	2	Southeast	Caucasian	M
KEITH	24	7	2	Mideast	Caucasian	E*
RICKY	29	7	4	Southwest	Caucasian	M

* Engaged

claimed that their success in high school had an effect on their desire to continue baseball into college and/or the pros.

At the time of the interviews, six of the players in this group were in their second year of Double-A baseball, one had played for four years (Table 1). These athletes indicated that they believe they have what it takes to make it to the Major Leagues. However, each expressed his own belief about whether that step would actually become a reality.

Individual Player Descriptions

Following are individual profiles of the seven athletes interviewed.

Gerald

Gerald was a twenty-four year old white male. He was born and raised in the Southeast region of the United States. He claimed, with a proud sense, that he was "pretty much from a working class family... my dad worked construction most of his life... it's been pretty much throughout my family". He had played one year of Single-A baseball and was in his second season of Double-A baseball at the time of the interviews.

Gerald started playing baseball at a very young age (Little League), and excelled at other sports such as basketball, football, and track. Body size seemed to be the determinant for him to pursue baseball. He stated "as I progressed I kind of leaned more toward baseball because I was a smaller guy." After successful junior and high school seasons as a pitcher, Gerald received a scholarship and played one year in Junior College and three years in Division I baseball. He attributed this success in college to getting drafted after his final year, because he felt he was not gifted with as much talent as that found in many pitchers in the Major Leagues. He stated:

I had like a 16-3 record which kind of got me over the hill to getting drafted... Because I was never an overpowering pitcher... I didn't throw

hard, I just moved the ball around the plate, and it just led me here, basically.

Overall, Gerald was an open person who appeared somewhat anxious to the idea of thinking about life after baseball. His small stature probably will decrease his chances of having a pitching career in the Major Leagues, however, he appeared to hold a positive outlook to his career.

Butch

Butch was a twenty-four year old white male who was married with no children at the time of the study. He was born and raised in the Midwest region of the United States. He had played two years of Single-A baseball and was in his second season of Double-A at the time of his interview.

When referring to his development as a baseball player, Butch acknowledged his normalcy of being in this athletic subgroup. "Basically, like most people, I got started in baseball... I just played all through elementary school, and all through high school." However, Butch admits, unlike most of his professional counterparts, that he wasn't avidly into baseball. "I wasn't really into baseball very much, I was mostly into wrestling and football and different other sports..." With an honest and humble laugh he asserted he "wasn't really that into baseball because [I] was never any good."

Butch has a unique way of understanding how he fits into the big picture of baseball. He has not let disappointments, nor an ego, get in the way of playing at this elite level. He stated "they never let me pitch because I never threw any strikes... [I was] wild... so I had to play positions that I didn't want to play, so I really didn't like playing very much." And when asked about his success in collegiate baseball he admitted that:

It was horrible... we had good teams and everything, but I really... I never had an E.R.A. under 5... I never won more than 4-5 games a year... I

threw hard, that's why I got to be in professional baseball, because I threw hard. (Butch)

Butch was a very open and honest person. He assumed that baseball was going to be a short, yet fulfilling experience, and it appeared he was ready to take on a family lifestyle. He said:

"I think emotionally I am [ready to retire from baseball] because I really want to be home... people that I want to see, my wife, I want to see her everyday, and I think emotionally I'm ready to do that."

Colby

Colby, another twenty-four year old white male, was born and raised in the South Atlantic Coast region of the United States. He had played one year of Single-A, a half year in Triple-A, and was in his second year of Double-A baseball at the time of his interview.

Colby's father also played minor league professional baseball, and he attributed his skill and desire to play to his father's background. Although he possessed a build more reminiscent of a short linebacker, he was aware that he may have gotten to the minor leagues "because of his [father's baseball] background, I grew up with the love of baseball, I've always been around it." He was successful his whole baseball life, and won several Little League Championships. This continued in high school when his team won the state championship and he was named the most valuable player (MVP). Although he was drafted directly after high school, Colby opted to play two years of Junior College baseball. After attending for those two years, he was then drafted into professional baseball.

Colby appeared to be a confident young man who seemed to be enjoying his time as a baseball player. He enjoyed being in the "spot light", and continuously was open to interviews and autograph seekers.

Jason

Jason was a twenty-two year old Hispanic male. He was born and raised in the South Pacific Coast region of the United States. He played one year of Single-A and was in his second year of Double-A baseball.

He credited his ninety-five mile an hour fastball to getting him drafted out of high school. He really had no extreme aspirations of playing professional ball while he was in high school, and admitted that he "was pretty lax.. just play and have fun... it interested me but not like 'oh my god, that's all I want to do'.. it wasn't like that."

Jason was a very laid back, and lax, type of person. He stated, "I don't think 'what if this, what if that', I'm kind of more, how you say... here and now." He suffered a serious accident a year prior to this study that left him physically scarred. He said that the accident strengthened his notion of playing day to day, with the assumption that anything can happen at any time, any day, that could prevent him from playing again.

Cliff

Cliff was a twenty-three year old white male who was born and raised in the Southeast region of the United States. He was married and had one child at the time of his interview. He played one and a half years of Single-A and was in his second year of Double-A baseball.

Cliff started playing baseball at an early age, and acquired his baseball skills from family tradition. "I started out about 4 years old; my dad coached, as he did with my brothers as I was growing up... and so I was just basically falling into those footsteps." He had success in baseball as he was growing up, which eventually led to a state championship his final high school year. He attributed his success in his high school career to receiving a scholarship. "We won the

state our senior year, so I had success there and that led me into a scholarship." He was drafted following his second season in junior college but opted to play two years of Division I baseball. He was drafted, and signed into professional baseball, after his second Division I college season.

Cliff was one of those fellows that every parent wishes their kids were like. A truly coachable person with strong work ethics. His attitude, combined with his skill may help pave his way to the Major Leagues.

Keith

Keith, yet another twenty-four year old white male, was born and raised in the Mideast region of the United States. He was engaged to be married at the time of the study. He had played five years of Single-A and was in his second year of Double-A baseball.

Keith played baseball as far back as he could remember. He took the game seriously at a young age and asserted, "I was always involved with organized baseball clubs. I took baseball serious! I mean... a long time ago." Even with his apparent desire to make it to professional baseball, he never imagined it would happen. Keith stated:

I had a dream but I never thought that it would actually happen. You know, as a kid, you always dream of the big leagues and dream of going here and there and just playing ball. And you know it's such a far fetched thing at that time.

He, like many of the other participants, attributed his professional status to his success in baseball; "I played American Legion [and] was very successful. That's when scouts started watching me." Although he had collegiate scholarships offered to him, he chose to sign a professional contract after graduating from high school.

Keith was a player that will more than likely be offered a job as a coach once his minor league days are over. He sensed that his time is short as far as

playing is concerned, but his dedication to the game would probably keep him in baseball in one aspect or another. He stated, "I'm not proud, I know if I gotta work in a factory, I gotta work in a factory. That doesn't bother me... I don't need millions of dollars, that's not why I'm playing."

Ricky

Ricky was a twenty-nine year old white male who was married with no children. He was born and raised in the Southwest region of the United States. He played one and a half years of Single-A, a year of Triple-A, and was in his fourth year of Double-A baseball.

Ricky began his sporting career at an early age, playing baseball and basketball at the age of six. Although he felt basketball was his real sport, his small physical size motivated him more toward baseball. He did not play very much in high school, and didn't feel he would ever progress to college, let alone to professional baseball. With a surprised expression, Ricky stated:

When I was 15 years old, you would have thought [I was] the last person in the world who would have done this. So it's sort of a bonus, like happy hour. Each year I go is like something extra.

Ricky also attributed some of his success to luck; "Somehow or another I've been successful. I don't know why. I just go out and compete each time... kind of like the chips fall to me.

Ricky has had a successful minor league career, and he indicated he expects to retire from baseball within the next few years. Although he had once already retired, the "free agent" market convinced Ricky to play a few more years. He basically summed up his feelings about baseball by stating; "Before I was planning to get to the big leagues, and it sucked when something didn't go my way. But now I'm playing for some money and it's a good feeling."

Double-A Baseball Environment

Professional baseball has faced many problems since the eighties, and it appears this negative cycle is spinning into the nineties. Labor disputes, players getting arrested for various felonies, and strikes have put a damper on America's game. Despite all of these, the number of and the quality of players coming through the minor leagues continues to increase. Also, salaries continue to skyrocket for those who make it to the Major Leagues; an enticement to any player. Because only a few actually do make it to the Majors, many are faced with having to find another occupation when their playing careers are over. The gamble of trying to make it to the Major Leagues requires the player to put up high stakes, and in the case of many baseball players, this means spending most of their time and energy on the field. Further, off-field activities such as weight and endurance training, batting in the cages, and watching films, only adds to time and energy spent by players. This type of environment leads one to wonder how those players ever have the time to develop other skills that may be necessary once their baseball careers are over. Haerle (1975) stated:

The occupation of professional baseball player shares much in common with other occupations. There are recruitment patterns and socialization to work expectations, technical and social skills, rules of appropriate conduct, authority and colleague relationships, and the like. At the same time, the baseball player's job exhibits some features which, when taken in combination, result in a rather unique set of organizational values and demands in conflict with personal motivations and economic desires" (p. 461).

Professional minor league baseball players find themselves in very unstable positions. The seasons, including spring training, can last up to nine months, and even more for those guys doing the extra off-season training. Keith commented about his unusual lifestyle:

I mean you're out here for six months out of the year. Sometimes you play winter ball, a lot of guys will do that, but for the most part you're

putting in a full years work in a half of a year. You don't have weekends off and we have very different time clocks. A lot of people think you show up for a ball game a half hour before you play, but as you can see I'm here at 1:15 in the afternoon and we don't start until 7:15. So it's a long day. You put in a good eight to ten hours everyday when you don't have off days. Those are fun... few and far between. It's tough because [it's] a twelve month a year job... if you go home the next guy behind you is pumping iron every winter to try and take your money from you next year. So there's no time... It's difficult, it's really difficult!

Most players are paid near the minimum of approximately 800 dollars a month, and that is only during the season (7 months). Even those who have the ability to make it to the next levels, i.e., Triple-A and/or the Majors, may never make it because of those who are already there. That is, Major League teams are reluctant to release, trade, or demote a player because the contracts they hold are at least one full year in length, and usually for large sums of money.

Minor League baseball may not be the best type of environment for many people, however, it does provide young baseball players an opportunity to continue playing the game, and also to earn an income. It also enables these players to keep their hopes up about making it to the Major Leagues one day.

CHAPTER V

DEFINITIONS OF TRANSITION

To understand the transitional experiences of a group of professional minor league baseball players, it is necessary to understand the players' perceptions of transition as it pertains to them. The participants explained transition as change, either into normalcy, or just into another lifestyle (Table 2).

Change

Leaving baseball, and finding another career to replace it, is a form of change in the players' life patterns. Further, these changes involve a movement from an unusual lifestyle as a professional baseball player into a "normal" lifestyle (Table 2). Three players stressed the fact that when they do finish their professional playing days, they must realize and accept changes. Gerald explained:

To me, it's going from your lifestyle, all of a sudden you're in a new lifestyle, and you've got... everything changes. It goes from one extreme to the next, and you gotta make that adjustment.

Not only did some of these players expect changes, but they also expected these changes to occur quickly. Further, it appeared to Jason that transition was a change which was unique to the individual. Jason stated:

Being able to adapt quickly. Being able to adjust to anything, to a way of living, to anything... All it is, is change. It's just a different word for change basically, and change is not bad... It might be good, it just depends on the person and the situation. That's all it is, it's just a situation really, and you have to be able to adapt to it. Change... that's all it is... adjusting to change.

Ricky further added to this change notion, suggesting that players need to change goals as they face their transition. He commented:

Table 2. Definitions of Transition

PLAYER	COMMENTS
GERALD	To me, it's going from your lifestyle, all of a sudden you're in a new lifestyle, and you've got... everything changes.
BUTCH	My perception is my ability to basically deal with not playing baseball anymore... not having... from playing to not playing. Basically my ability to go from my career as a baseball player into a career of a normal human being.
COLBY	It's going from the easiest job in the world [it's really hard for you while you're doing it] to something you know you would have to support yourself, and you will have to do that everyday, and it's so... everyday it's the same thing.
JASON	Being able to adjust to anything, to a way of living, to anything... All it is, is change.
CLIFF	I think it's movement, you know... making a movement from playing baseball to another job.
KEITH	I would think it's just how you progress from your baseball life into either another career or into more of a stable kind of a lifestyle.
RICKY	So I guess your goals just change a little bit, and that's what transition is, applying the strengths that you have as a person to a new set of goals.

When you say transition, I always think of transition game in basketball. You're changing from one game plan [offense] to another game plan [defense], and I mean I guess it applies to life... So I guess your goals just change a little bit, and that's what transition is, applying the strengths that you have as a person to a new set of goals. I still feel that transition... it's a preparation to adapt to new goals and new outside forces. How you're going to change so that you can be successful in your new environment. (Ricky)

Becoming Normal

Not only did the players suggest that transition is a change, five of the players also commented on how the transitional process will move them into a "normal" lifestyle. Butch exemplified this notion of normalcy:

My perception is my ability to basically deal with not playing baseball anymore... not having... from playing to not playing. Basically my ability to go from my career as a baseball player into a career of a normal human being.

Keith further commented on the unstableness of professional baseball:

Transition... how you progress into everyday normal life routines, because this isn't a normal life. I would think it's just how you progress from your baseball life into either, another career, or into more of a stable kind of a lifestyle.

Not only would the transition be into a "normal" lifestyle, but Colby suggested that this normal lifestyle would be repetitive and somewhat boring. He discussed this notion:

It's going from the easiest job in the world [it's really hard for you while you're doing it] to something you know you would have to support yourself, and you will have to do that everyday, and it's so... everyday it's the same thing. Where now baseball shows you a different thing everyday. You never do the same thing, but, you know, in the workforce you're gonna be doing the same thing everyday and more or less non-rhythmic... baseball is non-rhythmic. You do something different everyday of your life, and then when get you outside you have Saturday and Sunday off. Then you just hang out, and then, you go back and start over Monday. (Colby)

The players' definitions of transition supported their notion that changes will occur when they complete their professional playing careers. The thought of

not playing, and of going into a normal lifestyle like an everyday American blue collar worker, made them realize their uniqueness as professional athletes. The thought of leaving baseball was not pleasant to them, and the thought of finding another career didn't seem that appealing either.

CHAPTER VI

PLANNING

To help understand what these players are doing to help themselves prepare for their lives after playing professional baseball, it is necessary to delve into their thoughts and perceptions about their plans for the future. The planning strategies used by these players included: (a) no definite thoughts and/or plans, (b) making it to the Major Leagues, (c) staying within sport, and (d) completing, or adding, to their education.

No Definite Thoughts or Plans

Although there was a consensus in the participants' understandings of what athletic transition was, only three of the seven had some potential second career options at the time of their interviews. There were mixed emotions when it came to second career planning strategies. Two players never thought about it, two players thought about it but made no plans, and three players had plans but nothing concrete (Table 3).

Butch and Jason didn't express any thoughts toward planning for their baseball retirement. Butch appeared reluctant to even think about something other than baseball; he maintained:

No, I don't [have any plans]... right now, to be honest with you. I've never really... not playing... I've never thought of not playing. I've never thought about not being a baseball player, yet. It's [playing ball] the only thing I'm thinking about.

Jason appeared more laid back when he explained his lack of plans when it came to a second career after baseball. He explained:

I've never thought like that, like what's gonna happen in the future, tomorrow, or the next day. I'm more day to day. When I pitch, I pitch, and

Table 3. Indecisive Thoughts

PLAYER	COMMENTS
GERALD	You know I... like I said I really... I have thought about it but not in detail. It could end tomorrow, it could end ten years down the road. I don't know, I can't really say. I haven't really put a lot of thought into it.
BUTCH	No I don't. Right now to be honest with you. I've never really... not playing... I've never thought of not playing. I've never thought about not being a baseball player yet. It's the only thing I'm thinking about.
COLBY	Maybe broadcasting or something. I don't know. I think I still have a lot of talent that I haven't really possessed in life... I love this game more than anything so I'm not going to give up on it until it gives up on me...
JASON	I've never thought like that, like what's gonna happen in the future, tomorrow, or the next day. I'm more day to day. When I pitch, I pitch, and if it's my last day to pitch, it's my last day. I think I will have to deal with it when it comes.
CLIFF	Well I've been lucky so far. I've been able to associate myself with this man that owns a computer store... I've got a career there. So I mean it's worked out perfect to where I really do not have to work as hard as some people at finding a career after baseball.
KEITH	To be honest with you, after the last year or two it's become something that's on my mind a lot more because I'm not getting any younger. But right now I can't see myself doing anything else but baseball.
RICKY	Well, as of right now... I might still go to law school. The law looks good. Finance industry looks good. All those things kind of have their own little things that interest me, but I'm not sure which one does.

if it's my last day to pitch, it's my last day. I take everyday as my last day, you know... I think I will have to deal with it when it comes. (Jason)

Gerald and Keith had thought about their futures after professional baseball, however, neither had made any plans. Gerald, although knowing he could go and work with his father if he needed to, really hadn't put too much thought into his plans. He stated:

You know... I have thought about it but not in detail. It could end tomorrow, it could end ten years down the road. I've thought about it. I've wondered about it... I know if I got out today, I could go work construction with my dad. That wouldn't be any problem, but it's not what I want to do. My feeling towards it... I really couldn't say at this point. I don't know, I can't really say. I haven't really put a lot of thought into it. (Gerald)

When thinking a little more about it, Keith admitted that baseball was his priority at the time; he explained:

To be honest with you, after the last year or two, it's become something that's on my mind a lot more because I'm not getting any younger. But right now I can't see myself doing anything else but baseball.

The three other players, Colby, Cliff, and Ricky had thought about, and had some type of plans, however, the plans were not formalized. Colby, who also was an interviewer for his own radio sport-talk show during the offseason, expressed his belief in himself to be able to do other things. He explained:

As far as what I am gonna do afterwards... I have my own radio show and so I've been working with it. Maybe broadcasting or something. I don't know. Actually I am still up in the air about it, but I still love what I can do. I think I still have a lot of talent that I haven't really possessed in life, and those are the things that I am really looking forward to getting into. (Colby)

Cliff appeared to be very content with the fact that he has a job available for him when he finishes baseball. He had worked the job every offseason, and he stated that having this opportunity waiting for him was an ideal situation. He explained his situation:

Well, I've been lucky so far. I've been able to associate myself with this man that owns a computer store here in town, so I mean I've worked for

him the past three or four winters and it's worked out that I can... I've got a career there. And he owns the company. So he told me, as long as he's there, that I have a job there. So I mean, it's worked out perfect to where I really do not have to work as hard as some people at finding a career after baseball. I enjoy doing the work that I do there in the offseason, so I mean it's really a job that I enjoy. (Cliff)

Furthermore, Cliff suggested that having another identity, other than as a professional baseball player, not only gave him a good feeling about himself, but also allowed him an escape from the spotlight. He commented:

Well, I like it. I mean it. It's good to know that there's people that have confidence in me besides on the baseball field, you know. He [owner of computer store] looks at me as an individual and not as this baseball player, and it's different. Sometimes I like to disassociate myself, sometimes, from the game because you know your life is so centered around it. It's been in my life since I was four years old and sometimes you have to just shy away from it, you know, a little bit, and get out of the limelight, and just be... be myself. (Cliff)

Ricky admitted he had always been a planner, however, even with some ideas in mind, he was still uncertain of what exactly he would do; he said:

It seems like I've always been prepared. I'm somebody who plans a lot. Well, you hear a lot about a.. I guess it's a cliché..."something to fall back on." I guess it's just a lack for better words, but I don't know what is gonna... like, float my boat. I don't know what it is that is going to interest me when I get out of this game. The law looks good. Finance industry looks good. All those things kind of have their own little things that interest me, but I'm not sure which one does.

Although he continued to plan for his baseball retirement, he admitted that he had already retired once, and even had contemplated it again. However, he still seemed reluctant to give up sport. Ricky explained:

I actually retired [winter of 1994]. I played Triple-A that year and I decided I wasn't getting the opportunity to pitch in the big leagues, so I retired. I started law school... then I got offered to go back [to play Double-A] for a little more money and I figured, 'what the heck', it was close to home. And then I got a chance to play at home this year. I had taken a job in the offseason to get my securities brokers license, so each [time] I had planned for it. But I find myself getting pulled back, back into the game each year.

He further demonstrated his indecisiveness:

This is the third year, I've said this is my last year... I plan on going back and getting a job as a financial planner. It's something I do enjoy. I might still go to law school. (Ricky)

Those players that had not thought about what they would do after they completed their professional playing days, including those that had thought about retirement but had no plans, appeared content with the notion of continuing their professional baseball careers. They expressed a concern for their life after baseball, but they were really more interested in playing baseball, with the hopes of making it to the Major Leagues some day. The players that had relatively stable plans seemed satisfied with their current careers, and pleased that they had other careers waiting for them.

Making the Majors

Making it to the Major Leagues is an obvious goal of many, if not all, minor league players (Table 4). Although the chances of making it are somewhat dim for most, these players maintained their beliefs in themselves and their abilities to make it to the Majors. Four players discussed their aspirations to make it to the Major Leagues, but with different perceptions of actually moving up to that level. Ricky, on the other hand, believed he had seen his opportunity to make it to the Majors pass him by.

Cliff and Keith demonstrated the strongest notions of making it to the Majors. Cliff understood that the baseball organization had some control over whether he would make it to the Majors or not; he stated:

Well, I look at it this way as far as myself, I feel my best opportunity is in professional baseball with this organization. So I mean, as long as they feel like I'm a part of them, and they seemed interested in... to keep me moving up... or developing my skills out here... I believe I will stick with it.

Table 4. Making it to the Major Leagues

PLAYER	COMMENTS
GERALD	I would like to make it to the big leagues and if I don't, I don't know what I am gonna do as of right now, but something will come up. Everybody that's here, there not just here because they don't have anything else to do, they want to make it to the Major Leagues. So there's a lot people working their way towards that, and I just have to see how things go.
COLBY	A lot of plans right now are geared towards making it to the Major Leagues. I'm still young I don't care if I make it [to the Major Leagues]. I'll be happy. I've given it everything I have.
CLIFF	I feel my best opportunity is in professional baseball with this organization. So I mean, as long as they feel like I'm a part of them, and they seemed interested in to keep me moving up or developing my skills out here, I believe I will stick with it... and it's just for me to go out and prove to this team and, you know, get that chance.
KEITH	I still feel that I have a chance. If I didn't think I had a shot, I wouldn't be here. I want to get to the Major Leagues because that is the epitome of my career. That is the top. Those are the elite in my profession. That's what I want to do.
RICKY	Before I was planning to get to the big leagues, and it sucked when something didn't go my way. I will not be watching Sport Center and saying what if...

Keith strongly stated his intentions of making it to the Major Leagues, with the suggestion that every player has the same intent. He commented:

But right now I can't see myself doing anything else but baseball. I want to play until somebody stops letting me play. That's basically how I feel, and I still feel that I have a chance. If I didn't think I had a shot, I wouldn't be here. When I say shot, I mean to get to the Major Leagues. I mean that's everybody's goal. Nobody is here treading water. That's their dream. I want to get to the Major Leagues because that is the epitome of my career. That is the top. Those are the elite in my profession. That's what I want to do. (Keith)

Gerald and Colby were a little less sure about themselves actually making it to the Major Leagues, but stated it was still an aspiration of theirs. Gerald, who also agreed that making it to the Major Leagues was a common goal for most players, commented:

I've put a lot of energy into baseball physically and mentally. I would like to make it to the big leagues and if I don't, I don't know what I am gonna do as of right now, but something will come up. Everybody that's here, they're not just here because they don't have anything else to do, they want to make it to the Major Leagues. So there's a lot of people working their way towards that, and I just have to see how things go. That's the perspective that I look at it, just have to see how things go.

Colby claimed that he would like to make it to the Major Leagues, however, he also suggested that it wouldn't be that disappointed if he did not; he explained:

But a lot of plans right now are geared towards making it to the Major Leagues. I'm still young I don't care if I make it [to the Major Leagues]. I'll be happy. I've given it everything I have.

Ricky was the only player of this group that actually believed he was not really going to make it to the Majors. He had reached Triple-A, but once he was sent back down to Double-A he knew he would not return to even Triple-A. Interestingly, however, he noted that when he initially became aware that he would not make it to the Majors, he was somewhat disappointed. He commented on some of his feelings about not making it, and about other opponents and teammates who had:

Before I was planning to get to the big leagues, and it sucked when something didn't go my way... This isn't going to be my life. When you get to... the other guys will realize this... when you get to six-seven years you've played with or against two hundred guys who are in the big leagues. Each team I played against or with, six to seven guys... that will always be tough, and it will always be in the back of my mind... you know I got that guy out for six straight years. (Ricky)

He further discussed the idea of having plans and how that had helped him cope with not making it to the Majors. Ricky remarked:

... But because I have always planned, I will not be watching Sport Center and saying what if... Because I know that tomorrow things will be just as well as they are now.

These players knew that in order to even have a chance at making it to the Major Leagues, they would have to believe in themselves, and their abilities. Those who even questioned the notion of making it, knew that there was a lot of timing and luck that also could play a part in whether they make it. Therefore, most of them maintained positive thoughts, and continued to believe in their dream.

Staying Within Sport

Like many athletes, four of these players appeared somewhat interested in staying in sport once their professional playing days were over (Table 5). Since sport was a large aspect of their lives, and they had an apparent need for competition, these athletes felt a second career, such as coaching, may be best for them. Keith suggested that he would have a hard time without baseball, but also believed he would be able to find other work without any major problems. He explained how other people had influenced him into thinking about coaching when he finished playing. He discussed:

I tell you, if I had blew out my knee today and couldn't play baseball for the rest of my life, and I knew that it was over, I would feel uneasy. Not so much... 'hey... where's my next pay check coming from?... But man, what am I gonna do without playing baseball?' I know that I am resourceful

Table 5. **Staying Within Sport**

PLAYER	COMMENTS
GERALD	I'd actually like to be in college baseball. I think the competition aspect of it would be nice. I think it's something that I like to do, I like to be competitive. I like to be around it, you know, I feel comfortable competing.
BUTCH	I will try and make it as slow as a transition as possible. When I finally do retire, I don't want to totally get away from the game of baseball. I'd still have baseball or athletics as part of my life. Without the competitive type of field like athletics... because it's something that I know about. I mean I know what it's like out there to compete day in and day out and that.
KEITH	... but man what am I gonna do without playing baseball. I know that I am resourceful enough myself. I can find a job. I can find work. I've been told by a number of people, and I feel that they are sincere, that I would have a career after baseball, in coaching.
RICKY	My wife always said I would be a great coach, and I have been told by at least a dozen people [players and coaches] that's what I should do... Once the game starts, it's the funnest thing in the world, but it's the other 21 hours that I don't enjoy. So, I'm not sure coaching would be a good thing for me.

enough myself. I can find a job. I can find work. I've been told by a number of people, and I feel that they are sincere, that I would have a career after baseball in coaching. (Keith)

Ricky, although more interested in other career options, admitted he was influenced by others into possibly coaching, and he commented: "My wife always said I would be a great coach, and [I] have been told by at least a dozen people [players and coaches] that's what I should do."

However, he felt that the potential of coaching in a poor program, and the rigors of continuing the baseball life, was not that interesting to him. Ricky stated:

As far as coaching, it would be tough for me to go anywhere but to a good program because I expect so much out of the game. And when I see it played with less enthusiasm and less respect, I have a hard time being around it. However, being away from home is the worst part. Some people like that... not being away from their wives... But they just love the idea of playing this game. Once the game starts, it's the funnest thing in the world. But it's the other 21 hours that I don't enjoy. So, I'm not sure coaching would be a good thing for me.

The need to stay competitive appeared to inspire three of the players to think of second careers within sport. Gerald admitted that although he could do other things, coaching attracted him, and he suggested:

You know, as of right now, it could be anywhere from coaching, to college, to construction. I'd actually like to be in college baseball. I think the competition aspect of it would be nice. I think it's something that I like to do, I like to be competitive. I like to be around it, you know, I feel comfortable competing.

Butch admitted that baseball was a big part of his life, and he needed the competitive aspect of it. Also, by staying within baseball in some manner he felt his transition would be easier because he had already known so much about the game. He stated:

I will try and make it as slow as a transition as possible. When I finally do retire, I don't want to totally get away from the game of baseball. I'd still have baseball or athletics as part of my life. I think I will try and stay somewhat involved in baseball... athletics. Athletics has been such a big part of my life. Without the competitive type of field like athletics...

because it's something that I know about. I mean I know what it's like out there to compete day in and day out... (Butch)

Ricky also stated about his desire to find a second career that involved competition, but he looked outside of sport to find it. He discussed:

You can take your strengths and apply them to new goals when you make a transition. And one of those strengths is my competitiveness, and there's not a lot of fields out there where a competitiveness spirit can harbor, and it can grow. And the legal field is one because it is over saturated and anytime you step into a courtroom you're in a battle. What I'm gonna try to do is find a job that I can apply that competition to. Competition makes you kind of like stay on top or stay focused on a goal, on each goal that you set. When there's no competition, I or other people tend to get lethargic or complacent, and not all goals are gonna be easy. So by looking for something that's gonna have decent competition, I think that will keep my focus forward towards the new goals that will be set. (Ricky)

The need to stay attached to sport in some form, such as coaching, and/or the need to maintain some sort of competition appeared to be necessary for some of these players. It appeared that these players knew they would be able to coach, and probably wouldn't have trouble finding a coaching job. It seemed that these players felt that staying in professional baseball would not only keep their Major League hopes alive, but would also better prepare them for competitive jobs, like coaching, in the future.

Educational Planning

Either, having completed a college degree, continuing with their academic plan, and/or finishing up education was expressed by all of the players (Table 6). Although they had their own individual reasons for wanting to further educate themselves, most agreed that it was something that would help them with their transition and future plans. Two of the players, Jason and Keith, entered professional baseball right after completing high school. Jason was again lax about the idea of school, but admitted he had at least thought about it. He suggested:

Table 6. Educational Planning

PLAYER	COMMENTS
GERALD	I haven't graduated from college. I lack like two semesters from graduating from college... but I have not went back to finish, and that's gonna make a difference in my life when that time comes. I've thought about it... not real sure what I want to do, I definitely want to finish school. I definitely think that it will prepare you better for the future.
BUTCH	When I left college I still had a year and a half of school left and I made sure I got that finished, so, when baseball did end I would have something to fall back on.
COLBY	I'm gonna go back to school... I know that in order to get the opportunities I want, and to feel like a complete person... and education will help me do that. It will open more doors if I need them.
JASON	If I get out of baseball you know, in the next couple years, I'll probably go back to school, or something.
CLIFF	I feel like I'm gonna go back, definitely, you know. I know there's some guys that come straight out of high school and, that to them, it might be better. But I think for me personally, the education part was the big thing.
KEITH	I don't know, I see myself eventually going back to school and getting some more education. I would like to try, if I eventually get a chance to... I would like to try and get back and get some schooling. That is one of the reasons why I would like to go back, just to see how I would approach the school. I'm sure I would have a different approach to it.
RICKY	I've taken my LSAT, and I've gotten accepted to law school. I've got my broker's license, so I'm gonna be prepared to do any and all of them... Well, this past offseason... my degree is in finance [undergraduate]. I started thinking "what is that degree gonna do for me?", and I just didn't see any jobs out there. So it was a busy offseason. It wasn't like... I really didn't give myself a choice.

If I get out of baseball, you know, in the next couple years, I'll probably go back to school, or something. (Jason)

Keith also thought about returning to school, but more for personal reasons; he explained:

I don't know, I see myself eventually going back to school and getting some more education. I'm curious to see how I would approach it now after being out for a couple years. You know, I think I would have a different outlook on things. I would actually, probably, make an effort instead of coasting like most guys do. I think that I would have a different approach, a little bit more mature, and realize what things are important. It would be interesting. That is one of the reasons why I would like to go back, just to see how I would approach the school. I'm sure I would have a different approach to it.

Using an example of one of his former teammates, he suggested that a college degree could create a good transition. Keith commented on his former roommate:

You have the guys that come out of college, and you know they have their degree. My roommate from last year, he decided to retire this past year, he started a full time position with Payne Webber. So there's a guy who had good transition.

Gerald, Colby, and Cliff decided to enter professional baseball before finishing their degrees in college. Cliff earned his Associate degree and admitted that he was glad to be close to finishing his Bachelor's degree. He commented about the positive influence education had:

I graduated with an associates degree, so I'm pretty close. I think I prepared myself by being able to go through the college... I've been able to get an education and, you know, get well on my way to a degree. So, I think that was a big plus for me personally. I think for me personally, the education part was the big thing. (Cliff)

Gerald was only a few semesters from a Bachelor's degree and indicated that he was strongly committed to finishing. He also suggested that finishing college would help him in the future. Gerald stated:

I haven't graduated from college. I lack like two semesters from graduating... I would like to finish school definitely... but I have not went

back to finish, and that's gonna make a difference in my life when that time comes. I definitely think that it will prepare you better for the future.

Gerald further suggested that having a college degree would not only help prepare him for the future but also prevent him from having to do manual labor types of jobs. He commented:

Like I said, I come from a working class background, but that's not actually what I want to do. I want to finish school and not necessarily have a white collar job, but to be where I don't have to do construction all day. (Gerald)

Colby also admitted that he was going to finish school, and that an education would improve his own character, and open doors in the future. He commented:

I'm gonna go back to school whenever. I want to go into something like advertising, or some sort of marketing. I think that's my life led goal. I know that in order to get the opportunities I want, and to feel like a complete person, and education will help me do that. It will open more doors if I need them. (Colby)

Three of the players, Cliff, Colby, and Keith admitted that the lifestyle of being a professional baseball player has prevented them from completing their education during the offseason. Cliff commented on his offseason life: "It's just right now everything is so hectic and the way my life is, you know, I have to work as soon as the offseason is over with to support my family." Colby admitted the difficulty: "I try to go in the offseason but playing winter ball every year it's getting difficult." Keith added:

I just felt that I needed to play as much as possible, and my first four years I went to instructional league every year. So I played baseball all year round. So it was difficult for me to get any schooling.

Although the strain of the professional baseball life kept players from pursuing their education during the offseason, Butch and Ricky managed to overcome the difficulties. Butch spent his first two offseasons completing his Bachelor's degree, and considered entering graduate school once his playing

career was over. He also suggested that the graduate degree would enable him to enter into a selected career. He stated:

When I left college I still had a year and a half of school left and I made sure I got that finished. So when baseball did end I would have something to fall back on. With my degree, I wouldn't mind going back and getting my masters so I'd be able to either coach, or do something like an Athletic Director. (Butch)

Ricky had completed his degree before entering the professional ranks, but realized he needed to do something else to enter certain fields that interested him. He talked about the extra things he did and the effort he put in to accomplish them:

I've taken my LSAT, and I've gotten accepted to law school. I've got my broker's license, so I'm gonna be prepared to do any and all of them. So it was a busy offseason. I really didn't give myself a choice. (Ricky)

Education, in some shape or form, had a positive influence on these athletes. It was pretty much agreed by most of the players that a college education was part of their plans, whether during, or after, their professional careers. It also appeared that the players saw a college degree as a preparatory step to finding a second career.

CHAPTER VII

SUPPORT GROUPS

To further understand the transition of these athletes, it is also necessary to understand how they perceive "others" have had an affect on this process. These "others" are the people close to athletes who may have an affect on some of the decisions they have to make; such as career decisions. A second purpose of this study was to examine how athletes perceive that family, friends, spouse, and the organization, may effect the transition process. That is, are they helping the athletes prepare for the end of their professional baseball career? What these support groups do, that affects and/or effects, the *career* choices of the athletes, could be considered *transitional* support. Encouraging words, love and affection, and listening, could be considered forms of *social* support. In the present study, there was evidence of social support from parents, coaches, and wives. Transitional support appeared to come primarily from the organization. In following sections, players' perceptions of the effect of these support groups on the transition process are discussed.

Ma and Pa

Regardless of the influence coaches can have on athletes throughout their careers, the greatest influence on an individual is his/her parents. Since birth, parents teach their children the decision-making skills necessary to adapt to new and different situations. However, when asked specifically how they felt their families' were facilitating them with their transition into another career after baseball, the athletes only talked about the social support they received from their parents. They discussed the positive support they received for their

development and continuation of baseball (Table 7a), but they also commented on the negative aspects of support they received (Table 7b).

Positive Support

The positive support the players received started at an early age, when they were developing into athletes. Four of the players suggested that their fathers had an influence on their interest and development into baseball. Gerald and Cliff were coached by their fathers during their first few years of organized baseball. Butch and Colby's fathers both played elite level baseball. Colby attributed his father's baseball background to his current love for the game. He commented:

My dad was a professional athlete himself... and I think that most of my skills I attribute to him right now. I think that my dad is the biggest reason of baseball because of his background. I grew up with the love of baseball, I've always been around it. (Colby)

Colby, Jason, and Cliff were very positive about their parents supportiveness. Colby appeared very grateful for his parents help;

My dad was really there for me, my mom was there for me. They were very supportive of me... my family is the greatest family. I love them to death. They support anything I do, whether... it doesn't matter.

Cliff claimed that his mom was his biggest fan ever, but he admitted that he appreciated the support from his whole family. He spoke of their support and how it had made him feel;

The opportunity to play in my own home state, you know, in the same town that I grew up in. All my brothers and sisters come around and watch the games...real supportive and helping me out in that way. But, you know, it's just awesome to be able to have your family around... especially that they know you more as a person than as the athlete, you know, they kind of can disassociate yourself like that. (Cliff)

Although Jason considered his father to be a "hardass", it appeared his father was very supportive of whatever he did. That is, he raised Jason to work hard,

Table 7. Parental Support

PLAYER	COMMENTS
	a. Positive
GERALD	I started playing baseball in Little League, my father was coach.
BUTCH	When I started finally showing interest in baseball my junior and senior year in high school, and wanted to go to some camps, they jumped at every chance to get me somewhere to play.
COLBY	I think that my dad is the biggest reason for baseball because of his background. My dad [and] my mom was there for me, those are the things. They were very supportive of me.
JASON	My father was just... If you make it, you make it. If you don't, so what, you know. And he was happy.
CLIFF	I guess my mom is probably my biggest fan ever. She follows me, and clips papers, and everything. And I have four brothers and two sisters. They are real supportive in what I do.
KEITH	My folks have always been there. They're always supportive. I don't think I could remember one game where at least one of my parents wasn't at a game. They were always there, all the time.
RICKY	My parents have always been gung ho about baseball, but as the years have gone on, it's more like they've encouraged me to do whatever it is that I am going to be successful at.
	b. Negative
GERALD	He doesn't want to feel like he's pressuring me, but he does. I guess it's nice to have parents and brothers and sisters that support you, but it can also be a pain at the same time.
BUTCH	I've got to say that my parents are just over supportive of me. It bugs the crap out of me. They're so supportive that it makes me not like to play.
KEITH	I think he's always gonna be supportive but sometimes he gets overbearing about it. He gets mad. He gets angry. My dad was just more involved.
RICKY	My parents have always been gung ho about baseball. They've put pressure on me, but it's let off in the last couple years.

accept things as they come, and to maintain a positive outlook regardless of the outcome. Jason said:

I was kind of brought up in the way that you play ball and, you know, just go out and bust your ass all the time. Do your job and have fun, and play ball... and go out there and give it all you've got all the time. If you make it, you make it. If you don't, so what, you know. As long as you give 100% then you know... you have no doubts in your mind, I wasn't good enough. And he was happy.

Negative Support

Not only were parents considered supportive, but four of the players expressed the difficulties associated with their oversupportive parents toward their professional baseball careers. Two of the players stated that their fathers were overbearing, and one stated that both of his parents were oversupportive. These players also seemed somewhat annoyed by their parents over involvement. Gerald suggested that his dad put too much pressure on him, and it appeared to force him to try and ignore his father. He commented:

My dad lives his life through me. He just wants me to make it so bad he can't stand it, you know. My dad would call everyday and [he] wants to know who won, how we did, did I pitch, and half the times he calls I say "no, I didn't pitch", that type of thing. It's more of a... he doesn't want to feel like he's pressuring me, wanting me to do good, but he does. But I don't really say that because he's my dad and I don't want to hurt his feelings. (Gerald)

Keith also felt that his dad got too involved in his career. Keith even attributed his father's extreme support to a lack of having anything else to do. He commented:

My dad some times has a tendency to get too involved in my career. I think he's always gonna be supportive but sometimes he gets overbearing about it... He gets mad. He gets angry... but, he's always been there. My dad was just more involved. He wanted to know where I was at, and how was I doing. I think he got sometimes a little bit more in-depth, sometimes that can be bad. I think sometimes he got too involved, and where he didn't have his own activity. (Keith)

Butch felt that both of his parents got way too involved with his career.

This oversupportiveness had put a lot of stress on him which created negative

emotions for him. He even suggested that the pressure that had been put on him from his parents had an effect on his desire to continue playing. Butch explained:

And, all and all, I've got to say that my parents are just oversupportive of me. It bugs the crap out of me. They're so supportive that it makes me not like to play. And if I have a bad game and they're at it, you know they have the video camera so they're videoing everything I do. So if I have a bad game they'll take it home and look at it and tell me what... it drives me nuts. I get mad. I don't say anything to them, but I don't talk to them very much. In the last couple of years they have been so supportive that when they come, they expect the tops. If I could be in the hall of fame right now they would put me in it. It's ridiculous. (Butch)

He further added that he was almost afraid to quit because he felt he would hurt his parents. Butch stated:

I can't let them tell me to keep playing if I'm absolutely miserable. It makes it a little tougher because I know how it will affect them. It would totally crush them if I stopped playing.

Ricky felt his parents put a little too much stress on him during his first years in the minors, however, he claimed that they had put less pressure on him during his later years. He stated:

My parents have always been gung ho about baseball, but as the years have gone on, it's more like they've encouraged me to do whatever it is that I am going to be successful at. My parents... they've put pressure on me, but it's let off in the last couple years. They want it so bad for you that they can't control it. I went through that, calling every night. I can remember being 24 years old, being on a 20 inning streak with no runs, and I give up my first run and I was actually almost in tears because I had to call home and tell somebody. (Ricky)

He admitted, however, that it wasn't as bad for him as it was for some players who had nobody to turn to. Ricky commented: "But I've seen the kids who don't have that support. I would trade support for not-support anyday."

The support the athletes received from their parents was directed more toward the athletes' professional careers, and their childs' general feelings. It was apparent that the athletes experienced positive and negative feelings toward their parents' support. It appeared that some of the players no longer

appreciated the involvement of their parents, especially with their fathers, when it came to their professional careers. Other players, however, appeared happy with their parents' support toward themselves and their careers.

The Better Half

The players that were married and the one who was engaged were very grateful for the support their wives and fiancée provided them. They suggested that their partners not only provided social support (Table 8a), but transitional support (Table 8b), also. The players understood that their wives were living the same rigorous lifestyles as they were, yet they did not receive any of the spotlight. Four of the players in this study, three who were married, and Keith who was engaged to be married, spoke very positively about their significant other. Butch explained the social support he expected from his wife following his retirement from professional baseball:

I think that she will be very supportive. I think that she will be sympathetic and understanding that something that was once a very big part of my life is now not there, so I think she will understand when that happens. The days that I'm in denial, she'll understand.

Cliff was extremely happy with his wife, and attributed her support to their "perfect" relationship. He commented:

It's just worked out to a perfect relationship. She's probably the most supportive of me because she takes the baby, and she'll do every... all the little things that, you know, the people don't see behind the scenes. She gets up in the middle of the night when she's got to go to work the next day, but she knows that, with our lifestyles, you know, we [baseball players] need our rest. She's just been awesome. (Cliff)

He also talked about her understanding of his situation. Cliff stated:

She knew when we got married and everything that I won't be home a lot and will have to do a lot of things on my own as far as working out and everything. There's gonna be times we don't see each other as much and everything, and she understands that and that's why I think it's made it a lot easier for me to be able to come out and just play ball. She's just awesome.

Table 8. Spousal Support

PLAYER	COMMENTS
	a. Social
BUTCH	I think that she will be very supportive. I think that she will be sympathetic and understanding that something that was once a very big part of my life is now not there, so I think she will understand when that happens.
CLIFF	It's just worked out to a perfect relationship. She's probably the most supportive of me because she takes the baby, and she'll do every... all the little things.
KEITH	My fiancé is just outstanding... sacrifice. She's been real supportive, she doesn't put any pressure on me to do anything.
RICKY	There's not as much pressure, and that's because when I have a bad outing I call home... She's built up some confidence in me.
	b. Transitional
BUTCH	My wife is all for me being out of this game. I mean telling me day in and day out "are you gonna start looking for something else?"... She's really lobbying hard for me to be home.
CLIFF	I have to do what's best for me and my family, you know. I gotta look out and say "well what does it mean for my family, you know, will it hurt us as far as that goes?"
KEITH	I'm gonna have a wife in six to seven months and that changes a lot. Just having a new life, sharing it with somebody, you can't only think about yourself.
RICKY	She's just like, "finish out the year... you'll get a good job... you're gonna do this, that and the other", and she's right. She constantly encourages me to play this game, but she also encourages me that I can do well in other things.

Keith explained the sacrifices his fiancé had made to support them both psychologically and monetarily. He commented:

My fiancé is just outstanding... sacrifice. What she's doing... she's got a degree in speech pathology and the poor girl is working at a women's clothing store right now because we can't really get anything out of her degree right now. She needs to have her master's. We can't afford to send her to graduate school right now, so she's just sacrificed incredibly. (Keith)

Although the wives, and fiancé, supported their husband's baseball careers, they also had an influence on the player's future after baseball. Butch expressed his desire to be with his wife, including her desire for him to be out of the game. He explained:

I think emotionally I am [prepared] because I really want to be home. Like people that I want to see, my wife, I want to see her everyday, and I think emotionally I'm ready to do that. I've got my wife at home telling me "you can do other things." My wife is all for me being out of this game. She doesn't want... she wouldn't have any problem with it if we weren't apart all of the time, for seven months, or whatever, out of the year. She's all for it, but since baseball makes me be away for most of the year, she hates it. I mean telling me day in and day out "are you gonna start looking for something else?"... "when are you gonna come home during the offseason to find a job that you might like so that you can stay there?" She's really lobbying hard for me to be home. (Butch)

Ricky expressed his wife's desire for him to leave the game, but in more of a constructive manner. He explained their plans:

She's just like "finish out the year... you'll get a good job... you're gonna do this, that and the other", and she's right. She's built up some confidence in me. She constantly encourages me to play this game, but she also encourages me that I can do well in other things. I think baseball players sometimes are isolated, they lose confidence in what they can do outside the game, and so she's encouraging. (Ricky)

It appeared that just being married, or getting married, motivated Cliff and Keith to start thinking about career options. Cliff commented:

I'm married with a little kid so, you know, you've got to start thinking about your career after baseball. I have to do what's best for me and my family, you know. I have to take that into consideration. I gotta look out and say

"well what does it mean for my family, you know, will it hurt us as far as that goes?"

Keith spoke of the change that would occur when he would marry:

I'm gonna have a wife in six to seven months and that changes a lot. I mean eight months down the road I could answer this totally different. Just having a new life, sharing it with somebody, you can't only think about yourself.

It was obvious that the players were very grateful to have somebody with them who gave them the support and encouragement that their wives gave them. It was also apparent that the wives had a positive affect on the players' feelings about themselves, and on decisions about their careers after professional baseball.

The Organization

Coaches, managers, and owners can definitely have positive and/or negative effects on a player's transition. They make the policies and procedures that the players must follow. The players described the organization's preparation strategies, and how members of the organization may have enabled them toward coping with their future transitions. The players recognized coaches, and veteran players, as providing social support when they had problems to discuss, or advice to seek. Ricky explained:

Coaches give you advice or help. If you're a minor league coach, ninety-five percent of the time they are a life long baseball person. You played your eight to ten years, you're five to six years in the minor leagues, you're eight to ten years in the big leagues, and then you're gonna coach. That's what you do. Very seldom do you see a coach leave baseball, go do something else, and come back and coach. So you're not gonna have a lot. They're quality people, they're not gonna have a lot of advice for you to do something else.

Keith also understood that the experience of the coaches was helpful in getting through tough times. He added:

These guys have a lot of experience. They can help you through that just by talking about like... "Look I've been through this too, I know what you're going through but you know"... always positive thoughts, trying to install positive shots in your mind. (Keith)

Butch admired his coaches simply for their positive thoughts and outlook. He commented:

A lot of the coaches I've had really stress staying away as much as you can. Maybe that is to prevent getting burnt out at the end of the year, but I think a couple of coaches that I have had, and had been close to, have been really supportive of me. (Butch)

The players also claimed that the organization did provide them with transitional support. The players suggested that this transition support occurred for: (a) the transition up to the Major Leagues (Table 9a), and (b) the transition out of sport (Table 9b).

Support Toward the Major Leagues

It was very apparent to these players that the objective of the organization was to prepare them for the Major Leagues. Cliff explained:

They go at it for producing major league players. They're not really worried about you. I mean they're great guys and everything, but their business is to get you to the Major Leagues and that's what they're here for.

Ricky believed that the organization was there to prepare you for the Major Leagues, and that it should be that way. He stated:

But I think genuinely each organization has its interest for its players, and that's to play in the big leagues... and I don't think it's the responsibility of the organization to prepare you for something else. They're giving you every opportunity to reach this goal of playing baseball. Their responsibility is to give me every opportunity to make it to the big leagues and be successful. (Ricky)

Gerald explained how making it to the Major Leagues was everybody's goal;

Everybody that's here, they're not just here because they don't have anything else to do, they want to make it to the Major Leagues.

Table 9. Organizational Support

PLAYER	COMMENTS
	a. Toward the Majors
GERALD	Everybody that's here, there not just here because they don't have anything else to do, they want to make it to the Major Leagues.
CLIFF	But I think the organization is gonna give you every opportunity they can to get you in the competitive side. But their business is to get you to the Major Leagues and that's what they're here for.
RICKY	But I think genuinely each organization has its interest for its players, and that is to play in the big leagues... to give me every opportunity to make it to the big leagues and be successful.
	b. Transitional
GERALD	They like to get you to go out to meetings and hospitals and things like that, and you meet a lot of nice people that could possibly be connections down the road to help you make that transition.
COLBY	I think the club has really set forth me getting out into the public. The people that you meet, you never know who you might meet from one day to the next.
JASON	Anybody [in public] you meet, you know, can help you in the future. I don't care who it is, anybody can help you in the future.
CLIFF	Like I said, the player will be given every opportunity [from the organization], and the organization looks down on you if you don't take advantage of these opportunities.
KEITH	With this organization, there's always been an open door policy and I think that every manager that I have had, I've felt that I could go to and talk to when I have a problem.
RICKY	They're gonna have counselors there to help you so that you can concentrate on this game of baseball. Coaches give you advice or help.

Transitional Support Out of Baseball

Players also discussed other opportunities, provided by the organization that could help them once their professional careers were finished. These opportunities included: (a) paying for the players education, (b) providing counseling services, and (c) getting the players out into the community to meet people. It is well known that many players are selected out of high school, or before they complete college. Therefore, organizations will offer to pay for going to, or completing, the player's college education as part of the professional contract. Gerald stated:

I know when you're drafted, if you haven't been to college, or if you have been to college, you can get your college paid for. They will pay for it if you're coming out of high school. They'll pay for your college for 5 years to whatever school you want to go to. Coming out of college, they'll pay for the rest of your college. As far as that, they are good about taking care of your school.

Many organizations will provide counseling services for their players, but they are either geared toward personal problems, e.g., substance abuse, marital problems, etc., or the services were not really recognized by the players. Butch explained the uncertainty of the services provided:

This organization has basically one guy that goes around... you don't see him but maybe twice a year. He doesn't say a whole lot other than that he's there. He's kind of a self-help person that helps you deal with different problems on and off the field. I don't know [his title]. I know what his name is, but you hardly see him. We had one meeting a couple of years ago in spring training. Each year at spring training, maybe once, maybe twice, he'll come and introduce himself, tell you what he does, and maybe give out a phone number. Last time he came once.

Although the players expressed a little concern over the fact that there were no direct services to help with the actual transition into another career, they were aware that the organization did provide them with the opportunity to meet influential people in the community. Gerald commented:

They like to get you to go out to meetings and hospitals and things like that, and you meet a lot of nice people that could possibly be connections down the road to help you make that transition.

Butch further described the organization's efforts:

I know that the [organization] have a whole program set up so that the players go around to hospitals and you go and meet at different schools, and they've have programs set up for scholarships for underprivileged kids.

Colby explained how meeting people in the community could lead to future employment:

They are giving us a chance now to go out and meet these people, and I'm not saying that that's why we're out there meeting them for, but you know they might end up saying hey come work for me one day after baseball or whatever.

It was very apparent that the largest facilitator of transitional support came from the athletes' organizations. Coaches, and veteran players, were there to ease some of the difficulties associated with being a professional baseball player. However, the players believed that making connections with influential people, that may provide jobs after their professional baseball careers were over, was the best transitional facilitator offered to them.

It's Up To The Player

How an athlete reacts to his/her transition is dependent on a combination of the individual, and the situation he/she is in. When asked whether it was the athlete himself, or the organization, that is responsible for what occurs once his professional baseball career was over, the athletes agreed that it was up to them. They felt that the organization provided opportunities to help them with their eventual transition, but it was up to the players to take advantage of these opportunities. Furthermore, most of the athletes felt it was really up to each

player to prepare for their own transition while they currently played professional baseball (Table 10). Butch explained:

It is up to the player. The team can set you up, but if you don't take advantage of these things, that is your own fault.

Jason, Cliff, and Ricky also agreed that the control of the transition was up to the player. Jason responded:

It's more up to the player. Like the organization will suggest, and a player, you know, if he takes it in and tries it out... if he doesn't like it, he doesn't like it.

Cliff added that there was a little pressure from the organization to take advantage of the opportunities they provided. He stated:

Well, I think it all boils down to the player... it's the player that has to go out and do it. Like I said, the player will be given every opportunity, and the organization looks down on you if you don't take advantage of these opportunities. (Cliff)

Ricky stated that the organization was there to develop you as a baseball player, and that what you do afterwards is completely up to you. He commented:

It is totally up to the player. Like I said, the organization is here to make you the best possible ball player you can be, and if you don't make it, you don't make it. Time to find something else to do. (Ricky)

It was apparent that these players realized that their purpose for being in professional minor league baseball was to make it to the Major Leagues. They also knew that was the objective of the organization. The organizations, however, provided support for other aspects of their lives by offering to pay for the players' educations [if needed], and they also provided counseling services for problems such as alcohol, drugs, and marital difficulties. The players were aware of the opportunities, such as meeting people in the community, provided for them to help themselves in the future. And most importantly of all, they realized that it was up to them to take advantage of these opportunities.

Table 10. It's Up to the Player

PLAYER	COMMENTS
BUTCH	The team can set you up but if you don't take advantage of these things, that is your own fault.
COLBY	You have that ultimate control. That's why when you walk out through that fence, you are a baseball player, and you don't care what happens. And that's the way I have to approach it.
JASON	It's more up to the player. Like the organization will suggest, and a player... you know... if he takes it in and tries it out... if he doesn't like it, he doesn't like it.
CLIFF	It's the player that has to go out and do it. Like I said, the player will be given every opportunity. I think it's all upon the person. I mean, you can make anything as joyful as you want, or you can make it as hard as you want.
KEITH	I think it is up to the individual. I don't think you can be prepared by your organization. You have to prepare yourself.
RICKY	It is totally. Like I said, the organization is here to make you the best possible ball player you can be, and if you don't make it, you don't make it. Time to find something else to do.

CHAPTER VIII

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was twofold: (a) to determine the athletes' definitions and perceptions of transition; and (b) to explore enabling factors that have affects/effects on the athletes' transitions. This section is an overview of how these players defined transition, how they perceived their own transition, i.e., planning strategies used by the players, and what enabling factors were available to the players. The enabling factors, both positive and negative, included social and transitional support from families, spouses, and organizations.

The seven Double-A baseball players in this study defined their future transition as a change in their lifestyle. The term "change" has been widely used by researchers, and athletes, to describe athletic transition (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Swain, 1991). The players indicated that their current lifestyle was unusual, and that the change would involve a movement into a more normal lifestyle.

Twenty plus years ago, Haerle (1975) described how professional baseball players live unusual, and rigorous, lifestyles. The demands of professional baseball require the players to spend several days on the road, and in hotels. Also, because the game schedules include noon, evening, and night games, the players' sleeping patterns are inconsistent. This unusual lifestyle also occurs for many athletes from other sports (Baillie, 1993; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). The elite athletes Allison and Meyer (1988) interviewed stated that leaving their competitive sport positively enabled them to establish more normal, or "traditional", lifestyles.

Outside of Allison and Meyers' (1988) study, there is almost no evidence to suggest that the athlete considered his/her second career as normal, or usual. In addition, there have been no available studies that examined the athletes' perceptions and/or definitions of transition while the athletes were currently playing their sport.

Planning

It has been suggested that planning for athletic transition can facilitate athletes toward careers after sport. And it is this facilitation that can reduce difficulties associated with transition. It was clear that none of these players had specific plans for their transition or their careers after professional baseball. Some players had thought about planning, but had no ideas. Other players had ideas, but no specific plans to carry out those ideas. Researchers have suggested that elite and professional athletes were not prepared, nor were they preparing, for their lives after competitive sport (Baillie & Danish, 1992; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993). Haerle (1975) found that three-quarters of his sample of 335 retired professional baseball players did not prepare for their retirement until their careers were either almost completed, or completed. Furthermore, Chartrand and Lent (1987) suggested that the high level of commitment made to their sport by elite and professional athletes could restrict career decisions, therefore, predisposing them to difficult transitions.

It was apparent, however, that the baseball players in the present study who had ideas were more at ease about their situation than those players that had no ideas. Not having ideas, or plans, has been suggested to predispose athletes for difficult transitions. Sinclair and Orlick (1993) discovered that those elite athletes who had employment opportunities and/or other interests, while they were still currently playing their sport, tended to make smoother transitions

than those athletes with no options. Having a new focus, or other skills not related to sport while still competing, predicted better transitional adjustment for elite athletes (Baillie, 1993).

Because previous research involved athletes that had already retired from their sport, it was clear what levels they had achieved as they transitioned out of sport. The players in this study may have, or may not have, reached their highest level. However, six of the seven players believed they still had a shot at making it to the Major Leagues. The other player believed he had already had his shot, and would probably not get another one. Obviously those players that believe they have a shot, continue to spend much of their time and energy on refining their baseball skills. This "refinement" leaves many athletes without the necessary skills for other things, such as other careers outside of sport (Baillie & Danish, 1992; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993). Werthner and Orlick (1986) found that those athletes who had a sense of accomplishment, that is, they were satisfied with having met their personal athletic goals, tended to have smoother transitions. Furthermore, achievement of sport-related goals was a predictor of smoother transitions (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). Parker (1994) indicated that some of the ex-collegiate football players she interviewed, who had experienced difficult transitions, still felt that they had an opportunity to return to the game at the professional level. It could be assumed that these baseball players who continue to stay in the minor leagues, and who still have aspirations of making it to the Major Leagues, may be susceptible to difficulties as their careers end. Svoboda and Vanek (1982) suggested that those athletes who continue to cling to their sport careers with the aspirations of achieving unmet goals, may spend even more time and energy on improving their skills. Therefore, those athletes

would have even less time for developing other skills pertinent to their transition out of sport. All of this could predispose them to have difficult transitions.

Some of the players felt that they could continue their careers in baseball, or other sports, by coaching and/or doing some type of administrative job. Haerle (1975) reported that one-third of the 335 ex-professional baseball players stayed within sport in some manner, however, mostly in coaching positions. The elite athletes studied by Sinclair and Orlick (1993) suggested that organizations should keep athletes involved within the organization as coaching and/or administrative resources.

Four of the baseball players in this study suggested they wanted to continue within sport because they felt that was what they knew the best. Therefore, they wouldn't expect too much difficulty transferring their skills over to coaching. It appeared that these athletes felt that having extensive knowledge about baseball, at every level from Little League to the professional ranks, would enable them to be coaches and/or managers. Further, comments from coaches, wives, and others, appeared to motivate these baseball players toward thinking about coaching as a career option.

These players also discussed their need to stay in a field that would enable them to satisfy their competitive needs. Although the literature in athletic transition doesn't necessarily address the idea of competition as a separate variable or issue, it does indirectly relate to other aspects of transition that could create difficult transitions. That is, competition is a component of sport that drives athletes to direct much of their time and energy toward their goals, and there are difficulties associated with unmet goals as stated earlier.

All of the players discussed education as a potential part of their plans to facilitate their transition into careers after professional baseball. The players

knew that their organization would pay for their college once their professional baseball careers were completed, which is standard in most professional baseball systems. Some players felt they would think about education once they were finished with playing baseball, while others took advantage of their offseasons to complete their degrees. Those who completed their degrees, or continued on into higher education, felt it was a necessary and useful step for their next careers. Lerch (1981) studied 511 former Major League baseball players and discovered that level of education influenced further job satisfaction. That is, those athletes with higher levels of education, either obtained while they were playing, or before they entered another career, felt more satisfied about their jobs, and lives in general. Haerle (1975) indicated that those athletes that were better educated also tended to retire earlier and have less transitional difficulty.

It appeared that the baseball players planned to use, or were using, education as a "stepping-stone" from the end of their professional playing careers to the beginning of their next career. They felt that an education would prepare them for other careers, and improve themselves as individuals.

Support Groups

The athletes received positive and negative support from their parents. The positive support was more facilitative toward their ongoing career in baseball, and/or toward their life in general. The players' parents did what they could do to encourage their sons to develop the necessary skills to make it to professional baseball. However, it was apparent that some of the parents got too involved with their sons' careers, which caused some problems with the athletes' feelings about baseball. None of the players indicated that transitional support was offered by parents.

Pearson & Petitpas (1990) suggested that the presence of responsive support relationships, such as parents, might ease the difficulty of transitions. Social support from family is considered key for the adjustment process. Not having anyone to talk to, or provide feedback, can leave athletes alone in the transition process, which could lead to difficulties (Baillie & Danish, 1993). Werthner and Orlick (1986) also projected that there is a need for positive social support from families to assist in the transition decisions needed to be made by the athletes.

It is evident that parents could help the athletes in transition by providing positive social support. It is also clear that those parents that oversupport, or become too involved, can have negative affects on players. There is no evidence in this study, or from previous studies, that parents do, in fact, facilitate the athlete's transition out of sport and into another career.

The athletes that were married, as well as the player who was engaged, expressed nothing but positive thoughts and statements toward their partners. *Patient, awesome, and supportive* were some of the words the players used to describe their wives, and fiancé. Some of the athletes even suggested that their wives, (as well as a child for one athlete), were motivators for them to think and pursue alternative careers other than professional baseball. Further, a couple of the players stated that their wives were helpful in planning for new careers.

It has been conjectured that having support from those people close to the athletes can help facilitate them into smoother transitions (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). Swain (1991), who identified athletic transition with Kubler-Ross' (1969) human grieving model, hypothesized that support of others, i.e., spouses, could be one of the most important single factors in the

athletic transition process. Furthermore, Baillie and Danish (1992) suggested that support from close others might help smooth potentially difficult transitions.

It was apparent that the baseball players that had wives, or were about to have a wife, were somewhat pleased, and gratified, that they had someone on whom they felt they could rely. The players suggested that their partners provided social support and, in some cases, they provided transitional support. The transitional support involved, although suggestive in nature, allowed the baseball players to become more aware of other careers after professional baseball.

The baseball players suggested that the organization, as a whole, provided social, and transitional, support. Social support was provided by coaches, veteran players, and counselors. Transitional support was provided by organization to facilitate the players' mobility upward toward the Major Leagues, and to facilitate the players out of baseball. The players stated that coaches, and veteran players, were available to give advice and help with problems. Further, the organization provided counselors for the baseball players, mainly for substance abuse and marital problems.

It could be assumed that any coach should be available to help players in times of difficulty. Neugarten (1977) suggested that coaches who provide for the needs of the athletes, such as social support, can positively facilitate athletes' transitions. Also, he suggested that organizations that provide proper counseling can also help athletes with their transition. However, Parker (1994) noted that the ex-collegiate football players that she interviewed, experienced negative, or non-existent relationships with their coaches, which is not congruent with the findings from this study. These baseball players experienced positive relationships with their coaches, suggesting they were supportive and helpful.

These baseball players felt that the main objective of the organization was to facilitate them toward the Major Leagues. Providing the best possible coaching, training, equipment, and facilities is pretty much all they can do as an organization to help players improve their game, and hopefully have a chance at playing in the Major Leagues. However, the baseball players felt that the organization was providing transitional support for their retirement from professional baseball, but mostly through networking opportunities in the community. There was evidence of some career counseling services provided by the organization; however, they were not recognized by some players, and/or not used by any of them. The organization provided opportunities for the baseball players, such as autograph sessions and speeches, to potentially meet someone in the community that may have a job available once the players were finished with professional baseball. The organizations made it mandatory for the baseball players to do a minimum number of appearances for a season.

Sinclair and Orlick (1993) suggested that players should pursue social contacts during their careers which would open up more possibilities upon their retirement. Having more options upon retirement may ease the potential transitional difficulty. Pearson and Petitpas (1990) also suggested that providing athletes with opportunities to broaden their skills, such as offering retirement education programs, may positively motivate the athletes, and ease their transition difficulty. Blann and Zaichkowsky (1986) suggested that the professional hockey players they surveyed, who were still playing professionally at the time of the study, recommended more counseling services related to transition. It is apparent to the baseball players that the organization is primarily interested in developing Major Leaguers. However, they do realize that the organization is concerned about their careers after baseball. This is in opposition

to the suggestions of more services as suggested by the professional hockey players in Blann and Zaichkowskys' (1986) study.

The baseball players admitted that it was up to them, and not the organization, to prepare for their eventual transition. These results are in opposition to Blann and Zaichkowskys' (1986) study in which the hockey players suggested that the organization should become more involved with facilitation of the athletes during their transitional process. Much of the research in athletic transition had suggested that the organization become more involved with their athletes' transitions (Baillie & Danish, 1992; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993).

Although elite and professional athletes have stated that they want more support, there is little evidence to suggest what types of support actually positively affect/effect athletes' transitions. The baseball players in this study felt that providing for payment of education, and networking in the community, was enough preparational support from the organization. They also believed that, outside of the time and energy they knew they had to spend on perfecting their skills, each player, himself, was responsible for taking advantage of these opportunities. Thus, in actuality, the players felt that they were responsible for their own transition.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purposes of this study were: (a) to gain insight into the perceptions of transition of professional baseball players while they were still playing; and (b) to determine enabling factors that affect/effect the motivations of the athletes' transitional process. An interpretist framework and a qualitative methodology were used for this study. The participants were seven male professional minor league baseball players from two teams in the Southeast United States who had played at least one year of Double-A baseball prior to the study.

The interviews were semi-structured so that the participant could relate, in his own words, the specific areas of interest. The specific areas probed included: (a) definitions of transition, (b) their perception of their own transition, i.e., their planning strategies, and (c) enabling factors, i.e., family, wife, and organization. The themes that emerged from their definitions of transition were: (a) the players understood that there was change involved from moving out of professional baseball into another lifestyle; and (b) the players felt this change involved moving into a more normal lifestyle. The themes that emerged regarding their perceptions of their own transition included: (a) the players did not have specific plans for their transition out of professional baseball; (b) several of the players believed they had a chance at making it to the Major Leagues; (c) the players felt they would like their career after professional baseball to remain within sport in some manner; and (d) the players suggested that they would complete, or continue, their education prior to starting another career. The enabling themes that emerged from the support groups were: (a) parents provided social support

for the players' baseball careers, and this was perceived sometimes as positive and sometimes as negative support; (b) the players stated that their wives, and fiancé, provided social support, and transitional support in making career decisions; (c) the players felt that coaches provided social support for discussing problems and difficult situations; (d) the players stated that the organization was there to create Major League baseball players; (e) the players stated that the organization provided transitional support by paying for their education, and by giving them opportunities to meet people in the community that may help them in future careers; and (f) the players admitted that it was up to them, and not the organization, to be prepared for their future transition. These themes are discussed further, and compared to results and/or conjectures from previous research.

As suggested earlier in the study, the responses of these baseball players were not intended to be generalized to all male professional Double- A minor league baseball players. The experiences of these seven athletes resulted in themes that supported, opposed, and added new information to the body of knowledge about athletic transition. The powerful comments given by this small sport-specific group imply that other professional minor league baseball players might have similar perceptions and experiences. However, further investigation of athletes' perceptions of the transition process, while they are still currently playing their particular sports, warrants further investigation.

The findings from these interviews related the baseball players' level of awareness of transition. They understood that it is a form of change and suggested that it is also a change from living an unusual lifestyle as a professional baseball player, to living a normal, or traditional, lifestyle in some other occupation.

These baseball players did not appear to be prepared for their transition. Some of the athletes had no idea what they would do after professional baseball, and really didn't seem to care. They felt that they would worry about it when the time came. These athletes viewed transition as an event that just occurs when they finish with their baseball career; therefore, they did not believe they needed to plan and/or prepare for the change. The baseball players who did have some ideas, although they had no specific plans, appeared to view transition more as a process that required planning and/or preparation.

It was also apparent that most of these baseball players expected to have a shot at making it to the Major Leagues. Usually the goal of most elite and professional athletes is to reach the top level of their particular sport. For minor league baseball players, making it to the Major Leagues is a common goal.

The players felt that education would help them improve as individuals, and prepare them for alternative careers after professional baseball. The fact that professional baseball organizations pay for their players' educations may have an effect on whether or not the players pursue more education in the future.

It was apparent that enabling factors were positive and negative as perceived by the baseball players. The players indicated that they received positive social support from their parents in the forms of encouragement, and praise, toward their professional baseball careers. However, it was apparent that the involvement of parents in the players' career was overbearing for some players. The players used strong terms to express their anger toward their parents, especially their fathers. There was no evidence of transitional support from the parents.

The players suggested that their wives provided both social and transitional support. Having a wife that was able to withstand the rigorous

lifestyle of the professional baseball player, positively affected the players. This positive feeling was also apparent when the players discussed their wives during the interviews.

Even though the players agreed that the organization was primarily there to develop Major League baseball players, it was interesting that the players' only perception of transitional support came from the organization. This transitional support, however, only came in the form of player-community networking. Although the athletes suggested that there were people who were there to assist with career planning, there was little interest in using them.

Even more interesting, the players felt that the transitional support they received from the organization was sufficient. That is, the financial support for their education and the opportunity to use their professional status to meet people in the community were, in the players' opinions, major facilitators for their eventual transition. For the most part, these players felt that it was their own personal responsibility to make it to the Major Leagues, and that it was up to them to handle their own transition.

Recommendations

Recommendations for future research include: (a) examining perceptions of transition of other populations, e.g., by sport, race, and gender, while they are currently playing; (b) examining the perceptions of transition of athletes at different stages of their elite or professional careers; (c) comparing perceptions of transition between married and unmarried athletes; (d) studying the effect/affects of different levels of parent support, i.e., from no support to oversupport, on the transitional experience of athletes; and (e) examining how organizations, i.e., coaches, managers, and executives, perceive they are facilitating the transition of

their players toward higher levels of competition and toward other post-participation careers.

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Appendix A
Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT

PROJECT TITLE:

The perception of transition from professional baseball players.

PURPOSE OF STUDY:

The purpose of this study is to describe the perceptions of transition from currently playing professional baseball players. You will participate in approximately 3 informal interviews that will last approximately one hour. Because of the open-ended nature of the questions that will be asked, the interviews will be audiotaped to ensure accuracy in reporting the responses. Only the interviewer will transcribe the tapes. The first 2 interviews will focus on your perceptions of your transition. The third session will include sharing the summary of the first 2 interviews, opportunity to listen to the tape or read the transcript of the first 2 interviews, and allow the participant to add, correct, or delete comments made in the first interview and the summary. Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to answer specific questions or you may withdraw at any time without penalty.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Your responses to the interview questions will be kept completely confidential and the tapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my office at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I will be the only person with access to the tapes. You will select a pseudonym of your choice to ensure your anonymity in the presentation of results. This consent form will be stored along with the interview tapes.

POTENTIAL RISKS:

Participation in this study does not involve any anticipated physical or emotional risks. You, the participant, are under no obligation to answer the questions or complete the interviews.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS:

Participation will provide you with the opportunity to reflect on your own perceptions. Participation will also help me, as the principal investigator, athletes, coaches, and sport psychology consultants to more fully understand the transitional process of athletes.

I have read the above statements and understand the research procedures, my role in the project, and the potential risks involved in my participation.

Name

Date

Signature

For further information or questions please contact Jay McKnight or Dr. Patricia Beitel at: (423) 974-5111, Cultural Studies Unit, 1914 Andy Holt Ave., The University of Tennessee, Knoxville 37996-2700.

Appendix B
Interview Guide

Interview Guide

1. Tell me a little about yourself and your baseball background.
2. What is your perception and/or definition of transition?
3. Have you thought about your own transition?
3. Do you have any plans for your transition?
4. Have you done, or currently doing anything to prepare for your transition?
5. What have others, such as your family, friends, wife, coaches, organization, or anyone else you can think of done, or are currently doing, to help you prepare for your transition?
6. Do you have any other thoughts, ideas, or feelings about your, or anybody else's transition?

Probes that were used were:

- a. Can you elaborate on that?
- b. How did that make you feel?
- c. What do you mean by that?
- d. What did you do about that?
- e. Why do you think that happened?

VITA

Jay Neil McKnight was born in Windsor, Ontario, Canada on January 14, 1966. He graduated from Vincent Massey Secondary School in June, 1985 and received an athletic scholarship to play baseball at San Jacinto Junior College in Houston, Texas, the following September. While at San Jacinto, he played on the varsity baseball team that won the national championship. After one year of Junior College, he attended Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas, where he played 2 more years of varsity baseball on scholarship. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree, specializing in Kinesiology. He also obtained his teaching certification for grades kindergarten through high school in physical education. He completed his Master of Science degree at the University of Texas, Tyler, Texas. His emphasis was Kinesiology, with specializations in exercise physiology, and sport psychology. He entered the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in August, 1993 and in August of 1996 received a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education.

He is currently employed overseas, and plans on starting his own business within the next few years.