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**GROWING PAINS:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF
PERSONAL GROWTH EXPERIENCES OF
COLLEGIATE STUDENT-ATHLETES**

**A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

**William Henry Shawn Stewart
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents

Dr. William Bruce Stewart

and

Mrs. Suzanne Sullivan Stewart

for giving me the opportunity to pursue my dreams.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the perceptions of collegiate student-athletes with regard to: (a) their perceptions about the meaning of personal growth, (b) the characteristics of their personal growth experiences, and (c) the impact of their sport-related personal growth experiences on sport and non-sport aspects of their lives. The participants were eight male, Caucasian college student-athletes who had competed in NCAA Division I athletics for three or more years. Because the perceptions of student-athletes provided the basis for the study, qualitative research methods were employed. This study was conducted using an in-depth, semi-structured interview guide during two sessions with the participants. In the first session, the student-athletes described their perceptions of personal growth and their sport-related growth experiences during their college athletic careers. In the second session, the participants clarified and/or elaborated on their responses from the first session. The student-athletes described personal growth as a process of achieving balance and expanding their capabilities. The participants achieved balance in four areas: (a) priorities; (b) emotions; (c) perspectives; and (d) responsibilities. The student-athletes expanded their capabilities by improving their athletic and interpersonal skills. The types of experiences that the student-athletes described as growth experiences included: (a) success and hardship; (b) interaction with others; and (c) event-related emotions. These sport-related experiences influenced the student-athletes' lives academically and socially. They applied the lessons that they learned through their sport-related experiences to enhance their academic performance and their ability to interact and communicate with others.

Participants' descriptions of their perceptions of the meaning of personal growth in sport followed the theories of individual development of college students. The results are discussed with regard to related research on personal growth and college student development. Recommendations for future research are presented.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Involvement in sport is perceived as beneficial to participants. Players can develop motor control and physical strength. They can experience personal success and also contribute to team success. Participants may learn the benefits of discipline, effort, and hard work. They can make friends and learn the importance of competition as well as the importance of sportsmanship. Sport experiences can provide life lessons and help players to develop into fully functioning individuals. Sport offers participants many other opportunities, including team involvement, a sense of accomplishment, the thrill of competition, enjoyment, and personal development.

Personal growth is a motive for sport participation for adolescents (Ryckman & Hamel, 1995). Athletes from this population use sport to try to improve themselves as individuals. This suggests that sport programs can provide positive experiences for young athletes. However, experts in sport also believe that sport participation may have negative effects on younger athletes. These negative effects may include poor socialization skills (Yiannakis, 1981), limited personality development (Ogilvie, 1987), and physical and psychological effects of injury (Pillemer & Micheli, 1988).

Concern focuses on the effects of sport participation on youth sport participants. One consideration is the sacrifice that is often made to achieve success in sport. Increasing numbers of children spend increasing amounts of time practicing and competing in order to achieve sport success. For example, Boris Becker won at Wimbledon in 1985 at age 17; Tiger Woods won his first USGA Amateur Championship

at age 16; and Martina Hingis was ranked first in the world in women's tennis at age 16.

Part of the problem is that many athletic careers are relatively short, so the athletes must apply themselves at younger ages in order to have a career of reasonable duration. For some athletes, this early emphasis on sport may have a positive impact on their lives, but for other athletes it can have negative consequences.

Despite the potentially negative effects of sport on young athletes, if there were not potential positive outcomes, people would not play. For example, Jones (1996) found the positive effects of sport participation on female collegiate athletes included: (a) increased sense of independence and maturity; (b) increased ability to set and achieve goals; and (c) ability to transfer attributes of successful sport performance, like teamwork, communication, and concentration, to non-sport settings. In another study, Rudd (1998) determined that sport participation facilitated the development of values such as loyalty, cooperation, and self-sacrifice in athletes. Several other researchers have suggested that personal growth is a positive gain from sport involvement (Czikszentmihalyi, 1997; Ogilvie, 1987; Pillemer & Micheli, 1988; Ryckman & Hamel, 1995; Thomas, 1978; Udry, Gould, Bridges, & Beck, 1997; Wankel & Berger, 1990; Yiannakis, 1981).

Personal growth has not been clearly defined in the sport literature. The meaning of this construct has been based upon the perceptions of the researchers rather than the perceptions of the athletes. Even though each of these researchers believes that sport participation facilitates personal growth, each has different ideas about the meaning of this term. Suggested characteristics have included overcoming fears (Thomas, 1978); psychological well-being (Wankel & Berger, 1990); enhanced perceived competence

through physical and psychological development in learning new skills (Czikszenmihalyi, 1997); the development of life skills such as goal setting and self-reliance (Collingwood, 1997; Danish & Nellen, 1997; Schmid, 1996); increased problem-solving ability and improved interpersonal relationships (Cooker & Caffey, 1984); self-actualization (Maher, 1981); and the ability to gain perspective, develop other areas of one's personal life, improve time management skills, and personality development (Udry, Gould, Bridges, & Beck, 1997). This lack of agreement on the definition of personal growth is problematic because: (a) it increases the difficulty in determining the meaning of the construct, and (b) it increases the difficulty in determining the effectiveness of the methods by which personal growth is supposed to be facilitated.

Researchers have described the ways through which they believe that people can achieve personal growth. These methods primarily involve the use of programs that are designed to facilitate the personal growth of the participants. Programs have included outdoor adventure programs (Jensen & Young, 1981), physical fitness programs (Collingwood, 1997), peer mentoring (Schmid, 1996), and group counseling (Maher, 1981; McClure, Holladay, & Foster, 1988). Other researchers have developed sport-based personal growth programs that teach athletes life skills that help them to succeed in non-sport settings (Danish & Nellen, 1997). The purpose of these programs is to help athletes to transfer the skills that they learn on the field to real-life situations so that the athletes may develop into fully functioning individuals. There is no evidence that these researchers investigated the meaning of personal growth to the athletes. Because personal growth has not been defined from the athlete's perspective, programs designed to

facilitate personal growth may be promoting other attributes.

The construct of personal growth is not only found in sport but in college student development. Students grow and develop through their college years, whether through participation in extracurricular activities (Astin, 1984) or professional development programs (Consolvo, Seville, & Ogrosky, 1997). These opportunities for personal growth and development exist, but academic pressures and social opportunities consume much of the students' time, making it difficult for them to participate.

Even though most students experience pressure during their college years, student-athletes face unique challenges and have responsibilities to others in addition to themselves. Many feel pressure to perform well both academically as well as athletically. For instance, the coaches and athletic administrators expect these student-athletes to put forth their best effort in their respective sports so that the athletic programs will enhance the school's image. But these athletes are also students. They must do well academically to remain eligible to compete as well as to graduate. These responsibilities demand that these student-athletes spend all of their time either competing in their respective sports or studying for their classes. Thus, these individuals are left with little time to develop other areas of their lives. Consequently, student-athletes may fail to become fully functioning individuals.

Some people believe that the responsibility to prepare these student-athletes for real life lies with the institution (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). Fortunately, collegiate sport administrators believe that the personal growth of their athletes is a top priority (Chelladurai & Danylchuk, 1984; Onifade, 1993). Programs have been proposed due to

this increased interest in the total development of athletes (Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Cooker & Caffey, 1984; Danish, Petipas, & Hale, 1993; Jordan & Denson, 1990). The NCAA has also addressed this issue of preparing student-athletes for dealing with life events. Their life skills program, Challenging Athletes' Minds for Personal Success (CHAMPS), was created in 1991 with the purpose of facilitating the development of the student-athletes into fully functioning individuals. The program focuses on five areas: (a) academics, (b) athletics, (c) personal development, (d) career development, and (e) community service. These programs are aimed at helping the athletes to obtain the necessary skills during their college years that will prepare them to enter the "real world" after ending their collegiate athletic careers. The problem with these programs is that no research was done to determine the athletes' perceptions of personal growth and development or to determine what types of experiences the athletes perceived to be developmental. By failing to determine this information, these professionals may have created programs that may or may not facilitate personal development.

Further investigation of this construct is necessary to accurately develop programs that meet the needs of student-athletes. The meaning of personal growth to student-athletes must be directly investigated, and the types of experiences that athletes perceive to facilitate their personal growth must be determined. In addition to determining the types of experiences, the perceived influence of these experiences on the lives of student-athletes must also be ascertained.

This study provides a clear definition of personal growth from the perspective of the student-athlete and details the types of experiences that they perceive to facilitate their

personal growth. It also indicates the effects of sport participation on student-athlete development outside of sport. College athletic administrators can use this information to create activities that are more likely to facilitate personal growth in their student-athlete, and, with a clear understanding of the meaning of personal growth, they can determine the effectiveness of these programs.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study were: (a) to determine student-athletes' perceptions of personal growth; (b) to determine the characteristics of personal growth experiences of student-athletes; and (c) to determine the impact of in-sport growth experiences on out-of-sport lives of student-athletes.

Definition of Terms

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

Growth - The process of gradual formation and development toward maturity. (Neufeldt & Guralink, 1988).

Perception - The way in which the student-athletes view themselves and their environment based upon their previous experiences.

Personal growth - This term will be defined by the student-athletes who participate in this study.

Sport - An organized activity that involves competition between two or more parties.

Sport-related experiences - Experiences encountered by student-athletes within the sport setting.

Student-athlete - An individual who regularly participates in organized, intercollegiate athletic competition.

Upperclass student – An individual who is currently enrolled at a college or university who has sophomore, junior, or senior academic standing.

Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions were made for this study:

1. The participants in this study were able to articulate their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions relating to their personal growth experiences as athletes.
2. The interview was a valid method of eliciting information about subjective experiences.
3. The length of the interview provided sufficient time for recollection of pertinent and constructive information that strengthens the body of knowledge.
4. The participants in this study honestly reported their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions concerning their experiences.

Scope of the Study

The goal of qualitative research is to gain insight into the meaning of subject matter rather than to accumulate objective data that relates to the subject matter. This study was qualitative in nature, thus the results are not intended to be generalizable to the total population of athletes. The researcher investigated the subjective experiences of a small group of individuals with the intent of gaining as much insight as possible into the athletes' perceptions of those experiences.

Significance of the Study

This study was designed to gain understanding of the perceptions of collegiate student-athletes about the meaning of personal growth and the characteristics of their sport-related personal growth experiences. This study was directed toward future student-athletes, who may find themselves sharing similar experiences, by helping them to understand a variety of ways of growing and developing through sport. It was also designed to assist collegiate sport administrators to understand how their athletes are developing through involvement in collegiate sport. This information may also help administrators to develop programs that are specifically designed to facilitate the personal growth of their student-athletes.

This study was also designed to help sport instructors and coaches to become more aware of the developmental concerns of student-athletes. Understanding how their athletes perceive personal growth may enable coaches to not only teach sport-related skills, but also to help facilitate the personal development of their athletes. Sport psychology consultants can also benefit from this information because it may increase their ability to effectively develop programs that facilitate personal growth in student-athletes. To effectively develop such a program, these consultants need to understand what personal growth means to the athletes and how they experience it - especially now that more universities are employing the professional services of sport psychology consultants.

As stated earlier, personal growth through sport has not been the primary focus of any research study. Determining the meaning of personal growth to college student-

athletes is beneficial to all athletes and not just those who compete at the university level.

This study provides valuable information to administrators of youth and adult sport and recreation programs. These individuals can use this information to begin to develop programs similar to those employed in collegiate athletics departments to help the younger athletes to gain positive benefits from sport participation.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To understand the personal growth of athletes through sport, it is important to understand the role of sport in the lives of athletes. Over the past fifteen years increasing attention has been paid to the role of sport in athletes' individual development. A potential benefit of sport involvement is personal growth, but the literature on personal growth in sport is sparse over the past few decades and the descriptions of personal growth are inconsistent. Most of the literature on this construct stems from the opinions and assumptions of the authors, with each author having a differing view of the meaning of the construct. Interest in the welfare of collegiate student-athletes has also grown in the past few years. Sport administrators have recognized the special concerns of these individuals and have employed the use of programs that attempt to meet the needs of this population.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the literature on personal growth in sport and the programs that address the specific needs of student-athletes with regard to their growth and development. In examining these issues this review of literature focuses on: (a) potential effects of sport on participants; (b) personal growth in sport and physical activity; (c) facilitation of personal growth through sport and physical activity; (d) college student development; (e) student-athlete development; (f) collegiate responsibilities to student-athletes; and (g) efforts to address the needs of student-athletes.

Potential Effects of Sport Participation

Sport participation can influence athletes in many ways, and different people have different beliefs regarding this influence. Some believe that sport participation has negative effects; others think that the effects are positive. Still others believe that the effects are neither positive nor negative, but rather believe that sport just offers new experiences from which the participants can learn. This section briefly introduces the notions of researchers from different perspectives.

Yiannakis (1981) expressed his thoughts regarding sport as a microcosm of society, based on his research and experience as a professor of sport sociology. He stated that sport may be a means of shaping individuals into social beings or as a means of enhancing personal growth, individuality, and maturity (Yiannakis, 1981). In his analysis he described the two schools of thought and detailed the potentially harmful effects of the shaping model on youth sport participants.

One philosophical stance emphasizes the benefit of the individual through personal growth, individual decision-making, and helping others. From this perspective Yiannakis (1981) explained that the purpose of education is to help individuals to develop creative, investigative minds as well as an altruistic orientation toward others. The second philosophical stance, shaping, emphasizes structure and views society as a machine in which all parts work together in unison. The purpose of education from this viewpoint is to convey information about skills and values that benefit the effectiveness of the machine (Yiannakis, 1981).

As a mini-society, sport is an effective socialization tool because it influences the

participants with regard to their values, behaviors, and habits. Yiannakis (1981) believed that the shaping model dominated the model of youth sport in society, and this structured model had several detrimental characteristics including: (a) a strict organization with little time for unstructured play; (b) a highly competitive nature with an extrinsic reward system; (c) authority in hands of adults; and (d) a highly selective system in terms of who does and does not play (Yiannakis, 1981). Suggested outcomes of such an environment included: (a) individuals who learn to achieve or succeed mostly through competition; (b) children defining success through extrinsic rewards; (c) children learning obedience and conformity; and (d) sport fostering the desire for early specialization in education and career (Yiannakis, 1981). It was suggested that this structured model was harmful to the youth sport participants and that the sport model needed to change in order to provide positive sport experiences that promote individuation and personal growth.

Ogilvie (1987) expressed his thoughts about sport achievement as it related to personal growth. Through his extensive research and experience in applied sport psychology, counseling thousands of athletes, he believed that many youth sport participants were not being prepared to deal with the social demands of life outside of sport. During a panel discussion with Carol Mann and Peggy Fleming, Ogilvie (1987) learned that these elite athletes sacrificed emotional and personal needs in order to become the best athletes in their respective sports. In addition, these sacrifices were made at a young age when most individuals are developing into multidimensional people. This personal sacrifice was required by the extensive emotional and time commitments necessary to hone motor skills. Competitors on the U.S. Figure Skating Team practiced

seven to nine hours per day six days per week and spent time on aerobic training, dance, stretching, and exhibitions (Ogilvie, 1987). This singular focus of energy restricted the total development of the individual, and these athletes became one-dimensional individuals who experienced the joy of athletic accomplishment. But Ogilvie came to realize they also experienced emotional deprivation in other areas of life.

Ogilvie (1987) questioned whether this level of commitment in athletics at a young age is healthy. He suggested that, in order to reduce the potential harmful effects of an athlete's pursuit of excellence, sport administrators must stress and reinforce social and psychological goals and the development of programs that foster personal growth and create positive sport experiences. These sport experiences should: (a) enable every child to develop strong positive feelings about their bodies, (b) contribute to their abilities to identify more sensitively with others through physical and emotional sharing, and (c) reinforce attitudes that health maintenance through physical expression increases individuals ability to find happiness (Ogilvie, 1987).

There has been some concern over the effects of competition and stress on the development of youth sport participants. Pillemer and Micheli (1988) described their perceptions regarding the potentially harmful effects of competitive stress on those individuals who do not cope well. Their involvement with the Children's Hospital in Boston provided them with extensive experience with youth sport athletes who were experiencing physical and/or psychological problems due to their sport participation. They found that, in addition to the numerous physical ailments like fractures and overuse injuries, emotional complications due to the difficult recovery process prolonged

interference with athletic participation and increased the tendency toward reinjury (Pillemer & Micheli, 1988). This finding meant that, instead of enhancing the athlete's self-esteem and facilitating personal growth, sport involvement might hinder the athlete. However, the injured athletes did get certain benefits: (a) retreating from adolescent concerns; (b) avoiding competition; (c) gaining parents' attention without participating in athletic competitions; and (d) being able to remove themselves from competition in a socially acceptable manner. Pillemer and Micheli (1988) believed that these four benefits put the athletes at risk for injury and reinjury, which were negative outcomes of sport participation.

Jones (1996) investigated the perceived quality of life of former NCAA Division I African-American female basketball players. Issues that influenced quality of life included self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, level of happiness, and levels of success outside of sport. The purpose of the study was to determine the impact of sport participation on quality of life. Four female athletes participated in qualitative, semi-structured interviews. These interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and thematized by the primary researcher. Additional qualitative researchers validated the interpretation of the themes.

Findings indicated that these athletes experienced both positive and negative effects of sport participation. A positive result experienced by each participant was increased feelings of independence and maturity (Jones, 1996). One of the respondents specifically stated that sport helped her grow up and to become more responsible. A second positive result of sport participation was learning how to set goals and follow-

through on those goals (Jones, 1996). Related to goal setting was the motivation to be successful and do their best to accomplish their goals. Jones (1996) also found that the participants learned to transfer sport skills to non-sport settings. These skills included teamwork, communication, and concentration. Responses regarding the negative aspects of sport participation covered a wide range. The athletes cited: (a) lack of social life; (b) lack of accessible role models; (c) lack of recognition of female athletes; and (d) lack of parental support (Jones, 1996).

Character development is often perceived to be a benefit of sport participation. Rudd (1998) examined this belief by defining character and measuring character among athletes, non-athletes, and military cadets. He defined character in two areas: (a) moral character and (b) social character. Moral character included the values of honesty, justice, and responsibility. Social character included the values of cooperation, loyalty, perseverance, and self-sacrifice (Rudd, 1998). In order to measure these constructs, the *RSBH Value Judgement Inventory* was developed. The development and testing of this self-administered paper-and-pencil inventory was one of the purposes of Rudd's dissertation. Three pilot studies tested the validity and reliability of the RSBH inventory. A fourth study investigated group differences between athletes, non-athletes, and military cadets. Participants included 99 non-athletes, 66 military cadets, and 50 NCAA Division IA collegiate athletes. Group differences on the two variables, moral character and social character, were examined.

Results indicated significant differences between groups in moral character (Rudd, 1998). Team sport athletes scored lower in moral character than individual sport

athletes and non-athletes, $p = .0001$. Individual sport athletes scored similarly to non-athletes on moral character. Significant differences were also found between groups in social character (Rudd, 1998). Team sport athletes showed greater social character than individual sport athletes and military cadets, $p = .0253$. These findings suggested that participation in sport, particularly team sport, does build social character but not moral character (Rudd, 1998).

The literature in this section provides evidence that the impact of sport participation can be both positive and negative. It is important to recognize that, despite the potential negative consequences, sport participation can have a positive impact on the athletes.

Personal Growth in Sport and Physical Activity

The previous section indicated that sport participation can positively influence the participants. To better understand this influence, it is important to explain the nature of the positive impact that sport involvement can have.

Ryckman and Hamel (1995) investigated the motives of male and female adolescents to participate in organized athletics. Participants were 154 high school freshman students, and each participant completed a battery of questionnaires that included sport involvement questions and personality inventories. This test battery included: (a) a sport involvement questionnaire asking the participants to list all of the organized sports teams on which they had participated; (b) the *Interpersonal Orientation Scale*, which assessed affiliation in terms of emotional support, attention, friendship, and social comparison; (c) the *Competitive Attitude Scale*, which assessed

hypercompetitiveness and personal development competitiveness; (d) the *Personality Research Form*, which assessed achievement motives; and (e) the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale, which measured subjects' tendencies to seek social approval.

Multiple regression analyses indicated that the motives differed by gender. For males, hypercompetitiveness was the strongest predictor of sport involvement, $p < .001$, and for females, personal development competitiveness was the strongest predictor, $p < .001$ (Ryckman & Hamel, 1995). Further analyses indicated that males and females did not significantly differ in personal development competitiveness (Ryckman & Hamel, 1995). These findings suggested that males and females were equally concerned with maximizing their personal capabilities and enhancing their personal and social development.

Thomas (1978) expressed her thoughts about personal growth as they related to backpacking. In her personal experience as a veteran backpacker, she has faced and overcome certain fears that are associated with the activity. She categorized these fears as reasonable and unreasonable. Reasonable fears included things that are worth worrying about, like poisonous snakes, bears, or the imminent probability of death. Unreasonable fears are those that affect one's mind, like darkness or an unlikely animal attack. Thomas (1978) also stated that many of the fears that backpackers face were felt more strongly by females due to childhood socialization, claiming that being feminine meant being helpless. She supported this claim with her belief that fear grew with imagination and sensitivity. The more of these two characteristics that one had, the more that person would typically fear.

Thomas (1978) believed that backpackers could overcome their fears through education and gradual desensitization. Individuals should figure out what they fear and then learn as much as possible about it. She believed that knowing about what was involved with the fearful object or task would reduce one's anxiety. Individuals should also face their fears gradually, overcoming them one step at a time. They should perform small parts of a fearful task and gradually increase the amount until they can perform the whole task. Another way that backpackers could overcome their fears was to discuss them. Thomas (1978) thought that individuals experienced growth by overcoming their fears. This feat occurred by learning that individuals could face their fears and survive the dangers associated with those fears despite feeling the anxiety that accompanied the feelings of fear.

Determining the attributes of personal growth is difficult because so many characteristics can be classified as personal growth qualities. Wankel and Berger (1990) attempted to use Czikszentmihalyi's (1982) model of sport values as a framework in their examination of the benefits of sport. This model has four categories in which the main types of consequences of sport are placed. These consequences include personal enjoyment, personal growth, social harmony, and social change. Based on this model, ideal sport activities contribute to each outcome. Wankel and Berger (1990) described the specific characteristics of each category as they relate to sport. Of these descriptions, personal growth was the most thorough.

Personal growth, according to Wankel and Berger (1990), includes both physical and psychological attributes. Physical benefits revolve around physical health,

specifically cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, bone structure, and weight management. The psychological benefits of sport participation revolve around well being, which involves the reduction of anxiety and depression. The reasons for this reduction may include: (a) social interaction; (b) feelings of accomplishment; (c) self-confidence; and (d) escape from life stressors (Wankel & Berger, 1990). The physiological mechanisms that facilitate these reductions in anxiety and depression may include: (a) elevated endorphin levels; (b) increased body temperature; (c) increased blood flow to the central nervous system; and (d) altered catecholamine levels (Wankel & Berger, 1990). The authors state that the activity in which an individual participates must be sufficiently physically demanding, including intensity and duration, in order for these physiological effects to influence the psychological benefits. They recommended exercise, specifically aerobic exercise.

Kimiecik and Jackson (1994) presented their views regarding the application of model of complexity and flow (Czikszentmihalyi, 1990) to athletic settings. They defined flow as an optimal psychological state that occurs when individuals perceive a balance between a challenging task and their ability to successfully perform the task. Their purpose was to discuss how flow experiences in sport could help athletes to experience personal growth through the development of complexity, which occurs when individuals learn and perform difficult tasks that expand their abilities. By becoming more complex individuals, athletes can gain meaningful experiences from mundane events. This increase in the athletes' levels of complexity enables these athletes to experience flow in sport, which leads to personal growth (Kimiecik & Jackson, 1994).

To further explain this notion of flow as it relates to personal growth, Csikszentmihalyi (1997) described the flow construct. For individuals to experience flow, their abilities to perform a task must match the challenges of the task. For individuals to experience growth, they must increase their level of complexity, which involves learning new skills that stretch their abilities and integrating those skills into one's behavior. Essentially, this concept meant that individuals became more complex as they learn and apply new skills that enable them to optimally perform more challenging tasks. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) stated that learning and applying new skills is a growth process, and this growth process is necessary for our personal evolution.

The only research that illustrated personal growth in sport was a study by Udry, Gould, Bridges, and Beck (1997). They investigated athletes' reactions to injuries with the purpose of determining the psychological reactions and long-term benefits of season-ending injuries. A season-ending injury was operationalized as one that prevents a skier from completing a racing season and unable to ski for a minimum of three months. Participants included twenty-one members of the U.S. Ski team who sustained a season-ending injury within the four years prior to the study. The study was qualitative in design with the purpose of gaining the athletes' personal thoughts and descriptions of the experiences of their injuries. The researchers used a semi-structured interview approach to gain background information, immediate and long-term reactions, specific sources of stress and roadblocks encountered during the recovery process, factors thought to facilitate recovery, coping strategies used, relationships developed during the recovery process, and recommendations to other injured athletes (Udry et al., 1997). Interviews

were audiotaped, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed for content by each investigator to reveal raw data themes.

Results indicated four dimensions of psychological reactions to season-ending injuries. These dimensions included: (a) injury-relevant information processing/awareness; (b) emotional upheaval/reactive behavior; (c) positive outlook/coping attempts; and (d) other reactions (Udry et al., 1997). Results also indicated four dimensions of benefits of season-ending injuries. These dimensions included: (a) personal growth benefits; (b) psychologically-based performance enhancements; (c) physical/technical development benefits; and (d) no benefits (Udry et al., 1997).

The personal growth benefits dimension included four higher-order themes: (a) gained perspective; (b) personality development; (c) developed aspects of non-skiing life; and (d) learned better time management (Udry et al., 1997). According to the athletes, gaining perspective included things like reflecting on their lives, clarifying their priorities, and gaining a greater appreciation of what they had, such as their accomplishments, health, and important relationships (Udry et al., 1997). Personality development included things like character development (learning patience, maturity, balancing emotions), gaining independence, developing a more positive outlook, and enhanced sensitivity and empathy for other people (Udry et al., 1997). The athletes also developed aspects of non-skiing life, including relationships and education. Time management included learning to meet deadlines better and just managing their time better in general (Udry et al., 1997).

Although the literature in this section included personal growth in sport, only one study (Udry et al., 1997) attempted to define personal growth from the athletes' perspective. But even in that study personal growth was not the primary focus. The literature in this section showed that researchers believed that personal growth does occur through sport participation, and it also showed that those researchers failed to define the concept from the athletes' perspective.

Facilitation of Personal Growth through Sport and Physical Activity

More researchers believe that personal growth does occur through sport participation and have attempted to facilitate personal growth through specific programming, despite not having a clear definition of personal growth. Several methods have been used to facilitate personal growth through physical activity and sport. These methods include outdoor adventure programs, personal growth groups, physical fitness programs, and life-skills programs. This section describes these methods and their perceived effectiveness in facilitating personal growth.

Outdoor adventure programs have been a popular alternative source of education. They focus on experiential learning with active participation in physically and socially challenging activities that promote cognitive, affective, and motor learning in various settings. Jensen and Young (1981) stated that the purpose of these programs was to involve participants in unusual circumstances or situations with uncertain outcomes that demanded personal effort from the participants to cope with the resulting physical and psychological stress. Jensen and Young (1981) described the primary goal of outdoor adventure education with regard to personal growth, which included stimulating the use

of personal resources and increasing self-awareness, interpersonal effectiveness, and maturity. The authors defined these concepts as:

1. Self awareness: Including knowledge of participant strengths and weaknesses, physical and psychological resources for coping with stressful situations, and the ability to articulate values, feelings, and beliefs.
2. Interpersonal effectiveness: Including expansion of participant capacity for responding to others, the development of open and effective communications, enhancement of the capacity to establish cooperative relationships, and commitment to solving problems in a group setting.
3. Increasing maturity: As evidenced by acceptance of responsibility for setting and meeting personal goals, independence, self-reliance, self-confidence.
(Jensen & Young, 1981; p.65)

Personal growth groups have been used in sport research to determine their effectiveness in helping athletes attain self-actualization. These groups were used because they have been shown to be an effective means for promoting psychological growth (Lieberman, Yalom, & Miles, 1979). The purpose of these groups was to establish a foundation of trust among the members in order to foster open communication and self-exploration, which would eventually lead to personal growth.

Personal growth groups were hypothesized to be one way of promoting growth and development of individuals in a group setting. Based on his experience in psychology, Maher (1981) explained the movement exploration concept and how developmentally oriented movement activity could enhance personal growth. He described the methodology for this two-part process. In the first part, group leaders introduced themselves and modeled the behaviors or effort patterns, which included dabbing, punching, gliding, pressing, flicking, slashing, floating, and wringing. They also encouraged participation from the group members during the movement exploration portion of the program. In the second part, the group leader and group participants

openly discussed the movements and the feelings associated with the movement experiences.

The activities were designed to enhance self-exploration by allowing the group members to openly discuss the feelings that accompany their participation. Mastery of each introductory movement element and subsequent mastery of movement combinations accompanied by exploration of the feelings associated with participation and mastery allowed participants to increase their sense of competence and to progress toward becoming more fully functioning people. This process enhanced personal growth by offering group participants the opportunity to: (a) gain awareness of themselves and others through a physical and sensory group process, (b) explore the connection between the two, and (c) understand the concept of holistic well being (Maher, 1981).

McClure, Holladay, and Foster (1988) attempted to determine the effectiveness of a personal growth group on female gymnasts. Eight gymnasts were assigned to a treatment group, which met for one hour each week for the fifteen-week season. The seven remaining team members received additional practice during the same time. Pre-treatment and post-treatment self-actualization were measured by the *Personal Orientation Inventory*. Binomial expansion was used to analyze the data between groups and within groups. No significant changes in the means were found, but nine of the twelve scales for the treatment group increased, which suggested some movement toward self-actualization. These quantitative tendencies were supported with subjective reports from the participants who mentioned that the group helped to raise their self-confidence and their sense of importance as team members (McClure et al., 1988).

Personal growth groups can also be used to develop other areas. For example, McClure and Foster (1991) conducted a similar study with a female collegiate gymnastics team with the purpose of determining the effectiveness of a personal growth group on team cohesion. Fifteen members of the team completed the pretest measurements, which included: (a) the *Group Environment Questionnaire*, (b) the *Multidimensional Sport Cohesiveness Instrument*, and (c) the *Team Climate Questionnaire*. Eight members were randomly assigned to the treatment group, in which they participated in a personal growth group for one hour each week for the fifteen-week season. Seven other members met with the coach for an extra hour each week.

ANCOVA, with pretest scores serving as the covariant, revealed a significant effect in one area, attraction to the group, $p < .005$ (McClure et al., 1991). Further analysis showed that the scales moved in positive, expected directions, although none of the changes were statistically significant. These results suggested that participation in personal growth groups helped to increase levels of cohesion compared to the control group.

Collingwood (1997) explained that physical fitness programs, properly structured and supervised, could offer opportunities for personal growth for at-risk youths. He operationalized the term "at-risk" as one who lacks the skills and values that help individuals to become functioning members of society and are prone to develop behavior problems that include substance abuse, delinquency, violence, and educational difficulties. Some developmental themes that influenced their lifestyle choices included a search for identity, a sense of autonomy, a sense of self-control, a sense of

accomplishment, and the development of strategies to reduce stress and peer pressure.

Many of these developmental problems that his at-risk population exhibited were a result of not living a responsible, health-enhancing lifestyle. Participation in his personal growth programs offered this "at-risk" population opportunities to change their behaviors and their lifestyle.

Collingwood (1997) stated that one way to address the problems of at-risk youths was through the application of a physical fitness program. The author suggested that such a program not only offers the obvious physical development benefits, but also helps to develop goal-setting and planning skills as well as increasing self-esteem and well being. The program must be properly developed in order to have these positive effects on the participants. Five factors must be addressed when designing the program: (a) the needs of the target population, (b) the program components, (c) leadership factors, (d) organizational factors, and (e) program delivery factors (Collingwood, 1997). After the program factors are addressed, administrators must address the program structure and implementation. These concerns included: (a) initial participant orientation, (b) participant incentives, (c) physical exercise activities, (d) fitness education sessions, and (e) interactions with participants (Collingwood, 1997).

Administrators have learned that sports can be used to build skills in non-sport settings. For example, Schmid (1996) detailed the *Ice Hockey In Harlem* program, which provided opportunities for inner-city youths to participate in ice hockey while gaining experience and learning life skills. The program was designed to teach the kids educational and social values. Older participants were required to assist with community

service projects, and all kids are required to attend a weekly class in which subjects like sportsmanship, teamwork, and reading are taught. If the youths missed the class, then they were not allowed to skate that week. The administrators of this program used hockey to teach life skills to at-risk youths.

Researchers have addressed this issue of personal growth and development of athletes by developing programs that focus on specific concerns. Danish and Nellen (1997) referred to these concerns as life skills, and the development of life skills through sport participation was their focus. They primarily discussed how sport professionals, particularly sport psychology consultants, could facilitate the transference of these skills from sport to other aspects of the lives of athletes. As professionals with the Life Skills Center at Virginia Commonwealth University, the authors have gained experience with these programs and have applied them to various populations, including at-risk youths. Their article discussed the implementation of different programs with the at-risk youth population (Danish & Nellen, 1997).

The first program was GOAL (Going for the Goal), which was "designed to teach adolescents a sense of personal control and confidence about their future so that they can make better decisions and ultimately become better citizens" (Danish & Nellen, 1997; p.103). The program included 10-sessions that were taught by high-school students to middle or junior high school students. The primary topic covered was goal setting, and relevant topics included: (a) learning how to set goals; (b) planning to attain goals; (c) overcoming roadblocks to goals; (d) getting help from others; and (e) identifying and building on personal strengths (Danish & Nellen, 1997). Results from the research on the

value of the program showed that it was well received by the students. Participants felt that they learned the information and were able to achieve their goals. Other findings included: (a) improved school attendance (as compared to a control group); (b) decreased violent behavior among male participants (as compared to a control group); and (c) reported feelings that the GOAL program was fun, useful, and important (Danish & Nellen, 1997).

The second program, named SUPER (Sports United to Promote Education and Recreation), was designed to teach participants the importance of physical and mental skills for sports and life, the importance of goal setting, and the importance of overcoming roadblocks (Danish & Nellen, 1997). College-level student-athletes taught this program to younger adolescents, which enabled established leaders to be role models and to allow those leaders to gain the benefits associated with helping younger students. Such benefits included an increased sense of power, control, and being needed. Essentially, this process facilitated the development of the leadership skills of those peer teachers, which helped them to facilitate goal attainment in others. The objectives of the SUPER program were to help youth participants to understand: (a) the meaning of competition in sport and life, and (b) that competition was useful when you competed against your potential rather than when you competed against other individuals. This focus enabled the participants to experience increased feelings of competence or "life wins" (Danish & Nellen, 1997).

These two programs were based on the assumption that participants could transfer sport skills to life settings and life skills could be transferred to sport settings. In order

for this transfer to occur, the participants had to understand that they were competent in skills that could be applied in various settings and situations. They also had to understand that their repertoires included both physical and psychological skills. Danish and Nellen (1997) suggested that many athletes failed to recognize: (a) the importance of psychological strength in the pursuit of athletic as well as life achievement, and (b) mental discipline allowed individuals to set and attain goals. They also suggested that leaders in these programs must be able to help participants to transfer those skills by providing information about a new setting, coaching the student through the process of implementing the skill, and helping them to see themselves as successful individuals and not just successful athletes (Danish & Nellen, 1997). With help from the leaders, participants in these programs could experience personal development through increased feelings of competence and competition that maximized their potential to achieve their goals (Danish & Nellen, 1997).

Although this literature indicated that these programming efforts showed positive results, none of the researchers could claim that their programs led to personal growth in the participants because none started with a definition of personal growth by the participants. In addition, none of the researchers determined from the participants whether or not personal growth occurred.

College Student Development

Because this study focuses on the perceptions of college student-athletes, it is important to demonstrate that individual development can occur for all students during their college years, and therefore can also occur for student-athletes. This section

describes the major theories of college student development.

Chickering (1969) viewed the development of individual identity as a primary issue for college students. Once students established their identities, they were better able to address other issues later in the developmental process. But, in order for the students to establish this identity, they must have first resolved preliminary issues. He referred to these issues as vectors of development, implying that each had direction and purpose, and he believed that students moved through these vectors at their own rate while they reexamined issues associated with vectors through which they had previously moved. Chickering (1969) suggested that the development of one's identity was an ongoing process.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) revised the original theory of psychosocial development, proposed by Chickering (1969), to include working through seven vectors. The first vector was *developing competence* (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), which meant that the students gained confidence in their ability to achieve goals and to cope effectively with problems along the way. Categories of this vector included intellectual, physical, and interpersonal competencies. The second vector was *managing emotions* (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), through which students developed the ability to recognize and appropriately express and control their emotions as well as to act on their feelings responsibly. The third vector was *moving through autonomy toward interdependence* (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), in which students became aware of their relationship to others as well as develop their independence. The fourth vector was *developing mature interpersonal relationships* (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), which involved the

development of the capacity for lasting, intimate relationships. It also involved gaining appreciation of interpersonal and intercultural differences. *Establishing identity* was the fifth vector (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). This identity involved such things as comfort with oneself and one's role and a secure sense of self, including self-esteem, self-acceptance, and personal stability. The sixth vector, *developing purpose* (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), consisted of the development of vocational goals, dedication to personal activities, and establishment of interpersonal commitments. The seventh vector, *developing integrity* (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), included three stages: (a) humanizing values, (b) personalizing values, and (c) developing congruence, in which values and behaviors become balanced. This theory of identity development was just one that suggested that students learned to establish themselves as individuals during their college years.

Based on his extensive experience in higher education, Astin (1984) developed his theory of student involvement. He believed that the extent to which college students developed as individuals was related to their level of involvement, which he defined as the amount of physical and psychological effort that the students gave to their college experience. Examples of involvement included spending time and energy on academics, participating in student organizations, and interacting with faculty and peers. Astin (1984) explained his theory in terms of five postulates:

1. Involvement referred to the investment of physical and psychological effort.
2. Involvement occurred along a continuum. Some students were more involved than others.
3. Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features.
4. The amount of student development is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement.

5. The effectiveness of any educational practice is directly related to the capacity of that practice to increase student involvement.
(Astin, 1984; p.298)

In this theory emphasis was placed upon the behaviors of the students rather than the programs offered by the institutions. Students were required to take an active role in their development by expending effort and motivation to participate in student life. Astin (1984) described specific changes that occurred in students who participated in various activities, but the general conclusion was that the greater the students' involvement in college, the greater the amount of learning and personal development.

King (1990) stated that student development was understood best from a cognitive-developmental perspective, which held three assumptions. First it assumed that individuals create personal meanings of their experiences from their own explanations and interpretations of their experiences. In terms of student development, this assumption meant that these individuals have different experiences and these experiences impact the students individually depending on their interpretation of the experience. The second assumption was that cognitive structures changed or evolved over time, with earlier structures providing a foundation for later structures (King, 1990). As they matured between their freshman and senior years, students' perspectives became more complex and complete. In addition to gaining new knowledge throughout their college years, they learned to think more effectively and on more levels of awareness and understanding. The third assumption was that development occurred through interaction with the environment (King, 1990). The rate and quality of change fluctuated depending on the students' type of environment and the amount of stimulation they perceived.

More recently, Consolvo, Seville, and Ogrosky (1997) developed a professional development program that provided experiences for college students to gain competence in various areas. This program was designed to help students to understand the connection between the skills learned in college and the skills necessary for success outside of college. The program consisted of five competency areas: (a) communication skills; (b) leadership skills; (c) career development; (d) ethical/personal development; and (e) lifestyle development (Consolvo et al., 1997). Evaluation of the program was accomplished through focus groups and an inventory that assessed the students' abilities in the five competence areas.

The goal of this program was to allow students the opportunity to take an active role in their preparation for life after college. The five competency areas were addressed through various programs and services offered on the university campus. Participation in this program helped the students to build a strong foundation for leadership positions, become better candidates for jobs or graduate schools, and increase self-confidence and personal growth (Consolvo et al., 1997).

The literature in this section provides evidence that college students grow and develop in different ways through various activities during their college years. Knowing that these students can develop as individuals provides a foundation from which to demonstrate that student-athletes can grow and develop as individuals as well.

Student-Athlete Development

Student-athletes are a unique subset of the general college population. It is therefore necessary to more fully investigate the ways in which student-athletes develop

through their college years. It is also necessary to understand the challenges facing this population that may influence their development. Understanding this information will illustrate the aspects of their development in greater detail and provide insight about the obstacles in their developmental process.

The effect of sport participation on the college student is a controversial topic. More administrators and researchers have investigated this issue in terms of the development of these student-athletes. Sowa and Gressard (1983) studied the differences between athletes and non-athletes on the achievement of developmental tasks. Seventy-five students were randomly selected from both athletes and non-athletes, and these students were mailed the *Student Developmental Task Inventory*. This instrument measured the development of autonomy, purpose, and mature interpersonal relationships. It also provided scores on subscales, which included emotional autonomy, interdependence, educational plans, instrumental autonomy, career plans, relationships with peers, tolerance, and lifestyle plans.

Multivariate analysis of variance was used to compare athletes to non-athletes and males to females. Significant differences were found between athletes and non-athletes on three subscales: (a) educational plans; (b) career plans; and (c) relationships with peers (Sowa & Gressard, 1983). These results found that athletes scored lower than non-athletes on these subscales. No significant differences were found between males and females. These findings suggested that athletes had difficulty formulating well-defined plans for educational and career success. Many athletes also had difficulty developing mature relationships with peers, but the authors suggested that this finding might have

been a function of the instrument (Sowa & Gressard, 1983). Recommendations for future work with this population included helping these students to learn to plan for their futures and promoting the importance of education for career success.

Ryan (1989) examined the role of sport participation on the affective development of student-athletes. Specifically he examined their development in four areas: (a) satisfaction with college; (b) motivation to finish the bachelor's degree; (c) interpersonal skills; and (d) leadership abilities. A representative sample of college freshmen (N=11,862) was surveyed by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program. A follow-up survey was mailed to each of these individuals four years later. The four criterion variables were scored using a 5-point Likert scale.

Multiple regression analyses showed that athletic participation was associated with overall satisfaction with the college experience, motivation to finish the bachelor's degree, and the development of interpersonal and leadership skills (Ryan, 1989). These results suggested that involvement in athletics was a positive experience for the athletes and this involvement offered benefits to the athletes in terms of their personal development (Ryan, 1989).

Parham (1993) discussed his thoughts regarding the development of collegiate student-athletes. Based on his years of experience working with the college student population, he found that all students face certain developmental issues. These concerns included: (a) developing academic, social, and interpersonal competencies; (b) solidifying their identities as individuals; (c) creating and maintaining interpersonal relationships; (d) learning behaviors that are consistent with their emerging moral values

and beliefs; and (e) forming career goals (Parham, 1993).

Even though student-athletes faced similar developmental concerns as regular students during their college years, student-athletes had special challenges. These challenges included: (a) balancing academic and athletic responsibilities; (b) coping with isolation from mainstream activities; (c) managing success or failure; (d) attending to physical health to minimize injury and rehabilitation; (e) satisfying relationships with coaches, parents, friends, and community; and (f) coping with the termination of their athletic careers (Parham, 1993).

Because this population faced these special challenges, these student-athletes were more at risk for developing mental health problems. Parham (1993) proposed that universities employ the services of counseling psychologists to effectively meet the mental health needs of this population. These trained professionals have acquired skills that enable them to help the student-athletes to cope with each of their unique challenges and to develop more balanced lifestyles that facilitate individual development.

The literature in this section demonstrated that student-athletes have the opportunities during college to develop in several ways, including academically and socially, despite their unique challenges. Participating in collegiate athletics was beneficial for some student-athletes because that participation afforded them special challenges and opportunities that other students lacked, and these opportunities enabled the student-athletes to gain experience in a wider variety of settings and situations.

Collegiate Responsibilities to Student-Athletes

One of the purposes of the present study was to determine how personal growth

experiences in sport impact athletes in non-sport settings. In the previous sections the development of college students and, more specifically, college student athletes has been reviewed. It is necessary to identify the views of college athletics administrators toward the student-athlete.

Chelladurai and Danylchuk (1984) investigated the perceptions of athletic administrators regarding the goals of their athletic programs and the role of intercollegiate athletics in general. These goals were not official goals, they were operative goals. This term referred to the actual goals of the organization that were guided by the actual operating procedures regardless of the official goals. In order to determine these perceptions, 120 administrators, including athletic directors, assistant athletic directors, and appropriate deans and directors, from each of the 44 institutions in the Canadian Intercollegiate Athletic Union were surveyed using the *Scale of Athletic Priorities*.

The researchers found that the administrators rated athletes' personal growth as one of the most important objectives (Chelladurai & Danylchuk, 1984). Other objectives, like transmission of culture, public relations, and prestige, ranked equally high in the perceptions of athletic administrators (Chelladurai & Danylchuk, 1984). This high ranking of personal growth was held regardless of the sport promoted. Unfortunately the instrument used in the study did not allow the administrators to elaborate on their perceptions. Instead they had to abide by the researchers definitions of the nine objectives. Athletes' personal growth was defined as "to promote the athlete's personal growth and health (physical, mental, and emotional)" (Chelladurai & Danylchuk, 1984; p.34). This definition did not clearly state the exact meaning of personal growth.

Onifade (1993) conducted a similar study in Nigeria, investigating the perceptions of athletic administrators of four Nigerian universities regarding their operative goals. The findings again revealed that athletes' personal growth ranked highly in order of importance for those administrators (Onifade, 1993). Again, though, personal growth was not defined with any detail. Nor did the instrument allow for elaboration of administrators' perceptions about the meaning of personal growth.

These articles indicate that sport administrators are concerned with the growth of their student-athletes while those students are enrolled in school. But the institution should also help to prepare the athletes for graduation and possible retirement from sport participation, perhaps due to injury, financial hardship, or academic reasons.

Thomas and Ermler (1988) discussed the obligations that institutions should assume in order to make the transition from sport to outside life smoother. The authors stated that the athletic administrators and institutions in general have the obligation to allow the athletes to develop life skills, such as autonomous decision-making and social skills. These skills can help the athletes when they retire, either voluntarily or involuntarily, from their protected sport world.

Thomas and Ermler (1988) believed that the institutions held the power in their relationship with the athletes. This power, or strong paternalism, worked to keep the athletes safe and uninjured. But what they were also doing was creating individuals who were dependent upon others to help them to get through daily living. Collegiate athletes were pampered and coddled, and this treatment left them without the basic skills necessary for coping with life, like effective communication skills and reading or writing.

Because they had this power, it was the institution's obligation to teach the athletes to be autonomous. Many of these athletes were focused on living up to the demands of the institution, and they failed to look into the future to see what might lie at the end of their athletic careers. Many of them built their identities around their athletic status with their self-esteem linked to their athletic performance. But many of these gifted athletes lacked other skills that can lead to success in non-sport settings. Education was designed to develop self-understanding, critical thinking, and decision-making so that the individuals could become fully functioning members of society. Athletics were designed to teach the lessons of life, including leadership, handling pressure, and decision-making skills; however, in most educational-athletic settings these lessons are restricted to on-the-field athletic experiences (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). Often it was the coaches who restricted the athletes because they believed that their experience and knowledge gave them the wisdom to know what was best for them. Most of what was done for the athletes included preventing injury and fostering physical development, but little was done for fostering social, psychological, or emotional development.

In order to make a successful transition from sport to non-sport life, athletes must develop life skills, like verbal communication, critical thinking, decision making, independence, social interaction skills, and self-understanding (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). These skills should ideally be learned in college. Because the athletes were so focused on their athletic lives and may have lacked the insight to see the end of their careers, it was up to the institution to help develop these skills. Protection during the collegiate experience only fostered dependence on others. Suggestions for developing life skills

included: (a) advocating adherence to academic and behavioral standards, (b) offering career counseling and academic tutoring, and (c) discouraging drug use and antisocial behavior (Thomas & Ermler, 1988).

Efforts to Address the Needs of Student-Athletes

Administrators have proposed programs for student-athletes with regard to their academic, athletic, and social needs. Many of these programs have been created to help the student-athletes to develop in some or all of these areas. Some of these programs have been created as a means of helping student-athletes to experience personal growth. However, the creators of these programs have failed to define personal growth. So it is important to review the literature on these programs to determine the types of experiences that are designed to facilitate personal growth as well as to determine how personal growth is operationalized by these program administrators.

Cooker and Caffey (1984) were concerned about student-athletes with regard to their personal development, including both affective and cognitive domains. They believed that university athletes were faced with unique pressures that included high academic and athletic performance standards as well as social demands from their high visibility. They also claimed that both cognitive and affective domains must be developed in order for the athletes to maximize their potential. They believed that the role of intercollegiate athletics was to enhance the personal development of the athletes, including self-concept and opportunities for peak competitive experiences. The purpose of their study was to investigate the application of group counseling on the self-esteem, athletic attitude, and reading skills on intercollegiate athletes.

Cooker and Caffey (1984) used forty-three male football players as the subject pool. These student-athletes volunteered to participate, and were randomly assigned to one of the three groups: (a) reading program and group counseling; (b) reading program only; or (c) control group. Prior to the study, each subject completed the instrumentation, which included the *Test for Self-Esteem* and the *History of Brazil* reading test. The *Coaches' Perceptions of Athletes' Attitudes* was completed by the coaching staff. After the ten-week treatment, subjects were given a posttest with the same instruments, and the coaching staff rated all subjects after spring practice. All measures were analyzed using ANCOVA with the pretest scores serving as the covariates in each analysis.

Results of the study showed that group counseling had no significant effect on the attitude of athletes (Cooker & Caffey, 1984). However, qualitative narratives of the statements made by the athletes after group counseling sessions did show a positive effect in terms of solving problems, building interpersonal relationships, and expressing feelings (Cooker & Caffey, 1984). Confounding effects may have occurred in the timing of the study and potential treatment loss between session and player/coach interaction. There were also no significant changes in self-esteem due to participation in the group counseling (Cooker & Caffey, 1984).

Collegiate sport administrators have attempted to meet the needs of their student-athletes by employing professionals who were sensitive to the problems facing this population. Chartrand and Lent (1987) described two concerns that were unique to student-athletes: (a) role conflict between being a student and an athlete in a university setting, and (b) distress over the end of their intercollegiate athletic career and the need to

adopt new life and career goals. A problem with this group was that a large portion of their identity revolved around their athletic status. Thus, when encouraged to pursue academic or career goals, the athletes resisted because they were committed to their sport and their identity.

In order to help these individuals to effectively handle their concerns, trained professionals must be employed. Chartrand and Lent (1987) suggested that these professionals, whether they were sport psychologists or counselors, should incorporate an educational-developmental framework. This perspective focused on the individual as a whole person rather than as just an athlete. It also focused on the changing needs of the individual over time and in different settings. The professional's role in this framework was to teach the athletes skills and behaviors that helped them to solve problems in areas inside and outside of athletics. The goal of this educational-developmental approach to counseling student-athletes was to facilitate personal growth and well-being by: (a) encouraging athletes to accept responsibility for goal setting and problem solving, (b) focusing on the potential strengths of the athletes, and (c) promoting cooperation between the athletes and the administrators (Chartrand & Lent, 1987).

Concern for the development of student-athletes has grown due to the increasing challenges facing them in their athletic and academic careers. Jordan and Denson (1990) detailed a program that they developed at the University of Delaware, Newark. *Student Services for Athletes (SSA)* was designed to help student-athletes to utilize more resources available to them so that they could develop the necessary skills to succeed both in and out of college. The program focused on four areas. The first area, academic monitoring,

helped to ensure that student-athletes were properly registered for classes and were performing well enough to make progress toward their degrees. Plans were also developed to help these individuals to meet their academic goals. The second area, consultation services with the university community, focused on increasing communication between the student-athletes and the faculty, coaches, and athletic administrators to ensure that the athletes were assuming responsibility for their behaviors within the university system. The third area, personal counseling, facilitated the delivery of counseling services to student-athletes. This assistance allowed athletes to obtain counseling with issues that were not necessarily related to university life (Jordan & Denson, (1990).

The fourth area of focus of the *SSA* included workshops and special outreach programs. Jordan and Denson (1990) developed programs to assist student-athletes with four challenges that face most student-athletes. These programs covered such issues as: (a) successful transitions from high school to college and from college to the real world, (b) career development concerns such as academic major exploration and job search skills, (c) time management and study skills, and (d) stress reduction and relaxation strategies and training.

Program leaders emphasized that all skills learned in athletics were transferable to academics and other areas. Coordinators helped the student-athletes to develop persistence, self-discipline, and leadership so that they may succeed on and off the athletic field. Research on the *SSA* program indicated that more student-athletes, coaches, and staff members participated each year (Jordan & Denson, 1990). Positive

reports from the participants attested to the benefits of the program, and the athletic department supported it by increasing staff resources.

Researchers from various universities have become interested in the overall development of athletes as individuals. Danish, Petipas, and Hale (1993) examined the importance of sport in society and their effects on the development of identity and personal competence of athletes. They described their program as Life Development Intervention (Danish, Petipas, & Hale, 1993), which took a psycho-educational stance rather than a clinical stance toward intervention and training in athletic settings. By taking this stance, the researchers assumed that the skills learned in sports could be transferred to other settings, including academic and business settings. They also believed that sports played a large role in the development of one's identity and sense of personal competence, and positive sport programs must therefore be designed for the purpose of facilitating positive experiences and positive feelings.

The Life Development Intervention program (Danish, Petipas, & Hale, 1993) was designed to teach athletes how to effectively cope with critical life events. Examples of these events, from an athletic standpoint, included: (a) making the transition to higher levels of competition; (b) being injured; (c) changing the team composition due to graduation; (d) changing coaches; (e) retiring from sport due to being cut, graduating, or injury; (f) failing to make the starting team; and (g) failing to recover from an injury by the expected date (Danish, Petipas, & Hale, 1993). These events may lead to problems for the athlete, little or no change, or they may lead to personal growth opportunities. The athletes' reactions to such events depended on their past experience with similar

events, their personal resources prior to the events, and their level of preparation prior to the events. The goal of the LDI program was to optimize personal competence by teaching athletes life skills that enabled them to deal with these critical life events more constructively (Danish, Petipas, & Hale, 1993).

Danish et al. (1993) defined personal competence as the ability to successfully do life planning, become self-reliant, and utilize resources. Competence also extended into the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, which meant that the athletes must learn to effectively communicate with others as well as to develop both physical and psychological skills that help them to optimize their performance both in and out of the athletic domain. These skills were the life skills on which the LDI program focused (Danish et al., 1993).

The NCAA Foundation developed the CHAMPS (Challenging Athletes' Minds for Personal Success) program in 1994-95 to promote the welfare of student-athletes. The goal was to address the academic, athletic, and emotional needs of the student-athlete population by creating a comprehensive personal development program (NCAA, 1995). This program focused on five areas that the designers believed were critical for the individual development of the student-athletes. These areas included: (a) academic development; (b) athletic development; (c) career development; (d) personal development; and (e) community service (NCAA, 1995).

The literature in this section represented the breadth of research on personal growth in sport and the means through which it was facilitated. Unfortunately none of the program administrators defined personal growth from the perspective of the student-

athlete. Subsequently, these administrators could not confidently state that their programs facilitated personal growth in the student-athlete population. Correcting this problem is one of the purposes of this study.

Summary

Sport participation in college has both positive and negative aspects. It has been associated with increased satisfaction and motivation to finish the bachelors degree (Ryan, 1989), a high perceived quality of life (Jones, 1996), and the development of social character (Rudd, 1998). But with their demanding athletic requirements, in addition to their existing academic responsibilities, opportunities for student-athletes to develop identities outside of sport and academics are limited. Research has indicated that student-athletes have difficulty formulating effective educational and career goals and developing mature interpersonal relationships (Sowa & Gressard, 1983).

Research on personal growth in sport is limited, and researchers investigating personal growth have each defined the term differently. Some have defined personal growth generally as maximizing personal capabilities (Ryckman & Hamel, 1995), while others have defined the term more specifically. These definitions have included overcoming fears (Thomas, 1978), reducing anxiety and depression (Wankel & Berger, 1990), and learning new skills that expanded personal capabilities (Kimiecik & Jackson, 1994; Czikszenmihalyi, 1997). Only one study defined personal growth in sport as a multi-faceted concept. The researchers in this study (Udry et al., 1997) defined personal growth as gaining perspective, developing aspects of personality, developing aspects of life outside of sport, and learning better time management.

Despite the numerous definitions of personal growth, sport administrators have developed programs that are designed to facilitate personal growth in athletes. These programs have included outdoor adventure activities (Jensen & Young, 1981), individual and group counseling (Cooker & Caffey, 1984; Chartrand & Lent, 1987; McClure et al., 1988; McClure & Foster, 1991), and life skills programs (NCAA, 1995; Danish & Nellen, 1997). However, since personal growth has not been operationally defined and no researcher has investigated the types of activities or experiences that athletes perceive as growth experiences, it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of these programs in facilitating personal growth in athletes.

Individual development occurs during college (King, 1990; Chickering & Reisser, 1993) and researchers (Consolvo Seville & Ogrosky, 1997) have implemented programs to facilitate this development in college students. College student-athletes face unique challenges (Parham, 1993), making it difficult for them to participate in these developmental programs. Due to the rigorous athletic and academic demands placed upon student-athletes, college administrators need to accept the responsibility of helping these individuals to develop as fully functioning individuals. Many administrators and researchers have implemented programs specifically designed to meet the developmental needs of student-athletes (Jordan & Denson, 1990; Danish, Petipas & Hale, 1993; NCAA, 1995). These programs were created to facilitate the growth of student-athletes, but the researchers and administrators have failed to determine the student-athletes' perceptions of growth prior to implementing these programs.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purposes of this study were: (a) to determine student-athletes' perceptions of personal growth; (b) to determine the characteristics of personal growth experiences of student-athletes; and (c) to determine the impact of in-sport growth experiences on out-of-sport lives of student-athletes. The following sections include separate descriptions of: (a) rationale for qualitative research; (b) identification of participants; (c) preliminary tasks; (d) data collection; and (e) data analysis.

Rationale for Qualitative Methodology

Experience is a personal, individual phenomenon and is thus perceived subjectively. Perception of an experience depends upon an individual's background and perspective so that the individual determines the meaning of the event; an individual may also experience similar events differently. For example, a golfer may have a five-foot putt on the last hole of a tournament. He may experience this situation differently if he needs to make the putt to win the tournament than if he has a six-shot lead. From an objective standpoint the putt in each situation is the same task, but the change in context may result in a change in the individual's perception of the experience. To more fully understand the personal element of an event, researchers must employ qualitative methods.

Revealing the essence of a subjective phenomenon requires the use of qualitative methods, which attempt to uncover the mysteries of individual perceptions. Objective, quantitative methods are not as effective because they typically test larger populations in

order to generalize results. Qualitative methods investigate the qualities and essence of the perceptions of individuals in order to determine patterns among their perceptions (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992). The findings of qualitative studies can uncover in-depth meanings of a phenomenon and can lead to new research questions as well as the clarification of complex phenomena.

Qualitative methods used in sport psychology can assist applied professionals by increasing their understanding of various phenomena experienced by athletes. Streaan (1998) stated that qualitative approaches in sport psychology could produce understandable and credible findings that benefit sport participants, coaches, and administrators. Streaan (1998) suggested that these findings are beneficial because the athletes can relate to the findings in ways that allow them to transfer the results across settings and to make connections to their own circumstances and performances. Because the goal of this study was to examine individuals' perceptions of a phenomenon, it was best to employ a qualitative methodology that allowed the participants to describe their perceptions in their own words.

Selection of the Participants

In an attempt to obtain participants with a variety of demographic backgrounds and competitive sport experiences, student-athletes were randomly selected from sports offered through the athletic departments of four southeastern schools. To begin to accurately depict the perceptions of personal growth of the collegiate student-athlete population, athletes were selected from both individual and team sports. The participants in this study included five individual-sport athletes and three team-sport athletes.

Participants included athletes in basketball, football, golf, tennis, track, and cross-country running. All participants were Caucasian male, upperclass, collegiate student-athletes who had participated in NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletics for a minimum of three years. Consent to interview the student-athletes was obtained from the athletic director (Appendix A) and respective coaches (Appendix B). Upon approval from these administrators, the researcher randomly selected and subsequently contacted the athletes to participate in the study. Participants were asked to read and sign a statement of informed consent (Appendix C) prior to the study.

Preliminary Tasks

It is difficult to understand qualitative research without doing it. Active participation in qualitative research increases the probability of grasping the basic concepts of the purpose and the process. Prior to beginning the study, I engaged in activities that facilitated learning about the qualitative research process.

Pilot Testing

Because little research existed on the topic of personal growth in sport, a pilot study was a necessary step in the research. Pilot testing was used to enable me to develop appropriate skills that promoted, rather than discouraged, discourse by the participant. It also allowed me to gain knowledge and understanding on this particular topic. The pilot study aided in the development of the research questions and facilitated the refinement of the interviewing techniques and the discussion guide (Appendix D) used to obtain and examine each participant's experiences.

The pilot process examined the personal growth experiences of a competitive

student-athlete. This interview lasted approximately 60 minutes during which the participant responded to questions about his personal experiences. Upon completion of the interview, the audiotape was transcribed. A second interview allowed the participant to read his transcript and clarify ambiguous information. The participant also provided feedback regarding the discussion questions and the interview process.

In addition to the pilot interview, I conducted practice interviews with several student-athletes. These interviews lasted approximately 40-60 minutes during which the participants responded to questions regarding their personal experiences. These interviews were audiotaped but not transcribed. Instead I listened to the audiotapes several times for the purpose of further refining my interviewing techniques, including listening, understanding, and probing.

Bias Exploration

Another step in this qualitative research process was epoche, a phase in which the researcher becomes aware of or gains clarity about personal biases (Patton, 1990). Katz (1987) defined epoche as:

a process that the researcher engages in to remove, or at least become aware of, prejudices, viewpoints or assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation. *Epoche* helps enable the researcher to investigate the phenomenon from a fresh and open view point without prejudgement or imposing meaning too soon. This suspension of judgement is critical in phenomenological investigation and requires the setting aside of the researchers personal viewpoint in order to see the experience for itself. (pp. 36-37)

With regard to the present study, this step was taken to try to minimize the influence of my personal biases on the data collection. If I was not aware of my own feelings about the topic under investigation, then I may have subconsciously imposed meaning to the

data or led the data collection process in the direction that I felt it should go.

Prior to conducting interviews with the participants, an experienced qualitative interviewer conducted a bracketing interview with me to reveal my assumptions and biases. This interview helped me to clarify my own perceptions of personal growth with regard to what it means and how it has influenced my life.

The findings from this interview suggested that I believed that personal growth was a positive change that occurred from a negative sport experience. I recalled memories of personal accomplishment as well as personal failure, and I felt that I learned the importance of academics and social and parental support from those experiences. I expected the student-athletes to experience personal challenges that forced them to reflect on their past behaviors and perceptions in order to make positive adjustments in their overall perspective of sport and their interpersonal relationships.

From my bracketing interview I became more aware of my biases. This awareness helped me avoid compromising the integrity of the data collection and to exercise caution when asking questions of the participants and when probing for more detailed information. I was conscious of the questions that I asked, I tried not to lead the participants toward my own answers, and I made sure that I did not make known my beliefs about the topic during the interviews. This process also helped me to avoid compromising the integrity of the data analysis. I was aware of my assumptions while I read the interview transcripts, and I made sure that I did not read the transcripts in search of data that supported my own beliefs. Instead, I allowed the themes to emerge from the responses of the participants.

The Qualitative Research Interview Process

Interviewing is the process of interacting with another, primarily by asking questions. This method is used to gather descriptive data in the words of the participant so that the qualitative researcher can develop insights on how participants interpret some piece of the world (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992). The essence of the qualitative interview is to establish human-to-human interaction with the respondent with the goal of understanding rather than explaining (Fontana & Frey, 1994). The qualitative interview format is designed to result in a conversation, not a question and answer session, with the purpose of obtaining a first-person description of an experience. The role of the interviewer is to provide a context in which respondents freely describe their experiences in detail (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989).

Data Collection

To fully investigate the meaning of personal growth and the characteristics of personal growth experiences of student-athletes, in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews were used as the primary means of data collection. This method involved the use of an interview guide (Appendix D), a series of pre-set questions that I wanted to ask. These questions were open-ended and allowed the participants to answer in their own words and to lead that part of the interview in the direction that they wanted to go. With these interviews, I was more likely to have a consistent approach for all participants because each participant answered similar questions, albeit in their own words.

After gaining consent from the athletic administrators and coaches, I contacted randomly selected student-athletes via telephone to determine their interest in

participating in this study. I arranged mutually- convenient times with interested individuals to conduct interviews. Prior to the interview I informed the participants that the interviews were to be recorded and that they were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. Each participant read and signed a statement of informed consent (Appendix C) and selected a pseudonym by which they were identified for use during the interview. Participants selected pseudonyms of professional athletes in their respective sports. Participants were assured that all information regarding this investigation was confidential.

I conducted interviews that were audio recorded to ensure accuracy and to allow for evaluation of validity. Each participant was interviewed on two occasions, with each session lasting from 30 to 70 minutes. During these sessions I also answered the participants' questions regarding the nature of the study in order to alleviate their apprehensions.

The purpose of the initial interview was to gather information regarding the participants' perceptions of the meaning of personal growth and the characteristics of their personal growth experiences. Participants were asked about their various experiences throughout their collegiate athletic careers according to the discussion guide (Appendix D) and were asked to elaborate on the ideas that they presented. I audiotaped and transcribed these interviews and summarized my thoughts about their content for discussion with the participants.

I conducted follow-up interviews with each participant to allow them to have the opportunity to review their transcripts, to make corrections, and to clarify any ambiguous

information. During this interview I also shared my summary of the initial interview with the participants, and I encouraged feedback from the participants regarding the content analysis. This step, respondent validation, helped to ensure that what was stated during the initial interview accurately depicted that participant's thoughts. This step was the first in the validation process, which helped to provide assurance of data precision. At the conclusion of the second interview, I debriefed each participant with regard to the purpose of the study, confidentiality, and the use of the interviews in the final manuscript. All interview sessions were conducted in a professional manner that provided and protected confidentiality. The audiotapes were kept in a locked file until the completion of the study, at which time they were erased.

Data Analysis

The primary purpose of the analysis was to identify common themes across the transcripts. Interpreting the interview transcripts involved reliance on the descriptions and terms of the respondents. This interpretation did not incorporate hypotheses, inferences, opinions, or conjectures that exceeded the evidence provided by the transcripts. The goal of the interpretation was to understand the meaning of the experience and to describe common patterns or themes that emerged from the given set of experiences. Denzin (1989) described the steps involved with qualitative data analysis:

1. Locate within the personal experience, or self-story, key phrases and statements that speak directly to the phenomenon in question.
2. Interpret the meanings of these phrases, as an informed reader.
3. Obtain the subjects' interpretations of these phrases, if possible.
4. Inspect these meanings for what they reveal about the essential, recurring features of the phenomenon being studied.
5. Offer a tentative statement, or definition, of the phenomenon in terms of the essential recurring features identified in step 4. (pp. 55-56)

I audiotaped and transcribed the interviews and then examined them for errors, read them several times for content, and analyzed them for emerging themes. As suggested by Rubin and Rubin (1995), the participants' responses were coded into categories of similar ideas or concepts.

To effectively evaluate my interpretation of the text, I employed an interpretive group that was comprised of one professor and three doctoral students with experience in qualitative research. The group members received copies of the transcripts approximately two weeks prior to the meeting to give them sufficient time to read them and make comments. During the meeting I offered my thoughts on potential themes that I saw in the data. The group members confirmed my ideas and presented additional ideas, as well. After this exchange of ideas, I became aware of other information, relationships, and possible themes present in the data.

This group provided me with several advantages in conducting the interpretation. First, the research group helped to minimize the influence of my biases on the results by offering a fresh perspective of the data that may have been absent had I been the only person interpreting the transcripts. Second, the group was helpful in easing the burden of large volumes of data. A group is better able to remember more information from the transcripts than one person is. Third, the group provided me with immediate feedback by agreeing or disagreeing with proposed interpretations.

Using this research group was the second step in the validation process. Thematic validation involved the use of a qualitative research group who interpreted the information from the transcripts to determine emerging themes. I shared and discussed

my thematic structure of the data with the research group members. The group members then discussed their perceptions of the themes, and these discussions were compared within the group. I followed-up this meeting by reviewing my own analysis and the comments and recommendations of the group. With consideration of this review, I reread the transcripts and analyzed them again. I then shared this analysis with the group members. This follow-up led to the finalized thematic structure of the data.

Presentation of Results

The following sections are presented in the same sequence in which personal growth occurs. The characteristics of the growth experiences are presented first. Chapters six and seven discuss the meaning of personal growth. Chapter six describes the definition of personal growth and chapter seven discusses the process of personal growth. Chapter eight illustrates the impact of the student-athletes' sport-related growth experiences on non-sport aspects of their lives.

CHAPTER 4

THE PLAYERS

To fully understand the perceptions of the participants, it is necessary to gain understanding of the backgrounds of each participant so that their responses can be viewed in the context of their own worlds. The following sections introduce the players, both collectively and individually.

Group Description

The participants in this study included eight male, junior and senior student-athletes from four NCAA Division-I colleges in the Southeast region of the United States. Three of the colleges were small schools while one was a large university. The participants were randomly selected from the team rosters of a variety of sports from schools with varying sizes of athletic programs in order to obtain a representative sample of athletes and sport experiences. Participants included 2 golfers, 2 football players, 1 tennis player, 1 basketball player, 1 cross-country runner, and 1 decathlete. In order to preserve their identities and the identities of the colleges for which they played, pseudonyms were used instead of their real names. The pseudonyms selected by the players included *Nicklaus*, *Hogan*, *Bannister*, *Jenner*, *McEnroe*, *Jordan*, *Bradshaw*, and *L.T.*

All of the participants were Caucasian. Five were reared in the Southeast and three were reared in the Western region of the United States. Six held senior academic status and two held junior academic status. These student-athletes were not expected to be spokesmen for their sport, team, or college. The purpose was to determine their

perceptions and experiences as they pertained to personal growth with no emphasis on determining cultural, demographic, or sport differences.

The players all competed for NCAA Division-I intercollegiate athletic programs, but their athletic experiences varied. Six of the players competed on nationally ranked teams, and two competed on conference championship teams. Four of the players were team captains while two were walk-ons. One participant transferred from another school. All were starters on their respective teams at the time of the interviews.

Individual Player Descriptions

The following section provides some insight to the backgrounds of the individual student-athletes. These descriptions are presented alphabetically by pseudonym.

Bannister

Bannister was a senior cross-country runner at a large Division I college with a good cross-country running program and a strong cross-country tradition. He was a strong runner out of high school and was a starter throughout his college career. He earned his spot as team leader during his senior year. Bannister experienced a shock when he came to college because he was not immediately the best runner on the team.

I just felt like I came in here with a lot of confidence and I was thinking things would come easy to me, things would just fall into place. And from day one, I learned that wasn't the case. Every guy that comes here is in the same situation that I was in. Everyone was the best guy in their state, or whatever area.
(Bannister)

Bannister was a very competitive individual, and he felt like he needed to be the best at everything he tried. He had intentions of running part-time after graduation while also working part-time. By doing so he would follow in his older brother's footsteps.

Bannister also spoke about his long-term career goals, which involved television broadcasting rather than running professionally.

Bradshaw

Bradshaw was a senior at a large Division I university with a very strong football program and a rich football tradition. He was a walk-on player on his football team during his freshman year. He originally began playing on the team to fill a back-up position, but he eventually earned a spot in the starting line-up for a different position, a position for which he volunteered because he enjoyed doing it. He seemed to enjoy the relationships he established through his football experiences because he spoke often about how great it was to feel like part of a team. During his college football career he experienced more success than failure, but he never had any illusions of playing professional football because he always had another career goal in mind. In fact, football was not one of his priorities when he came to college. Bradshaw stated that, "coming up here my freshman year, it took me a good semester to learn how to put sports up there in the top. . . one of the top priorities of my college career."

Bradshaw had strong religious beliefs and enjoyed working with children in his free time. He was very personable, spoke confidently, and was quick to smile and add humor to his thoughts.

Hogan

Hogan was a fifth year senior at a large Division I school that had a mediocre golf program. He was red-shirted his freshman year but became a team leader in golf during his fourth and fifth years. He did not have any individual tournament wins during his college career, although he was a consistent performer. Hogan felt that his lack of

success was a sign that he should pursue career goals that were not related to professional golf. He was quite thankful for the opportunities that were presented to him through college golf, including traveling, paid tuition, and meeting people.

Well, you know, I just love playing golf and I've been playing it almost since I could walk and I just realize that I get some of my college tuition paid for. I get up and I get to go play golf all afternoon and I know there's tons of people out there that they'd give anything to be able to go play golf every afternoon and I just look at it that way. For me, really, why I'm in school, that's definitely to get a good education. I mean, playing golf, I have the best time in the world. And golf has enabled me to meet a lot of people while I'm here in school and while I'm traveling to a bunch of different places and seeing a lot of things I otherwise wouldn't have been able to do. (Hogan)

Hogan was very personable although at times he had trouble expressing himself. He was excited about graduation, and he said that he was considering graduate school in the future.

Jenner

Jenner was a senior decathlete at a large Division I school with an above-average track & field program. He enjoyed participating in college sports, and this competitive participation was important to him. Athletically he experienced both individual and team success during his college career, but his coaches and teammates influenced him by increasing his desire to become a well-rounded person.

I was so focused on trying to be this great person in track that school fell short and the coach said to me after he received the grades he said 'To have the whole package you have to have a sound mind and a sound body.' To me, that really hit home. (Jenner)

This influence, along with his competitive experiences, encouraged him to do more than just athletics. He had personal goals that did not involve professional sports.

... I'm not going to be doing this forever and I want to be a lot more than just a collegiate athlete. I want to have a job, have a career, have a family, and not be so one-dimensional, not just think about myself. (Jenner)

He took his academics very seriously as well as his relationships with others. At the time of the interview, Jenner was a very confident person with solid plans for his future.

Jordan

Jordan was a junior basketball player at a small Division I-AA school with a below-average basketball program. He walked-on the team out of high school and was a second-string player during his freshman and sophomore years. He had strong religious beliefs and felt that his involvement in sport would strengthen those beliefs.

As for me, I'm a Christian, and I look at trials and tribulations. I guess that's a different way than some non-Christians. When I go through things, I kind of look through what God would teach me and how he's gonna use these tough situations to help me serve him better later on. (Jordan)

Jordan believed that he was never really challenged athletically until he came to college.

On the team he felt like he was second-best because he did not believe that he had the natural ability that the other players had.

I feel that way a lot. Throughout this year and other years because I'm not a very good shot in basketball and I'm not very strong and I'm not terribly athletic. The only thing I can do is just, you know, I play hard and I just try to do the best I can with what I have. And I look at my teammates and I just see how much better athletes they are than I am. (Jordan)

Overall, Jordan had not had much success in basketball during his college career, and he had not made career goals in professional basketball.

L.T.

L.T. was a junior football player at a small Division I-AA school with a good football program and an excellent academic reputation. He was red-shirted his freshman year. He was a back-up during his sophomore year and then earned a starting position when the first-string player was injured during his junior year. During his junior year he

earned All-Conference honors. His college coaches and teammates influenced his beliefs regarding the nature of the game, and those beliefs reflected the values that he learned through his involvement with the program.

I know, its like. . . its so not a game. I mean you can take everything that you learn from it and apply it to any aspect of life. I didn't really realize that in high school . . . I don't really think I played football in high school. There wasn't much coaching there. It was more like recess or something. Things or values that come along from playing football, and the things you learn about loyalty, about loving the guys you play with, stuff like that. That's what I think comes from football, I guess sports in general, but especially in football . . . it's sort of a microcosm of things in general. (L.T.)

He had an intense love and respect for the game, and he felt that he would not be the person he was if he had not played football. L.T. had not made any definite career plans; he was more excited about the rest of his college career.

McEnroe

McEnroe was a fifth year senior tennis player on a strong team at a large Division I school. He was red-shirted during his junior year due to injury. He was a top-level performer out of high school and was a starter throughout his college career. Competition was a large part of his life and he felt like he competed in everything he did.

I just hate losing at things. I hate doing bad at things. I mean, I think most people. . . I think a lot of people that aren't in athletics are the same way. But I think when you get to guys or girls who are pretty good at their sport, then I think that its even more. (McEnroe)

He experienced more success than failure during his college tennis career, and the coaches left many matches up to him, often placing him in the final, deciding match of an event. Despite his success in college tennis, McEnroe felt that his chances of playing professionally were slim due to his injuries.

Nicklaus

Nicklaus was a senior at a small Division I-AA school that had a strong golf tradition. He chose golf because of its challenging, individual nature.

I grew up playing basketball and baseball and lots of team sports like . . . that I had some success in. But I don't find it as . . . I mean, I don't find it as challenging as an individual sport because like . . . when you're playing golf, it's you and it doesn't matter what you shot, you shot it and there's no excuses. You can't blame it on someone else that you messed up. But I enjoy the individual sports a lot more. But I think that's why I chose golf. (Nicklaus)

He earned a spot on the traveling squad his freshman year and became a team leader during his junior and senior years. He had a respectable career through his college years, with one individual victory and several team wins. He also had many strong performances in amateur tournaments during the summers. These personal successes encouraged him to pursue his goal of playing professional golf after graduation.

Overall Nicklaus was very friendly, although somewhat reserved, and he seemed to value the relationships he built through his involvement in golf. He was excited about the challenges that await him, and he had a positive outlook for his future in the sport.

CHAPTER 5

CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONAL GROWTH EXPERIENCES

One purpose of this study was to determine the characteristics of those experiences that the athletes perceived to be personal growth experiences. Although each student-athlete had different perceptions about their different experiences, all had similar types of experiences that they believed contributed to their personal growth during their college years. These categories of experiences included: (a) success and hardship; (b) interaction with others; and (c) event-related emotions.

Success and Hardship

When describing the experiences that they perceived to be contributors to their personal growth, the players described both positive and negative experiences. Analysis of these two types of experiences indicated that the players experienced success and hardship. The successes that the players described primarily involved achievement, which occurred through hard work and effort. These achievements included both winning as an individual and as a team as well as accomplishing personal goals. The hardships that the players experienced involved injuries and losses.

Success

The successes that the participants described all occurred through effort. None of the players mentioned any successes that came easy to them. In fact, it seemed as though the challenge made the success or reward meaningful. Their success assumed many forms according to the participants, who referred to it in terms of individual achievement

and team achievement. The student-athletes had successes that they attributed to their own effort as well as to the combined effort of everyone on the team.

The individual successes that the participants experienced primarily included reaching personal goals. Nicklaus described his first golf tournament victory as an attained goal, one that he had been striving for throughout his college career. He believed that this victory increased his confidence in his abilities and influenced his perspective on golf and his future.

I think it's the time when I won a college tournament. And it was a pretty good field there for the tournaments we played in. And I parred the last hole to get into a playoff and I didn't know. And it was two of us and I birdied the second playoff hole. I think winning that combined with some other successes our team had that year – it was the same year our team went out west. I think that made me realize that maybe I could pursue golf a little harder, maybe to work a little harder, and to achieve bigger goals. I knew that I could play with anybody out there, it was just a matter of time. And each year I've kind of looked to improve a little more on the last year. I wasn't that good as a junior golfer growing up, I mean I did lots of other sports and golf wasn't my main focus. When I went to college I wanted to improve each year. I felt like when I won the tournament like it was a hump that I made it over. It was a goal of mine to win a college tournament. And it gave me confidence and I did start to play better after that . . . I felt more comfortable out there. Instead of going out there saying, "I might win the tournament," I went into the rest of the year – the rest of my career playing golf – that every tournament I play in I want to win. (Nicklaus)

Jenner described his achievements, which included a very strong finish at the track and field conference championships and the attainment of a very high grade point average for the semester, both of which were personal goals.

It's just, ah, after the achievements I accomplished last spring, I just sort of . . . Looking back on why I had the success and how it worked for me and knowing that it was going to work for me and knowing that if I wasn't going to continue to grow, then I was just going to remain mediocre and unsatisfied . . . (Jenner)

Some accomplishments were not explicitly defined through rewards like recognition of performance in specific events. Some achievements were strictly personal.

Nicklaus explained that just making the traveling squad was a personal achievement that required consistent effort each year.

I didn't know if I was going to make the top five traveling first team. I didn't even know if I was going to make the team since everyone had to try out and they took the top five for twelve rounds of try-outs before the first tournament. And then we went on from there. So, I went in with the attitude knowing that no one really knew who I was, which I didn't mind. And I just went in there and played as hard as I could, and I made it to the top five in each . . . I could tell each year through the qualifying stages that I had to go through for four years, like each approach was a little different. The first year I went in there and no one knew who I was and I wasn't expected to do anything. Then the more I got into my junior and senior year, like . . . everyone in qualifying knew who I was. And I was playing pretty good, but it was expected, whereas, in the beginning, it was not expected. And I kind of liked the challenge of going in there knowing that I had to . . . that even though I played for three years, my senior year I knew I had to go in there and play good to make the traveling team. (Nicklaus)

Bradshaw experienced achievement similar to Nicklaus'. It involved earning a spot in the starting line-up through persistence and hard work during his first two years as a walk-on and third-string football player.

And for me, it worked out great. I came in here my freshman year and didn't do anything. I dressed out for three or four games. Didn't get to do anything big. You know, I had a great time being part of a team but still, you sit there and look and you go "Man, I want to do something." You know, "I don't really feel like I'm a part of this. Yeah, I'm a part of practice, but I'm not really a part of this." So the next year I got to do a little bit more and then by my third year, you know, I was out there on the field every game, holding and doing all this and . . . So learning that hard work is definitely something that pays off was big for me . . . I'd say, well I didn't see it really until spring of my sophomore year when I stepped in a position, a position that I had worked for a year and a half just doing because I wanted to do it in practice. You know, it's not a position where your name's in the paper all the time. It's not a position where . . . it's pretty much one of those positions where if your name's in the paper you've done something wrong. But it was one of those things that I enjoyed doing. You know, I was still running some quarterback stuff through my first two years but I knew with people like Joe Quarterback and Bill Quarterback around not to expect too much. And so I just wanted to help out and be a part of it any way I could. And so, come spring of my sophomore year, it was when I kind of slipped into the position and I realized, "Man, you know, this is worth it." You know, it's been worth the last year and a half of working my butt off and perfecting this. (Bradshaw)

Bradshaw did not necessarily receive any accolades for his performance or his starting position on the team. His achievement, like Nicklaus', was strictly a personal achievement of making the team.

In college sports the student-athletes competed on teams, and although many of these sports were individual in nature, all athletes competed to win team events. So many of the successes, as well as hardships, occurred in a team setting. The team achievements were those that the participants thought required a team effort rather than the effort of just the one individual. However, these collective achievements also contributed to the personal growth of the players. Hogan described how his team rose to the challenge of difficult playing conditions and high-pressure circumstances to qualify for the national championship golf tournament.

Just because I guess it was a few years ago when the NCAAs were in City X at a well-known golf course and we were . . . and I'm from City X so I thought, you know, we were playing in the qualifying tournament and there were 21 teams and 11 qualified. Like they have the East Region, the Central Region, and the West Region. Like eleven teams from each region will qualify. Nine from the Central, and 10 from the West. And I was thinking we were . . . and these are like the top teams from the region that are at this tournament. And you know, I was just nervous because I thought that would be the greatest thing in the world to be able to go play in the NCAA Championship in my hometown. You know, we were in like 7th place or 8th place. I think we were like, we were really close to the cut and there were a bunch of teams right around the cut. You know, there were like five or six teams that were like sort of, that were broken away a bit and had some distance between a pretty big pack of teams right around, you know, they were like maybe 8th place through 13th place were all really close together. You know, so we're going to the last round and it was rainy and we ended up having a rain delay. So I was sitting around thinking about, you know, if we get out there, you know, the opportunity that's there to play well in order to help the team, you know, make the NCAAs. And making to the NCAAs is the ultimate goal. But then to also be able to play in City X in my hometown and close to the university would be a big thrill. And that was just, we ended up making it in that day. And the conditions were real hard that day and we all played pretty good and you know it ended up being a lot of fun because we made it. (Hogan)

Nicklaus also experienced achievement with his team. This achievement occurred as a result of his teammates pushing each other to improve each day. Continuous competition within the team forced each player to strive to improve, which led to team improvement.

I guess it was 1997 and we were playing in the regional qualifying tournament to get into the NCAA tournament. And we were probably the 7th or 8th best school out of twenty teams there. And it was the best region in the Country for golf in our division. And we went in there, and I think we won by like thirty shots. And that was probably the best college experience that we've ever had. I didn't play well that last day, but it didn't matter because we were a team and we did it as a team, we accomplished it as a team. (Nicklaus)

L.T. spoke about the success of his team in the conference championship football game.

And we came out and . . . it was the best game City College has ever had. We won the league championship and sent the seniors out with a championship ring. I thought it was great. Its like, one of the best memories I have. (L.T.)

Hardship

In their descriptions of their personal growth experiences, the players did not describe only positive experiences. The negative experiences were equally as common as the positive experiences. The players did not characterize these negative experiences as failures. Instead they described them as tough times that they faced. These hardships included injury and defeat, and both forms of hardship led to personal growth in the players. McEnroe stated, "I think one of the reasons personal growth has happened to me through sports is through injuries." He described his perception of adversity through injury, which he experienced twice during his college career. Both injuries occurred during competition. His first injury not only impeded his ability to perform but it jeopardized his collegiate athletic career as well.

I destroyed my back, pretty much and I was out for a year where I couldn't do anything. And for a stretch of a couple months, I couldn't sit down, basically. I had to stand up in classes, when eating. I had to stand up on plane trips and I kept

playing, which was a mistake, for a while. And then it just got worse and worse until I couldn't do anything for almost a year. (McEnroe)

His second injury was less severe, but it also impaired his ability to compete. This injury also hurt his ranking and jeopardized his position in the starting line-up.

I was ranked high in singles and doubles and was ranked very high in the nation in doubles collegiately and then I fell on my right wrist and I'm right handed. (McEnroe)

Bradshaw supported this belief that injury leads to personal growth by describing an experience that made him examine his priorities and the importance of football in his life.

I had to have knee surgery and it was one of those things that when they went in they weren't sure exactly what was going to happen. They weren't sure . . . they knew it was torn cartilage but they thought it was ACL as well. And knowing that, that's gonna put me out for a good four months, take me out of spring practice, out of all the summer workouts, and that sort of stuff, then I'd still be rehabing into the fall when we're starting the season up. (Bradshaw)

Another type of hardship experienced by some of the players was defeat, which occurred in both team and individual settings. Bradshaw stated that repeated losses to a particular college team forced him and his teammates to grow. These losses occurred near the beginning of the football season each year, which put pressure on the team to perform flawlessly for the remainder of each season. So these losses were "gut checks" for him and his teammates that taught them how to handle tough losses.

We learned how to lose the first three years I was here, you know, against Rival College pretty well. And learning how to take that and not let it defeat you, not let it ruin the rest of your season. I think we realized that. My freshmen year when I was here we got beat by Rival College and we thought, "This is the end of our season." You know, so everybody kind of let up, and kind of let the season slip out from under us. And we go and get beat by City College. Ends up, Rival College loses and we would have been right up there, you know, stepped in front of them and things like that. And I think after that year, everybody on the team learned, you know, listen, it's never over. Next year came along, and we go out and we get beat by Rival College again, but we still have a good season. And we go to the bowl game and we ended up ranked really highly in the nation at post season. So we did a little better that year. We still lost two games but that's OK.

And then come my third year, we get beat by Rival College but we bust our butts and we say "OK, this isn't gonna end us." And what do you know, Rival College gets beat twice and we end up conference champions and we have a shot at playing for the national championship down at the bowl game. (Bradshaw)

McEnroe described a difficult personal loss on the tennis court that led to his team's defeat. If he had won, his team would have won. The pressure was on him for his team's record, and he was only a freshman.

My freshman year we played . . . we were undefeated and ranked high in the country and we were playing one of the top teams in the country. And it came down to my match. And I lost 7-5 in the 3rd. And that was our first loss of the year and that kind of, I mean, it hurt me really bad but I'll never forget, I mean, it's still the hardest match I probably ever lost. (McEnroe)

Nicklaus experienced a loss to an established player in a head-to-head competition. It was an opportunity to compete against one of the top players in the city in one of the toughest tournaments of the year.

And I think when I lost in the finals of the City Amateur to D.P., and, I mean no one really knew who I was, really, around the city. And I played well . . . I played very good actually and lost . . . but I've had plenty of times like that. (Nicklaus)

Bannister experienced a tough loss, from his perspective, at the conference championship cross-country race. He finished in second place, but he believed that he could have easily won. Reflecting on the race he felt that he did not run the last mile as well as he could have and that his lack of effort at the critical point in the race cost him the championship.

Like at the conference meet, I got second to that guy. I was going into the race, I wasn't thinking I was going to win it. I was just thinking, you know, just give yourself a chance to be in the hunt with the last mile to go to try and win it. I mean, that's pretty much what I did the whole race. I was right there with the pack, with all the State College guys. Then with like a mile to go, the Australian guy moved. And afterwards I think I was kind of complacent or kind of content, just because, you know, I was 2nd at the conference meet. (Bannister)

Another form of hardship involved an experience that was common among the players. This experience was becoming a bench warmer in college after being a starter in high school. Although this experience was common among the players, one player did not adequately deal with this experience very well. Jordan faced the hardship of his own reality when he became a member of his college basketball team. After being a consistent starter and solid performer in high school, he unexpectedly became a bench warmer on his college team – a team on which he thought he would start. His reality was that he was not as good of a basketball player as he believed he was.

I never rode the bench in high school and I never knew what that was like. And then I come to college and everybody . . . I acted important, which I wasn't. Everybody was more athletically inclined than me and, you know, I had to learn how to deal with being second-best on some things. And learn how to work in that situation . . . I feel that way a lot. Throughout this year and other years because I'm not a very good shot in basketball and I'm not very strong and I'm not terribly athletic. The only thing I can do is just, you know, I play hard and I just try to do the best I can with what I have. And I look at my teammates and I just see how much better athletes they are than I am. (Jordan)

Interaction with Others

The second type of experience that contributed to the players' personal growth was their interaction with others. Their descriptions included both positive and negative interactions with their teammates, coaches, and opponents.

Interaction with Teammates

Bradshaw described his experience with his team in general. He felt that just being a member of the team forced him to grow socially.

I guess another thing, in general, learning to deal with different types of people. Different attitudes, you know, you're on the team with 150 guys, all playing football, and you've got 150 different attitudes. And learning to feel out what a person is like and how you need to react to them to keep everybody in harmony was big for me. Being on special teams it was, you know, we had a smaller group that was a little bit tighter, but still everybody had their own personality and if you

weren't careful you could cross people and form a bad relationship there. And so I think one of the biggest things for me has been learning to deal with different people. (Bradshaw)

The majority of personal growth that occurred through this interaction occurred as a result of team unity. Nicklaus explained that daily interaction and competition with his team resulted in his growth as a player.

I think as I got older through my college career that the team that I was associated with became really, really close. We did everything together, we all lived . . . like all of the golfers lived somewhat together in different groups. But I did notice a big change, from when I was a freshman and didn't know anybody, to how we grew together. And all of us became friends and played golf everyday . . . since we were together all the time and we were all about equal in ability, I think we pushed ourselves to get better and better. Our coach didn't . . . we didn't have set practices or anything, but since all of us played everyday, we had little side matches you get. And you don't want to lose to your buddy and have to pay him five bucks or anything. But, I think that really, really helped us get a lot better . . . and a lot closer. (Nicklaus)

L.T. described the feeling of team unity that he got from playing football with his teammates and that he felt very close to all of his teammates.

It's a feeling of, you know, me personally . . . and I guess . . . me and everyone else on the team. Just being able to go out with literally your best friends in the world and play the greatest game in the world. Being able to go out with people that you would do anything for . . . it's like a war, you know. You go out with your best friends and you don't know if you're coming back. You look right and look left and see your brothers just going out to play ball. It's awesome, I love it. I love working towards a goal with people that I know are working as hard as I am, you know. Like, in our program, people . . . you know . . . when people slack, the team suffers. If you see someone slacking, you're like, "Pick it up, man. You can work harder than that." And I think when I get out of school and we all go our separate ways, I'm definitely going to . . . I'll see someone that's on my team 25 years later, and I'll be like, "What's up, man?!" I know it will be like that. I guarantee it. Because when you go through, like, misery with people, when you go through shit with people, it forces you to grow closer to them. I mean I consider everyone on my team to be my brother. (L.T.)

Bradshaw also believed that this same feeling of brotherhood within his football team resulted in his personal growth.

It's almost just like brotherhood. I mean it's a whole bunch of guys out there that are all fighting for the same purpose. And, you know, you get down there, you get dirty, you do the dirty work together, you know, you go out, you practice, and you do the stuff that the fans that come out on Saturday don't see. You know, you work your tail off and there's just that bond. You see each other walking around campus and you know you just have that bond. You know, you're out there doing the same thing every day. And you can look at each other . . . and just by looking at each other you know that's one of my buddies. And it just forms that brotherhood bond. That's just a great feeling. (Bradshaw)

In addition to general interaction with teammates, several players grew through their interaction with team leaders. Some grew as leaders while others grew from the influence of other leaders. McEnroe described an experience in which he assumed a leadership role at a critical period during the season.

I guess, let's see, what match was that? Oh yeah, we were playing Other State College, and we had a little lull in our season and it was a really big match for us and it was supposed to be a really close match. And I called a players-only meeting and talked for about 15 minutes, and then we all talked for a little bit longer. And then we went out, and I think they were ranked one spot above us, and we destroyed them. So I guess that's one that stands out in my mind. (McEnroe)

During this meeting, team growth was cited as a factor in their successes. McEnroe explained "how we worked harder and how we've grown as a team, how we got closer as a team, and how we need to go ahead and gel and win this match." His interaction involved taking a leadership role, and this role combined with his participation as a team member helped him to grow individually. Bannister supported this notion of growing through leadership. He explained that his role on the team as a leader included being a mediator between his coach and his teammates.

When guys are put in situations where they have to run fast and they have to do this, and they feel so much pressure from the coach, then I think it can almost be a bad thing. So my job is to kind of put his words or his passion about running into something they can understand, in a way they can understand how important it was that it did put pressure on them but you know it was kind of a good pressure. Like, "If you do this, we could do big things and it's going to feel really good.

And it's a big deal." I try to get them to realize that it's a big deal. "If you win this meet, people care about this. It's not like high school and it's not like other colleges where they don't care if they win this meet. But it's a big deal at this university." It was a neat thing because they gave me a chance to try and test out my ability to influence people and see if I could change the way people think and help motivate them. It was a good test for me. (Bannister)

These players grew through their experiences as team leaders. L.T. stated that his growth occurred as a result of his interaction with his team leaders. His experience with these leaders influenced his perceptions of the importance of the team leaders as well as his views about football.

Well, the way they led . . . it was just obvious to everyone else on the team that they cared what happened to everyone. You know, its not just about them, its not about like . . . I don't know if you've ever heard the saying "Win it for the seniors." You know, and they weren't about that. They weren't like, "Win it for us, we're going out and we gotta have a good season." They were just like, "You know what. I love playing with you guys. I have fun playing with you guys. We work our fucking asses off all the time. We're just going to go out there and fucking play ball together and have fun." I mean, it was so fun playing this year, it was so fun. I couldn't imagine having more fun. I mean every week was the same thing. Friday night before the game in the hotel, where ever it is, the whole team would get together for a team meeting. And the captains would get up and talk. And every week it would be, like, more reinforcement about what I was saying. It would just remind you every week about how lucky we are to be able to play with each other, and how lucky we are to just . . . being together and playing ball. They just never let us forget, just like the coaches. It was like the coaches, then the captains, then the players. They never let us forget how lucky we were to be able to play with each other. It just reinforces everything that I've learned since I've been in college. (L.T.)

Interaction with Coaches

Despite individual differences in coaching philosophies and styles, coaches had a very strong influence on the development of the players. The players described various interactions with their coaches as growth experiences. L.T. described a significant experience with a new coach and how this coach helped him to grow.

So this guy comes in . . . after two weeks of summer camp . . . God, he just loved to yell at me everyday at practice . . . like I couldn't do anything right. Like, I'd

screw up in the beginning of the week . . . I'd screw up and then he'd yell at me, he'd be on me like that [snapping his fingers]. Everything I did, like I couldn't take a step without him just screaming at me. And I was thinking more about him than thinking about what I should have been, like my responsibilities on the field. He was always right in my ear. Like, I'd take a step, "L.T., what are you doing?!" He was like my nemesis, man. I'd go home at night and lay in my bed and I'd be so frustrated. I'd never been that frustrated in my life and I'd go home at night. . . I'd just feel like I wanted to kill somebody I was so frustrated. Because I wanted to do what he wanted me to do so bad but I couldn't do it because I was thinking so much about him screaming at me that I wasn't even thinking about what I had to do. I'd go in and talk to this older linebacker and he would tell me "Man, just relax. You're too uptight on the field. You can't play when you're uptight like that." So I'd go out there towards the end of camp and I started picking it up and the coach was still . . . he was on me more than ever and I started thinking about it. "Why has this guy got it in for me?" I didn't know why. I thought he just didn't like me or something, so I started thinking that if he wasn't yelling at me then I'd be worse off. So I was thinking, this guy's probably in my ass . . . because I haven't done anything to him . . . so he didn't have any reason not to like me. But I was thinking to myself he was probably doing it, he was probably on my ass so hard because he thinks I can be a better player than I am right now. And it turned out that's exactly what it was. He turned out to be, without a doubt, my favorite coach. (L.T.)

Jenner had a significant interaction with a coach whose focus was not based solely on athletics. The coach exerted his influence in order to help Jenner to develop in both athletics and academics.

I didn't have this whole package together because I was so focused on trying to be this great person in track that school fell short. And the coach said to me after he received the grades he said "To have the whole package you have to have a sound mind and a sound body." To me, that really hit home. (Jenner)

Bradshaw supported this notion of coaches influencing players, but his interaction was an example of non-interaction while he was just a walk-on football player.

We have one coach that's just, like, he couldn't give a flying flip about walk-ons. And you cross his path and he's like, "Oh, you're just in the way." And, you know, I kind of saw it when I was here in my first two years, but now that I've been playing, it's kind of different. Now I can look back and watch how he is toward the new walk-ons, and stuff like that, and I guess . . . I don't know . . . things like that can really make you boil if you aren't careful and can really get you irritated . . . So, it's easy to have a negative attitude towards him and it's been

tough to teach myself not to, I guess I would say, if that's the way to put it . . . because, he's got his great sides, too. (Bradshaw)

Interaction with Opponents

Just as their interactions with teammates and coaches led to personal growth for the players, their interactions with opponents also led to personal growth. None of the players described positive interactions with their opponents, but not all descriptions were negative. Some interactions with opponents were not interpersonal interactions. Instead the opponents were just one piece of the total context of the experience and that influenced the way in which the players perceived the experience.

McEnroe saw his interactions with different types of opponents as lessons of how not to behave.

And when you play different schools you always play, you know . . . you play some really nice guys and you play some really bad guys. And I think that all will help you to relate to different people that, you know, you might get along with or you might not. You still can relate, I mean, you can still get along with them. (McEnroe)

Jordan had two significant interactions with opponents, and his were more physical in nature. The first one he viewed as the wrong way to handle a confrontation during a game.

As I was saying about picking your battles on the court . . . I had a battle with this one guy, had my focus on this one guy, you know, over something, one play that he did to me. I lost focus on what I needed to do for the team, what I needed to do to remain focused. (Jordan)

Jordan stated that he became upset with himself because he let somebody else affect his focus and this influence hurt his performance, which also hurt his team's performance. The second incident was an example of an occurrence in which he felt that he handled himself properly, according to his personal beliefs.

Like, you could throw an elbow at somebody, get in a fight, or whatever. You know, and that happened to me this year. This guy, I'm not gonna say the school, but, he got a rebound and I grabbed it from him and he grabbed me and threw me down and, you know, I just got up and I, like, helped him up, actually, after he threw me down. (Jordan)

In this second instance, Jordan maintained his focus. He did not allow his opponent to divert his attention from his performance tasks. In addition to maintaining his competitive focus, Jordan also acted in accordance with his personal beliefs. He believed that anger and violence toward other people was wrong. Reacting as he did to the overly physical play of his opponent showed Jordan that he was living in accordance with God's wishes.

Not all interactions with opponents were confrontational in nature, though.

Bannister described a competitive experience with another runner that helped him to change his mental approach to competition.

I was right there with the pack, with all the State College guys. Then with like a mile to go, the Australian guy moved. And afterwards I think I was kind of complacent or kind of content, just because, you know, I was 2nd at the conference meet. But thinking back, afterwards, I was thinking that maybe if I had just made one move on him, I could've broken him. Just maybe, you know, 800 meters before he moved, if I would've just moved on him, then he wouldn't have moved and I could've gapped him a little bit and it would've been over. (Bannister)

After this race Bannister began to mentally assert himself. He approached subsequent races with a stronger belief that he was a tough competitor and that he could dictate and win big races. His interaction was just competing with his opponent and comparing his running ability with his opponent's without actual interpersonal contact.

Nicklaus had a similar experience with an established opponent that helped him to develop and improve as a player. The setting was informal, but he perceived it as a formal opportunity to test himself.

J.W. came out to our course one day and I got paired with him. And I was like, "He won the State Open twice, so I want to play as good as I can just to beat him." And I played well, I might have beat him. (Nicklaus)

Like Bannister's experience with his opponent, Nicklaus' experience was more of an interaction of his ability with his opponent's ability, rather than interpersonal interaction.

Event-Related Emotions

The third type of experience that the participants believed contributed to their personal growth involved feeling emotion. As a result of certain events, whether they involved competition, the transition from high school to college, interactions with others, or just a gradual build-up of emotions related to an event, the players felt strong responses to those events. Whether the emotions were positive or negative, experiencing these feelings led to personal growth. Hogan described a time when he experienced anger on the golf course during a tournament.

I can think of a couple times when in the first couple years where I just got real angry with myself. Because it's easy, I think, especially in golf to get so angry at something that you, that you . . . like you know . . . you hit a bad shot. You know, it's easy to slam a club down or whatever. And I think for the most part I never . . . I've been able to stay real calm. On the golf course I've never really gotten, I mean . . . there's been occasions that, where I just got real angry with myself and show a lot of emotion. And I think . . . one time I just wasn't playing well and things weren't going my way and all these things just kept building up and you just want to vent it out. And I just got angry and I just slammed the club down and kicked my bag. And just looking back on that after the round and just thinking "That didn't help me at all". You know, it just made things worse. (Hogan)

L.T. described his feelings of frustration during a summer practice when a coach was being really tough on him.

I'd go home at night and lay in my bed and I'd be so frustrated. I'd never been that frustrated in my life and I'd go home at night . . . I'd just feel like I wanted to kill somebody I was so frustrated. Because I wanted to do what he wanted me to do so bad, but I couldn't do it because I was thinking so much about him screaming at me that I wasn't even thinking about what I had to do. (L.T.)

Several of the players described experiences in which they felt humbled, and this feeling helped them to see themselves in the bigger picture. McEnroe described how he felt when he first came into college and competed against seasoned collegiate players.

I mean, obviously you have the top of every sport that comes in and they compete and they do really good right off the bat. And then I think you have the next tier that comes in and gets humbled a little bit because they were the best and now they're just, you know, good or average at the collegiate level. And, so yeah, I think you do get humbled a little bit . . . It helped humble me in my freshman year, when I was losing, when I was real competitive and I was losing.
(McEnroe)

He continued by stating that the humbling losses that he experienced in competition showed him that he had room for growth as a player. Bannister had a similar experience when he first came to college and realized that he was not the best athlete. Seeing pictures of past runners and their accomplishments in the athletic complex and competing against his teammates, who were every bit as fast as he was, he said,

There's so many people here and so many good athletes here when I first got here and that have been here in the past. And it's like, "How can I live up to that and be as good as they were" and "How am I ever going to be this good?" Or "How am I ever going to know this many people?" (Bannister)

He stated that "I think it taught me to be a little bit more humble, to be patient"

(Bannister). Bradshaw's experience was not associated with a particular event. His experience of humility came from playing his position on the team, which is more of a supporting role than a headliner.

And, you know, it's the kicker's name and it's kicker's this and that so definitely it's been humbling. It's taught me a whole lot of humility just going out there and doing something, literally, for the team. You know, not doing it for your own good or glory. And that's something I don't think you can learn a better lesson than that. Just what it feels like to truly go out and do something for a team.
(Bradshaw)

Jordan discussed his transition from high school to college basketball as a discouraging experience. He went from a starter in high school to a bench warmer in college, and this transition affected his attitude.

And then I get here and I start playing with some of these guys and I realized how much better they are than I am. And at first I was just kind of discouraged because I couldn't do . . . some of it was . . . in my mind, I think that, at least back then I did, I thought that I was a better player than I really was. (Jordan)

After making the team his first year, Jordan stated that he still felt discouraged during that year because he realized that he was not as good as he originally thought. During a team meeting at the end of the season he became aware of his poor attitude.

I think our last game, coach was talking to us in a meeting and he was telling us about what he expected of us next year. And I realized that I had been discouraged somewhat that year just because I felt like, just because I was getting beaten around a lot and I couldn't do that much about it. (Jordan)

This meeting was a turning point for Jordan because he knew that to make the starting line-up, he needed to change his attitude toward basketball. Bannister faced a similar experience when he faced teammates and competitors who were faster than he was. He did not feel discouraged, though. Instead, he felt intimidated.

When I first got here, and . . . in the sport of running you kind of know your competitors and know who they are. And I would know, like uh, all the guys in the conference and the guys in the country who are really good and running really fast times. And I would always look up to them when I would go to meets. I would read about them in magazines and see them in publications about track and running. And I would see them and just put them up on a pedestal. You know, it was like, if I was in a race, I would have this mentality like, you know . . . I didn't belong running with this guy. This is the guy I look up to, that I read about. (Bannister)

Bannister also believed that he felt intimidated by runners who had a reputation for being fast. He described his perceptions of foreign runners and how their reputation for speed affected his performance.

I'll admit there are times when I'm intimidated, but I try to hide it or block it out. Like we were running against State College, and they have the best team in the nation. Probably in the history of any sport in the NCAA, State College has probably won more national titles than anybody. And then they've got a bunch of foreign guys running for them. For some reason I've got this thing with foreigners. I figure if they import a guy to come in here from like Ireland or Africa or from somewhere, then he's got to be the shit. I just figure, you know, if this guy is coming all the way over from his homeland to this country, he's got to be good. And, I mean, Americans aren't the best at distance running. They are definitely sub-par when it comes to the rest of the world, you know. And so I have this intimidation factor with foreigners. I'm so intimidated by them that . . . if the guy is foreign, then he's got to be tougher. (Bannister)

Disappointment was another emotion discussed by the players. Jenner recalled a competition in which he performed below his expectations by not running as fast as he could have. He stated ". . . you realize that at the end of the race you realize that you could have run faster and it's disappointing." Jenner finished the race adequately, but not performing up to his level of ability was difficult for him to accept. In that same competition, Jenner also felt embarrassed about his overall performance.

I didn't finish up that well in the overall standings and realized that I'm far better than that. That competition really sticks out in my mind. It made me want to focus on the weaker events that I had and push me even more. I was in a comfort zone in some events and I really needed to raise that ceiling to get better in those events. So it was embarrassing to have that kind of showing. (Jenner)

The reason that he performed so poorly throughout this competition was due to unresolved personal issues. With these issues dominating his thoughts, he became complacent about the meet. He stated, "I got in the comfort zone, I didn't take it out fast enough and you have to ignore those comfort zones sometimes" (Jenner).

Bannister also described a significant competition in which his complacency caused him to feel disappointed in his performance. He had a chance to win the conference meet, but he did not step up his effort when he needed to. Bannister described his feelings after the race, "I think I was kind of complacent or kind of content, just

because, you know, I was second at the conference meet.” He ran one of the best races of his college career, but his attitude at the critical point in the race prevented him from winning. But not all emotions were negative. Nicklaus discussed the success that he had through his collegiate career and how he felt as a result of those successes. He stated “And maybe the little success that I had made me a little inspired to work harder for the future” (Nicklaus). He felt inspired by his successes rather than discouraged.

Despite the similarity of the three types of experiences described by the players, the effects of these experiences were different. The players may have gone through similar experiences, like successes or interactions with others, but the effects of those experiences on the players were different. The players may have perceived their personal experiences as different from everyone else. Many of the players went through the same type of experience, like making the transition from high school to college. But each of them perceived that transition in their own way, making that experience meaningful or not meaningful to different players. The players did not necessarily grow in the same ways from similar experiences. Each gained something different from each experience.

Summary

The players described three types of experiences as examples of personal growth experiences. The first type of experience involved both positive and negative consequences of participation in competitive athletics, success and hardship. Player successes included achieving personal goals as well as both individual and team victories. Specific successes included earning a position in the starting line-up, finishing strong in big competitions, and qualifying for national competitions. The players described their successes as the consequence of hard work and effort, and they spoke about these

experiences proudly. Hardships included personal troubles, such as injuries and both individual and team losses. Specific losses included a deciding match, a close race in a big event, and an annual loss to the same team. These losses were significant because their outcomes affected the remainder of the players' competitive seasons.

The second type of growth experience was interaction with others. These interactions were both positive and negative and involved teammates, coaches, and opponents. As teammates, several of the players believed that being a member of a cohesive team on which they felt a sense of unity or brotherhood led to their growth while others believed that they grew by following or by being a team leader. Interactions with coaches were typically negative at first for the players because they felt intimidated by their coaches. But these interactions became positive after the players reflected on the coaches' motives and realized that they were trying to help. Meaningful interactions with opponents occurred at critical as well as ordinary times, such as the final stages of a big race or during a friendly round of golf. Some interactions with opponents were meaningful because of the outcome of the competitive experience while other interactions were meaningful because of the interpersonal connection between the players and their opponents. Several interactions occurred with opponents who exhibited poor sportsmanship. Each of these three types of interactions occurred through the normal course of participation in college athletics.

The third type of experience involved feeling event-related emotions. These emotions were those that were elicited by specific events in the athletic lives of the players. Emotions included anger, frustration, disappointment, humility, discouragement, and intimidation. The events that elicited these emotions were ordinary, but the players

described their frame of mind as unusual. Many players stated that their perceptions of themselves and/or their environment at the time of their experiences were atypical.

CHAPTER 6

THE MEANING OF PERSONAL GROWTH

The second purpose of this study was to determine the meaning of personal growth from the student-athletes' perspectives. When defining personal growth from their perspective, several of the players hovered around the concept of maturity. Many of them included this concept in their definition while others alluded to it in their descriptions of their personal growth experiences. When asked about his definition of personal growth, Hogan stated "I guess the one word that pops in my head is just maturity." L.T. also believed that maturity was synonymous with personal growth. He stated that "personal growth to me would be, not so much like changing your personality, more like growing and maturing as a person." Nicklaus supported this notion of maturity by stating "I think it's how you mature, I think its personal growth . . . the way you mature as you get older is personal growth to me."

In the players' definitions and descriptions of development and personal growth or the process of maturing or the process of maturation, two themes arose that characterized the players' perceptions of personal growth. The first theme was achieving balance. This theme included balancing: (a) priorities; (b) emotions; (c) perspectives; and (d) responsibilities. The second theme was expanding capabilities. This expansion included improvement of: (a) athletic skills, and (b) interpersonal skills.

Achieving Balance

The players stated that they were able to achieve balance in the four areas by

learning to handle themselves and deal with and gain control of specific aspects of their lives.

Balancing Priorities

*Personal growth is . . . learning what things are important to you . . .
what things are worth. -Bradshaw*

Through their experiences during college, many of the players learned how to prioritize their interests and duties. For those who had intentions of pursuing a career in professional sport, maximizing their practice and playing time was important. For those who chose to pursue career interests that did not involve professional sports, academic performance was most important. In either case, the players decided what was most important and then expended their energies in that direction.

After competing against top players in the region and the country, Hogan realized that his chances of having a successful career in professional golf were extremely slim. So he turned his efforts toward his academic performance, knowing that graduating with a strong grade point average was his best bet for landing a good job after college.

Because for me, you know, I'm not going to be able to make a living playing golf so it's something . . . I got to take care of my academics in order to have a job when I graduate. It just made me realize what the most important thing is. For me, really, while I'm in school, that's definitely to get a good education. I mean, playing golf, I have the best time in the world. And golf has enabled me to meet a lot of people while I'm here in school and while I'm traveling to a bunch of different places and seeing a lot of things I otherwise wouldn't have been able to do. I think when I first got to school I was just away from home and out of high school. You're getting to do something you really love to do. A lot of times you forget . . . I mean don't forget so that you let school get to the back of your mind by thinking about other things. Just realizing how important school is. (Hogan)

McEnroe also put academics as his top priority for college after his first major injury. When he began college, he was one of the top players in the country, and he had

aspirations of playing professionally. But his injury to his back made him realize that he needed to be more than just an athlete, just in case he got injured again.

Well, I think that affected my personal growth in that it made me realize the importance of having something else besides athletics. To have an academic foundation. You know, to do well in academics so that if tennis doesn't work out, which it didn't look like it was going to work out for sure when I couldn't hit a ball for a year. To have a, uh, um, also, you know, socially, that there's things I got to do away from school, I mean, away from sports to make sure that I'm gonna be able to succeed if there's not sports for me. I think it definitely opened my eyes a little bit because I thought it was over, I thought I wasn't going to be able to play again. (McEnroe)

It was during his time away from tennis, when he was in rehab, that he examined his options. He understood that injuries could happen anywhere and at anytime and that if he was not prepared with his college degree, then he would have a very difficult task of finding a good job. So he put his academics as one of his top priorities.

I wouldn't say I developed other interests. I'd say I had those interests already. But I would say I kind of maybe took them a little bit, viewed them a little bit more important . . . Again, you just realize that you have to have other things that are important to you other than athletics. Because the more injuries you have, the less chance you have of making it professionally, and the more setbacks you have. So, uh, you have to make sure that you're academically ready for a job if you have to go for a job right out of college. (McEnroe)

Jenner supported this notion that balanced priorities are important and that injuries can be exceptionally detrimental to an athlete's future. But if that athlete has balanced priorities, then he would be better off if he got injured because he would have other areas to rely on.

It's easy to get injured and hurt if you're not well balanced mentally and socially. And if you're just standing on one leg and that's taken out from underneath you, then the rest of your world just kind of falls out from underneath of you too. (Jenner)

Jenner learned that academics needed to be a top priority. There was not one defining moment when he learned it. Reflecting on his collegiate career, he determined that he

was too focused on athletics. He felt that this singular focus was hurting his total development as an individual.

In school when I first began my collegiate career I was mainly focused on just my sport and academics weren't a high priority. I was a good student but didn't necessarily apply myself and I became a one-dimensional athlete, just concerned with athletics and I didn't go to class as much as I should have and my grades reflected that . . . and I became such a one-dimensional athlete. (Jenner)

From this realization that he had become a one-dimensional athlete, Jenner decided to put more effort into his academic performance and his overall development as an individual.

I knew my parents always wanted me to have good grades, but I kind of left it upon myself. And it made me realize that there's a lot more to life than just track. And that's another personal growth experience is realizing that there's more to life than just athletics. And that's where I grew up as a person, realizing that I'm not going to be doing this forever and I want to be a lot more than just a collegiate athlete. I want to have a job, have a career, have a family, and not be so one-dimensional, not just think about myself. As an athlete, it's easy, especially not on a team sport, like basketball or football, you know, it's easy to be selfish and do things for yourself. And that was a personal growth experience for me, realizing that I want to do a lot more than just be that one-dimensional person. (Jenner)

In addition to putting his overall development as a high priority, Jenner also expended more effort into his social network. He realized that his friendships were important for his well being, so he made his social life a high priority.

I think a lot of people take that for granted. They don't realize how important that is and they take friendships and relationships for granted. For me it's like a wake-up call for putting that as a high priority and to put academics as well as track as high priorities. (Jenner)

Bannister also believed that having other interests besides sport was important. When he came to college, Bannister thought he was one of the top runners in the conference. In order for him to maintain this belief, he put all of his effort into his running, leaving little time for other interests. He believed that this focus impacted the other areas in his life, like academics and social time. After he realized that he was not

going to make a career as a runner, Bannister found other interests and made those interests high priorities. Putting those interests higher on his list of priorities did not mean that his running performance suffered, though. He knew that if he maintained a balance among his priorities, then he could do well at everything.

Yeah, now I feel like I have other interests besides that. I don't just talk about that. That's what was on my mind 24-7, and I realized that there are other things other than running . . . Like, the real world. Um, I graduate in May, getting a job, snowboarding, friends are a lot more important I think. Just relationships . . . chicks (laughing). Just life in general, you know. I don't want to limit myself. Before I had such a one-track mind. I was so focused and just wanted to run well, and I think I missed out on a lot of other things. Some of the things when I was younger just passed me by. I liked to party when I was younger, and I kind of held back on some of that stuff. And now I realize that you can have a balance and do both and still do well at both. And so having a good time, and having fun, and being happy are the most important things. Like I said, I've changed my . . . uh . . . my aim and the way I do things now. It's really not centered on running. (Bannister)

Bradshaw believed that personal growth meant mostly learning how to prioritize by learning what was and was not important in his life.

You know, what . . . learning what things are important to you, what things are worth. I guess if you want to put it in a cheesy way, what things are worth fighting for and what the things are that you want to stand up for. (Bradshaw)

When asked to elaborate on how he learned to prioritize, he responded with his thoughts on how he put football as one of his priorities with academics and his social life. His statement was different because he seemed to be more interested in everything else besides football even though he came to a college with a very strong football tradition.

I think one thing that stands out is early in my career here determining, you know, things that were important to me and how I needed to handle those. Because, I mean, you get to college and you have so many things thrown at you and you have so many things that you can do. So many opportunities. Whether it's socially, whether it's educationally, whether it's with sports. And, coming up here, you know, you want to do it all. You want to be a part of everything. You don't want to say no to anything. And coming up here my freshman year, it took me a good semester to learn how to put sports up there in the top, one of the top

priorities of my college career. You know, since it was one of the largest parts of my college career. You know, I'd say when I'm looking at school, you know, in my personal life, it's obviously my relationship with the Lord. And then, you know, my family. And then school comes. But if I'm just looking at school, obviously, you know, it's my education first and then sports. And so, you know, realizing how to put that first. (Bradshaw)

After playing on the football team for two years, Bradshaw experienced an injury to his knee. During these two years he had become an integral part of the team and football was one of his top priorities. This injury, though, made him examine just how important football had become and how his academic and social responsibilities had started to become less important. Like McEnroe and Jenner, Bradshaw reflected on this injury and put his athletic, academic, and social responsibilities back in balance.

I guess anytime you have an injury it causes you to think about things and realizing, you know . . . having two years of eligibility left . . . realizing that's something that can be jeopardized really caused me to think, "Hey, football is a big deal, and it's fun. It's something that the Lord has put in my life, but, just as well, it's something that He may want to take away." And realizing how many other things that He had blessed me with other than football. You know, that football, it wasn't the end of the world if football was taken away . . . Because when you go through something like that, just like when you go through an injury in sport, you realize that sometimes the things that, you know, you like to make important to you, aren't really the things that are. So I'd say that's probably the biggest thing that I have faced with . . . dealing with what's really important to me. (Bradshaw)

Balancing Emotions

Just learning how to deal with your emotions and how to deal with the way you react to things. -Bradshaw

Many of the players believed that learning to balance their emotions within their sport was another aspect of personal growth. Their emotions played a role in competition as well as in their general perceptions of their sport. Balancing these emotions meant that they learned to handle their emotions when necessary, whether it was during competition, after competition, or any other time they felt their emotions getting out of control.

Jordan learned that his emotions affected his outlook on his participation and his attitude toward practice, even though he wanted to play on the basketball team. He knew that if he was to improve enough to make the starting line-up, then he needed to practice hard. But when he came to college he felt like the coach had transformed his enjoyable sport into tedious work, and this perception changed his feelings toward practicing. Once he realized that his emotions were hurting his chances to play in the games, he knew that he had to get them in balance.

I realized that I think that one thing I probably learned most, in just everything in school, is just learning about emotions and how they can control you and about how you need to get in control of your emotions and not let them get the best of you . . . I'm gonna get back to sports again, but, getting up at 6 in the morning, you can do that, you can get up at 6 in the morning two different ways. You can get up and think "This is drudgery, I don't want to do this". Or you can get up and say "This is a chance to get better and I'm gonna do my best." And this year I really learned how to control that. I would, we would run. I think it was, like 6:00 or 6:30 but I would get out to the field, like, 20 minutes early and just run a couple laps and get my mind right and get my . . . and make sure my emotions were where they needed to be and that I was in control of them at that time. And just going through that has made me realize how powerful emotions are . . . about how I need to make sure that . . . to keep things in check, because they can really get you in trouble. (Jordan)

In addition to their effects on his attitude toward practice, Jordan believed that his emotions affected his performance during games.

If you let them take control of you, I mean, like in a basketball game . . . if you let someone get to talking trash, maybe slipping you elbows and stuff like that, you know, you could lose your cool. And your emotions can get intense, you know, and really control your mind and not let you . . . things that you normally wouldn't do you might do it because you get your emotions and they're all bubbling up and you want to kind of release them. Like, you could throw an elbow at somebody, get in a fight, or whatever. You know, and that happened to me this year. This guy, I'm not gonna say the school, but, he got a rebound and I grabbed it from him. And he grabbed me and threw me down and, you know . . . I just got up and I, like, helped him up, actually, after he threw me down. And that just kept me in such a better frame of mind than if I had got up mad. If I got up mad, then I wouldn't be thinking about what I need to be doing to help the

team, what the coach is telling me to do. But I'd be looking at ways to get back at that player. (Jordan)

Jordan believed that learning to balance his emotions during the games kept him more focused on his tasks while he was playing and also helped him to help his teammates to stay focused as well. Hogan also believed that balancing his emotions kept him more focused during competition. Hogan learned to keep his nervousness in check before and during golf tournaments. He knew that he was always nervous prior to the tournaments, and that nervousness did not subside until the competitive round was well under way. So he had to learn to control his emotions at the beginning of his competitive rounds in order to perform well.

You know, any tournament around here I'm always nervous at the start. And then you learn to hit good shots with that nervousness. It's like, once you get into your round you're not thinking about it as much and I've definitely learned to play under pressure. (Hogan)

McEnroe also learned to play under pressure by handling his emotions better. He believed that this learning occurred through experience, putting himself in high-pressure situations as often as he could throughout his collegiate career, so that by his senior year he could balance his emotions and control his nervousness very well during competitions.

Well I think it all comes from maturing. But it also comes from experience. You learn from your mistakes. For instance, if you're in a win-loss situation for your team. When you're a freshman, then I think you would be a lot more nervous, you know, feeling the pressure a lot more than if you've experienced that a few times and you're a senior and you have, you know, the game is on the line and you're in control of it. I think, you know, you've probably won a few like that and you've lost a few like that. And you know kind of how to stay calm and get through that . . . You earn the right not to be nervous because when it comes down to that, it's usually, you know, it's late in the match so it's a close match. So it's who, not necessarily who wants it more, but who handles the situation better that's gonna win. So if you've experienced it and you're not nervous, then you're most likely gonna win the match unless the guy is just better. But usually when it comes down to that, it's a close match, so whoever handles the situation better is gonna win the match. (McEnroe)

McEnroe also learned to handle his emotions as they pertained to his reactions to situations and occurrences on the court. A very competitive tennis player, McEnroe lost his composure during matches early in his college career. But he learned to control his emotions better so that his negative reactions and subsequent behaviors on the court were minimized.

And . . . athletically personal growth . . . it's, I guess it would also be personal growth how you act when you're competing, how you... whether you get mad, whether you get frustrated, whether you . . . You know, I think as you get older you learn how to handle those emotions a little bit better and how to carry yourself on the court a little bit better. At least I did – I can't speak for everyone . . . I think, you know, when I was younger I would get madder on the court. I wouldn't handle the pressure situations as good as I would now that I've experienced it. And you kind of . . . you're so involved that you get mad and make a fool out of yourself sometimes. But looking back on them when you get older, you don't do the same stuff, you don't act the same way. (McEnroe)

Not only did McEnroe learn to control his emotions during his matches, but he also learned to control his emotional reactions to his losses.

Well, everybody loses so you have to . . . think that's one thing you realize with your personal growth is that if you lose, you can hate it and, you know, despise it, but everybody loses. You learn how to handle it a little bit better and not be obnoxious about it. Not get, you know, obviously you're gonna get upset about it but you're not gonna make a fool out of yourself when you lose as you might have when you were younger. (McEnroe)

Bradshaw supported this notion of learning to handle his emotional reactions to losses. He described his experiences of losing to the same team for each of his first three years on the football team. He stated that he and his teammates learned to handle their emotions toward those losses better each year.

I guess there's always the lesson of how to win and how to lose. We learned how to lose the first three years I was here, you know, against Rival College pretty well. And learning how to take that and not let it defeat you, not let it ruin the rest of your season. (Bradshaw)

He described the progression of his growth and his teammates' growth from the first year to his last year in the football program.

Well first of all, like I said, the first year I was here, we lost to Rival College and we thought our season was over. We're like, "Oh, there goes the conference. What's there to play for?" Ends up we get beat by City College. If we hadn't gotten beat by City College, then we would have been playing for the conference championship and we would have been right up there with the top teams in the nation . . . You know, people weren't, you know, the attitude my first year was "This season's over." The next year, "Hey, there's still something to play for here." And then after . . . you know, if you watch football long enough... you learn that crazy things always happen towards the end of the season. And come that third year, we lost to Rival College, but the week after that game we were practicing harder than we've ever practiced. And it worked out unbelievable for us. We busted our butts all season, we played like champs the rest of the season and ended up being conference champs. (Bradshaw)

He described this progression of emotional balance as a lesson in how to lose. Bradshaw believed that there was a proper way to react emotionally to a loss. He felt that the ways that he and the rest of the team reacted toward those first two losses showed him the wrong way to react. Seeing the effects of his poor emotional control, he changed his attitude toward losing and was able to gain the necessary emotional balance to capitalize on the third consecutive loss.

Just from a feeling of defeat from one loss, feeling that, you know, "OK who cares? I guess this season's over." The hard work ceased, the determination ceased, the love of the game ceased, everything. And then that third year when we got beat, like I said we came out working harder than we've every worked the next week. You know, we weren't giving up. We were still out there to show everybody what kind of team we were, that we were still to be reckoned with . . . I think, you know, you gotta know how to deal with a loss. I didn't mean that as, "OK, here's how you go and lose." But more when you find yourself in a loss, then there's a lot more than one way to deal with it. And learning how to deal with it in the right way. And I think we finally figured out how to deal with that, like I said, the third year, you know, we didn't let that loss defeat us. (Bradshaw)

By gaining control of their emotions, Bradshaw and his teammates were able to effectively handle their tough losses and actually reap a positive benefit from those negative experiences.

Balancing Perspectives

And sports in college have made me look at life a lot differently as far as what it's about and what you have to go through. -Jordan

Many of the players described the ways in which their perspectives toward sport changed during college. It seemed as though their lives became clearer to them in terms of the role that their sport played in their lives. They learned new ways to view themselves and their respective sports, in terms of how they approached their sports, how they viewed sport in their lives, and how they viewed themselves within their respective sports.

Nicklaus went to college with the goal of making the starting line-up. But over time his perspective changed. He started to perform better and better, and his continual improvement led to a victory in a college tournament. This victory changed his perspective toward the role of golf in his future. Nicklaus began to take his practicing and competing more seriously, and he started to approach tournaments with a different, more positive attitude. He went to tournaments trying to win rather than just trying to play his best.

I think winning that, combined with some other successes our team had that year . . . it was the same year our team went out west . . . I think that made me realize that maybe I could pursue golf a little harder, maybe to work a little harder, and to achieve bigger goals. I knew that I could play with anybody out there, it was just a matter of time. And each year I've kind of looked to improve a little more on the last year. I wasn't that good as a junior golfer growing up, I mean I did lots of other sports and golf wasn't my main focus. When I went to college I wanted to improve each year. I felt like when I won the tournament like it was a hump that I made it over. It was a goal of mine to win a college tournament. And it gave me confidence and I did start to play better after that . . . I felt more comfortable out

there. Instead of going out there saying, "I might win the tournament," I went into the rest of the year – the rest of my career playing golf – that every tournament I play in I want to win . . . I finally feel like I know that I can do it. It wasn't like, "That's what I want to do, but I know I can't do it." I started to feel like, "I know that I can do it." (Nicklaus)

Hogan's perspective changed also as a result of his college golf experience. He came to college as a solid player with the thought of perhaps turning professional after graduation. But throughout his college career, he competed against some of the top players in the country and realized that his chances of making a career in professional golf were very slim. So he decided to put more emphasis on his academic performance and just enjoy playing golf with his teammates.

School's the most important thing and then just have fun with golf. I just felt I needed to have fun. I don't want to say have fun like not care, like don't worry about how I'm playing or anything. But just have fun with it . . . Well, you know, I just love playing golf and I've been playing it almost since I could walk and I just realize that I get some of my college tuition paid for. I get up and I get to go play golf all afternoon and I know there's tons of people out there that they'd give anything to be able to go play golf every afternoon, and I just look at it that way. (Hogan)

It became clear to Hogan that even though golf was important to him, it was not in his best interest to seriously pursue better performance. He realized that the best option for him was to enjoy the game and strive for academic excellence.

McEnroe also gained a new perspective on sport in his life during his college career. His perspective changed, though, as a result of injury. He entered college as one of the top players in the country, and he believed that his competitive nature helped him to achieve such a high rank. He wanted to win at all costs and he approached tennis very seriously because winning was very important. But injuries changed this perspective that winning was everything. McEnroe began to enjoy playing tennis rather than playing to win at all costs.

I'd say, uh, I think one of the reasons personal growth has happened to me through sports is through injuries. I think injuries make you realize that you are vulnerable and that you have to enjoy playing more when you can. If you have a bunch of injuries and you go through a lot of pain, and when you finally get back, I think you enjoy playing more and you respect playing more than you did before you had injuries. So I think that's helped a little bit. And that also helps in the way you act towards people and on the court and stuff because you're not so at the mentality that you have to win at all costs, you have to be mean to your opponent. You kind of just enjoy playing more. And you still want to win. Obviously everyone wants to do that. But I think that's one way. (McEnroe)

Bannister had similar perceptions about sport when he entered college. He also believed that he had to win all of the time in order to have a high self-image. Bannister was a runner and that was his identity at that time. But that competitive perspective about running carried over into the other aspects of his life. He began to compete in everything he did, even when he and his girlfriend went snowboarding for the weekend. He felt like he had to be the best at everything he did. But after competing against the top runners in the country, he realized that he did not need to be so competitive. He did not need to base his life on running. He changed his perspective from being highly competitive to being more relaxed about running. He began to just enjoy running and other activities and not be so competitive all of the time.

Everyday if you're competitive and you want to prove that you're tougher than the next guy or that you're better than this next guy, you're going to run until you can't see straight everyday. And so, I think that mentality kind of carried over to other things before . . . Just doing different things, taking on different things and not having to be the best at the things I take on. Like I'm so competitive, I guess, just from the nature of running. And like the things I'd take on, you know, I feel like if I'm not the best at it or I'm not one of the better guys at it that, you know, it can't be enjoyable. And I think I realize now that it can be . . . I think I've grown up a little bit and I realize that everything's not a sport, you know. I realized that I could leave certain things in certain arenas and to not carry them over. (Bannister)

Jordan gained a new perspective on his life in terms of the demands placed on him and his perception of those demands. While in high school Jordan thought that he

was a hard worker. When he came to college he quickly realized that the amount of work he did in high school was nothing. He also realized that even though his life in college is demanding, it was still not as demanding as that of his parents. This understanding gave him more respect for his elders for what they had gone through and still go through every day.

And just having to get up at 6:00 in the morning and go work out . . . get up at 6:00 and go run . . . go to classes, and then come back in the afternoon and lift weights and things like that. That's a real struggle for me to begin with. And when I look at how my parents have to do the same thing and how they're going through it right now, my dad's a veterinarian and he has to get up, you know, early every morning and he doesn't get home until late. And sports in college have made me look at life a lot differently as far as what it's about and what you have to go through. (Jordan)

Jordan changed his attitude toward his demanding schedule, developing a more positive outlook because he realized that his life was pretty good. He had the opportunity to play basketball every day and pursue a solid education. Related to this change in perspective was Jordan's change in attitude toward his participation on the basketball team. He felt discouraged early in his career because he was less of a player than he thought he was. He saw that his poor attitude hurt his performance because he was not motivated to work hard to improve. But once he realized that he wanted to be a contributor on the team, he changed his perspective from discouragement to encouragement. He used his hardship on the team as a motivator to help him to strive to improve.

I realized that I had been discouraged somewhat that year just because I felt like . . . just because I was getting beaten around a lot and I couldn't do that much about it, you know, because I was a skinny white kid. And I felt discouraged. But at that point, I realized that if I wanted to get to where I needed to be, that it was gonna take more work. I was gonna have to really work hard and at that point it really became more, I guess you would say, encouragement than discouragement. And through that I realized that I wanted things that were worth having and that you got to work for. Like I said before, I had things come easy for me. And in high school I never really worked that hard in my particular sport and I realized

that if I really wanted to get to another level and play even better, then I was gonna have to do certain things. (Jordan)

Like the other participants, L.T. gained a new perspective on sport and life when he came to college. His coaches showed him what football meant and how it could impact those who played. L.T. realized that the lessons he learned while playing football applied in other aspects of life. Realizing that football could teach him about life, L.T. gained a new respect and love for the game.

It's so not a game . . . I mean you can take everything that you learn from it and apply it to any aspect of life. I didn't really realize that in high school. I don't really think I played football in high school. There wasn't much coaching there. It was more like recess or something. Things or values that come along from playing football, and the things you learn about loyalty, about loving the guys you play with, stuff like that. That's what I think comes from football, I guess sports in general, but especially in football . . . it's sort of a microcosm of things in general. (L.T.)

L.T. believed that he was fortunate to have had the opportunity to play football. He described the misery that was necessary to endure in order to play the game, but he never wavered on his belief that football was the greatest sport and that he would do anything and everything to play.

I see what you're saying. No, it's not fun. That's not fun (pointing to the ice and snow outside). I mean, that sucks. I mean, when we are doing it, it's like, "Geez, man, why the hell are we doing this?" I'll get back to my room after we get up and run in the morning when I've got to go to breakfast check, and then I've got to go to class for like five hours, and then I've got to lift. It sucks. But all you've got to do is think about not doing it. That's what I do. When I think it sucks for me . . . what if I didn't do it . . . what the hell would I be doing? I can't imagine what I would do if I was a regular student at City College. I'd be scared to think about it. I mean, it's misery . . . it's definitely not fun, it sucks. But the fun part is seeing it pay off. The fun part is playing. Just having the opportunity to play . . . I just feel so lucky to play. That's the fun part – just playing the game. And all this other shit sucks, but, I mean, you have to do it. I mean, you've got to do it if you're going to have fun, you know. It's got to suck . . . doing all the shit's got to suck if you're going to have any fun playing. Because it wouldn't be worth it if you could just play the game. It wouldn't be as special. It would be sort of like

cheating the game if you just played the game and didn't pay the price.
You've got to pay the price if you're going to play such a great game. (L.T.)

Balancing Responsibilities

I think I've taken on more responsibility and have been able to handle it more.

-Bannister

The players faced not only academic challenges during college but athletic challenges as well. But not all athletic challenges came during practice or competition. Many of these challenges came as a result of just participating in college athletics. Being a member of a team carried certain responsibilities. Long practice sessions and extended travel were common. With these added challenges associated with participation in college athletics, the players needed to balance their responsibilities in order to meet the demands placed on them.

As a starter on the golf team, Hogan traveled to tournaments in other states approximately four to six times per semester. This extensive travel caused him to miss classes during those trips. In addition to these trips, his practice schedule was time demanding. But Hogan was dedicated to his academic responsibilities, so he learned how to maximize his scarce study time.

I think... like, you just learn how to deal with situations. You learn how to, like being on the golf team. And having to miss class. I mean, you just learn, you just keep learning better ways to deal with teachers and being out of class . . . I think one big thing is just having to, uh, just time management. Really just everything revolves around me and the golf team. I don't think people realize that, but I think the golf team probably spends just as much if not more time with it just doing the things that go along with . . . I mean a typical day we're, from 12 to 6:30 or 7 we're busy because if we're playing, we're allowed time to drive to the course and then play. And when you get done you got to drive home, get something to eat, and then by that time it's 7:00 and just learning you're tired, learning to just manage your time, just using your time to your advantage. Because if you've got . . . if you only have two classes one morning, like an 8:00 class and a 9:00 class, you know at 10:00 you've got two hours where you know you can get some homework done instead of catching a quick nap or watching

TV. I think, uh, just learning to manage your time and getting things done when you have the time. (Hogan)

Bannister also described his rigorous academic and athletic schedules and stated that he learned to manage his time better in order to handle all of his responsibilities. He stated that he was not able to cope well with both academic and athletic demands early in his college career. But learning how to effectively manage his time enabled him to not only cope with the primary demands of school and sports but to also take on added responsibilities like assuming the role of team captain.

Managing my time better, and I think I've taken on more responsibility and have been able to handle it more. I think if I had all the things that . . . like this past semester I was team captain, I had an internship about . . . only about twelve hours per week, and still I had fourteen hours of classes, which is not a big deal because, when you're a broadcasting major, the classes aren't tougher, they are just more time consuming. There's a lot of projects, and . . . not a lot of tests, but just so many projects and things you've got to do. And so, when you're traveling every weekend, just about, it definitely wears on you. But just through the progression of the past few years and getting used to like, traveling and going to classes, you know, I've been able to handle it really easy, like a lot better. Like when I was a freshman it was so overwhelming and I couldn't handle it really well. (Bannister)

When L.T. came to college he had to adjust his lifestyle in order to be able to meet his academic and athletic demands. He felt that he was able to succeed in high school because the demands were not as strict. But his college program was extremely strict compared to what he had previously experienced. This strict program carried more responsibility than he was used to, and he had trouble at first. But he worked hard and matured as an individual, and he learned to handle multiple tasks.

At City College, getting there when I was a freshman was a big adjustment for me because going from high school to college is a big jump. And the stuff we did there at City College, the whole program was a very difficult program. It's just very strict and everything is almost military like the ways it works. We have to be somewhere all the time and if you're late, you have to get up and run the next day. It's just all the time rules and regulations. It's really strict so that was a big

adjustment for me. And it sort of forces you to grow as a person compared to when you're a kid, you're not ready to take care of that responsibility being on top of everything. Always having coaches calling you up. There are coaches all over you all the time. It's kind of a big adjustment from being an immature kid. It sucked. So when I got there, I had to grow. There wasn't any choice. I had to mature myself, grow as a person, and adjust to the situation or get out. So I adjusted myself . . . I mean taking on the tasks at hand, things that the coach is asking you to do, whether it's getting up at like 4:30 in the morning to go run or whether it's lifting in the afternoon when you've got three papers to write, you know, stuff like that. Taking that stuff, like, man, just getting it done and not bitching about it. (L.T.)

Jordan faced a similar challenge when he came to college. He also had difficulty with the more demanding athletic and academic program that he joined as a member of his basketball team. When Jordan came to college he was content with his life. He enjoyed doing a variety of activities with his friends and he had the time to pursue those interests. But when he joined the basketball team, he felt like he gave up some of his freedom. When Jordan became a student-athlete, that distinction carried more responsibility than he had anticipated.

Well I felt at first, I was like, I don't know how I'm gonna do that. I like the way my life is right now. I've got more time for other things in my life. You know, if I want to go camping and do things with my friends, then if I work harder, it's going to take some of those things away. But you know in college sports, you kind of feel like, it's almost your job to improve. You know, you're getting your way paid through school and I felt like that it was almost my duty in some ways to get out and start doing it. And just having to get up at 6:00 in the morning and go work out . . . get up at 6:00 and go run . . . go to classes, and then come back in the afternoon and lift weights and things like that. (Jordan)

Expanding Capabilities

The second aspect of maturity that the players experienced was expanding their capabilities. This aspect primarily involved improving skills in two areas: (a) athletic skills, and (b) interpersonal skills.

Improving Athletic Skills

I just think you have to experience some personal growth if you work hard at what you're doing and you're looking to improve. -Nicklaus

Many of the players described ways in which they believed that they had improved athletically during their college careers. This improvement included primarily mental aspects of performance. None of the players mentioned the improvement of their physical athletic skills. Instead they described examples of psychological performance enhancement. This improvement occurred at various times but sometimes occurred over time without a specific trigger. Nicklaus stated that his improvement occurred as a result of hard work during his college athletic career.

Every time you work hard and improve and enjoy what you're doing, I think that you'll have some personal growth. You could learn it to, like you're different experiences, but I think it's every time you do what you're doing, when you go out there and work hard, you have to experience some personal growth . . . I just think you have to experience some personal growth if you work hard at what you're doing and you're looking to improve. And I think that makes you . . . each time you practice when you're doing the right things . . . it makes you that much better as a player. (Nicklaus)

Jenner described the improvement of his mental approach to training and performing in the decathlon. He first used an example of a time when he was training with a teammate and realized that he was not pushing himself, so he was not improving. He felt comfortable with his current level of performance and that comfort hindered his desire to improve and excel.

Physically it's easy to stay in one mindset and not grow out of that. Not pushing yourself in the weight room, not pushing yourself on the track. There's always somebody better than you no matter what your athletic ability, you always need to keep pushing yourself more and more. Just yesterday, I realized that I was . . . I was in the weight room and I wasn't going to put on as much weight as I could have or come close to what I could have. But I was lifting with a buddy and he was upping the ante in the weights and he said it was no problem and I did it. It wasn't so . . . its easy to get comfortable in what you're doing athletically . . . and to be better all the time you need to push the limits. (Jenner)

Jenner explained a specific way in which he improved by pushing himself and his capabilities.

Or like in the pole vault, it very easy. I mean, I've been doing it for some years now, but since I've been at State U, they've just totally raised the roof, like in my capabilities, always pushing me to get on bigger poles. Thus the bigger poles you get on, the higher you're gonna go . . . and it's a confidence thing. And it's easy to say "I'm just gonna stay here on this pole" and not try to get any better. I mean, you want to get better but there's that little fear factor about getting on bigger poles. Well if your teammates and your coaches are always pushing you to get on bigger poles, move your run back to where you're gonna run faster then you're gonna get better. (Jenner)

Jenner believed that improvement came from pushing himself in every aspect of his physical ability, and that this improvement in physical skill led to improvement in his mental approach toward his performance. By improving his mental approach, he pushed himself beyond his "comfort level" and raised his confidence in his performance to become a better decathlete.

Bannister also described how he had improved as an athlete when he changed his mental approach toward his races. When he first came to college, Bannister felt intimidated by runners from other teams as well as by runners who had raced for his team in previous years. He felt like he was not good enough to compete against runners who he thought were much better than he was. But after competing against these runners, he began to realize that he could race with them very well. When he began to see that he was a strong runner, his mental approach toward his races changed and he became a better competitor in his races.

When I first got here, and . . . in the sport of running you kind of know your competitors and know who they are. And I would know, like uh, all the guys in the conference and the guys in the country who are really good and running really fast times. And I would always look up to them when I would go to meets. I would read about them in magazines and see them in publications about track and

running. And I would see them and just put them up on a pedestal. You know, it was like, if I was in a race, I would have this mentality like, you know . . . I didn't belong running with this guy, this is the guy I look up to, that I read about. And pretty soon I realized that I could run with them. You know, I'm capable of running with this guy too. On any given day it doesn't matter if I read about him in magazines or anything. And I think I've gotten to the level now where I'm not intimidated by guys so much... I don't look up to them as much now. I think about them more as my equal, you know, that everyone is equal on that day. Its just whoever is tougher on that day. And it may sound arrogant, but I think I've gotten to the point where I think I can run with just about anybody in the country on a certain day, if I have the right mindframe . . . And running is a real mental game, I think. Moreso than any other sport, well, swimming probably is too. But . . . just because, if you get out there in a race . . . lets say it's the national meet and there's 200 guys out there . . . and I'm going into the meet thinking that everybody out here is such a badass or, like . . . there's no way I can run with these guys. And of course when they get out there and when it starts hurting, its not going to be anything for them just to pass me because I'm already thinking that they are better than me. But, if I go out there thinking that . . . you know . . . I've trained just as hard as any of these guys, I've put in all the work for months now, I'm prepared and I'm ready. And if they are going to beat me, they're going to have to be tough as shit to do it. And if I go in there thinking that, then I'm going to go out there, I'm going to battle every guy that's out there as opposed to just laying down for them and letting them go past me. I think it gets me in a good mindframe to go out there and be competitive and be aggressive. I think different things work for different guys, but I know that works for me. So that's the kind of attitude I try to have. (Bannister)

In addition to improving their mental approaches to their respective sport performances, the players described ways in which they improved their mental performance skills. For instance, L.T. believed that one of his coaches taught him how to keep his mind focused on the task at hand.

He showed me how much a coach can help and really forced me to grow as a player and as a person, I guess . . . Well, as a player, obviously he taught me to relax, be more focused on certain things. (L.T.)

L.T. believed that improving his focus made him a better player.

Hogan also improved his mental skills, but his improvement occurred in his ability to cope with performance pressure. By continually putting himself in high-

pressure situations, he gradually learned to handle his emotions and his muscular tension so that he could perform well under tournament conditions.

You know, if you're close, if you're in contention to win, you know, you want to hit good shots and make the putts to propel the team to victory. Or if, you know, like in the summertime when you're playing individual tournaments and you're playing well, then . . . and you're close to the lead, that creates tension. But then you also learn to play with tension or in tense situations. You learn to not . . . your body gets used to those pressures, so it doesn't tense up as much. You know, any tournament around here, I'm always nervous at the start. And then you learn to hit good shots with that nervousness. It's like, once you get into your round you're not thinking about it as much and I've definitely learned to play under pressure. (Hogan)

McEnroe also learned to perform better under pressure by controlling his emotions. He believed that he made mistakes in pressure situations early in his college career. He did not handle his emotions well, and he let them affect his performance. But throughout his college career he continued to learn from those mistakes until he was able to effectively control his emotional reactions to high-pressure tennis matches. McEnroe believed that gaining control of his emotions enabled him to focus better during tight matches, which improved his performance during those matches and helped him to win.

My freshman year we played . . . we were undefeated and ranked high in the country and we were playing one of the top teams in the country. And it came down to my match. And I lost 7-5 in the 3rd. And that was our first loss of the year and that kind of, I mean, it hurt me really bad . . . but I'll never forget . . . I mean, it's still the hardest match I probably ever lost. And so, I guess personal growth came from that is that, you know, you learn from it and you know how to better react in that situation if a big match comes down like that again . . . and it's on you . . . then you know how to . . . you've experienced it, and you know how to better react to it and how to, you know, stay calm and how to focus things out. And you remember what, you know, what hurt you in the match before and you try to do the opposite when it happens later. And then it happened several times since then and I don't think, since that match, I've lost the deciding match. (McEnroe)

Improving Interpersonal Skills

Personal growth is kind of synonymous with development of self . . . not just personally but socially . . . how you interact with others. -Bradshaw

Expanding capabilities was not limited to athletic skills. Many of the players believed that improvement of their interpersonal skills was one aspect of personal growth in which they expanded their capabilities. This improvement occurred through the players' interactions with their teammates, coaches, and opponents, and it enabled the players to develop better interpersonal relationships and to interact better socially with other individuals in sport.

Some of the players improved their interpersonal skills by learning about people in general. Improving their interpersonal skills was not exactly just learning how to communicate better. It was more like they learned about the nature of people. Bradshaw learned from a coach that, despite his personality flaws, that coach had something to teach. This coach might not have communicated it well with Bradshaw, but he still had worthwhile knowledge.

You know, I think everybody does, everybody has their ups and everybody has their downs, and I think you take both of them. You know, when you accept the good in somebody, you just take the bad that comes with it. Nobody's gonna be perfect. And I think that's what you have to realize. Sometimes, I think, people look at this person, you know, he'll be an unbelievable person and he'll have this one little flaw that just gets under someone's skin and they'll lose everything good about them just because of that one little flaw. So, through coaches, and as well as fellow players, things like that, you know, you deal with a lot of guys from different backgrounds. And it's easy to stereotype people and not want to interact because of where they come from or something like that. And when those people, just as the next person, have, just like someone who comes from your own background has, they have so much to teach. And I think there's something to learn from everybody, whether it's someone from a different background or someone from the same background, everybody's got something to teach if people just listen. (Bradshaw)

L.T. also gained insight to the nature of people through interactions with one of his coaches. When he first became a coach for L.T.'s football team, he seemed to focus on L.T. each day at practice, yelling at him to do the drills correctly. And even when

L.T. felt like he was performing well, this coach continued to criticize and correct his techniques. It was not until L.T. had to play in a game that he realized that the coach acted in that way because he cared about L.T. From that moment L.T. realized that people may have certain motives for their behavior and those motives may not be what they seem at first.

Well, like I said, he just helped me realize things about people in general, you know? Like, people aren't always what they seem. It made me have more of a respect for people . . . no, not respect . . . it made me look at people that I don't really particularly like and see them in a different light. Because when I realized that he was doing it, doing all this crap to me because he cared about me, it really shocked me. When I finally realized it, when I finally realized that he was doing it because he honestly cared about me as a player and a person, it really made me stop and think . . . It made me think about, you know, there's probably a lot of people in my life like that . . . people that, I guess, I think they're something that they're not. Maybe their motives are not what I think. Maybe they're not jerks. (L.T.)

In addition to learning about the nature of other people, one player gained awareness of the perspectives of other people. After joining the basketball team, Jordan became friends with many of his teammates. Getting to know about them and their backgrounds, Jordan learned that he had been judgmental toward other people. He had assumed that everybody had the same upbringing that he had and that others had the same family life that he had. By gaining that understanding of others' backgrounds and by realizing his own assumptions, Jordan was able to change his judgmental ways and accept others without bias.

One way is just in relationships with other people. And when you have a team you get various backgrounds coming together. I never did like rap and some of that stuff and, you know, that's what I'm exposed to a lot now. And I've learned to look at people and where they're coming from and try to accept them and love them and where they're at and where they've been. When I first came up here I didn't quite understand why people acted the way they did. As I got to know them I realized that people might not have had it as good as I have, like, my home life. I had a father and mother that loved me and took care of me and, you know,

these other people that I kind of always looked down on, you know, they never had that. And I've been pretty judgmental in thinking some of the thoughts that I had about them, but now I realize that things weren't so easy for them. I've learned to accept them and love them the way they are. That's coming from a relationship standpoint. (Jordan)

Nicklaus also learned about different people through interacting with them at golf tournaments around the country. He was able to meet people from different cultures, although within the same country, and this interaction helped Nicklaus to gain a better understanding of others.

And I think going out there and playing every week with guys across the nation helped me to grow. I got to meet a lot of people and understand a lot of different situations that people are in. (Nicklaus)

Much of the improvement in the players' interpersonal skills came through interacting with different types of people, whether they were teammates, coaches, or opponents. McEnroe believed that he improved his interpersonal skills through interaction with his teammates as well as his opponents. Being a part of his tennis team helped him because many of his teammates were international students. He learned about their cultures and shared his culture with them. McEnroe stated that his experiences with his teammates helped him to interact with people from different cultures, which he believed would help him in the future.

I mean, I think meeting a bunch of different people. And you know, being on our team . . . we have a pretty international blend. And you meet a bunch of different people from a bunch of different cultures, and you're able to learn a little bit about them and what they do. And I think that will help you, you know, down the road when you have to deal with people that are a lot different than you. And I'll be pretty much used to it because we've had guys from all over the place on our team. (McEnroe)

McEnroe also learned how to relate to people that he did not like. He competed against many different opponents, some of whom did not exhibit good sportsmanship. Many of

these opponents would behave poorly on the tennis court, yelling at their coaches and the judges. Competing against these individuals taught McEnroe how he did not want to behave. He learned to treat his coaches, teammates, tennis officials, and his opponents with greater respect.

And when you play different schools you always play, you know . . . you play some really nice guys and you play some really bad guys. And I think that all will help you to relate to different people that, you know, you might get along with or you might not. You still can relate, I mean, you can still get along with them . . . How you act on the court, how you act to your opponent, to the other team, to your team, to the coaches. You know, whether you're respectful and, you know, stuff like that. Or whether you're kind of obnoxious. And you get some . . . in our sport we have a lot of athletes, foreign athletes and American athletes, who are, you know, pretty obnoxious sometimes . . . you know, make bad calls and treat the coaches or the refs really bad and stuff like that. And so, I think you grow from not . . . you know . . . trying to treat your opponent and everybody else with respect a little bit more, even if it's hard. (McEnroe)

Bannister developed his communication skills through his role as team leader during his senior year. As the team leader he was responsible for resolving conflicts among his teammates and he relayed lessons from his coach in terms that were more acceptable to the athletes. He learned how to communicate effectively with others, and he learned to conduct himself better in meetings with individuals who held superior positions.

And anything I said, they absorbed it and they seemed to follow it really well. I get to orchestrate the meetings. Whenever something's wrong, like maybe a scuffle between two of the teammates and I was the one trying to mediate it. You know, I was kind of like the mediator between the coach and the athletes . . . And, well just when I would meet with the head coach and he's kind of an intimidating guy to begin with, he's not a real people person, so when I go into talk to him, I'm always kind of apprehensive. But I've learned through talking with my coach and the guys to speak with confidence and not be afraid to say what's on my mind. (Bannister)

Summary

Although many of the participants equated personal growth with maturity, the themes that emerged from the student-athletes' definitions of personal growth included two distinct characteristics, achieving balance and expanding capabilities. The balance that the players achieved occurred in four areas. The first area of balance was in their priorities. The players learned the importance of sport in their lives. They were able to make clear choices about the athletic, academic, and social aspects of their lives and to expend their energies accordingly on each aspect. The second area involved balancing their emotions with regard to competition. They learned to control their emotions during competition, which enabled them to focus on their tasks without distraction and enhance their performance. They also learned to handle their emotional reactions to the outcomes of their competitions as well as to control their attitude toward practicing. The third area in which the players achieved balance was in their perspectives of sport. Some players saw the role of sport in their lives from a new point of view, some changed their approach to their sport performance, and some gained respect for their sport. The fourth area of balance involved the responsibilities of the players. The student-athletes were able to accept the responsibilities associated with being a participant and contributor on a college athletic team, and they were also able to handle their responsibilities as students.

In addition to achieving balance, the players described personal growth as an expansion of their capabilities. This expansion occurred through the improvement of their athletic and interpersonal skills. Improved athletic skills included an enhanced ability to handle performance pressure, to focus attention on performance tasks, and to approach competitions with increased self-confidence. Improved interpersonal skills

included better communication skills, increased awareness of interpersonal similarities and differences, and enhanced ability to interact effectively with a greater variety of people.

CHAPTER 7

THE PROCESS OF PERSONAL GROWTH

Further analysis of the participants' descriptions of the meaning of personal growth revealed that personal growth was a process rather than an isolated occurrence. It was a process, according to the players, consisting of two components: (a) reflecting on past experiences, and (b) learning from past experiences.

Reflecting on Past Experiences

Many of the players incorporated reflection into their descriptions of their personal growth. Reflection was evident in the two specific aspects of maturity as well as in the players' general definitions of personal growth. Hogan described his belief that personal growth occurred by looking back at past behaviors and determining more effective ways to cope with similar situations.

I guess, uh, you're gonna make, you're gonna do things that, when you look back, you wish you hadn't done. Or you learn, just growing, just learning from your mistakes. And learning that when you get into similar situations in the future you can reach back and remember how you handled things in the past. How you wish you would have handled them differently. You can do in the present what you maybe wish you could have done in the past. (Hogan)

Hogan continued to describe the process through looking back at past behaviors and determining better ways to deal with similar situations that may arise.

It seems like there would be things I could look back on and things I've learned from. Almost I think like you learn something every day from . . . I think you can really learn, you know, every time you get home in the evening, I think I can look back on something that's happened throughout the day that I can learn from. You know, when you have a bad day, you know, you can learn from, you can look back at how you handled things. You know, what went wrong and, you know, "I wish I would have done this." And then on really good days you can look back and you can look at what you did to promote the good things that happened and

you can take those and I think you can just learn from both positive and negative things that happened. (Hogan)

Bradshaw also included reflection on past behaviors in his general description of personal growth.

Well I think its experience and reflection. I think you find yourself in the middle of experiences all the time, but it's those times that you sit down and reflect on it and think about the way you acted. Think about the way you responded to someone or to a situation. It's those times that you sit down and reflect on them and figure yourself out that you really realize who you are and the way you act. (Bradshaw)

In addition to general descriptions, the players incorporated reflection into the specific aspects of maturity, achieving a balance and improving. Jordan discussed how he reflected on his experience as a collegiate basketball player and his perception that he was having trouble adjusting to the demands of the rigorous practice and competitive schedule in addition to his academic schedule. He believed that his experience influenced his perspective on sports and on his perspective on his future.

It's broken me down some and it's made me stand back and look at my situation and what I'm going through. And then I look at other people's situations, people that are, let's say, just in the regular working world, a factory job, and what they have to go through. (Jordan)

Jordan believed that reflecting on his experience had helped him to balance his priorities concerning the importance of basketball and the importance of academics in his life.

Jenner reflected on an experience, from which he believed that he grew. The experience was negative because he performed poorly, and he was embarrassed and disappointed in his effort. Jenner stated "Looking back on it helps me better appreciate how important mental and physical well being is for me." Jenner believed that his lack of mental and physical balance contributed to his poor performance.

Other players also reflected on past performances that helped them to achieve emotional balance. Hogan used a particular instance within a competitive round of golf that helped him to control his anger.

And I think . . . one time I just wasn't playing well and things weren't going my way and all these things just kept building up and you just want to vent it out. And I just got angry and I just slammed the club down and kicked my bag. And just looking back on that after the round and just thinking "That didn't help me at all". You know, it just made things worse. And I feel like whenever I want to get angry I try to think back how that doesn't help at all. (Hogan)

McEnroe believed that this type of growth occurred during his college years. He stated, "And you can reflect how you were when you first got here and some of the things that you did that you wouldn't do now." He also described his experience of immaturity and how he reflected on it to achieve a balance with his anger during competition.

Well, I think, you know, when I was younger I would get madder on the court. I wouldn't handle the pressure situations as good as I would now that I've experienced it. And you kind of . . . you're so involved that you get mad and make a fool out of yourself sometimes. But looking back on them when you get older, you don't do the same stuff, you don't act the same way. You don't, if it's a bad call you don't jump on the official, you don't jump on the player. You kind of just handle it. (McEnroe)

Reflecting on competitive experience showed these players the importance of achieving an emotional balance, but competitive experience was not the only means. Bradshaw reflected on his interaction with a coach when he was a walk-on player on the football team, and that reflection showed him that he had gained control of his anger.

Now I can look back and watch how he is toward the new walk-ons, and stuff like that, and I guess, I don't know, things like that can really make you boil if you aren't careful and can really get you irritated. (Bradshaw)

Reflecting on past experiences not only helped the players to achieve a balance in their lives, but it also led to improvement as an athlete. Bannister mentioned reflection

during his description of a personal growth experience that helped him to see the importance of improving his mental attitude in competition.

And afterwards I think I was kind of complacent or kind of content, just because, you know, I was second at the conference meet. But thinking back, afterwards, I was thinking that maybe if I had just made one move on him, I could've broken him. (Bannister)

He felt that his complacency affected his performance during an important competition.

This experience showed him that he needed to improve his mental approach toward competing against foreign runners, who he perceived to be better than he was.

Learning from Past Experiences

The second aspect of the process of personal growth is learning from past experiences. Many of the players stated that they felt as though what they learned contributed to their personal growth. Some even incorporated learning into their general definition of the construct. Nicklaus defined personal growth as "... the things you learn in everyday life, growing up, and stuff like that." Hogan also defined personal growth in terms of learning, indicating that "... you learn, just growing, just learning from your mistakes." Bannister supported this definition of personal growth as a learning process by stating, "I guess personal growth to me really means learning from your experiences and mistakes." Bradshaw also believed that growth occurred by learning from past experiences. He described his thoughts about how personal growth occurred for him.

Just through experience. You know, you find yourself in situations and when you're in the middle of a situation, the only thing you have to do is react. And you learn by your reactions. Sometimes you screw up and you realize, hey, that's not the way I need to react to this. You know, whether it's in a confrontation or something that's in a positive sense, you know, positive conversation. Just learning how to deal with your emotions and how to deal with the way you react to things. (Bradshaw)

In addition to incorporating learning from past experiences into their definitions of personal growth, many of the players revealed that learning was a part of the two specific aspects of maturity – achieving balance and improving. Hogan believed that dealing with various situations required learning. “I think like you just learn how to deal with situations.” He mentioned one aspect of achieving a balance with his responsibilities.

Learning to just manage your time, just using your time to your advantage. Because if you got, if you only have two classes one morning, like an 8:00 class and a 9:00 class, you know at 10:00 you’ve got two hours where you know you can get some homework done instead of catching a quick nap or watching TV. I think, uh, just learning to manage your time and getting things done when you have the time. (Hogan)

McEnroe stated that learning is an integral part of achieving a balance in his emotions. He said “You know, I think as you get older you learn how to handle those emotions a little bit better and how to carry yourself on the court a little bit better.”

McEnroe also explained that personal growth occurs through learning from adversity to achieve a balance of emotions and reactions to competitive pressure.

My freshman year we played . . . we were undefeated and ranked high in the country and we were playing one of the top teams in the country. And it came down to my match. And I lost 7-5 in the 3rd. And that was our first loss of the year and that kind of, I mean, it hurt me really bad but I’ll never forget, I mean, it’s still the hardest match I probably ever lost. And so, I guess personal growth came from that is that, you know, you learn from it and you know how to better react in that situation if a big match comes down like that again. (McEnroe)

He continued describing the impact of this experience by saying,

You know, you win . . . you learn from your losses and remember your wins or whatever. But, I mean, it’s pretty much true, so . . . I think you learn to handle yourself a little bit better when those situations come about next time. (McEnroe)

Jordan described that his emotions affected his outlook on basketball practice as well as his daily attitude. He stated that learning about emotions and seeing the effects of

poor emotional control led to his understanding the importance of balancing his emotions.

I learned not to put too much into . . . not to let my emotions get myself carried away too much . . . one thing I probably learned most, in just everything in school, is just learning about emotions and how they can control you and about how you need to get in control of your emotions and not let them get the best of you. (Jordan)

In addition to achieving balance, learning was essential in improving in sport settings. Hogan stated that learning is an important aspect of improving his mental toughness, which increased his ability to perform in competition.

You also learn to play with tension or in tense situations you learn to not . . . your body gets used to those pressures so it doesn't tense up as much. You know, any tournament around here I'm always nervous at the start. And then you learn to hit good shots with that nervousness. It's like, once you get into your round you're not thinking about it as much and I've definitely learned to play under pressure. (Hogan)

In addition to improving their mental skills, learning influenced their interpersonal skills. Jenner explained that he grew socially by improving his interpersonal skills, which involved building and maintaining his relationships with others.

So I've learned to keep my balance of friends and continue to grow friendships and not let go of old friendships. I call friends that mean so much to me and to not let those go. So I've learned to expand, in that sense, personal growth socially by not depending on just one or two socially. (Jenner)

Bannister described his interaction with his coach and his teammates as a personal growth experience, and that learning experience helped him to improve his ability to interact confidently with others, both in and out of sport. He stated "But I've learned, through talking with my coach and the guys, to speak with confidence and not be afraid to say what's on my mind."

Similar to Bannister's perceptions of interacting with his coaches and teammates, Bradshaw discussed his perceptions regarding the improvement of his ability to interact with his teammates as a learning process.

I guess another thing, in general, learning to deal with different types of people. Different attitudes, you know, you're on the team with 150 guys, all playing football, and you've got 150 different attitudes. And learning to feel out what a person is like and how you need to react to them to keep everybody in harmony was big for me. (Bradshaw)

L.T. also learned through his involvement with football. He learned lessons that pertained to his life as well as the lives of others. He learned about values that helped him to begin to cultivate deeper relationships with his teammates and coaches.

Things or values that come along from playing football, and the things you learn about loyalty, about loving the guys you play with, stuff like that. That's what I think comes from football, I guess sports in general but especially in football. (L.T.)

These aspects of the process of personal growth in student-athletes define the process. But the players also stated that the nature of the process was one of a continual or ongoing process. Personal growth did not just happen and then cease. It happened for these players, and it continued and will continue to occur.

Continual or Ongoing Process

The players expressed their thoughts regarding the ongoing nature of personal growth in different ways. Some saw it in terms of aging while others saw it in terms of time or even a journey. In either instance, the players seemed to support one another's beliefs that personal growth is not a one-time phenomenon. In his definition of personal growth, Jenner explained his perception that growth was a continual process.

Personal growth to me means developing as a person in three aspects: mentally, physically, and socially and continuing to grow. It's easy to get in a comfortable state of mind, happy or content with what's going on in your world in athletics or

with your friends, your job, your relationship and I see it as something you have to continue to expand and grow upon. (Jenner)

When asked about his thoughts on the personal growth that he had already experienced,

Jenner responded that he continued to grow in all areas.

I think it makes you grow more. While there's that balance, and it may seem like a comfort zone, you just raise the level of expectations in all three and so you continue to grow. (Jenner)

Jordan's definition of personal growth also included references to its continual or perpetual nature.

I feel more honed into what I need to become. You know, when I think about "tested", you know, you take a test and you pass or fail, but when I look at growth, it's kind of a perpetual thing. Its not you get through the test and you're finished. It's like a continuous thing of tests that you go through. But, like in school, you're going through tests but at each stage you're learning more and more about what you need to learn about. And that's kind of the way I see it, like a continual going through things, learning from them, and then you go on to the next thing. (Jordan)

He also stated that the way in which he was growing as an individual was a continual process.

Yeah, I think I did. I think it's a . . . seems to me like you continually get more focused, at least in my life, on what you want to do. I think, really, what you're life is all about, I mean, I think it's just a continual thing where I feel like you grow, kind of to a point, rather than, you know, out into infinity. (Jordan)

Nicklaus viewed the process in terms of aging.

I think it's how you mature, I think is personal growth. How you maybe react to different things differently as you get older as you did when you were younger . . . Um . . . well, take golf for example. I mean, the way you approach the game differs, like your attitude towards the game, how it changes as you get older. Maybe your . . . you want to talk about different reactions, like maybe you start taking it more seriously and stop taking it less seriously. Um, the way you mature as you get older is personal growth to me. (Nicklaus)

In his definition of personal growth, McEnroe explained that the process of growing is in a way a journey that required that he continually strive to improve.

I would have to say personal growth is just improving in all aspects of what you think is important. For instance, academics . . . personal growth in academics would be, you know, doing well in your classes and heading toward your degree and obtaining your degree. And, you know, improving along the way, finding ways to better do it. And in life personal growth is to figure out people more, to learn more from people, and to try to help out with what you do good and improving on what you do good. And athletically personal growth is, I think is maturing . . . improving again and maturing. Not making the same mistakes twice, not . . . you know . . . just to keep improving and to keep getting better and not making the same mistakes you made in the past and learning from your mistakes. (McEnroe)

McEnroe's definition of personal growth was important because it illustrated that maturity was also a continual process. Nicklaus also saw one aspect of maturity, improving, as an ongoing process.

Like I always wanted to improve each summer I wanted to improve a little more. And as long as I keep improving it will still be a goal of mine. And if I stop improving before I want to do anything with it and I'm really working at it and I realize that I can't do it, then maybe I won't turn pro. But until then, as long I keep on improving and still pushing and working hard, and I'll see how good I can be. (Nicklaus)

Players also believed that achieving a balance was a continual process. Bannister described the achievement of a balanced perspective on his identity as a process that occurred over time, through aging.

That's another way I think I've grown is that, when I was younger I think Bannister the athlete or Bannister the runner was kind of my identity and that's what I fell back on at times. And that's what I felt like when I walked around. That's what I was known for . . . looking at me as Bannister, just the athlete. I was one-dimensional. And I feel like now I have a lot more to offer than just that. As a person I think I have more to offer. (Bannister)

He also stated how he had grown in terms of his perspective on sport over the span of his college years.

I went for a run with this girl from the girl's team for the first time since I've been here. To me running was like a real serious job, and I wouldn't go running with a girl because it was like, pathetic to me. But it was kind of a bad attitude to have, so I went running with her for the first time. Since, you know, I'm more mature

now, and this was a couple of weeks ago. And I realized that I didn't have to try to impress her, you know. "She knows you're good, you don't have to try to go out and hammer the pace." So I realized that it wasn't a competitive thing. I was able to make it just a jog, and just relax and not worry about it. (Bannister)

Summary

The players' descriptions of personal growth indicated that it was a process rather than a single occurrence. This process was not complex, though. First, players needed to reflect on past experiences. Reflection occurred at any time, and it involved mentally reviewing past experiences, which included their successes, hardships, interactions with others, and event-related emotions. From these reflections, the players needed to learn at least one thing. The players learned things about themselves in terms of their beliefs and their capabilities, and they were able to incorporate these things into their behaviors.

The players described the process of personal growth as continual, and they perceived their growth as an occurrence over time, over distance, or as a result of aging. Hogan's statement accurately depicted the overall nature of this ongoing process.

Almost I think like you learn something every day from . . . I think you can really learn, you know, every time you get home in the evening, I think I can look back on something that's happened throughout the day that I can learn from. (Hogan)

Experiences occurred every day, and each day provided an opportunity for him to grow. The descriptions from the other players were consistent with the three aspects of the process, i.e., reflecting on past experiences, learning from past experiences, and the continual or ongoing nature of the process.

CHAPTER 8

OUT-OF-SPORT IMPACT OF IN-SPORT EXPERIENCES

To fully comprehend the influence of sport on the development of the student-athletes, it was important to understand the ways in which their sport-specific, personal growth experiences transferred to out-of-sport settings. The third purpose of this study was to determine the impact of the student-athletes' sport-related personal growth experiences on their lives out of the sport setting. In general, the players described positive effects of their sport-related personal growth experiences on their academic and work-related development as well as on their interpersonal development.

Jordan stated, "The things I've learned in sports have taught me something about life." He and the other participants thought that the lessons that they learned through their sport-related experiences applied to non-sport aspects of their lives.

McEnroe believed that he learned the most about himself when he competed in tennis matches. He believed that competing under tournament pressure helped him to balance his emotions, which made him an even better player. McEnroe also believed that achieving this emotional balance would help him to handle the pressure of a job interview.

Well I think it's the same thing in anything else you do. You're still competing. You know, you're competing for good grades. You're competing for people liking you. You're competing for a job. You know, it's still going to come down to a few people, and it's whoever handles the situation better that's going to . . . who's more prepared is going to win. Whether you're going for a job and it's you and another guy, and the other guy had this interview and he's nervous and he hasn't prepared and he doesn't know . . . didn't do good academically or whatever . . . then you go in and you handle yourself a lot better . . . then you're probably going to get the job. I think . . . you can relate it to a lot of things in life, almost anything pretty much. (McEnroe)

McEnroe also believed that interacting within the diversity of his team and interacting with his coaches and opponents helped him to interact with different groups of people.

I think you grow socially too in your personal growth. You learn how to interact with different people from different backgrounds and different cultures better than you did when you first come to school. When you first come to school you're not, if you come from a smaller town or you know, you have your high school and your friends and your sport and you're not really . . . I mean, all those people are from the same area you're from. They're from . . . I mean the act the same as you do usually. And then you come to school and you have a bunch of people from different backgrounds that you meet. And you learn how to, you know . . . when you first get here you're not really sure how to interact with them or whether you like them or this or that. And then you get to know them and you learn how to . . . socially how to handle yourself around people you like or people that you don't like as much. I think you get used to it and you know how to handle those people and you know how to . . . if there is somebody you don't like, you know how to get along with them. (McEnroe)

Hogan learned from his experience in golf that both triumph and adversity can come at any time. He described an experience in which he was playing very well and seemed as though he would shoot a low score in a tournament. But he suddenly went from confidence to self-doubt and his scores became mediocre, at best. He stated that experiences like this one were commonplace in golf, and that he learned to approach the game expecting the unexpected. He believed that this approach applied to situations in the real world, outside of golf.

You've just got to deal with the things that are thrown at you. You've got so many unexpected things happening I guess. Not worrying about how it happened or why it happened or why it happened to you . . . you've just got to make the best of it and not let it get to you. (Hogan)

Bannister's sport experiences impacted his professional life, or at least his soon-to-be professional life. His experience as a student-athlete was demanding both physically and mentally. His training regimen was strenuous, and his time demands were

also strenuous. He accepted additional responsibilities throughout his college career, and his acceptance of these demands helped him in his professional training.

I think I'm more confident in my ability as a person to work, to handle tasks. And with broadcasting . . . I want to be a news producer, and its so deadline-oriented. And so I think, just with the pressures of running and stuff like that, I'm able to handle the deadlines and things like that. (Bannister)

In addition to learning to work under pressure, Bannister's experience as the team leader helped him to develop an interpersonal style that benefits his professional career.

Uh, well, just when I would meet with the head coach and he's kind of an intimidating guy to begin with . . . he's not a real people person . . . so when I go into talk to him, I'm always kind of apprehensive. But I've learned through talking with my coach and the guys to speak with confidence and not be afraid to say what's on my mind. Just to speak confidently . . . and so when I first went to the internship, I had to interview to get into it. And I was real nervous and real intimidated by it, but I think just the experiences of talking in from of the group, talking in front of the whole team with my coach, extensively with the head coach, it just kind of helped relax me. And it gave me confidence that, you know, I'm a leader on this team, I play a big role on this team, I'm ready for this so when I went to talk in the interview, I felt more confident. I think as a person, I think if I wouldn't have had those experiences, I would have been a lot more meek, just meek and, you know, I wouldn't have shown . . . the confidence wouldn't have shown through, I think. I think that was critical. (Bannister)

L.T. believed that the lessons that he learned in football applied to other aspects of his life. He viewed his participation in the college football program as a microcosm of life and the lessons that he learned on the field helped him off the field. He credited his coaches for creating this type of atmosphere within the program and forcing him and the other players to be all they could be in football and in life. His coaches created a strict, almost military-like program that encouraged their players to be committed to excellence both on and off the field. L.T. believed that his participation in this program helped him to meet his academic demands.

Like academics, for one. I mean, coming to City College . . . City College is a pretty tough school. And when I got there, coaches, for one thing, were all over

you about academics. That's one thing. Also I could see a correlation between dedicating myself on the field and the weight room and stuff like that, and the same kind of dedication I had to have in my academics. (L.T.)

Bradshaw's sport experiences as a member of his football team helped him to see the value of having a positive attitude toward challenge. He described his experiences of tough, disappointing losses to the same team for three consecutive years and how learning to cope effectively with those losses enabled his team to win during his senior season. Bradshaw believed that this experience showed him that in challenging situations, he needed to approach that situation positively rather than letting the situation defeat him. Specifically, this experience helped him academically. Bradshaw wanted to attend medical school, but with the extremely high standards of the medical school admissions boards, his grades needed to be exceptionally strong. He faced a challenging experience during his senior year.

The biggest thing with me is, you know, I came out of high school and I was . . . I had one B all through high school . . . so I was a great student. And coming up here, you know, for my first four semesters I was holding a 4.0 and everything. And come that third year when we ended up going to the conference championship and stuff like that, I had my first two Bs in college. And trying to get into med school and knowing that . . . I knew that come time to take the MCAT . . . I hate standardized tests, you know . . . I've always been great in class . . . but come to standardized tests, you know, I'm always average. So I knew I had to have my grades up and I knew I had to have a strong GPA, you know, especially in the sciences. But in the same way with sports, you know, it's never too late to work hard and I got . . . I slacked off I guess, or whatever you want to call it in a couple of classes just because I had other things on my mind. And I made other things more important. So, anyway, after I got those Bs, I was just like, "Listen, it's time to step it up. This isn't gonna keep you out of med school if you stay right here, you're gonna be fine." And so I really had to step it up and bust my butt in the harder classes. (Bradshaw)

Bradshaw's experience in football gave him the perspective he needed to be able to realize the need for positive action in order for him to achieve his academic goals.

Jordan's experience as a member of his basketball team helped him socially outside of the sport setting. His experiences helped him gain understanding of others in social aspects. For instance, through interaction with his coach, who he perceived held a lot of control over his college life, Jordan learned that some things are not worth fighting over and that fighting over them may be harmful to that relationship.

Like your battles with your parents, your battles with your friends, you know, they can be minor but you make it a big deal and if you just kind of overlook them, it can enhance your relationship with them somewhat. (Jordan)

Jordan also gained greater understanding about the perspectives of others through his interaction with his teammates. He was a white athlete on a predominantly black team, and he developed close friendships with his teammates. By developing these relationships with his black teammates, Jordan learned that the challenges that he faced as a student-athlete were different from the challenges that his black teammates faced.

I feel like I've become, you know, more in tune with all the faults you have. Especially, it's just been in the last couple of months, I've thought of the plight of the Black student-athlete here at this school because there's not a whole lot, if you look at the number of Black people here that aren't athletes, you know, there's not many at all. And one of my friends, who is a Black athlete on the basketball team, and he has, you now, he's pre-med and all this. And he's the leader of this thing called the Progressive Student Life here at school, and I heard him talking about one day how certain professors make him feel more a part of the class than some other professors. And I had never really thought about that. I never really thought about how a person, an African-American, I never really thought about them being uncomfortable in class. But he's in one of my classes right now and there's two African-Americans in that class and the rest are White people. I never had really thought about them being treated different. But now, looking back at it, I can see how they would be treated sometimes differently. Because, you know . . . a lot of . . . now this may not be true, this may be strictly stereotype. I don't know . . . but you know . . . of all the students here, you know . . . they see the Black athletes as just coming here to play sports and that's all they care about. And many of them are somewhat cocky and stuff like that. And, you know, when they first get into class they might be a little bit shaky in how I want to relate to them. And this is not all students, it's just some of the students. At first they're kind of cautious and as they get to know Black people like my friend. They

realize how much alike they really are or they can be. That's just something I've seen at least. (Jordan)

Jenner learned through a disappointing and embarrassing performance in a track meet that he needed to attain mental and emotional balance in order to perform better. From this experience Jenner found that the same principle applied to aspects off the track. Balance was equally important in the improvement and maintenance of his social network.

Socially, I've been so wrapped up in trying to make this relationship work with this girlfriend that, again, I was just standing on one leg, per se. And now I have the balance of other friends, female or male, and so when that doesn't work, you're left high and dry. So I've learned to keep my balance of friends and continue to grow friendships and not let go of old friendships. I call friends that mean so much to me and to not let those go. So I've learned to expand, in that sense, personal growth socially by not depending on just one or two socially. (Jenner)

Nicklaus believed that his participation in college golf made his life different by affording him opportunities that he may not have otherwise had.

But how did it affect me outside of sport? Yeah it affected me a lot. I've traveled around a lot. In the summer I played about a tournament a week, or I try to. And I would like to have a real job in the summertime like most kids do and work five days a week and be around my friends. But I enjoy traveling around different parts of the country playing in tournaments. I've made a lot of friends that way. So definitely if I wasn't playing, I don't know what I'd do. It would be interesting. I'd have a lot more free time, that's for sure. (Nicklaus)

Reflecting on his participation, Nicklaus saw that college golf was a top priority and that his life would be different if he had not played. He realized that his perspective on life and the importance of golf in his life would have been different. He may not have seen as many different places or met so many different people, and he believed that his college years would have been quite different if he had not been a member of the golf team.

Summary

The players varied in their perceptions of the ways in which their sport experiences affected their out-of-sport lives, but all of their perceptions were positive. The players all believed that participation in sport had positive influences on the other facets of their lives, which included primarily academic and social aspects. They learned that values like hard work and dedication apply to non-sport situations. For instance, expending the same amount of effort on their academics as they did on their athletics led to academic success. They also learned about themselves in terms of their own capabilities, such as handling the academic pressures of the pre-medicine major, handling the pressure of deadlines in a professional internship, or effectively coping with unexpected occurrences. The players also learned to develop better interpersonal relationships. For example, one participant put his friendships as a higher priority in his life while another participant developed greater empathy and respect for individuals who faced difficult social challenges due to their ethnic backgrounds. The players were able to transfer the skills from sport settings to non-sport settings.

CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was threefold: (a) to determine student-athletes' perceptions of personal growth; (b) to determine the characteristics of personal growth experiences of student-athletes; and (c) to determine the impact of in-sport growth experiences on out-of-sport lives of student-athletes. This section is an overview of how these individuals defined personal growth, how they characterized their personal growth experiences, and how those sport experiences influenced their non-sport lives.

Perceptions of Personal Growth

Several of the players perceived personal growth to be synonymous with maturity. The other players described their perceptions in bits and pieces that together constructed their meaning of personal growth, which consisted of achieving balance and expanding their capabilities.

Achieving Balance

Each player discussed aspects of their lives in which they had attained a sense of balance. They described this balance in terms of a sense of control over certain aspects of their lives. These aspects included priorities, emotions, perspectives, and responsibilities.

The players discussed balancing their priorities, which primarily involved athletics and academics. This prioritization meant that the players learned to determine what was most important in their respective lives. For instance, Nicklaus viewed golf as most important because he was interested in possibly pursuing professional golf as a

career. Hogan and Jenner felt like their best career opportunities required strong academic preparation, so they put education ahead of sport. It was apparent that only the player could determine which choice was better.

College is usually the first time adolescents leave home and live away from their parents. It is typically the time when young adults begin to make independent decisions. Through their college years, these players began to make independent choices with regard to their futures. They looked at the options for their lives after college and made informed decisions based on what they planned to do in the future and which of the current options were best suited to help them to prepare. Some chose athletics; others chose academics.

Like the athletes, who had experienced season-ending injuries in the Udry et al. Study (1997), the student-athletes in the current study also were able to clarify their priorities. They realized that sport was only a part of their lives and that their education and interpersonal relationships were important aspects as well.

The balance that the players achieved with their emotions involved two different aspects. First, several of the players realized that their emotions affected their competitive performances. This realization was important because these players became aware of the fact that in order to perform at their best, they needed to have more than just physical skill. They not only recognized the importance of emotional balance for optimal performance, but they managed to achieve that balance. For instance, Hogan learned to play golf under competitive pressure, and McEnroe learned to control his emotions in big tennis matches. This is consistent with the findings of other researchers that learning to

decrease or control one's anxiety is one aspect of personal growth (Thomas, 1978; Wankel & Berger, 1990).

Several of the participants began to perceive the role of sport in their lives from a different point of view. For some players, sport began to carry less importance in their lives while, for others, sport became more important. For those players who perceived sport as less important, they began to enjoy participating in their sport instead of working so hard to excel. This change in perspective did not mean that their performance level decreased. Instead, their performance did not dramatically change, but their ability to see their performance, good or bad, in the big picture of their lives increased. These players perceived the significance of their performance as relatively less important in relation to other concerns in their lives, like school, friends, and family. For other players, sport became more important and these players approached their sports more seriously. These players believed that they could make careers as professional athletes.

Regardless of the direction of the changes in the participants' perspectives, these changes indicated that these student-athletes had started to weigh their options for the future. Some made plans to pursue careers in professional sport while others had career plans in fields that were not sport-related. This finding contradicts the beliefs of several researchers and college athletic administrators (Sowa & Gressard, 1983; Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Jordan & Denson, 1990; Parham, 1993; NCAA, 1995) who have proposed that participation in college athletics hindered the development of career goals.

Learning to manage personal responsibilities is a difficult task, but one that must be addressed in order to succeed. For most college students, academic responsibilities dominate their lives. But college student-athletes have additional responsibilities. Not

only do they have the same academic requirements as regular college students, but also they have athletic responsibilities in which they must maintain high performance in order to remain student-athletes.

Parham (1993) stated that a primary issue for college student-athletes was the challenge of balancing athletic and academic responsibilities. But several of the participants in this study indicated that they were able to learn to manage their responsibilities as they progressed through college. Their success in maintaining this balance was due to improved time management skills and increased efficiency in the amount of effort expended on their respective duties. These responsibilities included their duties as team members or leaders and their duties as students pursuing their college degrees. The participants' descriptions regarding their improved ability to handle both athletic and academic requirements support the findings of Ryan (1989), who determined that, despite the additional responsibilities, participation in college athletics was associated with increased motivation to earn the bachelor's degree.

Related to this issue was their ability to prepare for their lives after graduation. At the time of the interviews, only one participant had planned to pursue a career in professional sport. The other seven participants had started to prepare for their careers by focusing more effort on their academic performance. Several of the participants had even begun their professional careers by engaging in internships in their fields of study. This finding contradicts the results of Sowa and Gressard (1983), who found, through the use of a standardized inventory, that student-athletes had difficulty formulating well-defined plans for educational and career success. This contradiction in findings may have been due to the progressive changes in intercollegiate athletics over the past fifteen years that

focus on the complete development of student-athletes or to the difference in the type of research methodology. In summary, the student-athletes in this study developed career plans and prioritized the academic and athletic aspects of their lives accordingly.

Expanding their Capabilities

The participants described the ways in which they pushed beyond their limits. Some players were pushed by coaches, while others were pushed by teammates. This expansion was characterized by the student-athletes' descriptions of their improvement in both athletic and interpersonal skills.

Several of the participants described the ways in which they improved athletically. The results indicate that the improvement described by the players did not involve improvement of physical athletic skills. The skills that improved were mental skills, which included learning to handle competitive pressure, overcoming fear, increasing attentional focus, and increasing self-confidence. These results supported the thoughts of Kimiecik and Jackson (1994), who believed that personal growth occurred for athletes when they learned new skills that expanded their athletic performance capabilities. Czikszenmihalyi (1997) also stated that individuals experienced growth as they increased their level of complexity, which involved learning and integrating new skills into their behavior.

The players stated that they improved their interpersonal skills with other individuals within college athletics. These skills included the ability to effectively communicate with others and the ability to relate to different types of people. The student-athletes' descriptions of their improved skills support the definition of Jensen and Young (1981), who also believed that improving interpersonal skills was an aspect of

personal growth. They characterized interpersonal effectiveness as an expansion of capacity for responding to others, cooperating with others, and communicating with others (Jensen & Young, 1981).

The skills that these participants discussed were limited to their interactions within sport. They learned to interact with teammates and opponents from different cultures, as well as, to empathize with the social challenges that these student-athletes faced as individuals trying to succeed in a foreign culture. They also learned to communicate more effectively by speaking with confidence to their teammates at team meetings and to their coaches in private meetings. The findings from this study support the notions of other researchers (McClure et al., 1988; McClure & Foster, 1991), who suggested that improved interpersonal skills were an aspect of personal growth.

In addition to achieving balance and expanding capabilities, personal growth in sport involved an aspect of character development. Rudd (1998) determined that sport participation built social character, which included values such as cooperation, loyalty, perseverance, and self-sacrifice. The participants' descriptions of their perceptions of personal growth support this finding. The student-athletes stated that they learned to be an effective team player, contributing to the team's performance in competition as well as to the team's cohesion. Their contributions involved working hard to improve their personal performance, learning to relate better to their teammates and coaches, and accepting responsibility for the team's successes and failures. These findings suggest that the development of social character may be one aspect of the personal growth of athletes.

The Process of Personal Growth

The participants described three aspects of the personal growth process. The first aspect of the process was reflecting on past experiences. Five players indicated that they grew from reflecting on their experiences. It was as though those experiences held no significance until the players thought about them and the impact they had on their lives. The second aspect of the personal growth process was learning. This step occurred after reflection on past experiences. The players learned new things about themselves from their various experiences. Incorporating the things that they had learned into their athletic lives led to their personal growth.

The third aspect of the process of personal growth was that it was not a singular occurrence that happened and then stopped. It was a continual progression that occurred over a period of time. The participants stated how they had changed throughout their college years, as both athletes and individuals. This finding supported the perceptions of other researchers who believe that growth occurs over time. These researchers have investigated personal growth through the use of fifteen-week programs (McClure et al., 1988; McClure & Foster, 1991), implying that growth occurs gradually over time rather than immediately. Danish and Nellen (1997) also developed programs that lasted for ten weeks aimed at personal development and life skills, facilitating gradual development rather than immediate results.

As the players progressed through their college athletic careers, they believed that they were continually learning new things about themselves. They learned new skills, both athletic and interpersonal, and incorporated those skills into their behaviors in order to become well-rounded student-athletes and individuals. This finding supports

Czikszentmihalyi's (1997) theory of growth, which states that individuals became more complex or developed as they learn new skills and incorporate them into their behavior. The participants also believed that the process of personal growth would continue throughout their athletic lives.

Researchers from different fields have presented their theories and thoughts about personal growth in sport, and these researchers have individually accounted for small pieces of the puzzle that composed the entire meaning and process of personal growth in sport. This study focused on personal growth as the single topic of study, and the findings illustrated the phenomenon of personal growth of a specific population of athletes and consolidated each of those individual contributions of previous researchers.

Characteristics of Personal Growth Experiences

The players described three types of experiences that they perceived to facilitate their personal growth as student-athletes. The three types of experiences included: (a) successes and hardships; (b) interaction with others; and (c) event-related emotions.

The successes experienced by the players included accomplishing personal goals and winning, either individually or as part of a team. The personal goals that two of the players accomplished included making the starting line-up on their respective teams. Both players cited hard work and consistent effort as the reasons for their accomplishments. This notion of persistence and hard work also applied to winning in both team and individual settings. The players who experienced victory, either individually or with a team, cited only victories that occurred through effort. None of the players described easy wins as personal growth experiences.

The hardships experienced by the players included losses and personal setbacks, which primarily included athletic injuries. Results from a study of professional alpine skiers (Udry et al., 1997) indicated that personal growth occurred as a result of a season-ending injury. This finding was consistent with the findings of the current study. Several of the participants discussed their athletic injuries as experiences that facilitated their personal growth. These participants stated that their injuries helped them to clarify their priorities and gain a clearer perspective of the importance of sport in relation to the other aspects of their lives.

Several of the participants perceived their interactions with their teammates, coaches, and opponents as experiences that improved their interpersonal capabilities. These interactions were spontaneous and unstructured, meaning that they were not planned in advance for the purpose of improving the individuals' interpersonal skills. Participants described their interactions as both positive and negative and as interactions that occurred in various settings, from high-pressure competitions to low-pressure team meetings. In summary, these interactions occurred through the usual course of participation in college athletics.

The participants cited many emotional incidents. From the participants' descriptions, the emotions elicited by the specific events seemed to have a greater impact on the student-athletes than the actual events. In general, the student-athletes felt emotions that made them examine their behaviors and beliefs, and these introspections were catalysts for changes in their behaviors and beliefs.

The descriptions of these student-athletes illustrated the characteristics of their experiences that they perceived to facilitate their personal growth. These descriptions

resembled the program descriptions of researchers and sport program administrators. For instance, Jensen and Young (1981) facilitated personal growth in participants of outdoor adventure programs. This growth was due to the involvement of participants in physically and psychologically demanding circumstances that required personal effort. Involvement in college athletics, according to the descriptions of the student-athletes, provided similar growth experiences. High-pressure competitions in college athletics demand physical and psychological effort, and participation in these competitions provided different types of growth experiences for the student-athletes. In these competitions the student-athletes experienced successes, hardships, meaningful interactions with teammates and opponents, and a variety of emotions that facilitated their personal growth.

Other researchers have used sport-related programs to facilitate different aspects of personal growth. Collingwood (1997) used a physical fitness program to help participants to develop goal-setting and planning skills. Several researchers used group counseling strategies to foster open communication among individuals and to raise awareness of interpersonal similarities and differences (Maher, 1981; McClure et al., 1988; McClure & Foster, 1991). These programs attempted to facilitate specific aspects of personal growth, but implementation and evaluation of the effectiveness of these programs indicated little success. The related experiences described by the student-athletes facilitated growth because they were meaningful to the individual student-athletes. Structured programs, like those cited above, may have been more successful if the activities were meaningful for the participants. But creating programs that are

meaningful for all participants is difficult because each individual has a unique perception of what is or is not meaningful.

Overall, within the present study, the personal growth experiences described by the student-athletes were typical occurrences associated with participation in college athletics. None of the experiences were planned or structured with the intent of facilitating individual growth. All experiences occurred randomly, and the importance of each experience was determined individually by each student-athlete. The use of structured programming showed marginal results in facilitating student-athlete growth; however, these weak results do not mean that these programs are useless. Structured programming, though, needs to incorporate descriptions of the types of experiences that student-athletes perceive to be meaningful, which may increase the likelihood of developing meaningful program activities for the participants.

Out-of-Sport Impact of In-Sport Experiences

King (1990) stated that students create personal meanings from their experiences and that the impact of those experiences on each student depends on the student's personal interpretation of the experience. In the current study the participants discussed experiences that were primarily sport-related, and the impact of these experiences that the participants described primarily involved positive effects on non-sport aspects of their lives. None of the student-athletes mentioned negative effects of their sport experiences.

Researchers have theorized that skills learned through sport participation could be transferred to non-sport settings (Danish & Nellen, 1997). To facilitate this transfer of skills, these researchers created programs that promoted the development of life skills. The purpose of these programs was to help sport participants to become fully functioning

individuals by using sport skills, such as goal setting, to bolster other aspects of their lives. These programs were effective in increasing the confidence and competence of the participants in academic and social areas (Danish & Nellen, 1997). Findings from the current study also indicated that college student-athletes were able to apply the growth that they experienced in sport to academic and social aspects of their lives as well as to their career planning. For student-athletes, these specific areas of impact were predictable because academic, social, and career issues are the concerns of most college students (Parham, 1993).

Overall, their positive and negative sport experiences were beneficial to the student-athletes. These participants learned lessons about sport and about the effects of sport on their lives, and they were able to use this new knowledge to become better athletes and well-rounded, mature individuals. These results support the findings of Jones (1996), which determined that participation in college athletics resulted in increased feelings of independence, responsibility, and maturity.

College Student Development

The findings from this study illustrate the phenomenon of personal growth in sport from the perspective of a small, specific population of athletes. But these athletes were also college students. Thus, stating that their descriptions of their personal growth pertained only to athletics would be incomplete.

Astin (1984) theorized that greater student involvement in college activities led to greater opportunities for learning and personal development. From this perspective, the student-athletes in this study had ample opportunities for personal development because each participant was committed to their sport and their team.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) believed that development as individuals was a primary issue for college students. They theorized that college students developed in seven areas that comprised their individual identities. Their theory did not exclude any specific populations of college students, but it also did not make claims about the application of their theory to specific populations. The point is that the descriptions of personal growth from college student-athletes resemble the areas of individual development detailed by Chickering and Reisser (1993), except that the development of the student-athletes is within sport-related settings rather than their lives in general.

The first area through which college students progressed on their path to individual development, according to Chickering and Reisser (1993), was developing competence in their ability to set goals and overcome challenges along the way to achieving those goals. One of the attributes of personal growth, according to the student-athletes, was expanding their athletic capabilities. Participants learned to set personal goals, such as winning a golf tournament or earning a starting position on the football team, and they described how they overcame personal setbacks and worked hard to achieve those goals. Chickering and Reisser (1993) did not specify the domain of their theory, but with the similarity between this vector of individual development and the student-athletes' descriptions of this aspect of personal growth, it seemed as though their theory is supported by the present findings in the athletic domain.

The second vector of individual development in Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory was the college students' ability to effectively manage their emotions and respond with responsible behaviors. In their descriptions of personal growth, several of the present student-athletes discussed how they learned to balance their emotions with regard

to their sport. They learned to effectively control their emotions in competition to enhance their performance, and they also learned to handle their emotions, as well as their behavioral reactions, with regard to both positive and negative outcomes in those competitions.

The next area of individual development, according to Chickering and Reisser (1993) involved the students' increased ability to developing mature interpersonal relationships. This vector was characterized by developing healthy interpersonal relationships as well as gaining appreciation of interpersonal and intercultural differences. This description resembles the student-athletes' descriptions of their improvement in their interpersonal skills. Several of the participants discussed how they expanded their interpersonal capabilities within their athletic domain. Some learned to interact with their teammates and coaches and were able to develop strong friendships. Other participants stated that, through their interaction with different types of people who were teammates or opponents, they had become more aware of the similarities and differences among individuals. One participant described the international make-up of his tennis team and that participating on that team had helped him to interact with individuals from different cultures. Another participant stated that his friendships with his African-American teammates helped him to empathize with their social challenges at a college with a predominantly southern, Caucasian student body.

Another similarity between the student-athletes' descriptions of personal growth and Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory of individual development involved the college students' establishment of their own identity. This vector of individual development was characterized by self-acceptance (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). In their

descriptions of personal growth, the student-athletes indicated that they had gained new perspectives regarding the role of sport in their lives. Many of the participants realized that they were becoming one-dimensional individuals whose identities were strictly athletic. These participants enjoyed this identity when they were freshmen and sophomores. But as they progressed through college, they realized that they needed to develop other aspects of their lives in order to become the individuals that they wanted to become. These participants realized that sport was not the only aspect of their lives, and they gained confidence in themselves as more than just athletes.

By gaining perspective on the decreasing importance of sport in their lives and the increasing importance of other pursuits, these student-athletes began to develop purpose in their lives. This progress was also a step toward individual development, according to Chickering and Reisser (1993), and was characterized by the development and committed pursuit of vocational and personal goals. By choosing to become fully functioning individuals instead of one-dimensional athletes, these student-athletes chose to put more effort into their academic performance and their professional development in their respective fields of study. They managed their time to accommodate their academic responsibilities as well as their internships and related professional activities.

The presence of these similarities between the personal growth of student-athletes and the individual development of college students may indicate that the perceptions among many college-aged individuals are similar. Student-athletes perceived their personal growth in sport in terms of the different vectors of individual development theorized by Chickering and Reisser (1993). The similarities between this theory and the descriptions of the participants in the present study indicate that student-athletes

experience growth and development through their participation in collegiate athletics.

To get a more complete picture of the phenomenon of personal growth in college sport, it may be necessary to examine the perceptions of several different populations of student-athletes, such as female and African-American student-athletes and intramural/recreational athletes.

Applications

College athletics administrators have indicated that the personal development of their student-athletes is a top priority for their athletics program (Chelladurai & Danylchuk, 1984; Onifade, 1993). Thomas and Ermler (1988) proposed that college athletics administrators needed to assist their student-athletes with their development throughout their college careers. They believed that verbal communication, critical thinking, independence, and social interaction skills should be learned in college to help student-athletes to succeed after graduation, and they believed that the institutions should accept the responsibility to help their student-athletes to develop these skills (Thomas & Ermler, 1988).

The findings of this study can be applied in the development of specialized programming that meet the needs of student-athletes while they are enrolled in college. One such program has already been developed. The CHAMPS/Life Skills program (NCAA, 1995) was designed to, among other things, foster personal development in student-athletes, and this development included such things as time management, social development, career development, and academic responsibility. Many of the facets of this comprehensive program touch on the same characteristics that the student-athletes described as personal growth in this study.

The CHAMPS program touches on the general aspects of personal growth, but the responses from the student-athletes in this study could be considered in order to make the existing programs even more effective. For instance, offering programs to facilitate different aspects of personal growth would be useless if the activities were not meaningful to the student-athletes. The descriptions of the characteristics of growth experiences in this study could be applied to the development of effective, meaningful activities for the CHAMPS program.

In addition to developing meaningful activities, incorporating additional aspects of the growth process into the program could make those programs even more effective. For instance, since reflection and learning are key components of the growth process, program administrators could employ athletic and non-athletic advisors to meet with the student-athletes after completing specific programs to reflect on their experiences and to help the student-athletes to determine what they learned and how to apply those lessons to their athletic and non-athletic lives.

Although the CHAMPS/Life Skills program contains specific programs on topics that involve personal growth, those programs are structured in nature. Based on the ineffectiveness of other structured programs to facilitate personal growth and development (McClure et al., 1988; McClure & Foster, 1991), serious thought must be given to the types of activities that are offered to ensure that they effectively achieve their purposes. These activities must be meaningful to the participants. If administrators only offer structured programs, administrators can employ trained professionals or coaches to help individual student-athletes to reflect on past activity experiences so that those activities become meaningful.

In addition to helping student-athletes reflect on and learn from structured activities, advisors could also facilitate reflection and learning from athletic experiences associated with participation in college athletics. If these professionals could help the student-athletes to learn at least one lesson from each experience upon which they reflect, then those student-athletes could experience growth from every athletic experience.

CHAPTER 10

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purposes of this study were: (a) to determine student-athletes' perceptions of personal growth; (b) to determine the characteristics of personal growth experiences of student-athletes; and (c) to determine the impact of in-sport growth experiences on out-of-sport lives of student-athletes. The participants were eight male, Caucasian collegiate student-athletes who had competed in college athletics for a minimum of two years prior to the study. A qualitative methodology was used.

The in-depth interviews were semi-structured so that the participants could respond in their own words to the specific topics of interest. The specific areas that were probed included: (a) perceptions of the meaning of personal growth; (b) characteristics of their personal growth experiences; and (c) ways in which their sport-related experiences influenced their non-sport lives. The themes that emerged from their perceptions of the meaning of personal growth were: (a) achieving balance and (b) expanding capabilities. Sub-themes of achieving balance included: (a) balancing priorities; (b) balancing emotions; (c) balancing perspectives; and (d) balancing responsibilities. Sub-themes of expanding capabilities included: (a) improving athletic skills and (b) improving interpersonal skills. The themes that emerged regarding the characteristics of their personal growth experiences were: (a) success and hardship; (b) interaction with others, including teammates, coaches, and opponents; and (c) event-related emotions. No themes emerged regarding the influence of sport-related experiences on non-sport aspects of their lives. Instead, individual perceptions of this

influence were discussed for each participant. In addition to these three areas of interest, results indicated three characteristics of the process of personal growth in college student-athletes. These findings suggested that the process was continual or ongoing and involved reflecting on and learning from past experiences. All themes and additional findings were discussed further and compared to results and/or conjectures from previous research.

As suggested earlier in this study, the responses of these student-athletes were not intended to be generalized to all student-athletes. The experiences of these eight Caucasian males resulted in themes and additional information that supported, opposed, and added to the existing knowledge about personal growth in sport. The insight provided by this small group of student-athletes implies that other student-athletes might have similar perceptions and experiences. However, further investigation of student-athletes' perceptions about personal growth and their personal growth experiences is necessary.

The findings from these interviews indicated the student-athletes' understanding about personal growth in sport. They believed that it was a continual process of maturity, which consisted of achieving balance in various aspects of their sport-related lives and expanding their capabilities athletically and interpersonally.

These student-athletes reflected on past sport-related experiences in order to learn to achieve balance with four aspects of their sport lives. During their collegiate athletic careers they learned to balance their athletic and academic priorities, their performance-related emotions, their perspectives toward sport and the role of sport in their lives, and

their athletic and academic responsibilities. They also learned to expand their abilities and improve their athletic and interpersonal skills.

The sport-related experiences on which the student-athletes reflected included three different types of experiences. Some experienced success, which consisted of reaching personal goals like winning or making the starting line-up on the team, and some experienced hardship, which consisted of competitive losses, failure to achieve personal goals, and injuries. These student-athletes also grew through their interactions with others, including their teammates, coaches, and opponents. These interactions were both positive and negative in nature. The third type of growth experience was feeling event-related emotions. These emotions were typically the result of a specific sport-related occurrence, like a tough loss, a poor performance, or a big win. Their emotional reactions to these occurrences were both positive and negative and included emotions such as anger, discouragement, intimidation, disappointment, embarrassment, frustration, and humility.

The sport-related experiences experienced by the student-athletes influenced various aspects of their lives away from sport. No themes emerged from the responses of the participants, as their individual experiences influenced each individual differently. However, based on their individual perceptions, their sport-related experiences generally helped these student-athletes to succeed academically and socially.

Conclusions

The results of this study indicate that student-athletes have similar perceptions about the meaning of personal growth, and the characteristics of these perceptions resemble the characteristics of individual development of college students theorized by

Chickering and Reisser (1993). This similarity suggests that college student-athletes experience the same growth and development as college students, despite the unique challenges that they face. Because of the time spent competing or practicing, student-athletes experience growth from sport-related experiences while regular students may experience growth from typical college experiences, such as participation in student government, Greek life, or academic activities. Moreover, the growth that student-athletes experience in sport can transfer to academic, social, and professional settings, enabling these students to grow and develop as athletes and as individuals.

Findings also support the notion that sport participation is beneficial to student-athletes. Jones (1996) found similar support for the positive effects of sport participation from the perceptions of female, African-American student-athletes. The perceptions of the male, Caucasian student-athletes in the present study are similar to the viewpoints of the female, African-American student-athletes (Jones, 1996), suggesting that perceptions between genders and cultures may be similar. Research on these populations of student-athletes is necessary to determine if these findings accurately depict personal growth in college sport.

The perceptions of these student-athletes also support the notion that sport participation is beneficial to athletes, in general. The participants perceived personal growth as a positive outcome of their participation in college sport. Although this population of athletes is unique, their descriptions depict sport as a positive influence in their lives.

Recommendations

Recommendations for future research include: (a) examining perceptions of personal growth of other populations of student-athletes, e.g., by race or gender, while they are still competing in intercollegiate athletics; (b) examining the perceptions of personal growth of other populations of athletes, e.g., professional, amateur, and recreational; (c) examining the characteristics of personal growth experiences of other populations of athletes, e.g., professional, amateur, and recreational; (d) studying the specific type of personal growth from specific personal growth experiences; (e) examining the effects of different coaching styles on the growth of student-athletes; (f) investigating the perceptions of individual-sport athletes and the perceptions of team-sport athletes; (g) studying the perceptions of personal growth and growth experiences of first-year student-athletes compared to third or fourth-year student-athletes; (h) examining the perceptions of college student-athletes who lose their status as student-athletes, either through being injured, being cut from the team, or dropping out; (i) examining the perceived impact of collegiate sport participation and the perceived benefit of developmental programs from the perceptions of student-athletes, coaches, athletic administrators, and parents; (j) due to the contradiction with previous research, it is necessary to investigate the perceived ability of student-athletes to effectively handle their academic and athletic responsibilities and to set and pursue career goals.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

September 29, 1998

Mr. Shawn Stewart
1629 Cumberland Avenue
Knoxville, TN 37916
(423) 595-7660

Athletic Director Name
Director of Athletics
School Name
School Address 1
School Address 2

Dear (Athletic Director),

I would like your permission to select seven to ten student-athletes from the athletic department here at the (school name) to participate in a study that will fulfill part of my requirements for my doctoral degree in sport psychology. This study will be conducted in an effort to acquire information from student-athletes related to the experience of personal growth as an athlete. This study will include participation in two personal interviews. The interviews will take approximately 60-90 minutes each, and they will need to be audiotaped in order to insure accuracy in interpreting and reporting the results. During each interview they will have the opportunity: (a) to listen to their audiotape of the previous interview; (b) to read the transcript and my summary of the previous interview; and (c) to modify, verify, and/or change the information they shared in the previous interview. Their participation in the study is voluntary, and they may choose to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Information that they provide will be kept confidential. They will select a pseudonym for use during the interviews, on the audiotapes, in the written transcripts, and in the reporting of the results of the study. All interview tapes will be transcribed by the interviewer alone, with the only other person having access to them being my academic advisor. The audiotapes will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my advisors office until the completion of the study, at which time they will be destroyed. In reporting the results of the study and in the transcripts, the participants will not be mentioned except by use of a pseudonym or false name. My dissertation committee and a group of qualitative researchers, who will sign a statement of confidentiality, will have access to the transcripts as part of the process to determine the accuracy of my interpretation of the interview information.

There are no potential risks involved in this study. The student-athletes are under no obligation to complete the study and may withdraw at any time without penalty. The goal of this study is to help collegiate student-athletes and athletic administrators to gain insight into the personal growth experiences of athletes. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Shawn Stewart
Ph.D. Candidate

I hereby grant Shawn Stewart permission to approach student-athletes from (school name) to participate in this study.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

September 29, 1998

Mr. Shawn Stewart
1629 Cumberland Avenue
Knoxville, TN 37916
(423) 595-7660

Coach's Name
Head Coach – (Sport)
School Name
School Address 1
School Address 2

Dear (Coach's Name),

I would like your permission to approach one or more of your players from the (sport) team here at the (school name) to participate in a study that will fulfill part of my requirements for my doctoral degree in sport psychology. This study will be conducted in an effort to acquire information from student-athletes related to the experience of personal growth as an athlete. This study will include participation in two personal interviews. The interviews will take approximately 30-90 minutes each, and they will need to be audiotaped in order to insure accuracy in interpreting and reporting the results. During each interview they will have the opportunity: (a) to listen to their audiotape of the previous interview; (b) to read the transcript and my summary of the previous interview; and (c) to modify, verify, and/or change the information they shared in the previous interview. Their participation in the study is voluntary, and they may choose to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Information that they provide will be kept confidential. They will select a pseudonym for use during the interviews, on the audiotapes, in the written transcripts, and in the reporting of the results of the study. All interview tapes will be transcribed by the primary researcher alone, with the only other person having access to them being my academic advisor. The audiotapes will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my advisors office until the completion of the study, at which time they will be destroyed. In reporting the results of the study and in the transcripts, the participants will not be mentioned except by use of a pseudonym or false name. My dissertation committee and a group of qualitative researchers, who will sign a statement of confidentiality, will have access to the transcripts as part of the process to determine the accuracy of my interpretation of the interview information.

There are no potential risks involved in this study. The student-athletes are under no obligation to complete the study and may withdraw at any time without penalty. The goal of this study is to help collegiate student-athletes and athletic administrators to gain insight into the personal growth experiences of athletes. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Shawn Stewart
Ph.D. Candidate

I hereby grant permission to Shawn Stewart to approach (sport) players from the (school name) to participate in this study.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT

TITLE

Growing Pains: A Qualitative Study of Personal Growth Experiences of Collegiate Student-Athletes

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study, which is part of my Ph.D. dissertation requirements, will be conducted in an effort to acquire information from approximately seven to ten collegiate student-athletes related to the experience of personal growth as an athlete. This study will include participation in two personal interviews. The interviews will take approximately 30-90 minutes each, and they will need to be audiotaped in order to insure accuracy in interpreting and reporting the results. During each interview you will have the opportunity: (a) to listen to your audiotape of the previous interview; (b) to read the transcript and my summary of the previous interview; and (c) to modify, verify, and/or change the information you shared in the previous interview. Your participation in the study is voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time without penalty.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information that you provide will be kept confidential. You will select a pseudonym for use during the interviews, on the audiotapes, in the written transcripts, and in the reporting of the results of the study. The primary researcher alone will transcribe all interview tapes, with the only other person having access to them being my academic advisor. The audiotapes will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my advisor's office until the completion of the study, at which time they will be destroyed. In reporting the results of the study and in the transcripts, you will not be mentioned except by use of a pseudonym or false name. My dissertation committee and a group of qualitative researchers, who will sign a statement of confidentiality, will have access to the transcripts as part of the process to determine the accuracy of my interpretation of the interview information.

POTENTIAL RISKS

There are no potential risks involved in this study. You are under no obligation to complete the study and may withdraw at any time without penalty. The consent forms will be kept in a locked file cabinet for three years at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Participation in this study may help collegiate student-athletes and athletic administrators to gain insight into the personal growth experiences of athletes.

I have read and understand the procedures and potential risks involved in my role, and I have received a copy of this consent form. I agree to participate in the research project.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

PRINTED NAME _____

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Shawn Stewart or Pat Beitel, (423) 974-5111, Sport and Physical Activity Unit, 1914 Andy Holt Ave., The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37996-2700.

APPENDIX D

DISCUSSION GUIDE

The following are lead questions and probe questions used to gather subjective information from each participant regarding their personal growth experiences as athletes. The time of response to these questions is designed to last no longer than 90 minutes.

1. Tell me what personal growth means to you.
2. Tell me about a time when you experienced personal growth in college sports.
 - a. How did you grow?
 - b. How has this experience affected your life in and out of sports?
3. What other personal growth experiences have you had in collegiate sports?
 - a. How did you grow?
 - b. How has this experience affected your life in and out of sports?

The following questions and statements will be used in an effort to probe in order to gain as much information as possible during the interviews:

Please describe that.

Can you give me an example?

Please expand on that.

Can you explain that?

How did you feel about that?

VITA

William Henry Shawn Stewart was born in Upper Montclair, New Jersey on January 31, 1970. He graduated from Douglas Freeman High school in June, 1988, where he earned numerous awards and recognition in varsity golf. The following August he enrolled at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. After one year in college he chose to take a break from academic work and moved to Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida where he worked at a golf course and honed his golf ability. The following September he enrolled at Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia where he was a member of the golf team. After one year he transferred to the University of Virginia, where he was also a member of the golf team. After two years at Virginia he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree, specializing in Psychology. One year later he enrolled at the University of Maryland in College Park, Maryland where he began working toward a Master of Science degree, specializing in Kinesiology. Two years later he enrolled at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee, and in August of 1999 he received a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education, with a specialization in Sport Psychology.