Who Am I to Become?

A Longitudinal Qualitative Analysis of Identity Transition in Student Athletes

Sari Little

Submitted to the graduate degree program in Health, Sport, & Exercise Science and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dissertation Defense Date: April 20, 2020

_____

Chair: Dr. Jordan Bass

_____

Dr. Brian Gordon

_____

Dr. Susan Harvey

_____

Dr. Zachary Foste

_____

Dr. Susan Williams

Date of Defense: 20 April 2020

The dissertation committee for Sari J. Little certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Who Am I to Become?

A Longitudinal Qualitative Analysis of Identity Transition in Student Athletes

_____

Dr. Jordan Bass, Chair

Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore and establish a better understanding of how student athletes identify themselves and create understanding of their transition out of their final year of baccalaureate study and intercollegiate athletic eligibility. The study is supported by three primary theoretical frameworks: identity theory; social identity theory; and transition theory. Further, research on student athlete identity, athlete identity threat and foreclosure, and student athlete career decision-making self-efficacy and career preparedness also bolsters this study. Because this study seeks to create understanding of the lived experiences of its participants, it is qualitative in nature. Specifically, the study subscribes to the phenomenological methodology due to the descriptive and exploratory nature of the study's purpose. The study consists of twelve interviews from six participants. The first interview with each participant occurred weeks prior to graduating from college; the second interview took place roughly six months post-graduation. This longitudinal timeline was implemented to account for each participant transitioning from their student athlete experience into various professional endeavors. The interviews in this study were semi-structured to allow for conversational dialogue between the researcher and participant, thus aligning with the phenomenological framework. In lieu of traditional qualitative data analysis methods, the *Listening Guide* is the analytic tool implemented in this study. The *Listening* Guide is chosen specifically for it's qualitative, relational and voice-centered data analysis approach. While traditional research designs call for the research findings to be presented in one chapter and discussed in the next, this study is unorthodox in its approach. A study of this nature is better presented as an infusion of finding and discussion per participant, as opposed to presenting the findings of all twelve interviews and then discussing them collectively.

After an in-depth analysis of each participant's findings, the study concludes with an acknowledgement of the research limitations as well as directions for future research.

Acknowledgements

If you would have told me five years ago that I would be sitting in an apartment in Lawrence, Kansas, writing acknowledgements for a doctoral dissertation, I would have thought you were crazy. Actually, I *do* think that - this entire experience has been absolutely crazy. My graduate career has been a truly incredible and unforgettable experience, and while I'm still trying to convince myself that this is real, there are several people I owe this entire experience to.

First and foremost, it is by God's amazing grace that I made it through this chapter of my life. I never could have predicted what You had in store for me, but I am confident that you put this dream in my heart on purpose and for Your purpose. My hope is that this work has glorified You, and I can't wait to see what you have next for me as I press on toward the goal to win the prize (Philippians 3:14).

Dr. Jordan Bass, I blame all of this on you. I remember the day you not pulled me into your office and asked me to consider pursuing my PhD. Since that conversation, irreplaceable friendships were formed, intellectual curiosities were sparked, and deep roots were laid in this Midwest soil. As such, calling Lawrence, Kansas my home is entirely your fault, and I hope to forgive you someday. Jokes aside, I could not have imagined doing this without you, Jordan. From some of my greatest triumphs to the lowest points in my life, you were there for me. I type this with tears in my eyes as I fall short in expressing my deepest gratitude to you. Thank you for seeing me, challenging me, and growing me. And thank you for welcoming me into your family without hesitation – Robin, Julian, Charlotte and Gail, I love you guys.

To my committee members, Dr. Brian Gordon, Dr. Susan Williams, Dr. Zak Foste, Dr. Susan Harvey, and Dr. Bernie Kish, I thank each of you for the value and support you have

contributed to my academic and professional pursuits. It is a privilege to have each of you on my committee – thank you so much for everything you have done for me. Dr. Gordon, thank you for your warm and inviting presence. There has never been a time that I felt I couldn't come talk to you, about anything and everything. You are one of the most gifted professors I have ever had the privilege to learn from, and your drive to question the status quo has encouraged me since I met you. Dr. Susan Williams, you are one of the most awe-inspiring people I have ever met. Thank you for being the best example of a badass woman in academia, college athletics, and life itself; I hope to someday be a fraction of the woman you are. Dr. Zak Foste, your encouragement and enthusiasm for my research has been so affirming and reassuring. I am so appreciative of the countless conversations held over coffee – next one's on me. Dr. Susan Harvey, I am truly indebted to have you in my corner. I thank you so much for your kindness, adaptability, and insight into my work. Dr. Bernie Kish, your passion for the world of sports, higher education, and especially your students is unmatched. Thank you for imparting in me an excitement for the possibility all around me; I am honored to have been your student.

To my family at Kansas Athletics, both colleagues and student athletes… where do I begin? My graduate journey would not have been possible if it hadn't been for this incredible place. To Paul, Glenn, Laura K., Nicole, Jane, Megan, and countless others, thank you for helping me grow into the professional I am today and live out my dream of working in college athletics. To the student athletes I have had the privilege to work with these last five years – *you* have been the best part of this entire experience. Thank you for letting me be a small part of the team. Once a Jayhawk, Always a Jayhawk.

To my beautiful and zany family, I wouldn't trade you for the world. Mom, you are the strongest, most courageous woman I know. I don't think a single day has gone by that you

haven't told me how proud you are of me – but you'll never know how proud I am to call you my mama. I feel your love all these miles away, and I hope you know how much I love you. Gramma, you are the source of my moxie and zeal, and I can never thank you enough for the countless times you've encouraged me and reminded me of who I am and where I come from. Aunt Nadine, thank you for believing in me and understanding what the heck grad school is all about – it's been so refreshing to know that you understand this grind. Keep battling, Aunty. To my siblings, Tyson, Trish, Laurin, Sam, Haeleigh and Halston, thank you for keeping me grounded and being my biggest cheerleaders. Even though you've each asked me no less than a hundred times what I'm studying, I'm glad you asked – sometimes I forget, too. I love you all more than you could possibly know.

They say it takes a village, and I wouldn't trade mine for the world. There are so many amazing humans that made this journey possible. To Danny, Brooke, Hannah & Kegan, Alex, Robby, Bri, Ali, Lauren & Matt, and so many more – you each have loved me, supported this wild dream, and picked me up when I thought I was down for the count. I can never thank you enough for being my people. I love each of you with every ounce of my heart. To my Velocity tribe, thank you for always reminding me who I am and Whose I am. This place is what community is all about.

Finally, I would like to thank my Daddy. What a ride, huh? Not a day goes by that I don't think of you. In every step of this journey, I have sought to make you proud. So many of my best attributes come from you, and I hope to live my every day with the joy and bliss that you did. You are my whole heart, and I miss you like crazy. I love you, ya Big Goof. And, yes, you do have to call me Doctor Sar. Byeiloveyou.

Table of Contents

Abstract iii
Acknowledgements v
Chapter 1: Introduction 1
Commercialization and Idolization of Sport 7
Tangible Social Benefits of Sport Participation 9
Student Athlete Mental Health 10
Chapter 2: Literature Review 16
Theoretical Frameworks 16
Identity Theory: Erikson 16
Identity versus role confusion 16
Identity Theory: Marcia 18
Social Identity Theory 19
Transition Theory 21
Types of Transitions 21
The 4 S System 22
Moving In, Moving Through, Moving Out 25
Student Athlete Identity 26
Athletic Identity Foreclosure and Identity Threat 28
Athletic career retirement 30
Self-Efficacy and Career Preparedness 32
Chapter 3: Methodology 48
Research Question 48
Qualitative Approach 48
Phenomenological Methodology 49
Establishing Trustworthiness and Ethical Conscientiousness 52
Sampling 53
Description of Participants 55
Participant 1 55
Participant 2 57
Participant 3 58
Participant 4 59
Participant 5 60
Participant 6 62
Interview Approach 64
Data Analysis 65
Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion 70
Participant 1 72
Pre-Transition Interview 72
Post-Transition Interview 79
Participant 2 89
Pre-Transition Interview 89
Post-Transition Interview 100
Participant 3 112
Pre-Transition Interview 112
Post-Transition Interview 120

Participant 4 132
Pre-Transition Interview 132
Post-Transition Interview.....143
Participant 5 157
Pre-Transition Interview 157
Post-Transition Interview.....169
Participant 6 186
Pre-Transition Interview 186
Post-Transition Interview.....199
Chapter 5: Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research 213
Conclusion 213
Limitations 216
Future Research 218
Appendices.....220
Appendix A: Participant Informed Consent 220
Appendix B: Pre-Transition Interview Questions.....222
Appendix C: Post-Transition Interview Questions 223
Appendix D: Participant I-Poems 224
Participant 1: Pre-Transition.....224
Participant 1: Post-Transition 232
Participant 2: Pre-Transition.....239
Participant 2: Post-Transition 245
Participant 3: Pre-Transition.....257
Participant 3: Post-Transition 262
Participant 4: Pre-Transition.....269
Participant 4: Post-Transition 281
Participant 5: Pre-Transition.....291
Participant 5: Post-Transition 302
Participant 6: Pre-Transition.....313
Participant 6: Post-Transition 322
References.....330

Chapter 1: Introduction

You are jolted awake to the screeching sound of your alarm clock. Rolling over, you read 5:00 AM on the screen: time for weights. Rubbing the sleep from your eyes, you stagger out of bed and fumble in the darkness to find your shorts and shirt. These are team-issued, as you are required to match your teammates in the weight room. You make sure your roommates are awake and headed out the door with you; for every late teammate, you run a gasser. Eyes hardly open, you enter the weight training facility to find your strength coach waiting in a power stance with his arms crossed. The next hour is a sweaty blur of clanging weights and heavy breathing as your heart feels like it might beat out of your chest. Good news: only one teammate threw up this time. Will these off-season lifts ever get easier? After a team huddle about toughness and grit, everyone flocks to the locker room to get ready for the day. By the time a shower is available, you have 25 minutes to clean up, grab breakfast, and make it across campus for your 8AM. You throw on yesterday's outfit: sweat pants, an oversized sweatshirt, and slides. You did not have time to wash your hair, so you throw on a ball cap. You stuff your laptop and books into your backpack, only to notice that you actually grabbed the wrong bag; since they are all the same for all student athletes, it is hard to tell yours apart from your teammates'. Hurry up, it's 7:53.

For the next three hours, you do your best to pay attention to today's lectures, but the exhaustion of 20-hour-weeks is quickly catching up. You nod off during your history lesson, losing participation points for the day. Great. You are a little more alert in your final class for the morning because your hunger pangs tell you it is lunch time. Walking across campus, you notice the backpacks; your fellow athletes all have the same one, and you feel a sense of comfort and pride in comparison to the other students. You are distinct, and it feels good. You head to the

dining hall, grabbing as much food as you can put on your tray. Is this what starving is like? At the register, the student worker checkmarks your name on her list; lunch is covered. You think to yourself "At least this is one perk of being a student athlete." Scanning the room, you find a table of your teammates, who are hard to miss since you are all wearing nearly identical outfits. Besides, they are the only ones you know. After nearly inhaling your meal, you wander back to your residence hall to sneak in a 20-minute nap before practice. On your way back, though, you realized you forgot to post an online discussion question for class, and you wonder out loud "Sleep, or 5 points?" Then you remember that your academic counselor will text you and ask why you did not complete an assignment, which will reflect on the weekly grade report that Coach sees. Begrudgingly, you sacrifice the nap to write the post.

"Let's go!" the text from your teammate reads; she is outside, waiting in the car. Since your sport facility is off-campus, you make the daily trek to and from practice. You have an hour until practice starts, but since straining your shoulder you have to see the athletic trainer for treatment beforehand. You have been dealing with this injury for months, with growing frustration that it does not seem to be getting any better. Practice starts at the top of the hour, and Coach is fiery today. Luckily for you, you are smooth through the drills and are hitting all your marks, so you are spared for the day. Three hours in the humidity and heat seem unbearable. As practice concludes, you head to the training room to get an ice-wrap for your shoulder and head back to campus. Per usual, you are in a hurry to grab dinner and get to tutoring on time. You spend the next two hours in the academic center, working on an essay with your tutor. Thank God for tutors, you think to yourself. 9 PM rolls around and it is finally time to go back to your room. You cannot wait to go to bed, but you need to stay up to study for tomorrow's math midterm. After a couple hours of studying, you decide you cannot possibly memorize another

formula, so you call it a night. Netflix sounds nice, but you know you need sleep. You have a missed call from Mom, but she will just have to wait until tomorrow. It is 11:49 PM, and you calculate that if you fall asleep fast enough, you can get about five hours of sleep before weights the next morning. You wonder how it could possibly get worse than this, but then you remember the upper classmen tell you to buckle up; this is off-season, and it only gets more intense in the spring when you are traveling for four days a week for six consecutive weeks until conference play begins.

The seniors keep telling you to cherish these moments, to soak it all up while you can; they have been a little sentimental lately and keep talking about “the end”. You think to yourself, “Who is dying here? Calm down.” As if they will never throw a ball again, right? They mention a lot of strange terms like “resume” and “career services”, but you do not pay much attention, since that is miles down the road for you. Besides, your plans are to play professionally, so you are not going to need a resume. That might not be their reality, but you are sure of your future.

For many student athletes, this is their reality. It feels like there are one hundred demands, but never enough hours in the day to get everything done. Between sleep, school, and a social life, something must give. While it is a privilege to compete at the collegiate level, the pressure to maintain athletic excellence and academic distinction is hardly attainable for many student athletes. Once a student athlete finally finds a rhythm, however, they are then asked to start thinking about their future after college. Many ignore this urge: it is difficult enough to survive the day-to-day life of a student athlete, and the notion of preparing for life after college

can be terrifying. Further, getting into college was the solitary goal for some; no one has ever asked about what comes after the playing days are over.

The transition out of college athletics, however, is inevitable. Per eligibility guidelines and institutional graduation standards, student athletes are generally allotted four to six years on campus. At some point, they will enter the real world; they will play their last game, run their last race, and leave the field of competition for the final time. In this moment, all student athletes are forced to ask themselves an impossible question: *now,* who am I? This study is an examination of that very question.

Programs have been developed to educate and ameliorate components of the transition out of one's student athlete experience. One such program, *MovingOn!*, provides former student athletes with information and resources on physical activity and healthy eating to equip their lifestyle transition after college athletics ("MovingOn!", n.d.). Former student athletes have shared their stories of transitioning out of their student athlete experience, emphasizing the difficulty in defining oneself outside of their sport:

> The initial feeling was excitement of course, with the sadness that something that was a huge part of your life is over. But the most difficult part for me was that being a field hockey player defined me for my entire life, especially in college. From 5th grade through college, field hockey was a major part of my life. In college, field hockey shaped who my group of friends were, most of whom I am still friends with today, and it shaped my schedule. Anytime a professor or anyone I met asked me to describe myself or give a few characteristics about my life, my go-to answer was, I am a field hockey player. But when my senior year ended, I was no longer a field hockey player. Something that

> defined me for so long was no longer was true. That was the most difficult piece to it- how should I define myself now? I was definitely lost for a while, especially making the transition back to home and looking for a career. I truly had nothing to define me at that time ("MovingOn!", n.d.).

Another former student athlete shares how continuing in a volunteer role with the team and eventually pursuing graduate school was difficult to accept after being a student athlete:

> It was pretty difficult. I actually graduated early and therefore had a year of eligibility left over and spent a semester (not as an enrolled student) helping the team. I was trying to hang on to the dream a bit I guess. I knew that I probably wasn't going to play pro, even if I had the talent to do so, and many of my teammates would. For me, using 4-6 years to play minor hockey didn't seem worth it in the long run. Once I was 'done' it felt a little strange. Even after getting into graduate school, when people asked me what I was in school for it was strange to think of myself as 'just a student' ("MovingOn!", n.d.).

While there are many programs like *MovingOn!* designed to help former student athletes with the adaptation to a new lifestyle (i.e. exercise, nutrition), there is less attention given to the identity transition associated with the finite student athlete experience. Current research likens the transition out of intercollegiate athletics to that of both amateur and professional athletic retirement. However, while there are common themes in the experiences, the transition out of college athletics is singularly unique (Fuller, 2014). As one experiences transitioning from one life phase to another, it is natural to experience feelings of loss in reflecting on "what was." While retirement is certainly a celebration of one's accomplishments in a given role or occupation, it naturally invokes feelings of remorse and loss. Heininger (2019) explains that for

student athletes, the loss is palpable. Retirement out of college athletics includes the loss of a structured, daily exercise routine; nutritious and prepared meals; access to elite medical care; social connections to athletic peers; a sense of belonging and common purpose; and, one's identity as a student athlete, cultivated throughout one's lifetime (Heininger, 2019). There is an evident void of this structure and support for student athletes leaving college athletics; for those experiencing mental health difficulties to any degree, this transition may exacerbate the matters. Regardless if mental health issues are present, nonetheless, the identity transition for student athletes is largely adverse.

Perhaps driven by a yearning for similitude, I am primarily curious if this is a shared experience among student athletes. As a former student athlete, I navigated these uncharted waters of identity transition when I graduated college and no longer identified as a student athlete. Though there were some days in college that I faced what seemed like insurmountable adversity and challenge, that experience *made me who I am*; it is one of the biggest influencers of my identity. Redefining one's sense of self is often a tumultuous process, and I was no exception to the threshing floor of identity transition and redefining who I knew myself to be. While my experience with transition is unique to me, it is limiting (and even naïve) to suggest that parallels do not exist amongst the experiences of student athletes. My hopes are that with a more holistic understanding of identity transition for student athletes, steps can be taken to better prepare student athletes for life after college athletics.

The following sections provide a more complete context as to why student athletes are particularly impacted in transitioning out of college. First, an examination of the sociocultural impact of sport commercialization and idolization is discussed. Next, some of the tangible social benefits bestowed to collegiate student athletes are provided. Finally, this chapter concludes with

an in-depth analysis on mental health on college campuses, specifically focusing on student athletes.

Commercialization and Idolization of Sport

Americans love sports; this claim is hardly disputable. A plethora of empirical evidence supports that our most valuable personal resources, both time and money, are widely directed toward sports. Regarding time, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019) shares that 21 percent of American men participate in sport, exercise, or recreation. Comparatively, 17 percent of women participant in these activities. Similarly, men spend 1.7 hours per day participating in sport-related activities, while women spend 1.3 hours per day participating (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). In terms of finances, the sport industry is one of the most lucrative in the US. In particular, the sport market is composed of event revenues, media rights, sponsorship and merchandise. In 2009, the US sport market was valued at $48.73; in 2018, it was worth an estimated $71.19 billion. Projected figures expect the value to rise to $80.3 billion by 2022 (Gough, 2019).

The summation of year-round training programs, travel, equipment, facility and coaching fees results in the youth sport industry to be valued at nearly $17 billion (Corbin, 2019; Thompson, 2018). Further, one in every five American families are paying at least $1,000 per month on elite youth sport expenses (Corbin, 2019). With most American families restricted to a limited disposable income, one must certainly postulate *why* some put such esteemed value on youth sport participation. Among reasons such as building character, developing healthy lifestyles, and cultivating social skills, sports are so greatly valued in our culture because they are simply *fun* to do (Novak Djokavic Foundation, 2015; The Aspen Institute, 2019). The NCAA

estimates that there are nearly 8 million participants in high school sports each year (NCAA, 2019a). While many sports deemed non-traditional are on the rise in popularity, such as lacrosse and alpine skiing, those sports perceived to be America's most popular sports still reign supreme. According to the National Federation of High School Associations (2019), the most popular sports for boys during the 2018-2019 school year were football (1,006,013) outdoor track & field (605,354) and basketball (540,769). The most popular girls' sports were outdoor track & field (488,267), volleyball (452,808) and basketball (399,067) (National Federation of State High School Associations, 2019). Beyond merely having fun, many high school athletes dream of competing at the collegiate level. Of those 8 million athletes, however, only about 480,000 will go on to play collegiately, across Divisions I, II, and III. This breaks down to 6% of all athletes playing beyond high school (NCAA, 2019a). With a closer look into the most popular high school sports, the percentage of high school boys who go on to compete in Football is 7.1%; Track & Field, 4.8%, and Basketball, 3.4%. For girls, 6.1% compete in Track & Field; 3.9% in Volleyball, and 4.0% in Basketball (NCAA, 2019a).

One could certainly assess that because it is so difficult and statistically unlikely to continue one's athletic career into the collegiate ranks, this population is elite, with their status reinforced both internally and externally. As such, their identity as a student athlete becomes increasingly salient throughout their athletic careers. Largely due to the commercialization of college athletics, particularly for the institutions in the "Power Five" athletic conferences, the student athlete identity holds significant status and social capital. As such, the following segment discusses these social benefits.

Tangible Social Benefits of Sport Participation

Social capital is understood to be the tangible benefits associated with a community and the quality within its social networks. Within a community, individual members contribute to the quality of the connections within the group, thus establishing trust and norms of reciprocity (Putnam, 2000; Clopton, 2011). The tangible social benefits of being a student athlete include academic support and services, unique competition opportunities and travel experiences, financial assistance toward higher education pursuits, wellness support and health insurance, and personal and professional development (NCAA, 2019b). All of these benefits allotted to student athletes can contribute to strengthening the student athlete identity. Further, the lifestyle of collegiate student athletes reinforces the notion that student athletes are set apart from their peers. While many can agree the demands of student athletes are rigorous, Heininger (2019) paints a clearer picture of just how laborious the lifestyle truly is:

> As student-athletes, we are conditioned to respond; to an opponent's movement, to the whistle, to our coaches, to the needs of our bodies, and so on. We spend the first semester – or a couple semesters – acclimating to the intense schedules of college athletics. It can be quite an adjustment to master the demands of 6 a.m. lift, class-lunch-practice, dinner-film-study hall, and still trying to get to bed for the needed 7-8 hours of sleep per night. Oh, and that workload of being a full-time student? The actual 'student' part of 'student-athlete'? We learn to adapt, and make time for that too (n.p.).

Programmed to adapt and adjust to their environment, student athletes are familiar with the challenge to assess and overcome obstacles, both on the field of competition and off. Unfortunately, a growing body of research on the mental health and wellness of student athletes

suggests that student athletes are experiencing great difficulty in coping with the many stresses embedded in the reality of participating in intercollegiate athletics. The following discussion provides a clearer picture of the current state of student athlete mental health.

Student Athlete Mental Health

According to Locke, Wallace, and Brunner (2016), roughly 19.4% of young adults between 18 and 25 experience some form of mental health disorder, including depression or anxiety. Causes of increased mental health disorders in young adults are largely social and cultural factors, such as parents and family conflict and lack of adequate coping strategies for emotions. Further, experiences with drugs, alcohol, and sex have been correlated with the increased occurrence, as well (Kitzrow, 2009). In recent years, social media has received increased scrutiny for its correlation with disordered mental health in young people. Eisenberg, Lipson, and Posselt (2016) found that social media exposes young adults to larger comparison groups, leaving them to feel vulnerable while also prohibiting adequate coping abilities for public scrutiny. Student athletes, in particular, encounter such factors as increased pressures to perform academically, the lengthening of competition seasons, pressure to win, and the visibility and commercialization of college sports (Brown, 2014). Given this underpinning, however, Ryan, Gayles, and Bell (2018) stated that “the nature of student-athletes’ experiences with mental illness and how to best serve this population is unclear” (p. 68). Thompson and Sherman (2007) found that the most commonly experiences mental health issues are depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and substance abuse.

Ryan, Gayles, and Bell (2018) stated that “Symptoms of depression can include weight fluctuation, insomnia or excessive sleeping, lack of energy, inability to concentrate, feelings of

worthlessness or excessive guilt" (p. 68). A study conducted by the NCAA found that nearly 25% of student athletes reported mental exhaustion from their sport demands (NCAA, 2016a). Closely linked with quality and quantity of sleep, depression is of increasing concerns for student athletes and support staff, as the average student athlete logs roughly 6.25 hours of sleep per night (NCAA, 2016b). Not only does increased sleep help physical performance and ability to concentrate on academic work, it can also help combat depressive behaviors (NCAA, 2016b).

Ryan, Gayles, and Bell (2018) derived that be it performance anxiety or general anxiety, fear of what will happen in the future is widely experienced by young adults. Across college campuses, 62% of the undergraduate student population experience anxiety (American College of Health Association, 2017). Specific to college athletes, 85% of athletic trainers reported that they felt anxiety was an issue that their student athletes were experiencing (Brown, 2014).

Stress can invoke a variety of disordered eating behaviors as a coping mechanism to relieve that stress (Ryan, Gayles, & Bell, 2018). Unfortunately, students often find themselves in the vicious cycle of disordered eating, which induces more stress. By engaging in behaviors to reduce stress that ironically produce more stress, students find themselves stuck in a perpetual cycle (Ryan, Gayles, & Bell, 2018). Numerous factors lead to disordered eating behaviors, including personality types, family complexities, societal pressures to be thin, and even genetics (Greenleaf, Petrie, Carter, & Reel, 2009; Thompson& Sherman, 2007). Student athletes are at an increased risk of experiencing disordered eating due to pressure to maintain a low body weight for performance; in this way, female student athletes are at an increased risk of developing an eating disorder (Chatterton &Petrie, 2013; Greenleaf, Petrie, Carter, & Reel, 2009; Thompson & Sherman, 2007). In sports that emphasize physical appearance (i.e. swimming, wrestling, track, and Cross country), disordered eating behaviors are more prevalent (Brown, 2014).

Substance abuse, namely alcohol and drug abuse, have long been concerning higher education administrators as well as the general public. Be it the freedom of leaving home, peer pressure, or experimenting with new vices, alcohol is often synonymous with the college experience. According to the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (2017), approximately 1,825 college students die each year from alcohol-related incidents. Many studies have also found that student athletes are more likely than their non-athlete peers to partake in binge drinking (Adams, Dziedzicki, Eberman, Kahanov, Mata, & Niemann, 2013; Brenner & Swanik 2007; Etzel, Watson, Visek, & Maniar, 2006). Thompson and Sherman (2007) found that the drugs associated with student athlete abuse include cocaine, marijuana, steroids, and ADD/ADHD medication; further, many student athletes acknowledge using medications without prescriptions (Burnsed, 2014). With many public outcries about unbridled opioid prescriptions and access, there is great fear encircling the notion that more prescriptions only increase the chances of medication abuse; Ryan, Gayles and Bell (2018) stated that this trend is "making student-athletes a very vulnerable population to opioid substance abuse" (p. 72).

Given the growing understanding of mental health issues that student athletes are facing, there is also a yearning to understand the barriers student athletes face in accessing adequate mental health care. According to Ryan, Gayles, and Bell, (2018), programs must be designed and implemented to meet the needs that student athletes are facing, stemming from "the over-commercialization of sports, achieving academic success, and maintaining eligibility, and grappling with issues involving gender and sexual identity" (p. 72). To this point, though, research suggests that student athletes are not receiving adequate help with mental health issues. Be it the "toughness and grit" attitude instilled in athletics, hegemonic masculinity, jock stigma, or perceptions of weakness when seeking help, student athletes generally have negative attitudes

toward the thought of seeking help (Beauchemin, 2014; Wahto, Swift, & Whipple, 2016; Watson, 2005; Moreland, Coxe, & Yang, 2017; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Interestingly, student athletes were found to perceive a significant difference between seeking help with performance goals versus mental health issues, though research suggests there is a clear connection between athletic performance and mental health (Gulliver, Griffiths, & Christensen, 2012; Ryan, Gayles, & Bell, 2018).

In response to the growing body of knowledge regarding mental health in student athletes, the NCAA has recently taken legislative action. In May 2019, Bylaw 16.4 was amended to include the following:

> 16.4.2 Mental Health Services and Resources. An institution shall make mental health services and resources available to its student-athletes. Such services and resources may be provided by the department of athletics and/or the institution's health services or counseling services department. Provision of services and resources should be consistent with the Interassociation Consensus: Mental Health Best Practices. In addition, an institution must distribute mental health educational materials and resources to student-athletes, including those transitioning out of their sport, coaches, athletics administrators and other athletics personnel throughout the year. Such educational materials and recourses must include a guide to the mental health services and resources available at the institution and information regarding how to access them (NCAA, 2019c).

Effective in August 2019, the intent behind this addendum is to require that institutions provide necessary mental health services and resources to student athletes, versus voluntarily provision. The rationale behind this amendment is that because mental health is an increasing

concern among college students, it is appropriate and necessary that athletic conferences and departments of institutions strengthen and improve the mental health education and resources offered to student athletes. Specifically, the bylaw states that "While institutions have generally taken steps to improve their mental health education and resources for the general student population, participation in college athletics can pose its own unique pressures and difficulties that require specialized attention" (NCAA, 2019c). Further, the NCAA affirms the opportunity and responsibility that athletic departments have in serving student athletes by fostering an environment that "wholly supports mental health wellness for their student-athletes" (NCAA, 2019c).

Accentuating the growing concern for the mental health of student athletes serves as a conduit in situating the present inquiry on identity transition of student athletes. If student athletes are facing such unique stressors and pressures during their time in college, one wonders what the impact of transitioning out of such a celebrated status and prominent identity may have on an individual as they explore new identities. As such, this research inquiry serves as a continuation of the conversation on student athlete mental health and wellness. NCAA Bylaw 16.4.2 specifically states that the amendment's intention is to provide mental health services and resources to its student athletes, "including those transitioning out of their sport" (NCAA, 2019c). Therefore, the current study seeks to provide application of the bylaw. Heininger (2019) shares the sentiment: "As we plan for happy, productive, successful lives after athletics, it's important to consider how each of these potential losses relate to our well-being" (n.p).

Given what is known about the commercialization and idolization of sports as well as the tangible social benefits of sport participation, it is easy to see why sports are glorified in American society. However, the recent surge of academic interest in student athlete mental

health calls into question the long-term impacts of such glorification on student athletes. Sport practitioners, stakeholders, and administrators at all levels ought to be analytical about this impact. As such, this study aims to fill a gap in current literature as an initial inquiry into identity transition in student athletes upon ending their college careers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The following chapter is an extensive review of the literature supporting the inquiry into student athlete identity transition upon leaving college. The study is built upon three primary theoretical frameworks: identity theory, social identity theory, and transition theory. Once this foundation is established, the review continues with an exploration on student athlete identity theory, student athlete identity foreclosure and threat. The review concludes with a thorough consideration of self-efficacy and career preparedness specific to student athletes.

Theoretical Frameworks

Identity Theory: Erikson.

The seminal research on the development of identity was conducted by Erik Erikson, who believed the psychosocial development of identity to be a constant cycle of becoming, rather than an achievable moment in time. Further, identity is established when one feels an overall sense of well-being: "a feeling of being at home in one's body, a sense of knowing where one is going" (Erikson, 1968, p. 165). Erikson's developmental theory has eight distinct stages, each centered around a conflict that an individual will likely experience, with two distinctly contrary outcomes of the conflict. Of the eight stages, the fifth stage of development, Identity vs Identity Role Confusion, is specifically examined and used to support the research puzzle.

Identity versus role confusion. During adolescence, Erikson contends that an individual is to create their personal identity or understanding of themselves apart from others through their sense of sameness and continuity. Individuals develop a meaningful self-concept in this stage in which their past, present, and future are all considered to form their identity (Muuss, 1996).

Identity is not simply earned by an individual through one's community or society, nor is it a physically manifested phenomenon; instead, identity is developed by the individual through persistence in self-reflection and understanding of one's strengths, weaknesses, and unique attributes. An individual's neglect or refusal to engage in this process, Erikson argues, can lead to role diffusion, in which an individual may feel alienated, isolated, and confused (Muuss, 1996.).

Unique to this stage of identity development are essential self-reflecting questions that the adolescent must consider: "the adolescent must find an answer to the question 'Who am I?' and must also establish some orientation toward the future and come to terms with the questions, 'Where am I going?' and 'Who am I to become?'" (Muuss, 1996, p. 54). Adolescents must navigate their own search for identity as conflicts and opportunities arise; failure to do so is referred to as a 'foreclosed fashion', the phenomenon in which an adolescent individual conforms to their parents' objectives for them (Muuss, 1996Because identity is socially constructed, particularly in this phase of development, involvement and acknowledgement within peer groups is essential. Social feedback, be it from families, friends, teammates, significant others, and so on, is crucial to developing one's sense of self; strengths are capitalized, while weaknesses are avoided. Dependency on parents transpires into dependency on peers, and confirmative in-group behaviors take hold. When an individual is able to escape this dependence, they have developed a mature identity (Muuss, 1996).

Vocational identity is of concern in this stage of identity development, as many adolescent individuals commonly make unrealistic choices for highly idolized and romanticized callings that are unrealistic and unattainable. It is not uncommon to see individuals forsake their own identity for that of their roles models and heroes to pursue a similar path. A commonly

shared strength in this stage is fidelity, which Erikson sees as "what we are faithful to, what we identify with, and what, in turn, we are identified by" (Muuss, 1996, p. 54). As the capacity to sustain one's loyalties when confronted with contradictions between value systems, fidelity is vital to developing one's identity because it reveals what one is truly and faithfully committed to (Muuss, 1996).

Identity Theory: Marcia.

Eriskon's seminal work influenced the work of James Marcia, who sought to build upon Eriskon's concept of ego identity. Marcia (1966) established four distinct identity statuses: Achievement, Moratorium, Foreclosure, and Diffusion, stating that "the main contribution of this study lies in the development, measurement, and partial validation of the identity statuses as individual styles of coping with the psychosocial task of forming an ego identity" (p. 558). Marcia (1966) found that individuals in the Achievement stage persevered longest on stressful problems and maintained realistic levels of aspiration. Individuals in Foreclosure displayed particularly strong endorsement of obedience, leadership, and respect for authority. The individuals in the Moratorium and Diffusion stages had great variability in scores; therefore, a generalization of these groups was more difficult to establish than in the aforementioned stages (Marcia, 1966).

Continuing the conversation with subsequent work on identity development, Marcia (1989) raises awareness to the difficulty in establishing a practice for psychological interventions to aid identity development. A key aspect of such an establishment is adaptation. Commonly referred to as "fitting-in-ness", there exists an additional understanding on adaptation: "another meaning of adaptiveness, better-suited to the uniquely human condition, is one which takes into

account the element of choice, of decision-making" (Marcia, 1989, p. 402). An individual's capacity for making a choice is equally significant to the action of commitment in identity achievement. In the quest for finding one's identity, surely choices must be made when presented with alternative identifiable characteristics and actions. Interestingly, the very presence of choices can overwhelm and debilitate an individual and prevent a salient identity from developing if said choices may not be supported by the individual's support systems: "What seems to happen to foreclosures is that consideration of alternatives becomes loaded with the danger of rejection by those whom he/she depends most heavily for affection and esteem" (Marcia, 1989, p. 406). For an individual to commit to a choice, they must feel supported to abandon its alternatives. Ideally, that support comes from family, peers, and the social structures in which the individual is involved. These support structures, preferably, work in such a way that the individual feels safe to make commitments; if such a commitment is a failure, the individual "can be brought back to a safe and caring context from which to venture forth again" (Marcia, 1989, p. 407).

Social Identity Theory

With Erikson and Marcia's identity theories, a foundation for identity development has been laid. However, a discussion on identity development would be incomplete without a consideration of the effect that socialization has on such development. While identity is an internal understanding of one's self, or selfhood, it is also greatly influenced by the social world in which an individual finds themselves. Jenkins (2008) writes that "Individuals are unique and variable, but selfhood is thoroughly socially constructed: in the processes of primary and subsequent socialization, and in the ongoing interaction during which individuals define and redefine themselves and others, throughout their lives" (p. 40). In this way, an individual's

development of identity is cyclical in nature: first, the individual gains an understanding of self; then, that understanding is either affirmed or denied based on socially constructed norms and expectations in the individual's surroundings. With this affirmation or denial, the individual then revisits their understanding of self, and the cycle continues indefinitely. As such, identity development is a refining process that an individual will experience throughout their lives.

Perhaps the most renowned name associated with social identity theory is that of Tajfel, followed closely by colleague Turner. Tajfel's (1970, 1978, 1982) work on social identity development can be summated by suggesting that "group identification and categorization are generic processes – and real for individuals – in the human world, with collective identifications emerging in the context of 'external' *inter*-group relations" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 43-44). In this way, individual identification is socially constructed by one's relationship with the social group or groups to which they belong; this collective identity is reinforced by one's interaction within these social groups. Important to extricate, then, is personal and social identity. One's personal identity is unique to an individual and is developed by self-perception. On the other hand, social identity is the individual's internalization of stereotypical, normative, and collective identifications. Between these, social identity can be the more influential on the individual's behavior (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987).

Acceptance into a social group solidifies one's identity in a multitude of ways. For example, group membership permits self-evaluation, promotes acceptable social behavior for group affiliation, and provides affirmation of belonging for individuals. Regardless of the meaning or context, group membership creates a reality for individuals in which group member similarities are amplified and praised. Further, the differences between in-group members and

out-group members are exaggerated, often resulting in discrimination against the out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). This comparison between groups is driven by a desire to maintain distinctiveness within the in-group, and according to Jenkins (2008), "Groups distinguish themselves from, and discriminate against, other groups in order to promote their own positive social environment and collective self-esteem" (p. 113). Interestingly, depending on the social context in which individuals find themselves, individuals will self-categorize themselves in such a way that to maintain in-group status (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987).

Transition Theory

Now that a literary summation of identity development has been established, the concept of transition ought to be discussed. In an attempt to more thoroughly grasp the phenomenon of identity transition, one must recognize an experience as a transition, what factors influence the transition, and the impact of the transition. According to Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006), a transition is defined as "any event, or non-event, [which] results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (p. 33). One's sense of self is essential to recognizing that one is in transition, as a transition can only exist if so defined by the individual experiencing it (Goodman et al., 2006).

Types of Transitions. Three types of transitions exist: anticipated (predictable), unanticipated (unpredictable), and non-event (anticipated but never occurs). Understanding these three types of transitions is advantageous because it provides context to the individual's relationship to the transition and the setting in which it occurs; this understanding establishes meaning of the transition to the individual experiencing it (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye,

2016). It is important to emphasize that transitions are solely unique, regardless of the similarity in circumstances and context of the transition. Two individuals experiencing the same transition may react quite differently to it. Similarly, an individual experiencing the same type of transition at two different times in their life may react quite differently to the transition (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995).

***The 4 S System*.** Four sets of variables – Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies – have been identified as the assets and/or liabilities an individual possesses that influence their effectiveness in coping with a transition (Goodman et al., 2006). According to Patton et al. (2016), "Transitions may lead to growth, but decline is also a possible outcome, and individuals experiencing transition may view them with ambivalence" (p. 38). Further, Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg (2011) explained that the 4 S model is not intended to asses an individual's mental or psychological state. Instead, the model depicts a ratio of the assets and liabilities inherent in the individual, allowing for changes in the ratio if there is change in the individual's situation. This ratio of assets to liabilities, then, explains why transitions are always unique:

> This approach partially answers the question of why different individuals react differently to the same type of transition and why the same person reacts differently at different times. The difference may be that the assets-liabilities balance has changed: Assets may outweigh liabilities, making adjustment relatively easy, or liabilities may now outweigh assets, so assimilation of the transition becomes correspondingly more difficult (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011, p. 63).

Situation. The first S of the 4 S model, Situation, encompasses multiple factors, including: Trigger, Timing, Control, Role Change, Duration, Previous Experience, Concurrent

Stress, and Assessment (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011). Triggers can be internally or externally derived and influence an individual to reconsider or reevaluate their current situation. For example, declining health due to stress at work may cause an individual to reconsider their career trajectory. Timing encapsulates an innate social clock that influences individuals to achieve given milestones in life, such as landing a job after college graduation, getting married or having children by a given age, etc. Control is an individual's perception of the control or direct impact they have on the circumstances in the transition. Role change is a consideration for how one's role changes in transition, such as a change in job title and the responsibilities associated with a new job. Duration is the time spent in transition, while Previous Experience offers an individual some working familiarity based on prior transitions. Concurrent stress includes the stress that reverberates through one's life as they experience a transition. For example, moving to a new state for a job also includes establishing a new home, new social circles, and a new professional identity. Finally, Assessment is the individual's appraisal of the transition and the impacts it has on their life and the environment around them (Anderson, Goodman & Schlossberg, 2011).

Self. While Situation can be understood to be external influences of transition, Self is a consideration of the individual's personal attributions to the transition process. While stating the difficulty in defining the characteristics of self, Anderson, Goodman and Schlossberg (2011) include such factors as socioeconomic status, gender and sexual orientation, age and stage of life, state of health, ethnicity and culture, psychological resources, ego development, optimism and self-efficacy, commitment and values, and spirituality and resilience. Some questions to consider when evaluating the Self component of the 4 S model include: "Are they able to deal with the world in an autonomous way?", "Are they optimistic?", "Do they blame themselves for what

happens?", "Do they feel in control of their responses to the transition?", "Do they believe that their efforts will affect the outcome of a particular course of action?". "Do they have a sense of meaning and purpose?", and "Do they have characteristics that contribute to resiliency?" (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011, p. 83).

Support. Support systems are often identified as the most influential tool for helping individuals with transition. Support systems, though, vary greatly, depending on "intimate relationships, family units, network of friends, and the institutions and/or communities of which the people are a part" (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011, p. 84). The key elements of Support are affect (admiration, love, respect), affirmation (confirmation of rightness), and aid (money, information, time). Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg (2011) have also included the element of honest feedback into the Support category of the 4 S model, which captures both positive and negative reactions to the support offered to an individual experiencing a transition. For the Support component, Anderson, Goodman and Schlossberg (2011) highlight the necessity of a range of support units across social spheres – a transition can interrupt the support units in an individual's life, so a range of support from multiple individuals, units of people, and social institutions would behoove the individual as they navigate their transition (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011).

Strategies. In the 4 S model, Strategies refers to the coping behaviors that an individual chooses to employ as they process and experience transition. While coping strategies are dynamic and ambiguous, the work of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) has influenced this component of the 4 S model. Specifically, there are two distinct classifications of coping strategies: instrumental, or problem-focused, behavior seeks to change the situation or circumstances that are causing the distress to the individual. In contrast, palliative, or emotion-

focused, behavior is employed to help minimize the emotional stress associated with transition (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Also influencing the Strategies component of the 4 S model is the work of Pearlin and Schooler (1978), who found that individuals respond to stress from transition in one of three ways: trying to control the situation, trying to control the meaning of the situation, or trying to control the stress.

Moving In, Moving Through, Moving Out. A cornerstone of Schlossberg's (1989) transition theory is the notion that a transition is not a singular event, fixed in a moment of time; rather, a transition is a process. Further, rarely will an individual experience one transition at a time because of the fluid nature of transitions. Hence, Schlossberg (1989) identified three distinct phases of transition: moving in, moving through, and moving out. Moving into a transition is a time in which the individual navigates newness by familiarizing themselves with the rules, norms, and boundaries of the new system. Moving through a transition is a more constant state, as one learns how to balance the activities associated with the transition with the other areas of their life. Moving out of transition, then, is denoted by a sense of ending or finality and preparing for the next transition (Schlossberg, 1989; Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). An example to illustrate this point is the college experience. As an individual moves into this transition, they are learning the norms of college life, new social rules and etiquette, and the expectations of behavior. Moving through the transition means the individual is balancing their many activities and obligations as a college student, including academic work, social life, physical and mental health, and so on. Moving out of this transition, then, is preparing for graduation and preparing to enter the work force.

Patton et al. (2016) offered further understanding of the depths of Schlossberg and colleagues' transition theory. Specifically, they note that all transitions have an impact on the

individual navigating it. The degree to which the impact alters daily life is determined by the individual experiencing the transition. Again, the same type of transition will impact two individuals in distinctly different ways, and these individuals assign the impact as positive or negative. Further, all transitions produce stress for the individual, and the degree to which the impact alters their daily life is determined by the individual (Patton et al., 2016). In referencing the 4 S model, Patton et al. (2016) explained that upon entering, or moving into, a transition, two appraisals occur. The primary appraisal can be likened to external circumstances, as it is the individual's assessment of the transition as being positive, negative, or irrelevant. The secondary appraisal, then, takes an inward-perspective as the individual assesses their access to resources (the 4 S's) as they navigate and cope with the transition (Patton et al., 2016).

Having now established the theoretical frameworks for this manuscript, a deeper dive into student athlete identity is warranted. Further, this literature review will explore the concepts of student athlete identity threat and foreclosure, self-efficacy and career exploration in student athletes, and the current understanding of student athlete identity transition.

Student Athlete Identity

Brewer is widely recognized as having completed the formative work on student athlete identity. Brewer (1999) wrote that a strong athletic identity, the degree to which an individual identifies as an athlete, can be accompanied by a greater variety in social networks, time management skills, and motivation in sport-related functions and activities; these attribute to a more solidified sense of self. On the other hand, those with a stronger athletic identity are more likely to struggle with the ending of their sports career as well as find difficulty in career development (Brewer, 1999). Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder (1993) developed a scale (later

revised by Brewer and Cornelius in 2001) to measure the salience of athletic identity in adolescents. The Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) was constructed around three primary themes: social identity, exclusivity, and negative affectivity. Social identity in the AIMS is considered the way in which an athlete perceives themselves as an athlete from someone else's perspective. Exclusivity is the degree to which an athlete identifies more as an athlete than any other self-concept. Negative affectivity, then, is the presence of stress or angst around one's athletic performance and failure to fulfill their athletic role (Burns, Jasinski, Dunn, & Fletcher, 2013). While the AIMS has been used in studies on collegiate and non-collegiate athletes alike to help better understand the salience of the athletic identity in identity development, it is important to note is that the AIMS is not a developmental model. Instead, the AIMS is intended to measure athletic identity at one specific moment in time (Patton et al., 2016).

As seen in a priori work, studying identity development is not new to the academy; however, an understanding specifically of athletic identity development is not yet widely established (Patton et al., 2016). Houle, Brewer and Kluck (2010) stated that adolescence is a crucial period for athletic identity development, suggesting that "athletic identity increases from late childhood to adolescence and remains elevated into young adulthood unless the individuals terminate competitive sport involvement, in which case athletic identity decreases" (p. 146). The influence of sport culture on adolescents is significant, as sport can be the platform for substantial personal and social development. Bimper (2014) contended that "The maturation of a student athlete's development is inherently linked to the perceptual degree and significance placed on one's psychosocial identity as an athlete" (p. 796). Further, "Athletes commonly base their identities on their experiences with sport and derive self-fulfillment from the successful assumption of an athlete's role (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). The salience of the athlete

identity is directly correlated to the time and effort given to maintain the identity, dictated by the degree of importance and the strength of exclusivity associated with one's identity as an athlete (Brewer, 1999) and is directly impacted by the external environment (Cieslak, 2004; Cieslak, Fink, & Pastore, 2005).

With an understanding of student athlete identity established, the following is an exploration of athletic identity foreclosure and identity threat, supporting the research question guiding this manuscript.

Athletic Identity Foreclosure and Identity Threat

Brewer and Petitpas (2017) have combined athletic identity to the traditional identity element, foreclosure. Individuals in foreclosure, according to Marcia (1966) exhibited obedience, leadership, and respect for authority. Athletic identity foreclosure, then, "refers to commitment to the athlete role in the absence of exploration of occupational or ideological alternatives" (Brewer & Petitpas, 2017, p. 118). In this stage, individuals are so consumed with their athletic identity that they neglect to engage in any kind of exploratory behavior that may endanger the salient athletic identity:

> Research findings on athletic identity and identity foreclosure in sport settings, it appears that athletic identity foreclosure is: (a) most pronounced during late adolescence; (b) responsive to changes in athletes' sport participation status; (c) related to a broad range of academic, social, cognitive/motivational, and emotional/affective factors; and (d) associated with potential consequences in the substance use, career development, burnout, and adjustment to sport transition domains (Brewer & Petitpas, 2017, p. 120-121).

The notion of exclusivity is of particular interest in the exploration and understanding of student athlete identity foreclosure. Burns et al. (2012) defined exclusivity as “the degree an individual’s [athletic identity] subsumes other self-concepts, resulting in a self-image exclusively as an athlete” (p. 281). The belief that one is set apart or easily identifiable and recognizable is a motivating factor for those with a high athletic identity to maintain exclusivity. Burns et al. (2012) explained that exclusivity runs the risk of becoming a toxic component in athletic identity, a notion supported by research conducted by Benson, Evans, Surya, Martin and Eys, (2015). In seeking to better understand the psychological process in response to threat and defense of athletic identity, Benson et al. (2015) found that athletes reported increased levels of athletic identity exclusivity when conditioned with the threat of career termination. Further, they found that this increased salience in athletic identity was driven by self-protective functions, as athletes were attempting to psychologically protect this identity in the face of threat. While this may be a suitable short-term defense mechanism as a means to reduce the anxiety associated with career termination, “this defensively motivated response may ultimately be a long-term maladaptive issue for individuals” (Benson et al., 2015, p. 312). Though it may seem probable to expect athletes who are approaching the end of their career to prepare for the transition into their next role, Benson et al. (2015) have suggested that the threat of career termination can instead invoke deeper attachment to the athletic identity. An important practical implication is that while it may seem intuitive to remind student athletes of their imminent career end as a means to help them prepare for their next step, this may unintentionally result in pushing student athletes to become more motivated to maintain their athletic identity and exclusivity (Benson et al., 2015).

Athletic career retirement. According to Ogilvie and Taylor (1993), there are four main causes of athletic career termination: age, deselection, injury, and free choice. The first three

causes are essentially out of the athlete's control (Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993), aligning with Bandura's (1977) notion of external locus of control. Ogilvie and Taylor (1993) stated that these causes are linked directly with performance decrements, leaving the athlete with no choice but a forced withdrawal. However, the fourth cause, free choice, involved an internal locus of control (Bandura, 1977), meaning the athlete was in control of their decision to terminate their athletic career (Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993). The work of Webb, Nasco, Riley and Headrick (1998) supports these findings on career termination. Specifically, in regard to locus of control Webb et al. (1998) stated that while the feeling of being in control is subjective, it is a vital component of social psychological development. This locus of control is highly correlated, then, with self-efficacy, all of which are supported by Bandura's (1977) foundational work. As such, the dichotomy of forced retirement or free choice to retire from one's athletic career directly impacts their transition.

Alfermann, Stambuloya, and Zemaityte (2004) work on athletic career termination and retirement highlighted the cognitive underpinnings of transition, defining athletic career retirement planning as:

> a cognitive process of structuring the future after sport career termination which takes into account factors of the social macro-environment (peculiarities of political and sport systems, social reputation of elite sport, cultural traditions, and so forth) as well as individual circumstances of an athlete's life (p. 71).

As such, the external circumstances of social circles, support systems, and visibility are interlinked with the internal resources one brings to the table upon entering a transition. Further, Alfermann, Stambuloya, and Zemaityte (2004) explored athletes' reactions to sport career

termination and found that individuals with high athletic identity displayed fewer positive reactions to retirement as well as more difficulty adapting to career retirement than did their non-athlete peers (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004). Further, the study revealed that readiness for career retirement or transition directly contributed to better cognitive, emotional, and behavioral adaptation (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004), suggesting that anticipation of career termination can yield more positive dividends for the individual. For example, planned retirement from one's athletic career results in more positive emotional reactions to the retirement process, a shortened duration of the transition into retirement, decreased use of distraction strategies, and higher life satisfaction (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004). In this way, athletes who anticipated, accept, and progress toward their career retirement "do not waste their energy in wrong directions and, hence, are able to mobilize and use their resources more effectively than athletes who do not plan their retirement" (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004, p. 70). Finally, Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte (2004) consider the idea of "readiness" for career retirement. One's level or degree of readiness for the transition into career retirement is directly correlated to career retirement planning, as those athletes who plan their athletic career retirement in advance had higher levels of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral readiness for their transition out of their sport career compared to their peers who did not prepare for athletic career retirement (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004).

Self-Efficacy and Career Preparedness

In an exploration of athlete identity development and identity transition, it is advantageous to consider the literature on self-efficacy. Often accepted as the original founder of self-efficacy, Bandura (1977) defined the phenomenon as one's belief in their abilities to

successfully perform a given task. In his work, Bandura (1977) established four primary sources of information that direct his model of self-efficacy: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological and emotional arousal. The more dependable these sources of information, the greater the perceptions of self-efficacy will be. Based on personal mastery experiences, repeated success at accomplishing a given task is central to the Personal Accomplishment source of information. The expectation to master a specific skill can also be derived from Vicarious Experience. According to Bandura (1977), seeing another individual perform a new skill without adverse consequences can improve an individual's self-efficacy by creating hope that they, too, can attempt a new skill. A readily available source of information in this model, Verbal Persuasion is an attempt to lead an individual into believing that they can successfully and competently accomplish a given task. Finally, one's state of arousal, both physiologically and emotionally, are direct sources of information for development of self-efficacy. High arousal will often negatively impact performance, so one's ability to control physiological and emotional arousal, to the best of their abilities, is crucial to successful performance (Bandura, 1977). An understanding of self-efficacy lends itself to the notion of career preparedness in student athletes. Self-efficacy is focused on skill development and acquisition; career preparedness is similar to the development of skills and aligns with Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy model.

Van Raalte, Andrews, Cornelius, Brewer, and Petitpas (2017) present a study by which career exploration and career self-efficacy can more accessible and utilized in the student athlete population. Van Raalte et al. (2017) sought to implement a Career Self-Efficacy workshop designed specifically for student-athletes and measure any changes to career self-efficacy reported by participants. Guided by modifications from athletics staff members at participating

athletic departments, Van Raalte et al. (2017) studied 158 collegiate student athletes and found that those student athletes whom participated in the workshop reported significantly increased scores in career self-efficacy compared to those student athletes who did not participate (Van Raalte et al., 2017). These findings are significant because it provides evidence that career self-efficacy in student athletes can be directly increased by practical application. With the model provided, this is good news for athletic department administrators seeking to support career development in student athletes.

Virtually all Division I athletic programs provide academic support specifically for student athletes. This staff may have oversight into student athletes' academic advising, access to academic materials, coursework support via tutoring and learning assistance, learning exceptionalities testing and accommodations, and connections to academic resources on campus such as writing centers and content labs. Burns, Jasinski, Dunn, and Fletcher (2013) establish their research inquiry in evaluating "the relationship between student athletes' satisfaction with academic support services and their perceived confidence in making career decisions" (p. 161). The athletic departments which participated in this study based their academic support services on the NCAA CHAMPS/Life Skills program, which is utilized by several universities across the country. Burns et al. (2013) found that Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (CDSE) was positively correlated with academic support services, generalized self-efficacy, and internal locus of control (Burns et al., 2013). This finding is crucial for academic support units in athletic departments because it validates the resources they provide to student athletes as having a positive impact not only on their day-to-day academic responsibilities, but also on their self-efficacy as related to their careers after college.

Tyrance, Harris, and Post (2013) examined how the demographic factors of race, gender, sport, and athletic identity relate to career planning attitudes and expectations to compete in sport professionally. In surveying 538 student athletes from four Division I FBS universities, the researchers pronounce the importance of student athletes partaking in career exploration and planning. A cornerstone concept of this study is that while only 2% of student athletes go on to play professionally, over 26% of student athletes surveyed believe they will make a living playing professionally (Tyrance et al., 2013). Three career planning attitudes were studied: career optimism, career adaptability, and career knowledge. Tyrance et al. (2013) found that student athletes who reported higher athletic identities had lower levels of career optimism; further, female student athletes reported lower scores in career optimism than male student athletes. This finding suggests that female student athletes in the sample may be "uncomfortable with their level of career development and were not optimistic that their future careers would meet their maximum potential" (Tyrance et al., 2013, p. 31). Student athletes with a salient athletic identity were found to have less confidence in career adaptability, or the readiness to handle career change. As more than a quarter of the sample expects to continue their playing careers professionally, Tyrance et al. (2013) contend that "These athletes may be particularly at risk for having difficulty managing change in their careers once their expectations to play professionally does not come to fruition" (p. 30). Career knowledge was the only career planning attitude studied that revealed gender predictability. Of those sampled, male student athletes reported higher understanding of the job market and employment trends than did the female student athletes in study. The researchers suggested that female student-athletes viewed their athletic participation as a job and would benefit from career planning programming intended to expose female student athletes to the job market and employment trends (Tyrance et al., 2013).

The final finding of this study revealed that student athletes who reported a higher level of expectation to play professionally also reported higher optimism regarding their future careers. This, however, "may be a false optimism considering the low number of student-athletes who go on to earn a living playing professional sports" (Tyrance et al., 2013, p. 32).

Now that light has been shed on the current status of career development in student athletes, an appropriate next step is to examine some of the influences that have brought about this situation. Navarro and Malvaso (2016) found three spheres of influence prior to and during the higher education experience that impact student athletes' degree plan major choices. The first sphere is Parental influence, which Navarro and Malvaso (2016) found to have the greatest impact on student athletes' study interests. The other two spheres of influence during a student athlete's higher education experience were Academics and Athletic Support Systems. Student athletes who stated their life experiences were impacted by their academic support system "tended to choose majors that logically aligned with their ultimate career aspiration" (Navarro & Malvaso, 2016, p. 44). Interestingly, student athletes who leaned heavily on their Athletic Support Systems (i.e. coaches and teammates) felt remorseful that their athletics commitments dictated their major choice (Navarro & Malvaso, 2016).

Sandstedt, Cox, Martens, Ward, Weber, and Ivey (2004) are credited with the development of the Student-Athlete Career Situation Inventory (SACSI), which has been utilized in multiple studies on the career development of student athletes. Sandstedt et al. (2004) explain that the study's purpose was "to develop a psychometrically sound instrument that measures the career situation of student-athletes" (p. 79), as such an instrument had not been developed nor widely accepted by scholars in the field to this point. The scale encapsulates five factors: career-

development self-efficacy; career versus sport identity; locus of control; barriers to career development; and sport to work skill relationship (Sandstedt et al., 2004).

Cox, Sadberry, McGuire, and McBride (2009) sought to better assist student athletes in exploring potential career interests before college graduation and/or the end of their athletic eligibility. To do so, they investigated multiple types of college experiences (i.e. university life, social enrichment, and use of campus-wide academic resources) and analyzed the experience's influence on a student athlete as having a positive or negative interest in issues that pertain to their future careers. Data was collected from 627 student athletes over a five-year period, and three instruments were utilized for the statistical analysis: a demographic inventory; the Student-Athlete Experiences Inventory; and the Student-Athlete Career Situation Inventory (discussed later). The most notable findings, according to Cox et al. (2009), were the distinct experiential differences between males and females. Specifically, males developed an enhanced perception of their career situations most markedly from strong and dynamic social interaction experiences with other student and their instructors. Males' perceptions of career situations were generally negatively impacted by university life experiences. Female student-athletes' career situation awareness, on the other hand, were more positively influenced by university life experiences. Contrary to their male counterparts, female student-athletes were not found to be positively impacted by social interactions with other students and instructors. In general, utilization of campus-wide academic resources had little influence on both male and female student-athletes.

Lally and Kerr (2005) examined eight student athletes' relationships between their athletic identities and student role identities with career planning. Lally and Kerr (2005) found a negative relationship between career maturity and athletic identity: the stronger the student identifies as an athlete, the lower their level of career maturity. However, Lally and Kerr (2005)

found that as the athletes entered their final years of eligibility, their athletic identity waned and their student role identity increased upon the realization that professional sport careers were not realistic career options. Although findings suggested the student athletes were able to explore their non-sport career options, there is a misconception about level of career maturity upon graduation. Lally and Kerr (2005) explain that while student athletes may abandon expectations of professional sport careers, they developed expectations for non-sport careers that were equally unrealistic. Additionally, they also neglected developing career alternatives should their primary career plan fail (Lally & Kerr, 2005).

A great deal of attention has been given to the academic and career development of student-athletes competing in revenue-generating sports, primarily men's basketball and football. Navarro and McCormick (2017) implemented a mixed methods study to investigate a three-part research inquiry:

> (a) to understand football student-athletes' involvement in traditional career development activities, (b) to understand football student-athletes' thoughts and perceptions of their career preparedness upon graduation, and (c) to explore how graduated and career-seeking or employed football student-athletes perceive campus programming to support their transition to life after athletics (p. 136).

The findings of this study confirm a widely-held belief that student athletes are not adequately prepared to begin non-sports careers upon graduation. Specifically, Navarro and McCormick (2017) found that participants in their study had a poor understanding of self-concept outside of sport, partially due to insufficient career role exploration. The graduated

football student-athletes in the study had not sufficiently participated in career development activities prior to graduation; as such, they approached the job market with "immature career plans resulting in a job search that was marked by career confusion, anxiety, and career indecision" (Navarro & McCormick, 2017, p. 154). The researchers passionately expressed that student-athletes ought to be actively engaged in the career development activities available to them on campus to develop a stronger sense of self outside of the athletic identity (Navarro & McCormick, 2017).

With a more comprehensive understanding of the factors at play in student athlete career development, scholars are now integrating career counseling theories into their inquiries. The implementation and practice of career counseling theory is vital for career counselors working with student athletes. Krumboltz's Learning Theory of Career Counseling (LTCC) provides a theoretical framework on which Shurts and Shoffner (2004) purpose their study. The basic premise of LTCC is that individuals are counseled to acquire new skills, interests, and beliefs in response to limited career exploration and learning opportunities. This theoretical approach can be particularly helpful in working with student athletes, according to Shurts and Shoffner (2004) because student athletes typically have a very narrowed perspective on career interests and opportunities. In this case study, many opportunities were created by the counselor for the student athlete participant that led to higher career self-efficacy (Shurts & Shoffner, 2004). Because LTCC focuses on expanding capabilities and interests, it is an attractive approach for a population that lacks experiences or knowledge of interests outside of athletics. Further, "such growth can help members of this population deal with issues like identity foreclosure, underdeveloped career maturity and social isolation" (Shurts & Shoffner, 2004, 107).

In their study on the association between such variables as athletic identity, gender, age, future time attitude, and career decision-making self-efficacy, Cabrita, Rosado, Leite, Serpa, and Sousa (2014) found that participants who reported higher levels of athletic identity reported higher levels of career decision-making self-efficacy as well as optimism about their future. Those athletes with higher athlete identity are also more likely to choose a career path that is sport-focused (Cabrita et al., 2014). Cabrita et al. (2014) have also offered the thought that while high athletic identity can certainly limit career development, it can also be perceived to provide career networking and modeling opportunities for those individuals:

> In effect, the sport world is flush with professional role models who provide athletes with information regarding various sport-related professions (e.g., coaches, referees, masseurs, sport physical therapists, sport psychologists, sport medicine doctors, sport managers). Such involvement in the sport culture yields many opportunities for contact with various sport-related professionals, which results in athletes having more information about this area of work than any other (p. 478).

Griffith and Johnson (2002) found that sport involvement can influence one's identity so deeply that the athlete identity is difficult, if not impossible, to separate from one's sense of self. To maintain continuity with the athletic identity, and perhaps to remain in a familiar social structure, those with a high athletic identity often choose sport-related career paths (Cabrita et al., 2014). Further, the individual sees themselves as an athlete and chooses to pursue sport as a profession; thus, a higher athletic identity can limit the individual's career development. An individual's athletic identity is not only influenced by their involvement in sport, but also by the social structures and people in sport. Peterson, Sampson, Lenz, and Reardon (2002) explained that an individual's exposure to structured environments and role models directly influences that

individual's career intentions. So, because athletes are exposed to sport at a very young age in a structured environment (i.e. organized sport practiced, teams, etc.) and role models (i.e. coaches, officials, managers, athlete peers, etc.), then they are more likely to pursue careers that involve sport to some capacity (Cabrita et al., 2014). This notion is supported by a study conducted by Shachar, Brewer, Cornelius, and Petitpas (2004), who found that former athletes who eventually became coaches were more likely to display a narrowed identity and had displayed less career exploration into paths outside of sport. Indeed, because of the protective behaviors associated with preserving the athlete identity, career exploration and intentions may be hindered. According to Savickas (1999), this results in less developed career maturity; hence, the individual is not adequately equipped to make informed, reasonable, and responsible career decisions.

While a great deal of research supports the idea that retirement from athletic participation elicits feelings of emotional and psychological distress in athletes (Bailie, 1993; Blinde & Stratta, 1992, Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994), some retiring athletes may instead experience a sense of relief and freedom through their transition out of sport (Coakley, 1983). Because sport is a social construct, some researchers have associated the retirement from sport to social loss and grief (Blinde & Stratta, 1992). Some have also likened the retirement from sport to be a similar experience to vocational retirement (Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985). By contrast, however, transitioning out of sport is not a similar transition to retiring from one's career. Indeed, because of the depth of identity associated with one's athletic participation, retirement from sport is not a singular event, but a process (Coakley, 2009). Fuller (2014) explained that athletes "gradually disengage from sport while realigning their priorities and life goals" (p. 1). The transition process out of sport is also unique to athletes of varying competition levels. According to Fuller (2014),

though there are similarities in the retiring experiences for Olympic, professional, college, and amateur athletes, there are unique aspects to the retirement from sport for college athletes. Specifically, professional and Olympic athletes have more autonomy in choosing when to retire from their careers (sans injury, being cut from a team, etc.); college athletes, on the other hand, are allotted a finite amount of time to compete, per NCAA eligibility regulation. There is also the consideration that most college athletes do not have an opportunity to compete professionally. Once their eligibility has expired, college athletes are essentially forced into retirement. "This combination – the likelihood of a non-professional sports careers and finite eligibility – makes the transition process unique for college athletes when compared to retirement from professional or amateur levels of a sport" (Fuller, 2014, p. 2).

In a meta-analysis on the transition experiences of student athlete, Fuller (2014) found six recurring themes across the literature: athletic identity; anticipation and preparation; branching out; satisfaction with athletic performance; loss of camaraderie; and support systems. As mentioned throughout this literature review, athletic identity is unique in both its salience to the individual as well as its reinforcement for the individual. For example, athletic identity in collegiate student athletes is reinforced by such external factors as parents and peers, as well as the visibility and recognition of athlete status. Having likely grown up participating in organized sport and being accustomed to the recognition of athlete, Fuller (2014) found that "For many of these athletes, nothing outside of sport was able to replace the recognition they received from being an athlete. In turn, they did not desire to relinquish their identification as an athlete" (p. 2). The social status and self-esteem associated with the athlete identity may be due to the fact that it is a more visible role than other identities (Webb et al., 1998). Internal factors that were found to

drive athletic identity in this meta-analysis were the belief in participating in professional sport beyond college (Ingebristen, 1996) as well as body perception.

Aligning with the athlete identity, Fuller (2014) found that many student athletes had grown accustomed to being very physically fit, thus increasing self-confidence. Upon retirement from athletic participation, changes in body composition led to a decrease in confidence (Barnes, 2002). This decreased confidence added to the difficulty of the transition process for student athletes (Fuller, 2014). An interesting finding to emerge from this meta-analysis was that not all student athletes' identities revolve solely around their athlete identity. Some athletes recognized that they had other roles and identities, such as academics, that were equally important as their athletic identity. Those who displayed an ability to balance their various roles and identities elicited less difficulty with the transition process out of sport than did the participants with a greater investment in their athletic identities (Fuller, 2014).

Anticipation and preparation for the transition out of sport participation was a second prevalent theme in Fuller's (2014) findings. This parallels the work of Goodman et al. (2006) and Patton et al. (2016) in distinguishing an event as anticipated, unanticipated, or a non-event. The individual's designation of the type of transition, then, determines their adaptation to it. Anticipating the transition out of sport was correlated to a smoother transition for some participants. Conversely, many experienced an unanticipated or involuntary exit from sport, such as injury, being cut from a team, or having their sport team eliminated from their school's athletic program. This resulted in more difficult transitions out of sport, revealing the importance of anticipation to transition:

> …because athletes who underwent an involuntary exit were unable to anticipate the ends of their careers, they were not able to prepare mentally and emotionally for the transition. As such, lack of preparation resulted in extremely difficult transitions for these athletes (Fuller, 2014, p. 4).

Importantly, Fuller (2014) stated that not all athlete participants were saddened to see their athletic careers come to an end. Though some participants expressed a desire to have a successful and enjoyable final athletic season, others revealed a yearning to let their athletic careers come to a close. "The grind of being a college athlete was mentally, physically, and emotionally taxing on many participants and over the course of four to five years, the burden of being an athlete eventually took a toll on the athletes' psyche" (Fuller, 2014, p. 4). Webb et al. (1998) suggest that future research investigating the transition process from college athletics should clearly delineate the nature of retirement from sport, as voluntary retirement seems to lead to different transitions than forced retirement.

A third common theme found in the literature was athletes' pursuit of interests outside of sport, or "branching out" (Fuller, 2014). Overcome with "uncertainty about a future without sport" (Wilson, 2007, p. 163), some athletes began to pursue other areas of personal interest. Lally (2007) expressed this process as a "redefinition of self". Though the timing was not consistent with all athletes (i.e. some branching out during their senior year; others, after transitioning out of college), most had reached a point of turning away from athletic pursuits in favor of other interests (Fuller, 2014). The two most commonly noted areas of branching out were career planning and new competitive outlets. These areas of pursuit suggest two ideas: first, athletes accepted the notion that they would not be competing in their sport professionally and needed to identify realistic vocational directions. Second, this suggested that having maintained a

high level of physical fitness and competitive environments for most of their lives, athletes had to learn to transition into a mentality of exercising for physical fitness, rather than training for physical competition (Barnes, 2002). Many retired student athletes participated in recreational sport leagues, allowing them the opportunity to stay physically fit as well as live out their innate competitiveness (Fuller, 2014). Branching out, for some athletes, may look like investing as much time into their academic work as their athletic pursuits. Some athletes, especially those who do not intend to continue their athletic careers after college, begin to devote themselves to their academic work. There is a commonly held belief that when athletes decrease their athletic identity salience, then their athletic performance will suffer. However, Lally (2007) found that academic and athletic performance are not mutually exclusive. The participants in her study decreased their athletic identification, yet still competed at a high level (Lally, 2007). Indeed, pursuing excellence in the academic identity does not correlate with suffering athletic performance (Miller & Kerr, 2002).

Satisfaction with athletic performance was mentioned across each study in Fuller's (2014) meta-analysis, making it the fourth emerging theme. Not surprisingly, many student athletes enter college having been successful athletes in their high school careers; as such, these athletes often bring lofty aspirations and goals to achieve in their collegiate athletic careers (Fuller, 2014). According to Hinitz (1988), one's ability to achieve these aspirations and goals was directly correlated with the level of difficulty of transition from sport. Though some student athletes focused on the goals they were able to achieve, many focused on goals they did not achieve or their worst athletic performances; this perspective equated to a disappointment in athletic performance, making the transition from sport more difficult (Fuller, 2014). Processing through the disappointment took time, but eventually, "athletes who did not meet their sports

goals progressed from dwelling on their athletic performance to accepting it" (Fuller, 2014, p. 5). This acceptance was driven by the realization that regardless of how much they thought about their athletic performance and what they wish they would have done differently, they could not go back in time and change their performance (Fuller, 2014).

As previously mentioned, sport participation is a commonly used vehicle for social integration and establishing friendships (Marcia, 1989; Anderson, Goodman & Schlossberg, 2011). Throughout the analysis, Fuller (2014) found that participants revealed a sense of belonging with their teammates. This camaraderie, according to Hinitz (1988) is "the communal sense of a common striving toward a team goal" (p. 143). For some athletes, the transition out of sport threatened that camaraderie and affirmation felt from being a member of a team. Some participants expressed a fear of not experiencing that type of camaraderie again; others even feared being alienated from their teammates when their athletic careers ended (Fuller, 2014). To deal with those threats, some participants began to distinguish amongst their teammates those they believed they would stay in close contact with after their collegiate careers ended and those they would not. Participants, then, remained close with a chosen few (Fuller, 2014).

The final emerging theme from Fuller's (2014) meta-analysis was support systems. While sport participation offered an immediate social network, Fuller (2014) contended that a danger to "having a homogenous support system (e.g., sport-based) is that there are limited alternatives for support" (p. 8). Indeed, when an athlete is transitioning from their main support network, they are sometimes left with limited support systems elsewhere. This finding supports the need for athletes for branch out and diversify their social networks; because sport retirement is imminent, it would behoove athletes to begin creating social systems outside of their athlete peers to help with the transition out of sport (Fuller, 2014). Many participants revealed that positive

relationships with their peers, coaches, and athletic administrators helped with the transition from sport; however, some athletes had developed negative relationships with these individuals, resulting in increased difficulty in the transition process: “When a healthy relationship with coaches and or/administration was absent, the result was often a difficult transition” (Fuller, 2014, p. 6).

Interestingly, some athletes contended that they experienced a lack of social support as they transitioned out of sport. Some admitted that pride dissuaded them from seeking help; the feeling of “invincibility” as a college athlete actually prevented many from reaching out for support (Blinde & Stratta, 1992). Other athletes isolated themselves, believing that no one would understand the complexities of their transition (Fuller, 2014). “The athletes possessed high levels of athletic identities, but it was their very athletic identities that prevented them from expressing their internal turmoil” (Fuller, 2014, p. 9). In this way, Fuller (2014) suggests future study on the relationship between athletic identity and athletes’ verbal expression of this internal turmoil.

This detailed review of the literature surrounding the multifaceted experience of student athlete identity transition has established a foundation on which to build an in-depth inquiry into the phenomenon in study. In exploring identity theory (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1969) and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008), the development of identity, or selfhood, is understood. The explanation of transition theory described the 4 S model, or the assets and liabilities that influence one’s ability to effectively cope with a transition, as well as the three phases of the transition process (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011; Schlossberg, 1989; Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). Together, these three theories establish the framework upon which this dissertation is situated. The inquiry is expounded further with a detailed account of

student athlete identity (Brewer, 1999), foreclosure (Brewer & Petitpas, 2017), threat (Benson et al., 2015), and athletic career retirement (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004) so as to illustrate the uniqueness of identity transition for student athletes specifically. Finally, an in-depth review of student athlete career decision-making self-efficacy and career preparedness (Lally & Kerr, 2005; Cabirta et al., 2014; Bailie, 1993; Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994; Coakley, 1983; Barnes, 2002; Fuller, 2014) illuminates the various factors that influence student athletes' career decisions. From here, the methodological design of this dissertation is described to illustrate the procedures by which the phenomenon of student athlete identity transition is explored.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce and explain the research methodology for this qualitative phenomenological study regarding identity transition in student athletes. To begin, the driving research question is reiterated, followed by a justification on the chosen qualitative research methodologies and a detailed narrative of the phenomenological approach. A demonstration of the researcher's trustworthiness and ethical conscientiousness for study participants is then given. Next, sampling procedures are discussed and followed by detailed descriptions of each of the six participants in the study. Data collection methods are discussed via the interview approach, and the chapter concludes with an explanation of the unique data analysis tool utilized in this study.

Research Question

The driving question underpinning this research is to explore and establish a better understanding of how student athletes identify themselves while transitioning out of their final year of baccalaureate study and intercollegiate athletic eligibility.

Qualitative Approach

The research question for this dissertation is qualitative in nature in that it seeks to bring understanding to an experience lived by participants. According to Maxwell (2013), qualitative and quantitative methods are not equal opposites of one another; said another way, they are not merely two different approaches to answering the same question. Instead, each method has different strengths and is built upon different logics, making each approach unique in the inquiries it explores (Maxwell, 2013). Specifically, Maxwell (2013) explained that a key

difference in the two approaches rests in the distinction between "variance theory" and "process theory":

> Quantitative researchers tend to see the world in terms of variables; they view explanation as a demonstration that there is a statistical relationship between different variables. Process theory, in contrast, tends to see the world in terms of people, situations, events, and the processes that connect these; explanation is based on how some situations and events influence others (p. 82).

Phenomenological Methodology

Because of the descriptive and exploratory nature of this inquiry, a qualitative research design is most appropriate and valid. Specifically, this study is built upon the phenomenological framework. Seeking to understand the lived experiences of participants, one must consider the context and setting of the phenomenon. Further, the participants' frames of reference for understanding the phenomenon they are experiencing should be acknowledged (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

In his article, "Phenomenology in Its Original Sense," van Manen (2017) focused specifically on the phenomenological term "lived experience" and delivers insight into the "significance for understanding phenomenological reflection, meaning, analysis, and insights" (p. 810). Phenomenology is unique in that it does not seek to understand the emotional reactions one has to a lived experience, but to understand the lived experience itself: the question is not how an experience makes one feel, but instead *what it was like* to live that particular experience (van Manen, 2017). In this way, "phenomenology is always anchored in the lifeworld of the

individual and the meaning associated with being-in-the-world" (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014, p. 88).

In attempting to understand what phenomenology is, it is sometimes beneficial to discuss what it is *not*. Van Manen (2017) explained, "phenomenology is not the study of the meaning of concepts, words, or texts, but of experience as lived" (p. 811). Patton (2002) stated that phenomenology focuses on the primary question: "what is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or this group of people" (p. 104). Instead of analysis with such methods as coding, theming, calculating repetitions, frequencies, and synchronicities, van Manen (2017) asserted that researchers are to "let a phenome (lived experience) show itself in the way that it gives itself while living through it" (p. 813). Further, the intention of phenomenological inquiry is not to theorize, generalize, or conceptualize while inferring and exploring the phenomena; rather, van Manen (2017) praised the singularity and individuality of lived experiences that the phenomenological methodology is built upon. This notion is further supported by Creswell (2013), who explains that conducting phenomenological research is unique in its intentionality to understand the essence of the phenomenon by studying a small group of individuals who have experience the same phenomenon.

Phenomenology is the most appropriate methodological framework for an inquiry into the experience of student athletes in transition solely for the purpose of understanding what that experience was like for the individuals. In searching for insights, or "in-seeing" to use the language of van Manen (2017), if and how individuals experience identity transition upon the foreclosure of salient identities is the focus. While other qualitative methodologies such as case study, narrative inquiry or even ethnography could likely provide fascinating findings and

research implications, I am drawn to the phenomenological framework primarily because of the emphasis on the *phenomenon* in study.

Two distinguishable components of the phenomenological methodology are that of epoché and bracketing. Treated as the first step in the phenomenological analysis, epoché is described as "when everyday understandings, judgments, and knowings are set aside, and the phenomena are revisiting, visually, naively, in a wide-open sense" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). In other words, it is the phenomenological researcher's responsibility to consciously acknowledge any personal understandings or biases they have toward the phenomenon under study. Bracketing, then, is the suspension of these assumptions when analyzing the phenomenon. Influenced by Husserl, Patton (2002) explained that bracketing demands that "the researcher holds the phenomenon up for serious inspection. It is taken out of the world where it occurs. It is taken apart and dissected. Its elements and essential structures are uncovered, defined, and analyzed" (p. 485). However, many researchers claim that it is impossible to fully bracket or suspend oneself from phenomenological data analysis. Specifically, van Manen (1990) suggested that "It is better to make explicit our understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions and theories" as an attempt to validate one's interest in the phenomenon of study (p. 47). Giorgi (2008) offered further explanation on bracketing:

> Basically, to employ the phenomenological reduction means two things: (1) The researcher has to bracket personal part knowledge and all other theoretical knowledge not based on direct intuition, regardless of its source, so that full attention can be given to the instance of the phenomenon that is currently appearing to his or her consciousness; and (2) the researcher withholds the positing of the existence or reality of the object or state of affairs that he or she is beholding (Giorgi, 2008, p. 3).

Establishing Trustworthiness and Ethical Conscientiousness

Establishing trustworthiness and ethical practices must be the focal point of all research; this study is no exception. The research inquiries of this study are deeply personal to the participants; as such, respect for their privacy and consent to share their story are obligatory. Once I established trust with the participants of this study, my anticipation that our interviews would be incredibly raw and vulnerable was accurate. A plan to reciprocate this trust and openness is essential to the quality of the study. Marshall and Rossman (2016) explained that when participants agree to help in a study, they are giving of themselves, and it is merely human nature to expect that giving to be reciprocated. This reciprocity is returned in sharing pieces of myself in the interviews; showing vulnerability in my own triumphs and defeats as a student athlete may open the door for participants to feel a connection and shared experience in the student athlete identity.

Maintaining ethical boundaries is of utmost importance to me in this research setting because of the dual-role I play. I have an advantageous position as a graduate assistant in the athletic department in which I have collected my data; as such, I have access to the student athlete population that most others do not. Similarly, I am a familiar face to many of my participants; in this way, trust may have already been established. Conversely, because I work with these participants, I am bound by both my professional restrictions as well as those of the NCAA. For example, it is typical in qualitative research to conduct an interview over a shared meal or cup of coffee. Per NCAA rules, however, sharing a casual meal with a student athlete can considered an “extra-benefit” because of their athlete states and can put them in harms’ way of repercussions from both the institution and the NCAA. Another important obligation for me as a researcher is to maintain the researcher-participant role. I must communicate clearly with the

participants of this study on what our roles are; however, I do not want to be unapproachable and callous to our conversations if I hope for participants to share some deeply personal experiences with me.

Building rapport and trust with the participants in the study is a hallmark in qualitative research. Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2014) shared that such a process requires time and care to give to participants in addition to paying persistent attention to their needs. In this way, one must also pay careful attention to fulfilling the needs of the study. Reciprocity and mutuality, notably the primary pillars of quality connections between participants and researchers, are established in the presence of rapport. However, Jones, Torres and Arminio (2014) stated that "rapport is not enough in a research relationship as it is more typically the presence of trust that facilitates a reciprocal relationship" (p. 120). Further, prolonged engagement ensures that the researcher builds rapport and trust with participants; in this way, the researcher allows time to build a relationship with their participants, versus a transactional experience.

Sampling

Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2014) expressed that sampling is arguably the "most understudied and least understood dimension of the qualitative research process" (p. 106). As such, a great deal of intentionality has been focused on this study's sample so as to most accurately depict the phenomenon in study, the experience of identity transition in student athletes. Patton (2002) offers insight into the notion of purposeful sampling, which is the practice of carefully selecting participants who are "experts" in the phenomenon under investigation. In this study, the experts on the subject are student athletes who are experiencing identity transition upon athletic career foreclosure.

Sampling criteria, a crucial component of the sampling design, “refers to those variables, characteristics, qualities, experiences, and demographics most directly linked to the purpose of the study and, thus, important to the construction of the sample” (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014, p. 110). There are specific demographic qualities that must be present and capable of being expressed by the participant; these qualities lend depth and understanding about the phenomenon of interest to the researcher (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014). Two primary criteria were used in selecting the participants for my study. First, participants must be student athletes in their final year of eligibility as well as on track to graduate at the end of the academic year. This criterion is essential to the study because it allows a foundation for which the “student” and the “athlete” identities can be understood; when the participant enters into identity transition upon graduation, then, I will be able to investigate the experience of transitioning from a salient sense of self (student athlete) into an unknown identity. The second crucial criterion for the study was to target student athletes who competed in non-revenue generating intercollegiate sports. Most of the existing research on the experiences of student athletes focuses on the revenue-generating sports (i.e. football and men’s basketball), so this study is an attempt to fill some of the disparities in the literature.

While sampling criteria provides the parameters by which ideal participants and pieces of data would fit, sampling strategy are a researcher’s methods by which they will recruit these components. Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2014) defined sampling strategy as “the way to identify and secure the individuals, organizations, documents, or research settings that reflect the sampling criteria developed” (p. 115). Further, the authors state that the sampling strategy “is a method that implies a plan for identifying those who may shed light on a phenomenon of interest to the researcher” (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014, p. 115). I benefit from my access to the

student athlete population at the institution for which I am employed and studying: through my graduate assistantship, I have full access to the entire student athlete population. To recruit a variety in participants, I contacted my colleagues in Academic and Career Counseling for their guidance and asked for student athletes who fit the sample criteria for my study. The six participants chosen for the study were the first six to respond to the inquiry. From there I met individually with each participant to introduce myself and my study, and we reviewed the verbal consent form.

The study is comprised of six participants: four of the six student athletes are female, and one participant is African American while five are Caucasian. The participants represent five different sport programs: baseball, softball, track and field, basketball, and rowing. Similarly, the participants range in the degree programs which they are pursuing. Diversity in sampling was an important element for this study because the goal is to investigate this phenomenon from multiple perspectives and create understanding that can positively impact a variety of student athletes who will, one day, experience the same phenomenon.

Description of Participants

The following section offers rich descriptions as provided by each of the six participants in the present study. The depth and detail with which these accounts are written is intended to help humanize each participant and create deeper understanding and similitude for the lived experience of identity transition.

Participant 1

Participant 1 is a student athlete on the rowing team. She identifies more strongly as a student than an athlete but expresses her lifelong ties to sport as a motivating factor that led to

her joining the team. Born in the northern United States, Participant 1 moved out of the country with her parents at a very young age. She moved again to the West Coast with her mother when her parents divorced, while her father moved to the Midwest. Participant 1 grew with her mom and little brother on the west coast, though she spent many of her summers in Midwest. Participant 1 attended a small private school where she knew most of her school mates and participated in numerous sports, including volleyball, basketball, track, and dance. A self-described "city girl", Participant 1 loved the challenge of working hard toward a common goal in sports. While she was recruited to play basketball at a few Division II schools, Participant 1 shared that her club team left her feeling burnt out and she just wanted to be "a normal student" in college. Her private school education greatly helped her prepare for the academic workload of college, but the void she experienced from not participating in a sport for the first time in her life caused Participant 1 to have a hard time staying disciplined, managing her time, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Participant 1 shared that having always battled body image issues, not having sport as an outlet for physical exercise also created feelings of self-consciousness toward her body. The lack of challenge in the classroom also led to habits of procrastination. Though she was completely unfamiliar with the sport of rowing, Participant 1 decided to try out for the team her junior year. She made the team and is grateful to be committed to a sport program once again. Incredibly extraverted, Participant 1 is a social butterfly and has several friend groups, comprised of athletes and non-athletes alike. Participant 1 considers herself a leader both on her team and in her academic settings and is driven to pursue a career as a wellness coach for college athletes, especially women. She is also intrigued by event planning, exercise implementation, and nutrition. When asked what her most salient pieces of her identity are, Participant 1 answered, "I'm a student athlete, I'm a woman, and I'm black."

Participant 2

Participant 2 is a student athlete for the rowing program, as well. Born and raised in the Midwest, Participant 2 grew up playing every sport she had opportunity to. She recalls participating in soccer, gymnastics, softball, basketball, volleyball, swimming, and track and field. Though recruited to the present rowing program, Participant 2 actually competed for the track and field team at a smaller school in the northern US her freshman year. Participant 2 ultimately decided to transfer back after one year at this smaller college because she did not feel connected to the campus environment. Participant 2 contacted the coach at the present program and went through the walk-on process to earn her spot on the roster. In high school, Participant 2 says she was very outgoing and social, involved in multiple friend circles and extracurricular activities. Those tendencies continued into her college career through her involvement with both her team and her sorority. Participant 2 identifies more as an athlete than a student: "I don't really love school, I like learning, but I just don't know what I'll do when sports are over." Further, she explained that her participation in sport is the reason she came to college in the first place; had it not been for athletics, she would have like to pursue something along the lines of becoming "a surfing instructor in Hawaii or something." Participant 2 describes herself as someone who is very emotionally aware and reflective of her feelings. She shared that on the StrengthFinders assessment, she is a feeler, empathizer, connector, protector and developer. When asked about ways she contributes to her team, she expresses her yearning to cultivate meaningful relationships and built connections that last, versus tangible results and athletic achievements. As such, Participant 2 shares that she is very anxious and sad for her participation in organized athletics to end, eluding to the loss of connection and relationships with coaches,

teammates, and so on. For Participant 2, sport made the transition into college easier; what then, she wonders, will the transition out into the real world be like without sports?

Participant 3

Participant 3 is a student athlete on the baseball team. Born in a nearby Midwest suburb, Participant 3 recalls starting to play organized sport when he was 5 or 6. He participated in basketball, baseball, and soccer. At age eight, he began playing for a competitive travel club baseball team. He moved up through the age divisions with this same team for most of his youth, and to this day is still very close with some of these teammates. Participant 3 experienced high school sport euphoria when his team won the state baseball championship his senior year. Though he hails from a highly reputable baseball team, Participant 3 expressed that he always loved playing the game simply for playing it. An older brother to four siblings, Participant 3 is very close with his family and has great pride in being a role model to his younger siblings; he goes home to see them any chance he can. Having grown up near the university in study, Participant 3 played in the baseball camps since he was a kid. This helped him develop a close relationship with his head coach, who Participant 3 considers a true mentor and confidant. After offers from other schools, Participant 3 signed his commitment letter to compete at the present university at the beginning of his junior year of high school. Participant 3 explained that the transition into college was overwhelming at first, with all the academic and athletic commitments freshmen student athletes have; however, after a few weeks, he found his routine and adapted well to the student athlete lifestyle. Though he is more introverted, Participant 3 made friends with his teammates and other athletes quickly. Participant 3 has great pride in his academic pursuits, stating that “I want the best success for life after sports.” With no intentions of pursuing baseball at a professional level, it is clear that Participant 3 cares deeply about doing his best

work in the classroom to prepare for his career after college. While his dream job is to be an athletic director, Participant 3 is open-minded about where the working world will take him and is accepting of any and all experiences that can help him along the way. Participant 3 is of genuine and humble character, as he always wants to lead by example and do the right thing. The ultimate team player, Participant 3 is focused on how he can contribute for his team rather than on his individual stats or accolades. He dreams of leaving a legacy of working hard and doing his best for those around him; he wants to be known for his integrity and instilling longevity into his athletic program for his beloved head coach.

Participant 4

Participant 4 is a track and field student athlete. He grew up in the Midwest and is an only child. In his younger days, Participant 4 played baseball, soccer, tennis, and football. On the social hierarchy in his community, football is king; Participant 4 proudly explained that it is his favorite sport and has had the most positive impact on his upbringing. Being very close with his parents and having very close friendships back home, Participant 4 makes the trip home as often as he can. Having diversity in his social circles is not difficult for Participant 4, as he has always had friends in both academic and athletic spheres. Though he did not begin competing in his field event until high school, Participant 4 quickly found success and began to be recruited by college coaches. While he did not intent to participate in sports in college, Participant 4 shares that he could not refuse the opportunity to compete at the Division I level. Participant 4 strongly identifies as a student over an athlete. He is an excellent student and channels a great deal of confidence and competitiveness through his academics: “I always want to be the smartest one in the room,” he explained. School comes quite naturally to Participant 4, and he grew an early interest for math and engineering in high school. Upon exploring introductory courses during his

first year of college, Participant 4 fell in love with accounting and is in confident pursuit of a career as a certified public accountant. He also sees great value in helping other students with their school work and enjoys opportunities to teach material to others. In terms of athletic success, Participant 4 shared that his collegiate career has unfortunately been shaped by recurring injuries and, therefore, frustration and disappointment. As such, he has learned to not define himself by his athletic accomplishments but, instead, appreciate the opportunity given to him and enjoy the ride. Participant 4 self-identifies as a leader, independent, competitive, confident, and a role model. Further, he shares that he works well under pressure and has developed an ability to balance his academic, athletic, and social lives well. He openly acknowledges the toll his athletic obligations have had on his academic responsibilities and social opportunities, but also recognizes his learned capacity for time management, organization and multi-tasking as well as the diversification of his social circles. While it would have been more comfortable to stay close to home with his parents and friends, Participant 4 is grateful for having said yes to the unknown: "I took the risk and I'm glad I did."

Participant 5

Participant 5 is a softball student athlete. Growing up in a sport-loving family of five, she participated in every sport she was able to: t-ball, gymnastics, swim, soccer, basketball, volleyball, golf, and softball. Born in the Midwest, Participant 5 moved west with her family for her dad's job and spent 14 years there. When she was a sophomore in high school, her dad accepted another job and their family returned to the Midwest. Participant 5 is very close with both of her parents and her youngest brother. Her family has always been supportive of her participation in sports, which have greatly influenced the entire family's social lives. Participant 5 soon realized that playing softball at the collegiate level was a possibility; her teammates and

friends also noticed and began calling her “D-1.” As such, Participant 5 shared that she only wanted to compete in college if it was at the Division I level; if she was going to make the sacrifices and put in all the effort, she wanted to be sure to do so at the highest level. The “D-1” nickname became a major component of her identity in high school, and Participant 5 admits that she let the pressure mount and interfere with her performance. When she hit a slump in her playing, she explains that she had to stop overthinking and trying to please others and, instead, just play the game she loves. When she arrived on campus, Participant 5 did not have high expectations to play in her freshman season, recognizing that she had a lot to learn and wanted to focus on growing and adjusting in her first year of college. The adjustment to college was not easy at first, as Participant 5 shares that there was very little downtime among all the meetings, practices, class, tutoring, and so forth. However, that rigidity in her schedule helped her learn to manage her time and set the foundation for the next three years of college. Expressing that academics are more important to her than athletics, Participant 5 is a very strong student and feels a great deal of pride toward her academic work. Sometimes, this pride can lead to her to feel pressure in excelling in the classroom. Early into college, Participant 5 understood the importance of diversifying her collegiate experience and considered rushing for a sorority; however, she admits that Greek Life was not entirely feasible with her schedule, nor congruent with her personality. Instead, she sought out different student athlete groups and organizations within the athletic department. From the athletics perspective, Participant 5 shared that she had a very tumultuous relationship with the head coach, who she described as confrontational, mean, and made unpredictable coaching decisions. As tensions and confusion escalated, Participant 5 considered quitting the team. However, the summer before her senior year, a new head coach was hired, and Participant 5 elected to stay for her senior season. Participant 5 describes herself

as a good listener, a hard worker, congenial, funny, and a go-getter. A natural leader, she is widely recognized by her teammates as helpful and resourceful, and many teammates lovingly call her "mom." Participant 5 is very realistic about her future in softball and knows that her playing days will soon come to an end. As such, she has worked hard to prepare for her life after collegiate athletics. She is driven by the understanding that while "athlete" is an important component of her identity, it is not all-encompassing. Though she does not have her next steps perfectly mapped out, Participant 5 wants to pursue a career in collegiate athletics to continue working with student athletes and help them see that there is so much more to their collegiate experience than being an athlete.

Participant 6

Participant 6 is a women's basketball student athlete. Born and raised in a nearby Midwest suburb, Participant 6 is very close with her parents and two brothers. Being the youngest and the only girl, Participant 6 admits she may have been spoiled a bit growing up. She started playing sports in early elementary, and basketball has always been her primary focus. Very competitive and naturally talented as a player, Participant 6 played in club organizations throughout her youth and quickly rose through the rankings to play for the best teams in her age groups. Early in her high school days, Participant 6 knew that she wanted to continue playing in college. After tearing her ACL during her junior season, her high school playing career came to an abrupt stop. Since she had already committed to playing in college, Participant 6 shared that she was not as disappointed in her high school career being cut short, though she was saddened to not be able to play in the state tournament with her teammates her senior year. Because of her close connection with her family, Participant 6 shared that she wanted to stay close to home when choosing which college to go to. In preparing to begin her college career, Participant 6

stated that she expected her transition into college academics to be much harder than it was. Athletics, on the other hand, was every bit as difficult as she anticipated: the visibility of her program's lack of success was especially intimidating. When asked if she identifies more as a student or as an athlete, Participant 6 explained that she takes more pride in her academics, but the time commitment and pressure to perform made her feel like more of an athlete than a student. Though she is a natural leader, Participant 6 shared that she had a very negative experience as a team captain in high school and has grown a dislike for the word "leader" and the notion of being responsible for the actions of others. Admittedly more reserved, Participant 6 prefers to stay in her comfort zone and is quiet until she is comfortable in her social setting. Participant 6 has found great social connection with various student athlete groups and organizations within the athletic department as well as with student athletes from other teams. With her heart set on making it to post-season play, Participant 6 also reveals that if she has the opportunity to extend her playing career after college, she would jump on the opportunity. However, she feels that because she has never been far from home, the thought of living over-seas away from her family can be overwhelming. She also recognizes, though, that her playing days are numbered and that sooner or later, she will retire from playing. While that will be a heavy day for her, she explains that her dad and middle brother may actually have a harder time with her transition out of sport than she will. Heavily invested in her playing career, her dad has been to every one of her games and gets video footage to share with her brother and grandparents. When I asked her how she thinks her dad will handle her retirement, Participant 6 states that "Dad is going to be a wreck if I stop playing." Because of the incredible influence sport has had on her life, though, Participant 6 would love to pursue a career that involves sport in a new capacity if she forgoes playing overseas.

Interview Approach

Van Manen (1990) speaks specifically to the interview component of a phenomenological study and explains that there are two purposes of the interpretive interview. First, the phenomenological interview allows the research to investigate "experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon" and second, the interview is "a vehicle to develop a conversational relation with a partner (interviewee) about the meaning of an experience" (p. 66). Further, Patton (2002) emphasizes that for phenomenological research, interviews ought to be conducted with individuals who have *directly* experienced the phenomenon of interest. To derive deep understanding of the phenomenon, "interview questions must be constructed to access the structure and meaning of the particular phenomenon" (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014, p. 91). A necessity in phenomenological interviewing is the researcher's ability to guide the participant in providing concrete, specific accounts of their experiences that lend understanding to the phenomenon to its fullest potential. As such, van Manen (1990) acknowledges that participants may experience a "block" in their retelling of an experience; in this case, van Manen (1990) emphasizes the necessity for the researcher to pause and be silent for a few moments, allowing the participant to find their words. If necessary, the researcher can restate the participant's last statement to potentially create a new perspective into the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). To further understand the lived experience of the phenomenon in study, researchers ought to utilize open-ended questions, allowing participants to describe the phenomenon in their own words (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014).

Because this study seeks to understand the phenomenon of transition out of salient identities, the design is longitudinal in nature. The present study consists of twelve interviews;

two with each of the six participants. Seeking an understanding of these student athletes in their final days of college, the first interview with each participant occurred within the few weeks prior to their graduation. The second interview with each participant, then, took place six months post-graduation. The intention behind this timing was to provide enough time for the participants to transition out of college and into new chapters of their lives: it is in these six months that I anticipate the phenomenon of identity transition to at least be initiated and cognitively recognized by each participant. To align with the phenomenological framework, the interviews were semi-structured to allow for organic, conversational dialogue between the participant and researcher.

Data Analysis

Supported by van Manen's (2017) skepticism of systematic analysis of qualitative data, the *Listening Guide* is the primary analysis tool implemented in this study. The *Listening Guide* is a qualitative, relational and voice-centered data analysis approach framed as a feminist methodology (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 2015; Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg & Bertsch, 2006; Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995). Further, the *Listening Guide* is a psychological analysis method designed to help researchers discover meaning by understanding another's inner world. Woodcock (2016) asserts that the *Listening Guide* is a unique analysis tool because, "it places emphasis on the psychological complexities of humans through attention to voice. It does so through the creation and special analysis of voice poems as well as by attending to silences" (p. 2). Because each person's existence is distinct, Gilligan et al. (2006) believe that one's voice is the direct pathway to creating a relationship in which deeper understanding can be established.

According to Gilligan et al. (2006), "the *Listening Guide* was developed in part as a response to the uneasiness and growing dissatisfaction with the nature of coding schemes

typically being used to analyze qualitative data" (p. 158). Because of its intense focus on the psychological experience of an individual experiencing a phenomenon and the drive to establish a relationship with the individual, the *Listening Guide* provides detailed and thorough insight into their stories, making it an ideal tool for holistic data analysis in a phenomenological study in comparison to what traditional coding and analysis would unearth.

The *Listening Guide* is a multi-step analysis process designed for an in-depth exploration of the layered nature of the psyche. In its first step of listening, the *Listening Guide* invites the researcher to listen for the plot in the story being told by the participant. As the researcher engages in the first listening, the elements to be focused on are the emotional resonances, repeated words and phrases, contradictions, omissions, and revisions in the stories shared by the participants (Woodcock, 2016). In doing so, one must pay careful attention to the when, where, with whom, and why of the participant's story. A distinct element in this phase of the *Listening Guide* is honoring the silences in the participant's story sharing. "Silence may manifest itself as pauses noted in the transcript as well as instances of informants either lowering their voices or allowing their voices to trail off" (Woodcock, 2016). Important to this step in the process is the intentional bracketing of one's own reactions and biases as a researcher listening to someone else's experiences, as well as using participants' words to tell our own stories. This attentive step closely mimics the phenomenological practices of epoché and bracketing, thus providing further support to use the *Listening Guide* as a phenomenological data analysis tool.

Before moving onto the second listening, the researcher is to revisit their research question, refreshing their focus and revealing the trends and themes to explore in more depth. With the research question in mind as the touchstone for further analysis, the researcher then concentrates on the first-person expressions throughout the transcript. These expressions, most

often articulated using “I” statements allows the researcher to “meticulously attend to thoughts, wishes, desires, needs, conflicts and silences spoken by the informant by tracing them in a purposeful way” (Woodcock, 2010). In this way, the researcher constructs voice poems from the “I” statements of the transcript, more commonly referred to as “I poems”. Gilligan et al. (2006) explain that this step has two primary purposes: “First, it is intended to press the researcher to listen to the participant’s first-person voice – to pick up its distinctive cadences and rhythms – and second, to hear how this person speaks about him-or herself” (p. 162). I poems are an excellent opportunity to examine interview transcriptions for meaning that may have been glossed over or not immediately detected in traditional coding analysis. Further, I poems provide clearer meaning of themes not directly stated, as “the I poem attends to an associative stream of consciousness carried by the first-person voice running through a narrative” and “brings the informant’s subjectivity to the foreground, providing the researcher with the opportunity to attend just to the rhythms and patterns in the informant’s relationships to himself or herself and to others as expressed in his or her narratives” (Woodcock, 2010; 2016). Woodcock (2016) asserts that “I” statements are often intermingled with “you” and “they” statements, which can be interpreted as internal dialogue and even dissonance within the participant’s understanding and telling of their story. As such, it is advantageous to explore multiple variations of personal pronoun statements (i.e. you, we, us, they, etc.) as a way to extract the participant’s internal conversations associated with the feelings and tensions within a given theme (Raider-Roth, 2000; Woodcock, 2016). Special attention is to be paid to the use of “you” and “they” statements, as they can be used to simply speak in reference to oneself and to others, or they can illustrate a participant’s separation from a given statement. Specifically, “you” or “they” statements can

signify a participant disowning a given statements, whereas an “I”, “we” and “us” statements can demonstrate ownership of the statement (Woodcock, 2016).

While the first and second listenings in the *Listening Guide* establish themes within the stories told by the participant, the third and fourth listenings explore the relationship between those themes. The third step in the *Listening Guide* is to listen for contrapuntal voices, which “offers a way to listen for the counterpoint in the text we are analyzing, or the multiple facets of the story being told” (Gilligan et al., 2006, p. 165). The interweaving of two themes is termed by Gilligan et al. (1990) as “contrapuntal”. Here, the researcher will review the transcription multiple times, each time listening for a different voice. As the voices are focused on, one at a time, the researcher is then introduced to the relationships between these contrapuntal voices and the first-person voice established via the I poem. The relationship between the voices can be harmonious, opposing, or even contradictory (Gilligan et al., 2006). In the fourth and final step, the researcher will take all the information they have gathered from their multiple listenings and findings to compose an analysis of the data as it pertains to the original research puzzle. It is in this phase that interpretations made by the researcher are transformed into writing, expressing what has been learned through the process and what implications these findings have on the inquiry in its entirety (Gilligan et al., 2006). Gilligan et al., (2006) explain that when several interviews are used in a given research project, the multiple analyses can certainly be compared with one another. In this way, both similarities in themes as well as distinct differences emerge collectively. The use of contrapuntal listenings can reveal notable correlations between themes, illustrating great insight into the intertwined nature of themes within a participant’s story. In this way, the *Listening Guide* again demonstrates why it is the appropriate analysis tool to implement

in a phenomenological study because “it directly lends itself to uncovering the relationships to be found in the informants’ stories” (Woodcock, 2010).

Chapter 4: Findings & Discussion

The following chapter is a presentation of the results of the twelve total interviews of this study. This chapter is unorthodox in its arrangement. While traditional formatting presents the data findings in a chapter followed by the collective discussion in the next chapter, I felt it would do a study of this nature more justice to infuse the findings and discussion with one another per participant, as opposed to presenting the findings of all twelve interviews and then discussing them collectively. As such, there are six sub-chapters: one for each participant, presenting both the results derived from the data as well as the discussion accompanying those results. It is arranged in this manner due to the unique, deeply personal nature of this qualitative study. These results are not intended to be generalizable and are therefore discussed in separate sections instead of in one larger finding.

Each sub-chapter/section begins with an analysis of the Pre-Transition Interview. Taking place at the end of their senior spring semester, the questions in this interview were intended to draw out the participant's identity and understanding of self in their final weeks as a student athlete. The interview questions draw largely on the ideas of anticipation of transition, identity foreclosure, identity threat, and the notion of leaving behind a legacy. Specifically, this interview was designed to seek out whether or not participants felt that their goals were met as a student athlete, what motivates them, and get a gauge for how they anticipate what the next season of life might look for them. Themes from the interview are presented, as well as excerpts of the I-poem, which can be found as an appendix. The relationships within these themes is then discussed using the *Listening Guide*. I Poems are created based on the transcription. In the analysis, careful attention is paid to the silences, pauses, and moments where the participant trails off or loses a train of thought or does not complete a thought. Additionally, contrapuntal voices are brought to

light – instances in which the participant's internal dialogue seems contradictory or negating of itself.

Each sub-section then moves to the findings derived from the Post-Transition Interview, recorded roughly six months post-graduation. The questions in the Post-Transition Interview are intentionally framed around the theoretical frameworks of this study. First, Social Identity Theory is explored by asking the participants questions to create an understanding of whether they perceive themselves as being in a social "in-group" or "out-group". The interview then moves into Transition Theory, in which the concept of moving in, moving though, and moving out is explained to the participant. The participant is then describes where they believe they fall on that continuum. The 4 S's of transition are also discussed – self is widely noted throughout the study because of identity. Their situation is the transition. The interview specifically asks participants what type of support networks they have utilized in their transition. Finally, strategies are discussed with "next steps" or how the participant is accepting where they are, settling in, or preparing to make their next move. The 4 S model ties in closely with Self-Efficacy and Career Preparedness, the third theoretical application of this interview. As with the Pre-Transition Interview, the findings from the Post-Transition interview go through the steps of the *Listening Guide* as the data analysis tool.

Participant 1

Pre-Transition Interview

Throughout the Pre-Transition Interview, Participant 1 is optimistic and confident in her preparedness for her next steps after college – though her exact plans were not yet solidified, she felt self-assured and that she had made the right moves to be prepared for her transition into a working role of some sort. Further, Participant 1 expressed a definite dissonance when stating how she felt about her college career coming to an end:

I'm excited
I never have to row again, but it's also like dang
I don't get to see my best friends everyday
I don't have a team to go to
I don't have all these, like… my schedule, people telling me what workouts I need to do
I'm going to have to do [it] on my own
I think it's like a little bit of everything
I'm sad
But I'm excited
But I'm scared
I think it's definitely everything.

For Participant 1, the anticipation of graduation is causing her to respond with a variety of feelings, including relief, excitement, remorse, and angst. In expressing the grief she feels toward not seeing her teammates every day, it is evident that the transition out of her student athlete experience threatens Participant 1's relationships with her teammates, embodied as a loss of camaraderie (Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Fuller, 2014). Further, Participant 1 is somewhat relieved to let her athletic career come to an end, alleviating the mental, physical and emotional tax of being a student athlete (Fuller, 2014; Coakley, 1983).

Participant 1 expresses identity threat in that her primary identity is athlete right now, which appears to be strengthened by the presence of impending identity foreclosure as she recognizes that transition is coming:

I still think I'm an athlete student
I still think athlete comes first
I'm an athlete. That is definitely the center of my identity right now
I don't know if that's because it's almost coming to an end
And I'm cherishing it a little bit more....

Because her collegiate athletic career is ending, Participant 1's salient identity, athlete, is threatened. In recognizing the threat, Participant 1 acknowledges that this may be causing her to cherish these final experiences as much as she can (Brewer & Petitpas, 2017; Benson et al., 2015). In this excerpt, Participant 1's voice is confident in her athlete identity, while the threat to this identity is only strengthening her identity (Gilligan et al., 2006). Further, as Participant 1 speaks of her athlete identity, she expressed feelings of pride, enjoyment, and confidence. Paradoxically, when she speaks of her student identity, she expresses irritation, melancholy, and detachment:

I have senioritis really bad academically
I don't want to write any more papers
I just want to do the bare minimum
[I will] make sure my GPA doesn't fall off
I think that's my only goal, just hold on
I thought about it, I've definitely thought about it (grad school)
I think where I am now,
I at least want to take a year off
I am so tired of writing papers and so over school
I feel like if I continue,
I won't have the want to learn anymore
But I feel like being in an internship,
I'm still learning
I do not want to sit in a classroom
I like hands-on training, like being in the environment and learning that way
I don't necessarily think I'm done learning
I think eventually I probably will pick up a Masters or something like that
But I don't think I could jump into that right now.

Evidently unmotivated to maintain her student identity, Participant 1 is eagerly anticipating the conclusion of her academic work. As with many graduating seniors, Participant

1 expresses burnout from school; however, she reveals that she believes it is likely that she will eventually pursue additional education in some way. As it stands, though, she yearns for reprieve from academic obligations: “I at least want to take a year off…I feel like if I continue; I won’t have a want to learn anymore.” For Participant 1, her student identity is not threatened by termination; because she has the option to return to school in the future, she welcomes the relief of setting aside any obligations associated with her student identity for now so that she can focus on her athlete identity. Her voice exhausted, it is clear that Participant 1 is drained from any scholastic motivation (Gilligan et al., 2006).

While reinforcement of the student identity did not appear to be a motivating factor for Participant 1, she did reveal a great deal about what she believed her purpose to be beyond simply being a student athlete, as she begins considering her identities aside from student athlete:

A young woman
I just I don't know, that just has so many meanings to me
[I’m] trying to just figure out my place in the world
I never had to think about who is [Participant 1] in the greater scheme of things?
Not at [institution], not to my teammates, not to my sorority sisters,
But who is [Participant 1] in the world?
What is she going to do?
Who is she going to impact?
Honestly, I just want to make enough to survive
I just want to make a difference
I want to have an impact on somebody
I want to be the person that somebody is like,
You know what?
This lady right here changed my life.

As Participant 1 reflects on her identities outside of her student athlete self, she ponders aloud who she might be in the future. Interestingly, Participant 1 is considering her identity aside from the social circles to which she currently belongs; in this way, she anticipates the separation from these in-groups as she navigates the development of a new identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979;

Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008). Throughout this excerpt, Participant 1 switches from primarily using “I” statements to speaking of herself in the third person. This interweaving of first and third person statements suggests that while there are components of her identity in which she has confidence and ownership (i.e. athlete), her future self seems distant, separated, and unclear as she develops a new identity (Gilligan et al., 2006; Erikson, 1968). Regardless, Participant 1 is confident that she will impact the lives of others. This yearning of Participant 1 to have a meaningful impact on those around her is deeply intertwined with the legacy she wants to leave. Specifically, Participant 1 expresses that as she is transitioning out of college, she is motivated to be remembered as someone who impacted others:

Before I go, making sure people know hey, still love you guys
I think just...
Just this idea of leaving a legacy behind me and just having,
Not necessarily my name be known but just that impact on people
I don't know why I want to be that way
I don't know why I want to touch so many lives
But I just feel like that's what I was meant to do.

This desire to impact as many lives as possible is perhaps a reason why Participant 1 is involved in so many social circles – the more people she can interact with, the higher the likelihood she has to impact people’s lives. It is also interesting to note that while she feels confident that her purpose is to impact others, Participant 1 cannot necessarily identify where that motivation or yearning comes from: her repetitive use of “I don’t know why” suggests that this disposition is something she has explored, yet has not unearthed (Gilligan et al., 2006).

Participant 1 expresses numerous times that she is prepared and eager, even excited, for her transition into a working role. In conveying her intentionality behind her proactively

preparing for interviews and internships, Participant 1 is not relying on one opportunity, but was sure to apply for multiple possible internships:

I really want it (internship)
But I have other applications out there,
And if not, I have other things I can fall back on,
But that's what I want
I can always stay here and intern with my stepmother
I can fall back on that plan and do stuff with her
I have other things I can do,
But I really want this because it's like smack dab in the realm that I want to be in.

Participant 1 describes her plan for life after college, beginning with her internship. Having applied for an internship as a sport nutritionist at another university, Participant 1 expresses that this is “smack dab in the realm I want to be in.” As an alternate option, Participant 1 can complete her internship at a local women’s fitness center. Interestingly, both options are sport-related, suggesting that Participant 1 seeks to maintain continuity with her athlete identity and remain in a familiar social structure upon transitioning out of her student athlete experience (Cabrita et al., 2014). Further, it is evident that should she need it, Participant 1 can complete her internship with her stepmother; in this way, she has security in her support systems as she navigates her professional development (Anderson, Goodman & Schlossberg, 2011). While she yearns for the sport nutritionist internship, there is a sense of calm and security in Participant 1’s voice (Gilligan et al., 2006). In believing that she has successfully planned her next steps, Participant 1 wonders about her peers who have not been as proactive about their careers:

I mean....
It takes away a lot of the stress
Other people… not knowing what they're going to do after graduation
I mean I still have that stress
I want this internship
I'm going for, but I feel like... Like it's not the end of the world if I don't get it
I feel like it takes a little weight off of my shoulders
I do think some of my teammates are a little stressed

If I didn't have my stepmom, I'd be in the same boat
Either you took the steps to apply early and figure stuff out early
Or you waited until the last minute and now you're confused.

While her plans are not yet solidified, Participant 1 is assured about the steps she has taken to prepare for life after college. She expresses confidence in all options of her plan. Further, there is an ease about her dialogue; “it’s not the end of the world if I don’t get it.” Participant 1 is secure with the outcome of this decision because she has something to fall back on with her stepmother (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011). Participant 1 points out, however, that if she did not have a secure support system yielding an alternate path, she would find herself in a similar place as her teammates who have not prepared for their professional lives after graduation. The “I” statements shared in this excerpt suggest that Participant 1 is confident about the decisions she has made regarding career preparation. Paradoxically, her use of “you” depicts a dialogue in which she is speaking to someone who did not take the same initiative that she did: “Either you took the steps to apply early and figure stuff out early, Or you waited until the last minute and now you're confused” (Gilligan et al., 2006).

In the closing statements of the Pre-Transition Interview, Participant 1 returns to the notion of legacy. First, she explains what she hopes her personal legacy would be and how she wants to be remembered by her teammates:

I think I will be remembered as the one who is always working hard
And just motivating people to work hard
I'm not the best on the team
I don't have the best numbers
But I was always like let's do it
I might have complained along the way, and been like my body hurts
But when it came time to do the work, we got the work done
I think that's what I leave behind, especially for our Littles
I think when my Little looks at me, she's like okay, she never gives up.

The notion of working hard for her team is paramount to Participant 1's identity on her team. Further, this notion also feeds her identity as a student athlete, a distinguished identity on campus. For Participant 1, being a student athlete is the epitome of representing her alma mater:

Being a [mascot] for me is being able to actually wear my mascot on my chest
I feel more pride than a lot of students who just kind of like wear it
Like when I'm out and people are like oh you go to [institution],
They'll see [institution] rowing on my chest, they'll be like oh you're an athlete at [institution],
Yeah, I am
I think for me being a [mascot] is being a student-athlete
Being able to represent this University outside of its walls
I'll always be a [mascot]
I will always wear my gear
I will always wear it proudly
I'll probably always cheer louder than anybody else when we play any sport.

With a sure sense of pride, Participant 1 expresses what it means to represent her institution as a student athlete. There is an underpinning of communal connection to her mascot, particularly with her fellow student athletes. This collective identity that she shares with all of her peers emits pride and honor. Further, Participant 1 expresses her belief that student athletes are the true bearers of the university's mascot; her identity as a student athlete is exclusive, setting her apart from her non-athletic peers. As such, Participant 1 is motivated to maintain this exclusivity (Benson et al., 2015). Participant 1 also makes strong first-person statements throughout the excerpt such as "I will always…", which suggests a promise that Participant 1 is making not only to her alma mater and community of student athletes, but to herself. In a more profound way, this may be an act of not forgetting this identity, even when she has moved on. For Participant 1, perhaps promising to always cheer for her alma mater is how she promises to stay connected to her student athlete identity long after she has left campus.

Post-Transition Interview

Within a few weeks of graduating college, Participant 1 moved back home to California and works in Los Angeles as a sport nutritionist intern at a university. To make fiscal ends meet, Participant 1 picked up two part-time jobs as a personal trainer and as a waitress. While she expresses that she needed to get these additional jobs out of necessity for income, it is also possible that she did so to maintain the "busyness" that she is accustomed to. Though she is working over 40 hours a week between her internship and two part-time jobs, Participant 1 shares that she is excited with where she finds herself and how she has adapted to the working world. For Participant 1, her favorite part of her transition thus far has been:

I would honestly say just figuring it out on my own
I haven't really had to run to my mom or anything like that
I feel like I'm growing
I can see my growth
I find that super exciting
I don't want to be like yeah, I'm happier without rowing
But I feel like I'm more in control than when I was on a team
I feel like now,
I can actually be more independent
And do the things that I want to do rather than feeling forced to do things
Like in rowing, if you're having a bad day,
You can't really take a day off
But now if I'm not feeling well one morning,
I can call and be like okay I'm not coming in today, and that's okay.

Personal growth and independence are important self-attributes that Participant 1 is excited to be fostering in her transition out of college. Further, the transition out of her sport has allotted a great degree of personal freedom that Participant 1 is thriving in as she redefines who she is as she navigates her transition out of her student athlete identity (Fuller, 2014; Lally, 2007). The control that she now has over her own time has contributed to her personal growth and thriving independence outside of the student athlete experience, which is in so many ways defined and structured (Coakley, 1983). While it is alleviating to no longer be confined by her

obligations as a student athlete, Participant 1 is also sentimental about the evolution of her social connections:

I miss my teammates
I miss being surrounded by such a great group of girls
I miss my friends
I think I find a lot of peace in being alone
I don't think I feel isolated at all
I always know that if I do want to hit up one of my friends on the team
or if I want to talk to somebody, they are always there
There's no worry that they are going to turn me away or not talk to me.

In her time as a student athlete, Participant 1 established many friendships with her teammates and fellow student athletes. In her retirement from her student athlete experience, Participant 1 expresses the grief she feels in no longer seeing her teammates every day (Blinde & Stratta, 1992). Though she is not physically surrounded by her teammates, Participant 1 certainly still feels connected to them and recognizes them as her in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008). Negating any perceptions of loneliness or isolation, Participant 1 is secure in these social connections and believes that any of her teammates would openly receive her should she reach out (Fuller, 2014).

The sense of community is not only present in her friendships, but also in the connections she is making professionally. As such, Participant 1's salient athlete identity has had a great influence on her career aspirations (Cabrita et al., 2014):

I've always known that I wanted to be involved in sports
So, it's no surprise to me that I found myself still immersed in the sports community
I think it helps me [being a former athlete]
I feel a little different than the other interns…
They weren't student-athletes
I have a little more insight
I've been in the athletes' shoes
I know how big a role the nutrition plays and how it affects our day-to-day habits
I will ask athletes how they are doing and talk to them
Even though I was in there are definitely things that I can relate to here in LA.

The experiences she had as a student athlete not only give her professional credibility and relatability with her student athlete clientele, but they have seemingly influenced Participant 1's very choice of career path (Cabrita et al., 2014). There is a sense of familiarity and ease expressed by Participant 1 as she describes her work with current student athletes; in this role, it seems she can better advocate for the student athlete because she understands the experience first-hand. Though she competed at a different university, Participant 1 reveals that there is a collective understanding that student athletes have for one another. Therefore, while she is no longer a competing student athlete, Participant 1 eludes to an in-group mentality with current student athletes over their shared experiences (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008). Further, Participant 1 seems to establish a distinction between herself and her fellow interns; because they were not student athletes themselves, the do not understand the experience the way Participant 1 does. Specifically, Participant 1 even aligns herself as a student athlete as she describes how nutrition "affects *our* day-to-day habits." In this way, Participant 1 aligns herself with the athlete identity, placing herself back in the student athlete in-group (LG; Brewer, 1999; Benson et al., 2015; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008). Participant 1 continues this notion as she speaks into the difficulty of the student athlete experience:

As student athletes, we invest a lot of time and effort into what we do
We don't always receive all the credit,
And we have to be okay with that
I just think that...
I would just say that it's a lot harder than you think
I just tell people that all the time, it's just a lot harder than you believe
People just think we get up and we just go to practice
And how hard can it actually be?
I definitely give it to student-athletes
We definitely deal with a lot more than the average student going to college.

Throughout this passage, Participant 1 speaks of herself as a student athlete. In defending the student athlete experience to onlookers, she is realigning herself with her athlete identity (Brewer, 1999). Protective of this athlete identity, Participant 1 advocates for her fellow student athletes to those who simply do not understand the experience. In aligning herself again with her athlete identity, then, Participant 1 categorizes herself in this exclusive in-group (Benson et al., 2015; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008). By the way she seemingly defends the life of a student athlete, it is evident that this is not the first time Participant 1 has considered this dialogue. Further, this excerpt exemplifies an interesting exchange between “I” and “we” statements. When using “I”, Participant 1 is speaking directly to someone who seemingly does not understand the student athlete experience. In using “we” statements, then, Participant 1 owns her student athlete identity; she feels it, understands it, and empathizes with it. Perhaps seeking validation or affirmation of the complexity in this identity, Participant 1 now advocates for her student athlete peers (Gilligan et al., 2006).

Perhaps influenced by her aspirations to work in the realm of exercise and nutrition, Participant 1 shares that she was prepared for certain components of the transition out of college. In anticipating the similarities between her student athlete regimen and her professional schedule, Participant 1 feels she has eased into her transition and has thus far experienced minimal difficulty:

I was kind of already prepared for that transition
I knew that of course I wasn't going to be working out as much
I knew that my diet would change
Or that it would have to change if I wanted to maintain a certain weight or whatever
I think I mentally prepared myself for that change a while before we graduated
I also feel like I'm very comfortable in my nutrition and in my fitness and just my journey
It hasn't been frightening so much.

In addition to her first-hand experience as a student athlete, Participant 1's familiarity and intrigue with exercise and nutrition has seemingly eased this part of the transition out of college for Participant 1. In anticipating her transition out of her student athlete experience, Participant 1 was able to create parallels between her personal experience and the career she is pursuing, thus easing the transition (Fuller, 2014). In this excerpt, Participant 1's voice is full of assurance as she confidently explains that she anticipated the various changes innate to transitioning out of her student athlete experience. In limiting the unknown components of her transition, then, Participant 1 has not been intimidated by her transition (Gilligan et al., 2006). Curious as to what may have contributed to her self-reliance in her transition, Participant 1 expresses the accountability she must lead by example if she wants to have a positive impact on others:

I don't have people riding me for it anymore
I don't have people keeping track of what I'm eating,
When I'm eating,
How much I'm working out
I think it's just definitely made me more accountable for what I'm doing
I think I'm doing pretty well.
I also think being a personal trainer and working in nutrition at [institution]
It keeps me on the ball
You know you can't fall off,
You kind of have to lead by example
When people look at you and be like well if you're not doing it, then why do I have to do it?

While in college, she was held accountable by those around her (i.e. teammates, coaches, support staff, etc.). Now, Participant 1 recognizes that she must exemplify this same accountability to her clients. Thus, leading by example is closely intertwined with her purpose of impacting those around her, likely derived from her athletic identity (Brewer, 1999).

In her Pre-Transition Interview, Participant 1 expressed that while she was not ready to embark on another academic journey immediately, she was hopeful that she would return to

school again someday. Interestingly, she is presented an unexpected opportunity through one of her part-time jobs:

I also have cool opportunity to work in the kitchen and intern with the chef
That's something that I'm leaning towards
[I am] foreseeing myself go to culinary school in the next six months
I can get a culinary degree and then move forward on the nutrition side
I've been kind of back and forth [culinary school]
Since I wanted to go to school
Since I graduated high school
I didn't really know what to do as a chef
I feel like my whole path led me back here for a reason
I feel like the whole nutrition thing and me being super involved
Made me want to know even more now
I can come back and use my skills and what I've learned there to…
Spread education about food, help athletes in that way.

Participant 1 explains that since she was in high school, she was interested in culinary school but did not know how that might play out as a career. Having an opportunity to shadow the chef of the restaurant she serves at has seemingly sparked this interest again. In this way, Participant 1 is assessing her current situation, including the timing of the opportunity and her previous interest and experience. Further, she is developing a strategy to prepare herself for her next transition into culinary school and, eventually, into a career in which she can educate athletes about nutrition (Schlossberg, 1989; Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011). In this excerpt, there is a subtle undertone of wonder in Participant 1's voice; she expresses that "I feel like my whole path led me back here for a reason," alluding to fate bringing her into her present moment. As she reflects on how her journey has led to her current situation, her voice is confident that this is exactly where she is meant to be (Gilligan et al., 2006).

While it seems that Participant 1 was motivated to capitalize on networking opportunities to engage in her next career move, it seems that there was a deeper motivating factor at play: fear of failure. When asked if she felt she was where she thought she might be six months post-

graduation, Participant 1's response reveals that fear of failure, and not intentional preparation, is the reason she finds herself in her current situation:

I didn't really want to think about six months post-graduation
It wasn't that I was scared,
I just know that I get disappointed easily
I didn't want to set any goals that I couldn't obtain
When I originally planned to move out here and do my internship,
It was more "okay let's get our internship done,
Let's just kind of find a job so that we cannot fail"
I think that's all it was,
"Let's just go to LA and survive, see what happens"
I didn't expect to have made so many connections and so many friends
Have a path kind of write itself out for me
I think one of the biggest lessons that I have definitely learned is just keep going
I felt discouraged when I felt like I was failing
Not necessarily because I was failing at something
But because I felt like I wasn't doing as well as I should be
So I felt discouraged
But now…
If I'm not living up to my potential or doing as well as I think I should be doing,
It's like okay,
What can I do instead that makes me feel a little more complete?

This excerpt is fascinating in the way it reveals Participant 1's fear or avoidance of failure. Perhaps by setting small, easily obtainable goals (i.e. get a part-time job to get supplemental income) instead of lofty goals (i.e. network with professionals, apply for culinary school), Participant 1 was insulating herself from failure. This excerpt also provides insight into Participant 1's internal dialogue, as she uses plural, possessive pronouns to illustrate her thoughts (i.e. *our* internship; *let's*; *we* cannot fail). In this way, it seems that Participant 1 engages in frequent self-talk to affirm and encourage herself as she navigates her transition (Gilligan et al., 2006; Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011). Further, Participant 1 expresses a lack of ownership or influence over her situation. Specifically, she believes that external factors have influenced her current career circumstances: "Having a path kind of write itself out for me" suggests that Participant 1 does not have effect on her career path in this moment; it is something

that is happening *to* her, not *because of* her. As such, Participant 1's focus is on avoiding failure, not necessarily finding success. However, she suggests that instead of accepting failure, she finds alternatives to derive a feeling of completeness (Gilligan et al., 2006; Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011).

In briefly explaining the stages of moving in, moving through, and moving out of transition (Schlossberg, 1989; Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006), Participant 1 identified where she felt she was on the transition continuum:

I think I'm still kind of moving through
I think my move out here was definitely moving into transition
I don't want to say I have everything figured out,
But I am definitely more solid than I was when I got out here
Just a little bit more comfortable
When I first got here, back to LA, it was just like a lot of unsure...
Scared...
Just kind of trying to not let anybody down
I feel like there was so much I had to prove
But I didn't really need to at the time.

Participant 1 finds herself moving through the transition out of her student athlete experience. She explains that when she first made her move to LA, she was certainly moving into transition. As she navigated the newness of her surroundings and had to familiarize herself with the rules, norms, and boundaries of her new system, Participant 1 describes herself initially as "unsure" and "scared". As she has become more accustomed to her new life, she explains that she is "definitely more solid than I was when I got out here." As such, she has established a more constant state as she is learning to balance the various components of her new life (Schlossberg, 1989; Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). Once again, Participant 1 expresses that the primary space by which she was mentally and emotionally operating from to be fear of failure. However, she it seems that Participant 1 has reflected where this fear has come from: "Just kind

of trying to not let anybody down; I feel like there was so much I had to prove; But I didn't really need to at the time." Additionally, Participant 1 trails off into silences and leaves thoughts incomplete in this portion of the interview, signifying that she is still seeking to understand the transition; grappling to make meaning of everything, Participant 1 is accepting that where she finds herself does not have to be defined as "failure", despite the external pressure she evidently is sifting through (Gilligan et al., 2006).

In the closing moments of the interview, Participant 1 reminisces on her student athlete experience and how it has instilled in her the characteristics she needs to pursue her career dreams:

I think I will always see myself as a student athlete
It's what made me who I am now
I think honestly, I will always identify as a student athlete
I will always identify as a [mascot]
Those are the things that got me to where I am right now
I don't think that's going away anytime soon
Maybe when I stop being a student
Or when I stop being an athlete, then maybe it will change
I still think being an athlete is a huge part of who I am.

Because her career is so engrained in the world of sport, exercise, and nutrition, it is easy to see that Participant 1 would feel that her identity as a student athlete was quite influential on her career (Cabrita et al., 2014). Further, the ease of the transition from being an athlete to working with athletes implies that Participant 1 has not realized retirement from her student athlete identity; though she is no longer competing as an athlete, she still clearly sees herself as one (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004). In this excerpt, Participant 1 also repeats the notion that being a student athlete is the what made her who she is now; her experience as a student athlete has rooted the characteristics and attributes that have helped her navigate her transition. In this way, the permanence of her voice suggests that her identity as a student athlete

is deeply embedded and seemingly unlikely to change (Gilligan et al., 2006). Though she is redefining herself in the professional world, Participant 1's athletic identity is preserved because of the career path she is pursuing (Brewer, 1999; Cabrita et al., 2014).

Participant 2

Pre-Transition Interview

Participant 2's demeanor is seemingly nonchalant to begin the Pre-Transition Interview. However, when she described and unpacked where her state of mind was throughout the interview, it was clear that competing in her final weeks of rowing was essentially all-consuming, and that nearly every other component of her life was less prioritized so she could focus on rowing. When asked how her final weeks of school were going, Participant 2 shared that she was clearly not motivated by or interested in excelling in school:

I just don't want to do anything, I'm so over it
I'm only in three classes
I don't have someone in front of me (online course)
I'm not worried about disappointing her because I haven't met her
If I was in person, I couldn't look at her if I didn't turn in an assignment
I don't ever want to do it
I've done well but…
I just don't... I don't know
I'm really pushing it off
I just…the way I feel right now is my GPA is not going to go up or down,
So I'm like what's the point?

As with most college students toward the end of the spring semester, Participant 2 is lacking motivation in the classroom. What is interesting, though, is the reasoning for why she does not feel remorse if she does not perform well in her online course, in particular. Because she does not interact with the instructor face to face, Participant 2 seems to feel disconnected from a possibility of disappointing the instructor. Further, Participant 2 feels as though her GPA is quite secure, so she is even less motivated to put in extra effort academically right now. This energy, then, can be spent elsewhere. Specifically, Participant 2 is focused on her athlete identity (Brewer, 1999).

As her collegiate athletic career is coming to an end, there is clear dissonance in the feelings and thought patterns that Participant 2 shared:

I always asked for seniors if they're sad about leaving
no I'm feeling good it's four years for a reason
I'm always like what the fuck how can I be…
I'm going to be a mess
And I kind of am
I have a good solid few weeks left in me
I am so ready to put my energy somewhere else
I finally do understand that
I'm going to miss it,
I'm going to be so sad
but I'm tired of...
I'm just tired of doing stuff,
I just don't want to do anything
I literally want to just lay around for 3 weeks and just not talk to anybody
Academically... I'm ready for all that to be done.

The discord expressed by Participant 2 reveals that she is simultaneously saddened to be done competing *while also* exhausted and in deep need of rest. It is interesting to feel both at once; to feel grieved by the conclusion of something while also feeling excited for it to end is conflicting. These contrapuntal voices, then, imply that Participant 2 feel disjointed in anticipation of her transition (LG; Fuller, 2014). Further, Participant 2 expresses a desire to protect her athlete identity in its final few weeks of existence, deflecting any consideration of alternatives (Benson et al., 2015; Brewer & Petitpas, 2017). However, she also acknowledges that in she is ready to rest and to put her energies into new endeavors (Fuller, 2014).

Despite the dissonance within her student athlete identity, Participant 2 shares that her salient identity is still athlete over student. The fulfillment she gets from her sport reinforces the salience of her athlete identity. Again, she recognizes that her athlete identity is threatened, evident in this excerpt (Benson et al., 2015):

Athlete student

I'm just someone who's always been that way
I care more about this
I'm enjoying this more so I'm, yeah I'm going to put the athlete part first because it's fun
I have teammates who definitely feel otherwise
Because yeah it's almost the end
I want to take in every moment
So the athlete part is definitely right there.
Everything I do, I'm doing with rowing in mind
What I eat, when I sleep when I nap
I think about it all the time
I know their strategies [opponents]
I'm thinking about how we're going to combat that
I think about it all the time
Like I'm not going to be able to think about that in 3 weeks,
because I just won't have that...
So what am I going to think about?
I don't know. I need some sort of activity.
I'm just afraid I'll turn into a cross-fitter, I am so scared.

It is clear that the imminent threat of her collegiate athletic career coming to a close is motivating the behaviors of Participant 2 as she commits solely to her athlete role (Brewer & Petitpas, 2017). She also seemingly uses humor as a coping mechanism. However, she posits a question that she is clearly wrestling with: what is she going to think about when rowing is done? If her sport fills most of her thoughts, what will she turn to when she is no longer competing? This internal dialogue illustrates the tension Participant 2 feels as she anticipates retiring from her sport (Gilligan et al., 2006; Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004).

Participant 2 is also anxious to leave the safety and comfort of her team (Fuller, 2014). Specifically, she is enamored by the goal-driven mentality of the team setting and the opportunity to overcome obstacles. Participant 2 wonders, then, where will she find a space to foster the same mentality:

And so I don't know if certain things that are hard,
Like overcoming those hard things,
I'm doing this for myself because this is going to make me better at this,

Or make me mentally tougher,
Or just make me feel good
I don't know
So I've been trying to think about things like that....

When she is no longer on an organized team, pursuing a common goal, there is a threat of not being able to overcome obstacles, adversity, or to achieve accomplishing a goal (Fuller, 2014). Therefore, Participant 2 expresses a perception that without her athletic team, there will not be a goal-oriented space for her to feel successful. For her, being on this organized team, with a common, well-communicated goal, she is able to achieve something bigger than herself; when her athlete identity is ended, then, where will she find this space? *Will* she find it again? Participant 2 wonders if, perhaps, this goal-oriented space cannot exist outside of her team.

Though recognition is not a driving motive, Participant 2 does express that the recognition for athletic accomplishments is more significant to her than recognition for academic accomplishments:

My love language is words of affirmation
So hearing people tell me,
“Seeing you do this inspired me to do this,”
I think most people want to be recognized for the things that they do
I mean it doesn't need to be like a grand thing, but yeah....
Yeah I think so
But I don't think people just do shit to do it
I don't know
Maybe in school, you don't get as much of that recognition
At the end of the day,
It's just you and your instructor looking at that assignment and stuff
To me it's easier to be good at school than it has to be good at sports
I think if it was team-voted, that would be more meaningful to me
I still think it's a cool honor
I feel so bad saying this out loud,
But that is more whoa than an academics one.

Recognition for athletic accomplishments holds more meaning for Participant 2 than academic accolades. Because her athlete identity is more salient than her student identity,

therefore being recognized athletically feels more respected and valued to her (Brewer, 1999). In the same way, she is certainly more apathetic toward her student identity. As such, there seems to be a correlation between the significance associated with an identity and the recognition derived from it for Participant 2. In her eyes, being recognized or awarded as an athlete is more difficult than as a student; as such, it seems that the more challenging the recognition is to attain, the more valuable that recognition is. Said another way, when award is given to the identity that one holds more pride in, the award in and of itself is more valuable.

From here, Participant 2 begins to unpack her thoughts on what she might do when her collegiate career comes to an end. It is immediately evident that Participant 2 has avoided any kind of career preparation:

I'm always thinking of crazy silly ideas of what I'm going to do next
But also, I'm very much like
I'll figure it out
I haven't applied for a job or anything like that
I don't need to be doing that
I'm very much in the moment.

Participant 2 initially associates her lack of career proactivity to her personality, which is seemingly flippant and spontaneous. However, it is not merely levity or carefreeness that has guided her career decision-making; instead, it is athlete identity threat (Benson et al., 2015). Her salient identity is being threatened as her career comes to an end, and with no concrete or foreseeable plan of what is to come laid out before her, Participant 2 is disregarding any proactivity for focusing on what is enjoyable and fulfilling in the moment (Benson et al., 2015; Lally & Kerr, 2005; Fuller, 2014). She continues this train of thought:

So, I don't know where I'll be
Would I be sacrificing doing other fun things that I want to do?
I don't know
I already feel like I've given up a lot for rowing...

Like I keep going back and forth
I don't want to miss an opportunity, and that would be a cool experience....
FOMO just really gets me...
So I don't know what to do about that
And I'll probably make a spur-of-the-moment decision.

Participant 2 brings to light the ideas of sacrifice and FOMO, or “fear of missing out”. There is a definite tension in making a career decision. On one hand, Participant 2 feels that by making one decision, she is immediately and indefinitely saying no to any other options. She seems to operate from an all-or-none mentality and seems to think that is she does not do the “fun things” now (i.e. surf instructor, bartender in St. Thomas), then she will never again have those opportunities. However, on the other hand, there is angst in missing out on an opportunity to pursue a career opportunity that may not present itself again, should she reject it. The instability of either option is what is causing the indecisiveness for Participant 2, thus leaving her to conclude that the best, or safest, option is to decide in the moment (Cabrita et al., 2014; Lally & Kerr, 2005). This is perhaps a self-protective mechanism for decision-making. Further, it is evident that Participant 2 would rather do something spontaneous and untraditional because she does not want to commit to any major responsibilities in her next life season:

I feel like I have like a million different things I want to do
I can't really decide
I want to go explore
That's why I want to be a bartender in St Thomas
I just don't want to be tied down for a while
I don't want to have commitments
But I think it would be really cool to be back at a university setting someday.

Having been a student athlete throughout her baccalaureate career, Participant 2 has had her life scheduled, assigned, and mapped out for four years. The decisions she made have been bound to her responsibilities as a student and an athlete, leaving very little room for personal freedoms. In that way, it is plausible that Participant 2 would want to have experiences that are

not bound by conventional career commitment. Interestingly, a third option is then brought into the conversation: being in a university setting someday. Having been in school for most of her life, continuing school seems to be an adequate and dependable backup plan. It is familiar, reliable; a continuation versus an unknown. However, it is not Participant 2's intention to pursue a graduate degree immediately:

I think I'd like to maybe do it (grad school) at some point
but like I said I think I need to go do some other things
I think it'd be really cool to, teacher or something like that
Like the discussions I have in my classes really blow my mind
I get so into it
I want to have these conversations forever
I think when we're having these conversations, where else do you do this?
I don't know I just want more of that
So I can kind of see myself doing that down the road
but it's a lot of work and a big commitment.

Enamored by the depth of conversation in an educational environment, Participant 2 is curious where one would participate in these conversations outside of the classroom. However, she revisits the notion of commitment, as she recognizes that graduate school is a significant decision and a substantial amount of work. From this anecdote, it is not inaccurate to infer that for some, the decision to go to graduate school is made not because it is something the individual wants to do, but because they do not know what else to do. Perhaps in a deeper sense, continuing with school is a way of stabilizing or remaining in the student identity. While it is not the salient identity for Participant 2 right now, it is still a familiar self; operating out of a familiar identity is ideal compared to an unknown identity (Erikson; 1968; Marcia, 1989).

In anticipating her transition out of her college career, Participant 2 expressed deep concern about what she believes her mental state might be like. Without having a structured routine and common goal, Participant 2 is anticipating a void when she is no longer an athlete:

I'm just really worried more about my mental state, like going crazy

I don't know
I feel like I'm going to be like.....
I don't know
I don't know how to say this without sounding like super depressing and like a cry for help
But I just think I'll feel empty,
like what am I....
Because every day we got to practice and yeah, we're trying to achieve these goals
but, I won't have those so...
I don't know...
I pretty much told my mom like hey for 3 months I need you to make me not do anything
I'll wear black all summer,
Mourning.

Participant 2's repetition of "I don't know" and the silences throughout this excerpt display that she found it difficult to adequately describe what she anticipated her mental state to be like upon transitioning out of being a student athlete. By the way she trailed off into silence after multiple statements, it is evident that she struggled to adequately describe the emptiness that she anticipates feeling (Gilligan et al., 2006). One implication from this passage could suggest that because she had yet to experience the transition, she did not yet have a language to describe the experience. However, it is also plausible that because she recognized the emptiness of the anticipated transition to be particularly painful, her psyche is protecting her from the threat (Benson et al., 2015), not allowing her to come too close and thus, leaving her grappling for understanding. In this protective manner, Participant 2 describes her tactic for comprehending the transition is to compartmentalize it:

I'm just compartmentalizing
I'm just going to think about the exciting part,
Let the sad part happen when it happens
But then I think because I'm not processing it as both of those things,
I think the sad part is going to hit me too hard.

Interestingly, Participant 2 is intentional about "thinking about" the exciting part, whereas she passively "Let the sad part happen when it happens." Her intentionality with staying present and enjoying the exciting parts is evidence of her owning the experience. In contrast, by

letting the sad part happen when it happens, she gives her ownership and power away; this is not something she is choosing, but rather something that she is allowing to *happen to* her (Gilligan et al., 2006). Participant 2 was then asked to specify what the "sad part" is:

That it....
Awwww.....
Here we go....
Like I don't know...
That it's over
I think I also see a lot of this as a security blanket,
So now I have to go...
Do something else
Measure success in different ways,
Which I think is actually the scariest part
I'm so used to this
And I'm comfortable...
Aaahh.....
That's the sad part.

While the loss of familiarity and sense of security is intimidating, Participant 2 expresses that she anticipates the most difficult component of the transition to actually be how she will measure her success moving forward. Because her cannot anticipate how she will identify next, she is unable to imagine what success will look like in that identity; existing as an unknown self is more overwhelming than leaving behind the identity that is recognizable and dependable. Her voice full of tension and angst, it is evident that Participant 2 is overwhelmed in the anticipation of her transition. Further, the silences and ambiguity throughout this excerpt imply that Participant 2 is struggling to anticipate how she will navigate this component of her transition (Gilligan et al., 2006; Fuller, 2014). Conversely, Participant 2 describes the "exciting" part that she associates with the transition:

I did this really difficult thing for 4 years
And it made me tougher and stronger
I met some of my best friends
I'm excited
Some of the work we do is really fucking hard,

So I'm psyched don't have to do that again
I like that we have goals every day, and we could go out and accomplish them.

A strong sense of accomplishment makes Participant 2 fulfilled in her experience as a student athlete. When she reflects on her experience, she is excited about the improvement she made, the relationships she formed, and the goals she achieved. Describing all this as “really fucking hard,” Participant 2 is also very excited to not have to do this excruciating work anymore (Fuller, 2014). She is not only referring to the physical work, but also for the break in the mental strain of competing at this level. When every athlete around you is talented and competing to capitalize on limited opportunities, the mental strain is often more daunting than the physical one. It is no surprise, then, that many athletes base their personal worth and value on their athletic performance (Fuller, 2014). Student athletes are inundated with feedback. Externally, this comes from coaches, teammates, performance statistics, win-loss records, and so on. Internally, this is the self-talk narrative constantly going on in one’s head. Based on external feedback, that internal narrative can be extremely critical, and toe over the fine line from performance into identity. As such, Participant 2 is excited for the relief to come when her identity, and therefore her value, is not based on her performance (Fuller, 2014):

I think most people can relate to this,
Like the way you feel when maybe you just have like a bad a row or have a bad practice
Like I'm...
I don't know
I think I'm someone who takes those things kind of hard…
So I'm excited that...
I don't know
I won't have to value myself based on those kinds of things
I'm hard on myself but not in a way that... Maybe it's just not visible
I don't know
I've thought about how I'm going to feel at the end of this
Relieved is something that comes up the most
I'm just going to feel so relieved that I don't have to push myself so hard.

In forecasting how she anticipates feeling in the foreclosure of her athlete identity, Participant 2 continues with her confession that she is ready for the relief to come with no longer having to push herself so hard, mentally or physically. The latter statements in this passage suggest that Participant 2 has spent time thinking about the transition out of student athlete enough to have “relief” be a recurring theme (Benson et al., 2015; Fuller, 2014). Though she is compartmentalizing and living in the present moment, she also admits that she is looking forward to letting go of the rigor and intensity of holding herself to such a high standard, physically and mentally. Without a plan solidified for her next steps after college, it is plausible that perhaps Participant 2 is hoping for rest (Fuller, 2014).

Participant 2 concludes her Pre-Transition Interview with an interesting job lead: a potential role on the coaching staff of her team. As she eluded to in previous points in the interview, she is anxious about choosing between doing something unorthodox, unrestrained, and spontaneous, and something that seems like an opportunity that is too good to pass up:

But then also coach talk to me briefly about a volunteer coaching thing,
And I'm really torn because...
But I really disagree with some of the things that they do,
And sometimes they just really frustrate me,
And so I feel like being here as a volunteer coach,
And like agreeing to do that,
I'm supporting that in a way
I was like yeah, I'll get back to you
I don't want to decide anything
I want to see how the season plays out
Because maybe, maybe in two weeks I'll fucking hate rowing
And I'll never want to see it again.

In her closing thoughts for this interview, Participant 2 circles back to the primary dilemma she finds herself in. Her options are to stay with her athletic program by moving into a volunteer or graduate assistant coaching role, or to find something completely removed from her student athlete self. The tension in choosing between something familiar and comfortable or

something unknown and exciting is a difficult one; for Participant 2, though, the decision further complicated by what she perceives to be conflicting values. By agreeing to join this coaching staff, Participant 2 feels that she is submitting to their discernment as well. Once again, she avoids making any type of commitment: “I’ll get back to you; I don’t want to decide anything” reinforces her lack of motivation to settle on a decision (Gilligan et al., 2006). Further, though, her acknowledgment that she may not want any involvement in rowing at all is reasonable. Consistent with the whole interview, Participant 2 may likely make an impulsive decision for her next steps after college.

Post-Transition Interview

In a manner consistent throughout this study, Participant 2 made a quick decision for her next move out of college. She was offered the position of graduate assistant coach for her former team. While she had already established plans to move to an island in the fall subsequent to graduation, Participant 2 seemed quickly convinced to change her mind:

All this time I've been thinking that yeah,
I'm going to be on some Island in the fall
I had gotten the plans worked out for that
Then Coach told me, “so this position is now available”
She encouraged me to apply
So I did
I wanted to go to grad school
I wanted to try all of that,
And I wanted to try coaching
I got a job at a restaurant near home
I had never had a serving job
I'm thinking, if I'm going to this island…
Some of the opportunities are probably going to be [there]
But I had only done stuff in like customer service
I'll just get some experience doing that
And then I got this job.

Participant 2 was preparing for her move to an island to live out her dream by taking a serving job to gain experience that she felt was applicable work experience. While she eludes to

her plans having been worked out for this island move, her former Coach reached out to encourage her to apply for the graduate assistant coach position with her former team. The promptness with which she applied to this new role is perplexing; having dreamed so long of moving to an island, it seems odd that she so readily switched course. However, this is directly related to the salience in her athlete identity (Brewer, 1999). When given the opportunity to return to a well-known environment, Participant 2 put aside her lighthearted island dreams to return to her home for the last four years. Further, while it could be argued that she was engaging in career preparation for the island by taking a serving job, it is far more plausible that Participant 2 felt more efficacious about her abilities to coach the sport she retired from just months before (Cabrita et al., 2014). Because Participant 2 had long identified more strongly as an athlete than a student, she did not engage in traditional career preparation activities provided by her institution and athletic department, like mock interviews, resume workshops and career fairs because of the threat posed to her athlete self (Lally & Kerr, 2005; Benson et al., 2015). Now, then, a perfect opportunity was presented to her in the coaching role: seemingly something to ease out of being a student athlete yet remain in her proverbial athlete atmosphere. In this way, it seems she wants to own the decision: though she did not seek out this opportunity and was not interested until her Coach encouraged her to apply, once hired she now seeks to take ownership of the decision. She wants this to be her choice, not something that someone bestowed to her. In this way, we see her use of "I wanted…" statements as legitimizing the decision (Gilligan et al., 2006).

Whether Participant 2 did honestly want to take this role, or was trying to convince herself that she did, she is certainly wrestling with whether she made the right decision. The friction she is experiencing is palpable:

Part of me is also like I could be on an island right now
I just really wanted to go there for like, six months
Then I wanted to come Back and do this
But obviously I couldn't have guaranteed that this is going to be waiting for me
I'm someone who is like everything happens for a reason
I think it worked out the way it should
I always tell myself the island will still be there, unless…global warming
I don't know that's just what I keep telling myself
I'm just afraid to get...
Become an adult where, you know...
Like oh but then there is this opportunity that was too good
And then there was this other opportunity
And it's like I never get around to doing it [going to the island]
Because it is really something I would like to do at some point
And I don't know if that's the life I want necessarily [friends' lives]
But sometimes you just get caught up comparing yourself.
It's like well should I be doing that?
An island is definitely not a part of that equation
Sometimes I feel like I'm in behind
So yeah that's where I'm at.

Participant 2 is well aware that the opportunity to be the graduate assistant coach for her team might now have come around again. In this way, it seems she accepted the position out of scarcity of opportunity. She recognizes that such seemingly perfect opportunities do not come along often, so one must accept them whenever possible. However, Participant 2 eludes to the social pressures of accepting these opportunities at the expense of pursuing other dreams. Participant 2 expresses the pressure to take advantage of opportunities creates a cycle in which she may never get around to moving to her island. This socially responsible decision-making cycle, or "becoming an adult", is directly evident of her career decision making self efficacy (Cabrita et al., 2014). Further, the social comparison to others tells her that she is "behind" where she ought to be; she is in the out-group of her peers (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008). This excerpt is filled with internal conflict, evident by the dialogue she has with herself. In this way, the conflict of making the right career decision is spoken through contrapuntal voices (Gilligan et al., 2006).

The conversation with Participant 2 then moves into what she misses about being a student athlete. Her verbalization of the transition is raw and emotional, full of nostalgia and self-reflection on her student athlete experience:

I'm going to start crying
I mean it's nice to not have to spend so much physical energy, that's so nice
But…I miss it a lot
I think so many people,
We value ourselves based on our athletic performance
So every week that was a high I got to ride
Obviously that doesn't determine who you are, but it just makes you feel good
And I don't have that now
Yeah, I got this job that I wanted
I'm hoping to get into the program [different graduate program]
At the end of the day I still wake up, and I'm still the same person
I don't have these things that are...
I have to deal with my own inadequacies…
the things I don't like about myself
Athletics, it just disguises all of that
It's just this big illusion
I'm pouring myself into something
And I'm having these really great results
I don't have to think about those other things
It was just such a good distraction
I have to face these things I've been running from for 4 years.

Though she gives a brief admission that it is a relief to not be spending so much physical energy on athletic performance, Participant 2 misses her athletic experience. In this particular passage, Participant 2 explains that when she was a student athlete, her worth was largely based on her athletic performance. Her use of collective pronouns like “we” and “our” imply that this is a commonly shared reality for student athletes (Gilligan et al., 2006). However, Participant 2 unpacks this notion further, now seeing that for her, athletic performance was merely a distraction; it was a false high that acted as a diversion that prevented her from dealing with what she describes as inadequacies, or “the things I don’t like about myself.” In transition, then, Participant 2 misses her student athlete experience not only because it gave her a greater sense of

accomplishment, but because focusing on her athlete self allowed her to avoid further personal development, only to be brought to light in transition. The void in this sense of accomplishment causes great dissonance for Participant 2 in her coaching role, as she is now helping others feel the sense of accomplishment that she longs for (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004). Not only is it difficult to watch her athlete compete, but Participant 2 shares that it is also complex to celebrate their accomplishments:

I'm so happy for them
But I want to celebrate too
I want to feel that accomplishment
I think that's the thing,
I miss that sense of accomplishment
like I said, it's a disguise for inadequacies
And it's just, like, a nice little false high.

Achieving a shared goal with her teammates is what Participant 2 identified as what she loved about being a student athlete in the Pre-Transition Interview. Hence, it is no surprise that she longs for that experience and feels remorseful when she is no longer accomplishing those things with her teammates, but is instead witnessing them accomplish goals without her (Fuller, 2014). Further, Participant 2 continues to unpack this notion that one’s athletic performance is a façade:

I think the thing that makes me sad is now that I'm on this side of things,
I see how the coaches work
And I see how they think...
I don't know how to say this besides...
Nothing matters
We take these things way too seriously
I used to think...
Literally I took one bad stroke
And I would think oh my gosh was does this mean,
But in reality, he's standing like this [arms crossed] because it's comfortable,
He's not mad at me
All these things and nothing matters.

The unspoken correlation between athletic performance and personal worth is spoken as a generalized experience for all student athletes. This passage reveals a fascinating phenomenon about identity development, specifically about how our perception of acceptant or rejection from others constructs our identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008). Further, Participant 2 exposes a misunderstanding that many encounter: misreading body language. A student athlete perceives their coach's body language to mean that they are disappointed in their performance, whereas the reality is actually that standing with arms crossed is more comfortable. Interestingly, Participant 2 is speaking from the first-person, present tense in this excerpt as a student athlete, not as a coach (Gilligan et al., 2006). Consequently, the salience of her athlete identity is commanding for Participant 2, even though she is no longer a student athlete (Brewer, 1999; Benson et al., 2015). The salience of her athlete identity also surfaces in her interactions with her student athletes. In one specific example, it seems that Participant 2's athlete self is preserved by her participation in practice with her student athletes:

I would run stadiums with the freshmen in the fall
That was kind of a pride thing
I wanted them to know like hey
I'm kind of washed up
but I can still kick your ass
You know since I'm young and in shape
I'm not going to ask you to do anything I can't do with you
I think that was important
I really like doing that
And I think the freshmen enjoyed that, they told me they did.

Seemingly to assert dominance and authority, Participant 2 joined in the conditioning drills with some of her student athletes. This behavior was rooted in pride, but Participant 2 also validates her actions because she believes that a coach should be able to perform in the way that they expect their athletes to. Further, the freshmen student athletes seemingly shared that they

enjoyed her participation in the conditioning drills, further affirming Participant 2's actions. It is interesting, then, that Participant 2 would default to an athletic performance-based behavior for affirmation; this behavior, then, implies that her athlete identity still holds great significance (Brewer, 1999; Benson et al., 2015).

The conversation then moves into whether Participant 2 feels isolated. Not surprisingly, she is feeling a deep tension with being a former student athlete and now employed in the athletic department of her alma mater:

A little bit [feeling isolated]
And sometimes the other coaches will invite me to do stuff
I like working with them
I know there's more people around here that I could connect with, but I think...
I don't know...
I don't know how to explain it
But I still in a way don't feel like I should be doing this
I feel like fuck who gave me this authority?
I just feel like a scrub
Especially when I'm walking around here,
Which I love wearing comfies to work
I love wearing my comfies
I look like an athlete
I think people are probably like, who gave that bitch keys
So I want to get better connected but I think...
I feel like I can't
Because my insecurities are holding me back from really connecting with other people
I know there are opportunities to connect with the younger peeps
But... I'm really scared to put myself out there.

Without a sure sense of belonging, Participant 2 feels socially isolated. Further, she is afraid of exploring new social circles, suggesting that she does not have the safety of a supportive network in which she can explore potential identities and abandon alternatives (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011; Marcia, 1989). This is an isolating experience for Participant 2 because she does not strongly identify as a coach, nor does she feel she can identify as an athlete anymore. In this manner, Participant 2 seemingly has no in-group to which she

belongs (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008).

Participant 2's student identity is revisited; after all, she is still a student. A most curious question was whether the salience of her student identity has changed now that she was no longer an athlete. Moreover, it is plausible that in what could well be a tumultuous identity transition as she phases out of "athlete", perhaps there is a sense of assurance in her student identity, as it is the identity that is in continuation:

This is going to sound so dumb because it's obvious,
but it is harder than I thought
But what I'm realizing is that obviously…
You need a different quality of work
I would read through people's post and be like
You need a comma after that prepositional phrase
And now I'm like I don't feel good about myself
I read other people's and I'm like oh fuck they can actually write

While she is enjoying her program and is intrigued by the challenge of graduate school, Participant 2 is clearly comparing herself to her peers. Similar to the comparison she drew in career decision making, she is now comparing her work with her classmates and making presumptions that she is inadequate. This social comparison could be causing further divide between what she perceives to be the in-group in her graduate program (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008).

The three phases of transition are briefly explained to Participant 2 (Schlossberg, 1989; Good, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). After a long and contemplative pause, Participant 2 expresses where she locates herself on the transition spectrum:

... I feel like I'm...
I feel like I'm still moving in,
because in so many ways I still identify...
Like when I think about loyalties

I feel like some of my loyalties are still with the athletes
I still feel closely connected to them
And that's probably why I have a hard time being stern with them
Because it's like I was just there
It's like I'm yelling at myself
And then when they bitch about the coaches
Sometimes I want a bitch, too
I don't because of boundaries and shit but I feel that
But I don't even know...
I don't know...
Maybe it's because I'm not there yet
I can't even imagine what that transition out would look like
Especially in this role...
Sometimes I'm like fuck what am I doing
Why did I sign up for this job?
Again, I just said all of this
I like it.

Though six months removed from graduation and the conclusion of her student athlete career, Participant 2 feels that she is still moving into transition. At first, she is hesitant to place herself in a transition phase, as she is silent for long moments and trails off with her sentences (Gilligan et al., 2006). These silences, pauses, and wandering sentences lead her to the admission that she still identifies primarily as an athlete. Her explanation is fascinating; the strong connection she still feels with her former teammates reveals that her loyalties lie with the student athletes. She attributes her back of discipline toward her student athletes, then, to this loyalty; to be an authority figure to them as a coach is to betray her camaraderie. Further, to be authoritative with her athletes is to also betray herself: she was very recently still a student athlete, so who is she to turn on herself? It is inferred, then, that the identifiable in-group for Participant 2 is still the student athletes (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008). The tension of identifying as both a student athlete and a coach is palpable in the voice of this excerpt. Participant 2 wanders back into silences and unfinished statements (Gilligan et al., 2006), then reveals an epiphany: she cannot even fathom what

transitioning out of her student athlete identity would look like, *especially* in her current role as a coach for her former team. This is a captivating realization to consider: would Participant 2 be able to comprehend transitioning out of her athlete identity if she was still so immersed in athlete culture? Or, is that identity so salient for her that regardless of where she was employed, she would still be wrestling with the transition? Participant 2 insinuates that her role as a coach is making the transition out of her athlete identity far more difficult than she anticipated, as it is essentially preserving her athlete identity. This opposition between who she *was* and who she *is* surfaces as an anxious internal dialogue (Gilligan et al., 2006), laying root to her inability to own an identity.

Participant 2 yearns for affirmation in sustaining her athlete identity. Yet, concurrently, she also wants to be respected as an authoritative figure:

And so in some ways I think I'm scared of them seeing me as something else
I feel like I spend a lot of time worrying about, how do the athletes see me?
What do they still see me as fun?
Or am I now a hard-ass bitch that they don't want to talk to?
And they need to talk to me
but I don't want that to change,
but then again, I want to be taken seriously
I want to be professional
I want the coaches to think that about me.
And so it's like I have these two very opposing things I want...
And I can't get them both but...
Sometimes I'm like I don't give a fuck what the athletes think of me,
and sometimes I'm like I don't give a fuck about what the coaches think of me,
like they hired me so they can fire me anytime.
And I know I'm doing okay at both
but I want more of both at times,
And that's just a struggle because it doesn't work that way.
But then I guess that's what makes this transition hard,
I have to say bye to that.
And then I could be on an island, in my swimmies, you know?
Here we are.

Participant 2 acknowledges that the approval she is seeking from both the athletes and the coaches is impossible to have because they are opposing distinctions. In realizing she cannot be both at once she momentarily reacts emotionally to renounce both identities, not caring what either group thinks of her. Realizing she cannot have both, though, Participant 2 realizes that this is the difficulty in identity transition; coming to peace with the cessation of an identity (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004). Considering the alternative, Participant 2 wonders aloud if she had chosen a different career path, would this transition out be any bit easier to navigate:

So sometimes I think being closer to this helps the transition,
But also...
Sometimes I think for me to continue just,
still trying to act like I'm one of them,
that's kind of selfish
It's not helping them
But it's easier sometimes.

Participant 2 wrestles with the notion of the environment that she is situated in through this transition, pondering whether or not being emerged in the same setting placates or exasperates the struggle to transition. Admitting that it feels selfish to remain in a known and safe environment, Participant 2 succumbs to what feels more comfortable as she navigates her identity transition (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011). Regardless of the choice she made, Participant 2 expresses that the decision want intertwined with burden:

I feel like if I wouldn't have taken this job,
I would have been sad.
But I did take this job,
and I'm still kind of sad.
I just really think, it's one of those things,
That the only way out is through. You know?

The internal dialogue suggests that despite the hardship of traversing through transition, she recognizes that she must go through the transition. Regardless of which path she would have

taken, it would have felt difficult and been riddled with remorse. That, then, is the heaviness of identity transition: a simultaneous grieving of a self that once was, while embracing a new self that is yet to be realized (Marcia, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Schlossberg, 1989).

Participant 3

Pre-Transition Interview

In his final few weeks of his collegiate career, Participant 3 does not appear to be operating from a position of angst, but rather one of hope. Participant 3 is composed throughout the interview, rendering himself confident yet humble. The imminent end of his baseball career certainly feels heavy-hearted, but Participant 3 is also looking forward to what is to come when his playing days are done:

It's good I've been playing more than I have in the past 3 years of my college career
I'm cherishing every moment I can because it is coming to an end
I've had a couple mental breakdowns
It’s like, wow I'm going to be done after this
But I have a lot to look forward to this summer,
And in my career, I guess.

In relishing the playing time he is getting, Participant 3 is intentional about enjoying every moment he can because he knows this is a finite experience, dwindling down quickly. His admission to having “mental breakdowns” is the result of his acceptance that his playing career is coming to an end; his reaction to the anticipation of retirement (Bailie, 1993; Blinde & Stratta, 1992, Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). He touches on this very briefly, though, and rebounds with the assurance of all he has to look forward to. His voice is confident and secure; he is factual and forward-seeing, owning where he is (Gilligan et al., 2006). Further, having “a lot to look forward to” eases the transition, and seemingly nullifies the mental breakdowns; by anticipating, accepting, and progressing toward the retirement of his playing career, Participant 3 has eased himself into the transition (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004). Though ready, Participant 3 shares his nervousness for graduation, the symbolic launching pad into the working world:

I'm going to walk for my parents

I mean I feel like it's all coming way too quick
I don't feel ready to graduate,
I don't feel ready for the real world
I know probably nobody is
I mean, I'm ready
But I'm not ready
I'm ready for the schooling part of it to be done,
I know after a couple of years working,
I'll come back and get my masters,
So it's not totally done.

In this excerpt, the concept of readiness is repeated multiple times. While not being ready to be in the professional working world but also being ready for his academic responsibilities to be done, Participant 3 seems fragmented with his use of contrapuntal voices (Gilligan et al., 2006). Participant 3 is ready in the sense that he is prepared; he is not ready to say goodbye. Further, he expresses that "I'll come back and get my masters", exhibiting that he intends not only to be a student again, but that he looks forward to returning to a familiar identity in being a student. In this way, his student identity will simply be in hiatus. In his anticipation of transition and retirement, Participant 3 has accepted the transition he is about to experience; though retirement from his collegiate career is forthcoming, he is not threatened by it (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004).

The conversation then flows to the concept of success. While he is playing more now than in his previous three years, Participant 3's definition of success is not based on his athletic performance, but on the example he sets for his teammates:

I mean with baseball you have to have success for yourself as well to succeed on the team
I've just really trying to just be a team leader and make sure that my legacy on the team is left
I've just really been working on picking people up
That's what I've been trying to do
I'm just trying to be a good teammate, trying to be a good leader.

Participant 3's salience identity is in student rather than athlete, so it is logical that his definition of success would not be supported by his athletic performance. Instead, the impact he was able to make for his team has been his commitment to build relationships with his teammates and lead with encouragement and support from the dugout. Recognizing that he has other identities aside from athlete, Participant 3 supports his teammates through connection and empowerment, versus athletic performance (Fuller, 2014). This is infused into the legacy he hopes to leave behind for his program:

As a good leader
as a good teammate
I mean a lot of people want to be remembered by their stats,
which is a given in sports
I'd like to be remembered as the guy that I was,
The teammate that I was,
And the leader that I was to the younger guys
I cherish those things,
Those relationships I build with people
Such a beautiful thing to make those connections
It's something I really cherish.

For Participant 3, the value of the relationships and opportunities to be a selfless leader outweighed any accolades for athletic achievements. Participant 3 cherishes the relationships he forms with his teammates and is intentional about establishing camaraderie within the team (Marcia, 1989; Anderson, Goodman & Schlossberg, 2011; Fuller, 2014). This suggests, then, that because he is motivated to pursue these connections more than he is fixated on his athletic performance, Participant 3 has accepted that his role on the team is not to be the all-star performer but to be the dependable and supportive teammate (Fuller, 2014). It is interesting, then, that while Participant 3 identifies more strongly as a student than an athlete, negative athletic performance still impacted him (Fuller, 2014):

I strained my hamstring 2 weeks ago in a scrimmage,

It was so stupid
I was only out for the [opponent] series
I started that game, but it sat me out for a week
I was mad at myself for going super hard in the scrimmage
I was really mad at myself about that,
But it's all okay
I started the season 0 for 20
The worst slump I've ever had
I was so mad
I was mad that I was losing opportunities
Because I wasn't performing
I was mad at myself because Coach kept giving me opportunities
I'm finally starting to perform the way he wants me to
And the way I want to
I was frustrated then because I knew this was my last season
I don't want to go out on an 0-for-40 year
I was hitting balls hard the whole year,
They just weren't finding holes
I hit two balls super hard to the wall, but they got caught
And we just started flowing after that
It was a huge relief.

Regardless of his identity salience, Participant 3 is still an athlete; therefore, his athletic performance does affect him. This excerpt clearly illustrates his frustration with his performance. There is a clear sense of urgency here; Participant 3 knows he has limited opportunities left in his career, and his inability to make the most of these chances had a strong effect on him. An interesting contrast in voice is revealed: the use of “I” is correlated with expressions of anger, frustration, and blame. He owns the fact that he was not capitalizing on his opportunities. Interestingly, when the circumstances have changed, he now uses “we” instead of “I”. It is fascinating that he would not also own the change in circumstances; instead, Participant 3 seems to express that it was a collective effort that led to better performance (Gilligan et al., 2006; Fuller, 2014).

Readiness for career retirement is correlated to planning for life after sport has ended (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004). To this affect, Participant 3 has laid plans for alternatives such as getting married after graduation, thus having a new identity to embrace:

I'm a future husband, I guess
We've been doing marriage classes
I've been really working on that
We're going to Disney World for our wedding
We chose a pastor there,
And they sent us some stuff to do like marriage books that we're reading
June 17th,
So, if we make a regional, I'm not getting married.

In preparation for marriage, Participant 3 has invested time and efforts into preparing for a new identity in the very near future. This preparation in an identity aside from the athlete may help ease Participant 3's transition out of college athletics because he has already been anticipating the transition and preparing for what is next (Fuller, 2014; Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004; Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995). By taking advantage of career preparation opportunities, Participant 3 also has his first job already in place:

I start [company] July 25th
It will be a business analyst role
Very entry level job
So it seems like you've got a lot of your stuff kind of lined up pretty nice and neat for the next foreseeable future?
I'd like to think so, yeah it seems like it right now for sure
But once it comes to it, it won't seem that way
To have it all figured out,
It's a huge weight lifted off my shoulders
Definitely
I probably wouldn't have my job if I didn't go to the career fair.

Knowing that he would not be playing professional baseball after college, Participant 3 chose to participate in career development opportunities offered on campus. By attending a job fair, he landed his first job out of college. In branching out (Fuller, 2014) of his typical a student

athlete routine, Participant 3 began to engage in the process of redefining himself as he transitions out of college. Further, having a plan in place for his transition out brings about relief for Participant 3 cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004). Having secured this position, Participant 3 expresses the relief he feels as well as a sense of gratitude for having attended the career fair (Gilligan et al., 2006). Though relieved, there are still feelings of loss that Participant 3 is navigating as he considers what life might look like without baseball:

I've thought about it a lot
I don't think baseball will ever leave my life, which is a good thing
Playing might,
But I can coach,
I can be an athletic director if I want to
So, it's never going to leave my life
but the fact that I've been playing it for 18 years,
And it's all coming to a close,
I mean that's all I've really known
We play so, so much
It's all I've really known
So to have the free time I will have,
I probably won't know what to do with myself
I just have no idea what to do with my spare time
Because usually it's occupied by baseball
So, I'm excited for that,
I'm not excited for it to be done.

Repeated throughout this passage is the fact that baseball is all Participant 3 has ever known; this seemingly ever-present and secure chapter in his life is concluding, leaving Participant 3 tender for what was and expectant for what is to come. As his final season draws to a close, undertones of loss and grief (Bailie, 1993; Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) are coupled with excitement for the relief and freedom of spare time and choice of how he will fill that time (Coakley, 1983). Further, Participant 3 expresses that while he will no longer be playing baseball at an elite level, “I don’t think baseball will ever leave my life, which is a

good thing." He considers career options, such as being a coach or athletic director, that would keep him close to the game. Whether driven by loyalty to the sport or a yearning to remain in a familiar social structure (Cabrita et al., 2014), Participant 3 believes baseball will always have a presence in his life.

The will to be comparatively superior is a driving force inherent to the student athlete experience. As such, competitiveness is a trait that all student athletes carry to some degree. In transitioning out of their collegiate career, student athletes must eventually acknowledge that their primary outlet for freeing their competitive spirit will cease to exist, creating a need to identify a new outlet. Participant 3 seeks to find that new competitive outlet:

I talked to our strength and conditioning coach,
I talked to him about what I should probably do like when I'm done here
I won't have a free place to go workout
I think I'm going to take up CrossFit
Because there's a competitive aspect to that
I think I need in my life is that competitive
I don't really think I'll get that
I'll get it in the workplace a little bit, like competing for roles and stuff
But athletic competitiveness I'll miss a little bit
I think that's a good outlet for me.

Having maintained a high level of physical fitness and competitive environment for most of his life (Barnes, 2002), Participant 3 is determined to find a suitable competitive outlet once his baseball career concludes. He considers joining a Cross Fit gym, well known for the competitive format of classes and workouts. While there can be a competitive aspect to a professional role (i.e. title promotions, salary increase, etc.), Participant 3 feels that an outlet for his physical competitiveness is significant for his transition. It is an interesting notion, then, to consider how Participant 3's mentality may change in transition, as he will now be exercising for physical fitness, rather than training for physical competition (Barnes, 2002).

A key element in any transition is the presence of support systems as the protective environment in which an individual can safely sift through differing commitments (Marcia, 1989; Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011). While support systems are widely thought to be comprised of family, peers, and social structures, Participant 3 brings to light a new support system: his faith. Noting that his relationship with God has been a central part of his relationship with his fiancé, Participant 3 shares how his faith has also helped him grapple with his transition out of his student athlete identity:

I wouldn't be able to do.....
I'd be so stressed out if I didn't have Christ in my life
It's helped me so much my building my relationship through Him.
I think I started that on the baseball field too,
Just every chance I get honoring Him with whatever I can
It's usually not vocal but...
Thanking Him for every hit or something like that
We pray before every game, stuff like that...
Yeah, it's a huge anchor in my life, to have Christ in it.

Support systems are often the most influential took for helping individuals work through transition (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011). The Christian faith is anchored in the omnipresent and omnipotent nature of God, and Christians believe that God is in full control of every aspect of one’s life. In this way, then, Participant 3 submits that his faith has pacified the stress inherent to his transition out of college. Specifically, Participant 3 identifies his faith as being the primary support system that helped him navigate the performance slump that he found himself in at the beginning of his senior season:

I was mad
I was mad at God, but it's tough to be mad at God.
I know it's teaching me a lesson that's bigger than what I can comprehend
I know there's plans in there for me
When I was struggling, I knew there was a plan
And I still don't know what those plans are, and I won't know.

In this short excerpt, Participant 3 recognizes his anger toward his athletic performance. However, despite the tension he felt in his expectation to perform better, he confesses that he believed God was teaching him something through that experience. While he was upset with the circumstances, he was not upset with his belief that he needed to endure those circumstances. Participant 3 concedes that despite the struggle he was in, he is confident and hopeful in the plan that was unfolding (Gilligan et al., 2006). This assurance, then, is the central foundation that Participant 3 relies upon to comprehend his life circumstances. The confidence in Participant 3's voice shows that he believes there is a greater purpose for him; despite the angst that is intertwined in his circumstances (i.e. disappointment in athletic performance, anticipation of transition), he is hopeful and optimistic that his future is secure (Gilligan et al., 2006).

Post-Transition Interview

When the Post-Transition Interview was conducted, Participant 3 was employed as a business analyst at a large information technology company near his hometown. Participant 3 also got married shortly after graduating from college. With some much newness in a short period of time, Participant 3 begins the conversation with a summation of where he finds himself as a young adult:

I've had of lot more free time on my hands, especially on weekends
I picked up CrossFit
I've only been doing that for two weeks though
Before I was going early to work and working out at like 6 in the morning
So, I was doing that, then work from like 7:30 to 4 each day
We got another dog
Yeah that's been my life so far.

Participant 3 opens with what a day in his life looks like now. As he noted in the Pre-Transition Interview, he recently joined a CrossFit gym. Consistent with many athletes, Participant 3 sought an outlet to fulfill both his competitive nature and need for physical fitness

(Barnes, 2002; Fuller, 2014). The conversation then turns to his entry-level role as a business analyst:

At the beginning of my work experience I was kind of hesitant
Like is this what I want to do?
And I'm still not sure if this is what I want to do
We do reporting, data metrics, we deal with the government
But I don't know if it's what I want to do.

Despite thoughtful planning and high self-efficacy in making career decisions (Cabrita et al., 2014), Participant 3 suggests that his current role may not be what he expected and is pondering aloud whether this is the line of work he wants to continue. His internal dialogue is self-interrogating, confirming this confusion and hesitancy he describes (Gilligan et al., 2006). Interestingly, Participant 3 is already considering what alternate plans for what his next move would be:

Every day I think about going back and getting a master's in sport management
So I can be an athletic director,
which I think is my end goal still,
I think that's still is my end goal
So, working for a couple years
maybe they'll pay for my college, which would be cool
So that's the plan for now.

In saying that he considers his alternate plan every day suggests that Participant 3 is very discontent with his current working role. However, he expresses potential value in staying where he is with the possibility of his company paying for his graduate education. At this point in the interview, an interesting consideration arises; while Participant 3 had self-identified more strongly as a student, salience in the athlete identity begins to subtly surface in this interview. Specifically, in the discontentment of his current role Participant 3 begins contemplating a career that revolves around sport. In this way, returning to the familiarity of the sport world suggests a high athletic identity (Cabrita et al., 2014). Twice Participant 3 states that he thinks being an

athletic director is his end goal, implying that he is confident about the direction this new ambition is taking him (Gilligan et al., 2006).

The time demands for student athletes can be mentally, physically, and emotionally taxing, and many student athletes are relieved to get a cessation from the daily grind (Fuller, 2014). Since his freshman year, Participant 3 competed in summer baseball leagues away from home, meaning he was playing baseball nearly year-round. For the first time in four years, then, Participant 3 had the freedom to choose what to do with his own time:

Yeah it was but I did not know what to do with myself
Especially the days when I had nothing
It was super nice to have the summer off
But it was weird going into August and not going back to school,
Going back to the routine of playing baseball, lifting.

Having enjoyed his first summer break in a few years, Participant 3 acknowledges that he quickly missed the student athlete routine when summer faded to fall. Participant 3 was adapted to the cyclical nature of the academic year and the athletic obligations that accompany it. There is a contrast in his voice in this excerpt: while taking a break in the summer was satisfying, he felt a void in the fall when he would typically resume his routine (Gilligan et al., 2006). However, Participant 3 seems to fulfill his craving for familiarity in a variety of ways, such as playing recreational sports with old friends:

I played slow pitch softball, once a week
It was different, it was fun though
I played with friends that I've never gotten to play a sport with
I got to play with friends from high school who played college baseball at other places,
So we all came back and played together
It's been amazing [to reconnect]
We've hung out pretty much every weekend.

While not remotely close to the caliber of play he is used to, it seems that playing for pleasure with friends from high school helped ease Participant 3 through the summer. Ending

one's collegiate career is often likened to a social loss, as one is removed from their team and, consequently, their primary social circle in college (Blinde & Stratta, 1992). By reconnecting with his former high school friends and teammates, it seems Participant 3 was able to mollify that component of his transition. Further, his participation in recreation league sports allowed Participant 3 to live out his innate competitiveness and participate in a team sport as he was accustomed to (Fuller, 2014). Despite all of this, though, Participant 3 still misses his teammates and college friends, as well as the places he frequented as a student athlete:

I definitely miss my friends in [college town]
We came to a couple of football games
I just go back to the old house that I lived at
Once in a while, I'll go in the locker room.

While playing recreation league sports and reconnecting with old friends are certainly valuable coping strategies for navigating his transition (Fuller, 2014; Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011), Participant 3 expresses a nostalgic yearning for the normalcies of his college days. The loss of a social circle as intimate as college teammates is a difficult transition to endure (Blinde & Stratta, 1992), as it was certainly Participant 3's most significant in-group throughout college (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008). Circling back to routine, Participant 3 illustrates the specifics of the student athlete structure that he yearns for:

I really miss being a student-athlete
.... I miss the routine
When I get back at 4:30 in the afternoon,
It's nice to see my wife and the dogs
But I find myself wanting to do more
On the nights when I don't do anything
I feel so tired and lethargic
When I was a student athlete, we had stuff in the evenings
We would get done at 7
I would be wide awake till 10 or 11 at night
So that's the one thing I miss.

While having so much downtime and freedom to choose what to do with his time was initially appealing, Participant 3 explains that he wants more. Having adapted to a constantly busy schedule as a student athlete, he is now growing bored with nothing to do. Ironically, though, Participant 3 states that what he does *not* miss is limited freedom he had over his schedule as a student athlete:

The time constraints on everything
I have my own schedule, the weekends are free
My afternoons are free, which is a win and a lose to me
Time is the most liberating, I think.

Participant 3 misses the routine he had as a student athlete; conversely, the more liberating part of transitioning out of being a student athlete is the freedom he has over his own time. This juxtaposition is quite curious; the apparent contradiction in these excerpts is an excellent example of a contrapuntal voice (Gilligan et al., 2006). It seems, though, that Participant 3 understands the irony in his explanation, as he describes this friction as "a win and a lose to me". He continues to illustrate the tension:

When I don't have anything to do at work it bothers me so much
When I was a student-athlete,
I could just go hang out with my friends in the locker room if I wanted to
Or in between classes that's what I would do
But recently since I found CrossFit
I've been going from 5:30 to 6:30, so that feels like quite a bit of time in the evenings
Then after that I feel super awake which is good
I get grumpy when I'm lethargic and tired.

The boredom Participant 3 experiences from lack of stimulation in his schedule leaves him agitated and frustrated. As a student athlete, he always has a place to which he could retreat: the locker room was a reliable space to both rest and interaction with his teammates. Engaging in CrossFit, now, provides not only a competitive outlet and means for physical fitness, but is also a

social activity that fills his schedule (Fuller, 2014). CrossFit is an ideal coping strategy for Participant 3's transition out of his student athlete experience:

Yes definitely [fulfilling]
[I] can go back and see what [I] could have done better
everybody's doing the same workout
Try to beat the person next to you
That's fun to me.

Student athletes are accustomed to measuring and tracking the progression of their athletic performance. Participant 3 has been intentional about finding outlets for his competitive needs through his transition out of the student athlete experience As such, CrossFit serves as an environment in which Participant 3 can engage in physical fitness that is measurable, competing against himself as well as those in the workout alongside him (Fuller, 2014). Participant 3, then, is externally motivated by outward achievements in the athletic realm, supporting a strong athletic identity (Fuller, 2014). Explicitly explaining that trying to out-perform the person next to him is fun, this outlet is clearly fulfilling. Measurable improvement has also led Participant 3 to feel fulfilled via another outlet:

I picked up golf
I've always wanted to be a golfer
If I didn't play baseball, I think I would have been a golfer
I'm okay at it
I'm looking to get better
I'd say [I play] once every two weeks
I find it therapeutic
I get to go hit off a tee just like in baseball
I can do the same thing in golf
I can videotape myself swinging
I get very similar things from it, like being able to go watch my swing and fix it.

In picking up golf, Participant 3 has found another physical pursuit that allows him to track his improvement. With a deeper analysis, though, it seems that this is essentially a new identity that Participant 3 is hoping to embody. He is not merely saying he has always wanted to *play* golf, but that "I've always wanted to *be* a *golfer"*; if he had not played baseball, he thinks

he “would have *been* a *golfer*”. Seemingly subtle, the use of language is indicative of how Participant 3 views himself: baseball and golf are not merely activities that he participates in, but they are identities that he personifies (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1989;Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008; Gilligan et al., 2006)). Further, Participant 3 enjoys for its parallel qualities to baseball: not only are there similar motor patterns between the two sports, Participant 3 is able to measure his skill improvement by videotaping his swing to correct his mechanics and perform better. This passage, then, brings to light a significant implication: as a strategy to cope with the loss of his baseball self, Participant 3 is attempting to create a new identity as a golfer. This is the cyclical nature of identity development (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011; Jenkins, 2008).

The changes in one’s body composition as a result of transitioning out of their nutrition and training regimen is often a deflating realization for the retiring student athlete (Barnes, 2002; Fuller 2014). Participant 3 explains how he is processing this aspect of his transition:

I've weighed a couple times
I've weighed pretty much the same
I would like to do a dexa scan again, but those are expensive when you're not an athlete
It’ll be interesting to see what my body looks like after I do CrossFit for a little while
See if it's better than what it was when I was in college
I don't know
I'd like to have lower body fat percentage
In college I was trying to kind of put on weight and it didn't really matter what it was.

While the number on the scale has not changed drastically since ending his athletic career, Participant 3 is curious about the changes in his body composition. He is interested to see the effects that CrossFit will have on his physique. Once again implying the idea of improvement, Participant 3 is intrigued to see if his physical appearance will be “better” than when he was a student athlete. Curious, then, is this idea of looking better: what characterizes looking better for a retiring student athlete? Perhaps another example of being motivated by

outward achievement, it is likely that Participant 3's outlets are preserving the competitive, active spirit of his athlete identity (Barnes, 2002; Fuller, 2014).

The concept of sport retirement is a perplexing one, a cognitive process that is unique to each individual (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004). Participant 3 unpacks his perception of athletic career retirement and where he finds himself in that process:

Maybe when I start being more sedentary and don't work out so much
I still feel like I could go out there and compete if I really wanted to
If I really work hard and tried out for an independent ball team
I think I would make it
But I would say when you think you can't do that that's when you're retired
I don't know about [becoming] sedentary
I think I'll pick up golf
I'll do that and get a lot better at it and hopefully compete in tournaments
I retired from one sport, moved onto another.

Participant 3 depicts retirement as a sedentary state. Further, he believes that when one is no longer able to perform at an elite level anymore, then they have retired. In his mind, then, he is not retired because he believes he could still perform at the same quality that he did as a student athlete, even going so far as to say he believes he could make the roster of an independent baseball team. An expectation to be elite in golf continues in this excerpt as well; Participant 3 believes that with some training, he is capable of competing in tournaments. Retirement to him is not a cessation, but transition: retiring from one sport and moving onto another maintains his athlete identity (Barnes, 2002; Fuller, 2014; Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004). Throughout these excerpts, Participant 3 seems to be seeking validation that he is still capable of performing at an elite level. His voice is humble, yet confident that he is capable of such a feat: he is not seeking affirmation in asking questions, but rather stating actuality in his abilities (Gilligan et al., 2006).

At this point in the conversation, Transition Theory is introduced (Schlossberg, 1989; Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). After briefly explaining the phases of transition, Participant 3 sits quietly for a moment. Then, he illustrates where he finds himself in his transition:

I think I definitely have accepted it
I'd say I'm walking, like one foot is out the door of out
I'm through it and out of it at the same time
I still keep in contact with the guys that are playing
I feel like I'm still kind of in it
but I've accepted that I'm in a working role now
I have a big boy job
I have accepted that I'm out of it.

In this excerpt, it seems that Participant 3 understands that he is no longer a student athlete by title, as he is now working in the professional world. However, given the fluidity of transition as a process, he finds himself simultaneously moving “through” and “out”. He is far enough removed from his college days that he is finding consistency and balance in his current state. Further, having “accepted it” denotes finality (Schlossberg, 1989; Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). Still, because he remains in close contact with his former teammates, he feels like he is still a part of the team. This suggests, then, that he is still connected with his former in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008) and if finding it difficult to part ways. His repetition of “I have accepted it” implies not that he is declaring the fact, but that he is confessing aloud what he must accept (Gilligan et al., 2006). It seems logical that his dissatisfaction with his job might make it more difficult to accept where he is at in his transition. However, Participant 3 anticipated that this was a possibility:

It's not where I want to end up, I don't think
but it's where I'm at right now
I pictured myself doing an entry-level job for the first few years

If it's something I didn't want to do,
I'm not going to do it
I haven't got there yet
But if I do get there, I'm still young in my career
I can drop everything and find something else
I've thought about being a teacher, going to get my teaching degree
I could coach while teaching
I can always go be an admin at a school, then High School athletic director, then college athletic director
I've thought about those steps.

Though dissatisfied, Participant 3 is not to the point of forgoing his current role. By picturing himself in an entry-level position, Participant 3 anticipated this portion of transitioning into a working role (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). Additionally, he acknowledges again that he has considered an alternate strategy to the point of planning specific steps to take if and when he is ready to make the switch. Again, assures himself that this discontentment was to be expected, and that he has a plan in place for the next transition:

I can think of what I probably would be doing
I think I'd probably be doing a graduate assistant gig,
If I did not have a job lined up
I'd probably still be in school
I probably just would have gone to get my Master's right away
If I didn't have this job lined up
Then again that goes back to the fact that I was getting married, to have a job
If I wasn't getting married and didn't have a job right away
I think that's what I would be doing, coaching.

Participant 3 revisits his dream to get his Master’s degree and pursue a career in sport as a graduate assistant coach. An intriguing question is brought to light in this passage: did his marriage prompt his choosing his current role over continuing with his graduate education? As a young husband, was there pressure to prioritize a stable income over a dream career? The manner in which he weighs what he could have done versus what he chose to do infers that this is not the first time Participant 3 has considered this compromise (Gilligan et al., 2006).

Despite missing his teammates, Participant 3 is restructuring his in-group by connecting with his church community (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008). In congruence with the Pre-Transition Interview, Participant 3 expresses the impact his faith has had on his student athlete experience and now, his transition. After getting married, Participant 5 and his wife were intentional about seeking connection in their local church:

We joined a small group, through [church]
We became members of the [church]
I've definitely grown in my faith in the last 5 months more than I ever have
I've learned so much from the pastor at [church], he is so good.

In knowing the importance of his faith, it makes sense that together Participant 3 and his wife would look for opportunities to get connected into their church community. In transitioning out of his student athlete identity, Participant 3 expresses that he has “grown in his faith” significantly. As such, it is completely sensible that he would look for like-minded peers to provide safety and belonging as he continues to navigate the uncharted territory of his identity transition (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008).

In his closing thoughts, Participant 3 lists his identities with certainty and security. Perhaps ranked by salience or priority, he addresses first his relational identities, then vocational, and then concludes with his student athlete identity:

I am a husband
I am a person of Christ
I'm a family guy, I'm always around my family
I'm a dog person
I wouldn't say I'm a business analyst, I would just say I work at [company]
I think it's cool to say that you are a student athlete
But I would never use it to my advantage in class or anything
I think it's cool to be known as a student athlete
I can say yeah, I played baseball there. That's a conversation point

I think it makes people think I'm more important than I am
I think it's super cool because the majority of people didn't play sports in college.

In first listing his relational identities, it is implied that Participant 3 is driven to maintain his relationships. Further, he feels safe in his social circles as he names these identities with confidence (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008; Gilligan et al., 2006). For his vocational identity, he explicitly states that he would not say he is a business analyst, despite the fact that this is his title; instead of stating “I am __”, he chooses “I work at __”, suggesting that he does not necessarily own his professional role. This is consistent throughout the interview analysis, as Participant 3 indicated numerous times that he has plans to branch out toward different vocational pursuits (Fuller, 2014). The excerpt concludes with Participant 3 circling back once more to his identity as a student athlete. By admitting that being a student athlete is desirable, it is implied that Participant 3 is more attached to the exclusivity of the student athlete identity than he had initially understood himself to be (Benson et al., 2015).

Participant 4

Pre-Transition Interview

In the final weeks of his undergraduate days, Participant 4 is focusing on being as present as possible. The anticipation of the imminent transition (Fuller, 2014) has Participant 4 feeling heavy-hearted:

... I'm kind of getting a little more sad...
Just like not wanting it to end so soon
I remember at the beginning of the semester I was just kind of like alright
I'm ready to get this out of the way
But now I'm trying to make it last as long as I can.

Participant began the semester with a seemingly detached demeanor. It seemed this was but something to get through for Participant 4, and he has minimal emotional attachment to the experience. However, with the end drawing nearer, he has since become more emotionally reflective. In the very opening statement, he begins with a pause, and trails the sentence off into a silence for a few moments (Gilligan et al., 2006). He appears to have brought himself to terms with the fact that this looming conclusion is actually having an emotional effect on him; while he initially approached this as but another semester to get through, he now wants to make this experience last as long as he can.

The time that this interview occurred was days after a departmental event was held to celebrate the senior student athlete class for their accomplishments on and off the field of competition. A handful of honors and awards are bestowed to individuals of the class for outstanding academic and athletic achievement. Participant 4 was selected as a winner of one of these impressive academic awards:

I won that award on Monday, which helped a little bit.
It was one of the most fun experiences I've had in my life

I mean obviously there's been a lot with track
But it was just really cool being honored for that
For putting in four hard years of work
And then finally being able to be recognized for that academically
Because in athletics sometimes you don't really know or understand...
How good you're doing in academics
Like a GPA is just a number, but it says a lot more than what's just on the transcript
It was really nice to be recognized for that
The kind of Justified sticking it out all four years as a student-athlete.

For Participant 4, the award he received was validation of the hard work he had put into his academics throughout his four years. Participant 4 has typically expressed more salience in his student identity than his athlete identity; being awarded for his hard work academically, then, surely reinforces the student identity. The excerpt is interesting when applying the *Listening Guide*, as there are very little "I" statements. However, the voice in this section seems to be an outward monologue of an inward declaration; though he is speaking to me, Participant 4 seems to be affirming himself that he did deserve this award (Gilligan et al., 2006). Having reached the pinnacle of academic achievement, the conversation then merged to athletic performance:

We could be doing better
but I'm not too worried about that
We have some really big meets coming up
I think my peak is coming for the season
I am just looking forward to that
Like this is what I told myself
I said that no matter how I do this season,
I'm never going to stress it just because I know...
Like... like...
Especially because of the award too,
My four years have been justified here,
And I've kind of come at peace with
Whatever I end up doing athletically,
That will be good enough for me
I'm still going to strive to be as good as I can be
But I'm not going to dwell on poor performances if they occur
I mean, that's just kind of how life goes.

Participant 4 has not yet performed to the athletic standard he is hoping for, but he remains hopeful with the last few competitions left in the season. Regardless of how his track

career ends, though, Participant 4 is intentional about not letting his athletic performance dictate his entire collegiate career (Fuller, 2014); in other words, if he is unable to achieve the athletic goals he set, Participant 4 feels that he had an extremely successful collegiate experience, validated by the academic award he recently received. With a confident voice, Participant 4's use of "I" statements are strong and assured. He is certain that regardless of how his athletic career ends, his "four years have been justified here". Further, in stating that he has "come to peace" with the possibility of not achieving his athletic goals, it is plausible that Participant 4 has already internally processed through this tension, thus revealing his resolution (Gilligan et al., 2006). Participant 4 expresses his perception of his final weeks as a student athlete and the impact that is having on his identity:

Honestly right now...
I would have said like 6 months ago definitely student-athlete
but I feel like since I know the end of the Athletics side is closing in,
I kind of want to focus more on the athletic side right now
like I said my academics are a lock,
I mean I don't really have too much to lose in that aspect,
So I think I want to put a lot of my attention on Athletics right now because...
This is actually the last time I get to be competitive in this sport
So I really want to put that at the top of my priority list.

Though he confidently identifies more frequently as a student athlete than an athlete student, Participant 4 expresses that he wants to make his athletic identity a priority right now. Since he is continuing into graduate school, there is no direct threat to Participant 4's student identity at this time; however, with only weeks of his athletic career remaining, his athletic identity is threatened with termination. Seemingly aware of the contrasting voices (Gilligan et al., 2006), Participant 4 justifies his choice to focus more exclusively on his athletic identity by acknowledging the lack of threat to his student identity. As such, Participant 4 is choosing to align himself more with the fading athletic identity (Benson et al., 2015).

Participant 4 is comfortable to let his unthreatened identity, student, submit to the threatened athletic identity for the time being. However, he is still looking forward to new identities he will assume once his athletic career comes to an end. Participant 4 will begin his graduate program in accounting, which will give him the opportunity to gain teaching experience. In anticipation of this new identity, Participant 4 is excited but nervous:

I've never thought of this but next year,
if I get this TA-ship,
I will be a teacher
I will be teaching a lab. Like it's a lab, but that's scary
I mean think about it, you're in charge however many 25 to 30 people,
All their stuff, being organized
I've never really thought about.... Me like that,
But it's really exciting
I think it's going to be really good for my public speaking skills
I'm not saying a struggle with that,
But there are definitely times when
I'm not extremely comfortable talking in front of a large group of people
I think that will be a really good way to break the ice,
Just kind of get me out of my comfort zone.

The possibility of being in a teaching role is an exciting one for Participant 4, though marred with angst as he recognizes the responsibility inherent to the position. His voice is somewhat timid as he considers the challenges of teaching, trailing off and indicating some discomfort (Gilligan et al., 2006). Participant 4, though, knows that there are many benefits to this role that he can capitalize on, such as improving his organizational and public speaking skills. If nothing else, it will get him out of his comfort zone. In this way, Participant 4 is reflective about a new identity he may assume. The development this potential new identity (Erikson, 1968; Marcia 1989) is evidence that Participant 4 has begun to process his identity transition (Schlossberg, 1989).

Continuing this train of thought on his future self, Participant 4 considers how his daily routine might look different regarding exercise and eating. While he is completely confident in his approach to his workout routine, he is quite unsure of cooking and eating:

Oh my gosh, now that's another thing I'm going to have to balance too
I'm definitely going to work out, that's something that's not going to change
I'll probably do a lot more upper body lifting, probably not as much cardio
I'll still run but I won't do nearly as much as I would do during track
But yeah eating is going to be a tough...
That's going to be one of the toughest things
I've never really been super... Keen... On cooking
I'm not a good chef or anything
I'll make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, that's my forte
I'm going to have to learn how to do that
I'm going to have to go grocery shopping a lot more
That's one perk you don't really think about
Is the free food when you're a student athlete.

Concerning exercise, Participant 4 is poised and secure, explaining the workout goals he has certainly already considered. Using his lifting regimen to orient his plan, Participant 4 knows the modifications he wants to make based on his personal preference (Barnes, 2002; Fuller, 2014). Emptier, though, is his confidence in approaching cooking for himself. Acknowledging that cooking is simply not a strength or interest, Participant 4 knows this is something he is going to have to learn as he transitions out of being a student athlete. While his voice was confident and easy in talking about working out, his sentences begin to trail off as he considers his skill set in the kitchen. Further, he seems to underscore learning to cook and grocery shop as a burden, contrasting it to the student athlete “perk” of provided meals (Gilligan et al., 2006). A threat to his athlete identity, then, is represented by the reality that a staple of his student athlete experience will culminate (Benson et al., 2015).

The conversation then shifts back to the present. Up late the night before taking a test on campus, Participant 4 explains an interesting moment of nostalgia as he caught his mind wandering:

I kind of looked out the window and it was dark out
I was looking at the buildings
I was like I can't believe I used to go up on that hill like everyday
I was just thinking about my freshman year, all my classes...
That was like 3 years ago, but it feels like yesterday
I almost felt weird studying at [building], like what am I doing here?
I'm about to be an intern
I'm about to be graduated
I'm doing something I would have been doing three years ago...

As he reminisces about his college years, Participant 4 is seemingly struck by the reality that his transition out of college is imminent and suddenly urgent. His replaying of freshman year memories is abruptly interrupted when he suddenly realizes that he is graduating soon and moving on to new experiences. In questioning himself, “what am I doing here?”, it seems that Participant 4 is correcting himself out of his reflection (Gilligan et al., 2006). Participant 4 continues to unpack that tension as he describes how his thinking has evolved throughout his college experience:

But yeah it's just crazy...
How your schedule and how your mindset of college changes
especially when you get to your senior year...
It's almost like do I still belong here?
It's like freshman year, you're always looking forward to the next four years
you're like I have so much time
But then Senior Year, you're like oh I'm almost done...
It doesn't really feel like I'm in college anymore.

Attempting to describe the way one’s mindset changes throughout college, Participant 4 drifts into contemplation. Both his silences and the manner in which his sentences trail off as he grapples to find the words indicates that Participant 4 is challenged to find adequate language to

describe the paradox that he finds himself in. In asking if he *still* belongs here, Participant 4 reveals how he is wrestling the anticipation of his transition (Gilligan et al., 2006; Fuller, 2014). Coming back out of the pauses, Participant 4 describes the culmination of his college experience:

I would say for the most part everything I've set out to do in college,
I have achieved so far
I got a really good GPA
I got a degree that's going to be really useful
I got a math minor just because I was in love with math in high school
I competed at the Division I college level for 4 years
I had decent success at it
I'm not saying I was a superstar
Obviously I wasn't. There's still time
I made so many friendships...
And I just did something that... A minority of People can say that they've done.
And that's an intangible that you can't really take away.

Consistent with his high-achieving personality, Participant 4 describes many of the benchmarks he accomplished throughout his undergraduate career as a student athlete. In this passage, it is noteworthy that Participant 4 first describes his academic achievements; this suggests that while he wants to remain intentional and present in his athletic identity at this time, his student identity is still comparatively salient, as his academic achievements are at the forefront of his list. Participant 4 then describes his athletic successes, distinguished not by his performance but rather his athletic affiliation; though he has not yet attained his athletic aspirations, he recognizes his commitment to his team and this athletic program as success. Briefly touching on his social experience, he trails off into a momentary silence as he searches for words to encapsulate his college experience (Gilligan et al., 2006). Participant 4 culminates this passage by highlighting the exclusivity of his experience: as a student athlete, Participant 4 is fulfilled in knowing that he accomplished a feat that few have had the opportunity to do (Benson et al., 2015). This exclusivity is enhanced further by the adversity he had to overcome through a significant athletic injury his freshmen year:

My freshman year I had a big injury
I was like I can't... dwell on
I kind of learned it myself
Everyone will give you advice about what you can do…blah blah blah all that good stuff
It's been reinforced in my mind a million times
But until you actually encounter something
That kind of inhibits you… that's the biggest wake-up call
Especially in an individual sport like track and field
You literally just have to tell yourself...
It's going to get better
And that's a hard thing to tell yourself sometimes,
Especially when it seems like it's not going to get better
At the time it seemed so bad...
I can never get back to the way I was before
But you definitely can, it just takes time
And unfortunately, time is very limited.
So, you just kind of have to do what you can when you can.

Sustaining a career-altering injury is an arduous experience for any student athlete. As Participant 4 reflects on his injury, he seems troubled to recall the experience. Multiple times in this excerpt Participant 4 trails off into lengthy silences, as though is reopening the vault to a dark cerebral encounter (Gilligan et al., 2006). He recalls getting generalized preventative advice, but to personally suffer a debilitating injury would be an overwhelming process for anyone. Interestingly, this notion illustrates a theoretical application; a career-ending injury would qualify as the catalyst of an unanticipated transition, in which case the individual would have no time to predict and prepare for the transition (Schlossberg, 1989; Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006; Fuller, 2014). Though not the case for Participant 4, it seems that this “wake-up call” flashed the fragility of his athletic career before his eyes. Additionally, this scare reinforces his athletic identity exclusivity in that he endured a hardship that many of his non-athletic peers would not encounter, as he went so far as to sacrifice his body for his athletic career.

Curiously following the trail of exclusivity, motivation was the next topic of discussion in the interview. Participant 4 is an undoubtedly high-achieving individual; appealing, then, is the source of his motivation:

I'm kind of a perfectionist
I just want to be the best at everything I do
I feel like that's what motivates me
Academically, honestly my dad probably motivates me the most, he is so smart
I want to be smarter than him
He's a way better accountant than I am
He's not even really an accountant, he does all the stuff on the side
I can't let my dad be a better accountant than I am when he's not even an accountant
I want to be as smart or smarter than him,
So that's kind of like my end goal
I'm very competitive
It's not even that I want to beat him I just want to...
I don't want to be inferior
I'm in his shoes I don't want to be...
I want to have the same amount of knowledge and experience as him
But he's extremely supportive
He motivates me.

A perfectionist and competitor, Participant 4 is driven to simply be superior in anything in which he partakes. In and of themselves, these attributes are not unique to Participant 4; rather, these are qualities of arguably most student athletes at the Division I level. Academically, however, he is specifically driven to outdo his dad. Enamored by his father's intelligence, Participant 4 is motivated to surpass his intelligence. Participant 4's father manages the accounting for the family's small business and is not a certified accountant by trade. In this way, Participant 4 is driven by a desire to distinguish himself, both professionally and personally. In listening to Participant 4's voice over this passage, the ambition to be superior resonates loudly throughout. Paradoxically, though, is the almost whispered statement, "I don't want to be inferior." Although perfectionism and preeminence drive him, it seems that the true root of Participant 4's motivation may actually be a fear of inferiority (Gilligan et al., 2006).

An impressive attribute in many student athletes is their time management capacity (Brewer, 1999). Typically very organized and mindful of his academic and athletic obligations, Participant 4 expresses disarray in balancing his responsibilities:

I almost completely...
It's almost like I have to completely separate the two more
Like usually they blend together, like my athletics and academics
I'm cognizant of what I have, but lately it's like...
Like oh crap we're leaving for a track meet tomorrow
I'm like what else do I have today
I'm like oh shit we're leaving
I had already known and I had all my stuff prepared for it,
It was like sometimes just kind of like....
Like yeah...
Like the reality that we leave tomorrow.
It's just like, this time of the year is so busy with all the meets and all the traveling and just…
Getting all your school work in
I just feel like you don't get a free minute.

Usually quite proficient at managing his responsibilities and schedule, Participant 4 describes a jumbled mindset, almost letting important tasks and assignments slip. Describing "athletics" and "academics" as tangible units, Participant 4 explains that he needs to separate the two identities more; while his student and athlete selves normally "blend together" efficiently, he admits that everything seems to be peaking too quickly. Indeed, his voice is momentarily frenzied and rushed (Gilligan et al., 2006). This frenzied feeling is commonly experienced when one's academic assignments and athletic competitions peak at the same time. Further, as the spring semester draws to a close, an excitement for summer is surely present. However, there is an undertone of angst in this excerpt that is subtly connected to feelings of finality and anticipation of transition. In previous passages, Participant 4 confesses that in not wanting this experience to end so quickly, he is intentional about relishing his last moments as a student athlete. It is presumed, then, that in attempting to be cognizant of everything in front of him

while simultaneously rejoicing over his final weeks, control begins to fade (Schlossberg, 1989; Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006; Fuller, 2014).

In the concluding moments of the interview, Participant 4 reflects again on the summation of his collegiate experience. With a sense of pride and accomplishment as the undercurrent of this excerpt, he exudes satisfaction and fulfillment in what the last four years had offered him:

I think it's almost kind of like...
Weird to think that I've been here for four years...
Like looking back when I'm an adult and I can say,
I didn't stay the status quo like a lot of my friends
I didn't just take the easy way...
Not to say they took the easy way out, but it was comfortable, simple
I can look back and say
Hey, I took a chance
I moved somewhere that I've never been
Doing something that people, some people just can't physically do
They're not strong enough to get away from their comfortability
I think that's something that's amazing
I have loved my experience here at this university
The teachers, the people here, the campus, the coaches, the teammates
I can't really say a bad thing about it
The fact that I can say I was a part of this community
I went to this university,
I feel like this is one of the more unique places to go to school.

Participant 4 describes his overall college experience as a very positive one. Specifically, he is pleased that he chose to embark into unknown territory as opposed to his high school friends, who chose to remain in their hometown. Though he is not considering himself superior to his friends, his choice to differentiate his college experience reinforces exclusivity (Benson et al., 2015). Participant 4's "I" statements throughout the excerpt depict self-validation. Statements such as "I didn't stay the status quo" and "I took a chance" reinforce his choices; "I think that's something that's amazing" further justifies his decisions (Gilligan et al., 2006). In choosing to

attend a respected and prominent university, Participant 4 has aligned himself with that reputation. As a member of the larger university body, and more specifically the student athlete community, there are layers of exclusivity in Participant 4's comprehension of his college experience (Benson et al., 2015).

Post-Transition Interview

Six months after graduation, Participant 4 is enrolled as a full-time graduate student in a Master of Accounting program at his alma mater. After his summer internship with a well-known accounting firm, Participant 4 seems to be thriving in his graduate work and is excited for continued opportunities to grow his skill set:

I am in 15 hours of the Masters of Accounting program
I'm also a [accounting course] TA this semester
I teach two sections of that
It's been really fun, teaching is... I like it.
I don't really see it going past this TA-ship
I mean it's just, it's a good skill to have
I've actually led a group, two different groups of people
Oh yeah it definitely improves my public speaking
I've got to think on my feet a lot more which is always good
I don't think I've actually had a point where I told a kid,
"Actually, I have no idea"
But I know it's coming
It's not as hard as I thought it was going to be
I was really nervous for the first lab I taught
I'm definitely the superior one in terms of how much I know
And it's kind of a fun feeling, like being looked up to like that
I like to share knowledge that may not be intuitive to people
Add some of my own tricks and thoughts to it,
Because there is always more than one way to solve a problem.

Shortly after our Pre-Transition Interview, Participant 4 was offered a teaching assistantship for the introductory accounting course of the undergraduate accounting program. Participant 4 enjoys teaching; no longer signifying teaching as an identity as he did in the

previous interview, he recognizes the skill development it is providing him. Interestingly, the notion of superiority in knowledge is revisited. In the same way Participant 4 sought to have superior knowledge over his dad in the Pre-Transition Interview, he now expresses his confidence in knowing he is “definitely the superior one in terms of how much I know.” The repetitive reference to this standard of superiority illustrates Participant 4’s understading of himself and his desire to outrank his peers (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008; Gilligan et al., 2006). While he does not imply his superiority in a condescending manner, Participant 4 is driven to be identified as the primary intellectual in the group. In this way, his competitive spirit is fueled by a desire to remain exclusive (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008; Benson et al., 2015; Fuller, 2014).

Immediately following graduation, Participant 4 began an internship with a prestigious accounting firm in a local city. Participant 4 relished the full-time experience he got through his internship, and is excited to return to the company upon completing his graduate program:

I had a lot of fun
I was actually just thinking about that today
I'm starting to miss it already kind of
I'm really enjoying my grad year
But I'm excited to start full-time
So I got an offer at that place
Yeah so I got the job. They offered right after the internship
I will just take my CPA from March until July, August, somewhere in that range.
Hopefully [I will] pass them all on the first try and then start
I bounced around a lot between a few different clients
I did a lot of kind of busy work
[I was] just doing the stuff that the Associates didn't really have time for
I really like the people I worked with.
Yes, so just kind of builds upon itself
I know once you kind of learn the ropes of the business,
You can start to progress into a senior role and it just kind of builds up on there.

Participant 4 had a tremendous internship experience, capped off by an offer to take a full-time role with the company once he completes his master's program. Having enjoyed both the work and his colleagues, Participant 4 is eager to begin his career. His voice confident and enthusiastic, it is clear that Participant 4 is pleased with the outcome of his experience and is excited to go back (Gilligan et al., 2006). Further, his career preparation during his undergraduate years has paid off. Participant 4 has established a solidified career path, resultant of his acceptance and preparation out of his student athlete experience as well as his high self-efficacy in his career decision-making abilities (Cabrita et al., 2014). In knowing he would not be pursuing a sports-related career, Participant 4 wasted no time or resources in exploring frivolous career opportunities and instead shows evidence of readiness to begin his professional career (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004).

Due to his obligations as a teaching assistant and a graduate student, Participant 4 spends most of his time on campus to be available to students and complete his own coursework. As such, these time demands have essentially forced him to make sacrifices in other areas of his life. Paralleling his concern from the previous interview regarding grocery shopping and cooking, Participant 4 is managing to make do with what he is comfortable with:

I've been doing some grocery shopping
I need to do a little bit better job of doing that
But I try to do the best I can
I still don't know how to cook much, but I can make it by
I can buy bread and turkey and all that and I can make sandwiches,
I can make soup, that's not really that hard
I mean, usually when I spend that much time in the office,
Sometimes I just have to go out and get something
I'm not going to run all the way home to make something
I don't have time for that
I could bring stuff but I,
I usually don't do much in the morning
Besides get up get ready and then go to class or the officer or whatever.

Often unable to prepare meals at home due to his busy schedule, Participant 4 settles for the simplicity of sandwiches and soup. Seemingly seeking validation, Participant 4's voice is clarifying and honest in what he is capable of regarding preparing food for himself. Multiple times he reinforces what he can do versus what he is incapable of doing, drawing attention to his strengths instead his weaknesses (Gilligan et al., 2006). Acknowledging the fullness of his schedule, Participant 4 also admits that social opportunities have factored in the no-sleep equation:

Honestly... I haven't gotten a lot of sleep this semester
I've just been really busy
And if I'm not, then I'll be out with friends
Saturday's are just always really hectic
I'm just out of the bars all day or having fun
Oh yeah, it's been fun,
I've just neglected sleep a little bit more than I should
That's what winter break is for, catching back up on that
I'm taking care of myself
I've definitely like, let loose more this semester than I have
I've stayed out later
I need to catch up on sleep
I wouldn't say I've been more irresponsible,
But I've just been less uptight
Like sometimes I'll be like
I need to go to bed,
But sometimes I'll be like screw it
I can stay up
I'm young,
I have the rest of my life to sleep
I's not like I'm getting one hour or two hours of sleep
I at least get 4 to 5 hours, at a minimum
It's not like I'm a zombie staying up
But I'm definitely not like saying oh crap I have practice tomorrow
I need to get 8 hours of sleep

No longer bound by the restrictions of being a student athlete, Participant 4 has targeted far more of his free time toward social pursuits. In this excerpt, Participant 4 is quite reflective of his former, student athlete self and who he is now; specifically, he describes himself as "less

uptight", inferring that he had unrelenting boundaries as a student athlete with which he had no other choice but to abide by. With undertones that are subtly rebellious, Participant 4 now revels in the freedom he has since retiring from his student athlete self (Gilligan et al., 2006; Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004; Fuller, 2014). Participant 4 further explains this revelation:

I've also noticed I just can't sleep in much anymore, even if I try
I've just been so busy
I'm just always used to getting up and going to do something
So, sleeping in past 10 just feels awful, especially on the weekends
I would never sleep in during a school day
Like on a Saturday morning back when I was in track,
I could sleep till 1 if I wanted to because I was like screw this
I just had a full week of practice, this is my day off
So, I'm going to sleep in
And now on Saturday I'm like wow I worked all week,
I want to have fun
I don't want to waste the weekend
I love the weekends
It's weird I love the week, because it's a grind
[Then] like oh yeah, it's Saturday I don't have to do anything for work
I can just go hang out with people and watch the game or whatever
I always try to work out Saturday morning, that's always my thing
If I'm going to be drinking during the day,
I'm not going to want to work out after
I need to work out in the morning
I usually try to wake up at like 9, go right away
That's one nice thing I don't really have to worry about
I can't drink because I'm on the track team
I can drink more than I want to.

Now that he is no longer constrained to a rigorous student athlete schedule, Participant 4 is opting to fulfill his time with social endeavors. A full schedule typically compliments achievement-driven personalities, with Participant 4 being no exception; where his schedule was once filled with his responsibilities as a student athlete, he has now filled it with opportunities to go out and enjoy himself with friends (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008; Fuller, 2014). In a fascinating juxtaposition

between his former and current selves, Participant 4 highlights his perception of rewarding himself. As a student athlete, Participant 4 expresses the importance of getting 8 full hours of sleep: adequate sleep was necessary for his athletic performance. More profound, though, is his perception of sleep as a reward; after a long week of drudging through classes and practice, sleep came as a sweet relief, one that Participant 4 took full advantage of. In contrast, then, is how Participant 4 rewards himself now. After grinding through the week, Participant 4 looks forward the weekends as a time to decompress and enjoy time with his friends. Where Saturdays were once utilized for rest and recovery, they are now designated for community and escape. A treasured liberty, Participant 4 is careful to not waste his beloved weekends (Gilligan et al., 2006).

The conversation continues to build on the different experiences that Participant 4 has noticed in no longer being a student athlete. With this study's interviews taking place in the athletic department on campus, Participant 4 reminisces on the space that he frequented almost daily for four years:

Yeah, I mean it's definitely weird
I haven't been in this building at all since...
Like this is the first time I've been here this semester
So it was almost weird walking over here because I didn't feel...
Like I remember walking and I was like holy crap
I haven't been here in like 6 months
And it just felt normal
I just walked in and I'm like oh shit
I'm not actually an athlete anymore
But I mean it's like...
I don't think much has really changed in terms of like how I feel about me as an athlete
I'm obviously not a certified athlete anymore.

Participant 4 is humbled by the familiarity he felt being in the athletic department again. Though he had not been in the building since his graduation, Participant 4 expresses that "it just felt normal". As though he is searching for adequate words, Participant 4 trails off and does not

complete his sentences multiple times in this passage; this signifies that he is at a loss of words to describe the nostalgia he feels in being back in such a familiar setting (Gilligan et al., 2006). Interestingly, it seems that Participant 4 perceives his student athlete identity through a label or status. In stating "I'm obviously not a certified athlete anymore," Participant 4 implies that a designation, title, or certification is what verifies and endorses him as a student athlete. It is not that he has *inwardly* accepted no longer being a student athlete, but that he is no longer *outwardly* recognized as one that concludes Participant 4's understanding of identity retirement (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004). As such, without the outward affirmation to belong to a designated group, Participant 4 is left to reconstruct his identity (Erikson, 1968; Marcia 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008). This notion continues to be unpacked:

I mean I'm physically not on the roster anymore
That's one way I'm retired
I don't practice long jump anymore
I still workout
I still consider myself an athlete,
Even though I'm not actually an NCAA athlete
I'll always be an athletic person
So that's one way I don't necessarily feel retired
But...
How I do feel retired…
I'm not on the roster anymore
I'm not talking to people on the team as much anymore.

Participant 4 believes he is retired in that he is no longer participating in the physical functions that were conditional to be a student athlete, such as practicing his event. Further, he acknowledges twice that he is no longer on the team roster. As if attempting to negate these statements, though, Participant 4 quickly states "I still workout; I still consider myself an athlete… I'll always be an athletic person." These contrapuntal voices, then, negate his claim to accepting that he is retired (Gilligan et al., 2006). Moreover, it seems that the immediate

nullifications are proof of his loyalty to his athlete identity and refusal to accept identity retirement (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004). Participant 4 then discloses a very interesting detail: he is considering being a volunteer coach for his former team. Perhaps as a coping mechanism for transitioning out of his student athlete experience, Participant 4 explains how this opportunity came to light:

I think I'm going to help assistant coach a little bit during the winter
Like when they start with competitions
He asked me this summer, he called me
Actually, we talked about it very briefly at the end of the year last year
I was like yeah, I'll think about it
I'm trying to figure out my schedule
I have my schedule now
And the thing is next semester, I will be way less busy
I will only have 9 credit hours and one of them will be an online class
So, I will have a lot more free time
I'm in 15 hours of physical classes right now, it's a lot.

Participant 4 was given the opportunity to volunteer coach at the end his senior season. Initially hesitant because of the fullness in his schedule, Participant 4 expresses that his spring semester will have more flexibility. Curious, though, is his motivation for agreeing to coach; volunteer coaching seems irrelevant in professional field that Participant 4 is pursuing. Perhaps, then, this is an avenue through which Participant 4 can stay connected to his former identity (Cabirta et al., 2014):

I wanted to...
I wanted to kind of give back a little bit
I wanted to stay in touch with the team
I mean I love the sport
I like the people that I was teammates with last year
I wanted to see them and help them in any way I could
I wouldn't necessarily say I felt disconnected
Maybe that was an underlying factor...
Maybe I'm still holding on a little bit...
So that could be
Maybe
I wouldn't say I feel disconnected at all

I'm always going to be a student athlete here.

In wanting to stay connected with his former team, Participant 4 opts to volunteer coach; this strategy for staying connected with his team and the sport he loves is evidence of Participant 4 clinging to his athletic identity (Brewer, 1999; Benson et al., 2015). Though he does not feel disconnected, his behavior suggests that he is trying to prevent that feeling from coming to fruition. Further, he submits that perhaps this fear of disconnection is “an underlying factor”; deep in psyche, Participant 4 may well feel that he is losing connection with the primary social circle he belonged to for the last four years (Benson et al., 2015). Through volunteer coaching, he can maintain not only his athlete identity to a degree but is also his sense of belonging (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008). Evident in his repeated use of “I wanted…”, it is implied that Participant 4 yearned for an opportunity to stay bonded with this group. Further, his internal dialogue seems jumbled as he tries to order his thoughts. In stating that “I wouldn’t necessarily say I felt disconnected” to “Maybe that was an underlying factor”, then to “Maybe I’m still holding on a bit” but concluding with “I wouldn’t say I feel disconnected at all”, Participant 4 brings to light the cyclical progression of his thoughts as he tries to understand his new identity (Erikson, 1968; Marcia 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008; Gilligan et al., 2006). Finally, in saying that he will always *be* a student athlete, it is inferred that Participant 4 remains close to his student athlete identity, with intentions to preserve it through means other than his career (Benson et al., 2015).

Curious as to why he may be embracing his athlete identity in this way, the interview shifted into Participant 4’s own athletic performance at the end of his senior season. At the time

of the interview, a few weeks of competition remained in the season and Participant 4 was confident that he would break his personal record:

I didn't end up PRing
The last meet, actually I scratched a couple really good ones
But I was content
I'm satisfied with how my career went
I stuck it out for 4 years and that was the goal
I didn't give in to some of the pressures that some people have
Where they're just like I just can't do this anymore, or like I'm not good enough
I never thought that was the case
Just my hamstrings didn't want to cooperate with me.

While he was not able to attain his athletic goal in breaking his personal record from high school, Participant 4 maintains that he is content with how his career finished. Specifically, he is gratified in having persisted for four years and not conceding, despite a recurring injury. In this way, exclusivity in his athletic identity was reinforced (Benson et al., 2015). In congruence with the Pre-Transition Interview, Participant 4 seemed to make peace with his college experience regardless of how his athletic career concluded. However, having not achieved the athletic apex he yearned for, it is possible that Participant 4 is opting into a volunteering coaching role to make peace with an otherwise disappointing end to his collegiate athletic career. In giving back to the sport that he loves, perhaps he is seeking closure from the disappointment of his athletic performance (Fuller, 2014).

Though his chronic injury inhibited his performance goals, Participant 4 expresses that he is still quite active and works out regularly. His injury no longer nagging at him, he is enjoying his freedom in exercising:

I'm feeling good
I've been able to lift a lot more like upper body
I've been lifting a lot more
I've really only gained about 3 or 4 pounds
I didn't want to gain weight
I honestly feel more obligated to workout now than I did during track just because...

Since I'm not obligated now
I feel like if I don't then I'm just kind of like tapering off and then just getting in a bad rut
So I just try to stay on top of it as much as I can.
I always try to do something
Even if… I'm not feeling like working out one day
I'll just say hey just go to the gym maybe run a mile and do some core
You don't have to do a full hour lifting workout,
You can be there for 30 to 40 minutes, just do something.
And it makes you feel accomplished, it's a good feeling.

Accustomed to extreme physical fitness, Participant 4 continues to exercise in an attempt to maintain this high level of fitness and thus, self-confidence. Further, Participant 4 sometimes must reproduce a competitive environment to motivate himself. Nervous to be "tapering off" or "getting in a bad rut", Participant 4 is determined to maintain his level of fitness, directly linked to self-confidence. In this way, working out regularly may assist Participant 4 in the transition out of collegiate athletics competition (Barnes, 2002). This excerpt displays an interesting anecdote of Participant 4's self-talk, as well. In telling himself to "You don't have to do a full hour lifting workout; You can be there for 30 to 40 minutes, just do something," Participant 4 is encouraging himself through internal dialogue. His voice kind yet resolved, he serves as his own motivation. Further, noting that this leads to a feeling of accomplishment, Participant 4 again illustrates his achievement-focused personality (Gilligan et al., 2006).

Identity is developed in the context of self-reflection and in establishing a sense of belonging in one's environment (Erikson, 1968; Marcia 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008). In being a graduate student at his alma mater, the familiarity of campus and the normativity of the student routine ought to evoke a strong sense of belonging for Participant 4. However, Participant 4 expresses a need to justify his presence:

I'm still here
I'm a grad student but it's just…

Being a grad student is so much different than being an undergrad just because...
You feel like you shouldn't be here…
I shouldn't say I shouldn't feel like I should be here
I'm paying tuition for this so I definitely should be here
But it's a little bit different
It's just weird because...
These halls…
You literally walk them for 4 years,
You're like oh I'm a student athlete
And then now I walk them and I'm like
Wow I'm not a part of this anymore,
But I'm in the same spot.
So, it almost feels...
Weird
I don't feel unwelcome, it's just very weird.

While he is in the same physical place that he spent his previous four years, Participant 4 tries to explain the differences he feels in no longer being a student athlete while still being at the same institution. Initially uttering that "You feel like you shouldn't be here…", Participant 4 corrects himself by stating that his presence is justified alone by the fact that he is paying tuition for his graduate program. For Participant 4, then, the tension lies in being in the same place without identifying in the same way. He describes this phenomenon as a shift: while he was once content in who he was as a student athlete, but now feels disconnected in that "I'm not a part of this anymore." Trying to verbalize his understanding of the tension, Participant 4 wanders into pauses and silences (Gilligan et al., 2006). Unable to find a fitting description of the contrast, Participant 4 can only describes the experience as "weird"; the repetition with which he uses this word implies that he does not yet have language to associate with the transition experience (Gilligan et al., 2006; Schlossberg, 1989).

As a graduate student at his alma mater and potentially engaging as a volunteer coach for his former team, it seems that Participant 4 is still moving through his transition out of his student athlete experience, as he grasps for familiarity in his surrounding environment to ease

himself out. However, a transition only exists when the individual experiencing it has identified it as such; in this way, Schlossberg's Transition Theory (Schlossberg, 1989; Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006) was briefly explained to Participant 4. In asking where he would locate himself on this spectrum, Participant 4 unpacked his understanding of his identity transition:

Honestly, I would probably say I'm out of it by now
I didn't...
I don't know if maybe it'll hit me just really late
but I didn't have a period of time where I was very...
Emotional...
I didn't...
I didn't really feel sad after I was done
I felt like...
I felt relieved
I felt like I was like…
I told myself one day you're going to be like wow, I really wish I was still competing
And right now, I still feel like I miss competing
I miss the practices
But I think it's going to hit me probably more in the future than it is right now
It's still pretty fresh
I'm still...
Yes so I would....
Maybe I'm still in the transition, but maybe because it finally hasn't hit me yet...
But right now I...
I feel...
I don't really feel like I'm still lingering, holding onto track and field
I feel like I'm out of the transition
It's not like I ever feel like while I wish I could go practice right now, you know what I mean?

Participant 4 initially states that he believes he has moved out of his identity as a student athlete. Drifting into silences multiple times throughout this excerpt, Participant 4 struggles to find adequate words to describe his feelings and pinpoint his positioning in his transition. Interestingly, he initially associates sadness as an indicator that he would still be *in* transition. He explains that he did not feel remorseful or heavy-hearted for his career to come to an end; instead, he felt relieved. However, he then verbalizes another instance of self-talk, in which he

tells himself "you're going to be like wow, I really wish I was still competing," (Gilligan et al., 2006) followed by the admission that he does, in fact, miss competing and practicing. Recognizing that he may not be as far removed as he initially thought, he confesses "Maybe I'm still in the transition, but maybe because it finally hasn't hit me yet…" An emotional reaction, then, seems to be the precursor to transitioning *out*; because "it finally hasn't hit me yet", Participant 4 wonders if he is still *in* transition. However, he returns to his initial assertion that he is *out* of transition because he is not "still lingering, holding onto track and field". Though Participant 4 explains that he is out of transition, he momentarily ponders if he is possibly still moving in and through it, but then returns to claiming that he is out of the transition. Albeit he may not be holding onto track and field as an entity itself, the manner in which he cycles through the phases of identity transition imply that he is still holding onto his student athlete identity itself and is wrestling with the process of identity transition. (Schlossberg, 1989; Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006; Fuller, 2014).

Participant 5

Pre-Transition Interview

As the final semester of her senior year draws to a close, Participant 5 is proud of what she has been able to accomplish over the last four years. Having just been offered a graduate assistantship position in an academic support office for the athletic department of another institution, Participant 5 is also now relieved to have secured a working position and begin her graduate work:

[I'm] Good. Good now
[I] Got a job finally, which is good
I feel relieved, it's not here but that's okay
I'm excited
I'm excited that it's an hour away,
I'm excited for something new
I'm ready for it, I think
I've been looking for graduate assistant positions
So I can help get my Master's paid for
I'd really like to pursue a master's in something sport related or College administration,
I ended up accepting a position at as a graduate assistant academic advisor [in Athletic Dept]
It's been like the 20th thing that I applied for
I did like four interviews, and this one is finally the one that stuck
I'm excited
I definitely feel relieved
I finally found something
I didn't think I was going to
I was like okay I'm going to have to come up with a different plan here
But I finally figured that out
I feel relieved for sure.

Having applied for seemingly countless graduate assistantships, Participant 5 is finally seeing the fruits of her labor. Throughout her collegiate career, Participant 5 was active and intentional with her career preparation for life after graduation; her high career decision-making self-efficacy, then, instilled in her an optimism that was tested throughout the last several months

(Cabrita et al., 2014). In applying for multiple positions and being repeatedly rejected, Participant 5 was discouraged, as she began to think she might not be offered any positions. She is then completely relieved to accept an offer and look forward to her next life chapter. In this excerpt, her relief and enthusiasm are palpable; the angst in her voice was tangible, and the levity she exudes is undeniable as she describes herself as “excited” and “relieved” multiple times (Gilligan et al., 2006). Participant 5 is very sure that the professional field she would like to pursue is higher education or college athletics administration:

I think I'm going to do the college student development [program]
With a focus on Intercollegiate Athletics
I'm probably going to end up doing that
I want to further my education in that department anyway
I already have the communications and journalism
I'm not really interested in business, but it's just a good thing to have I guess
I’m getting that athletic side too, hopefully with the advising and stuff like that
I think it'll be a good choice
I talked about with my parents too
That's like kind of the road I'm looking at right now.

Participant 5 seems confident in the degree path she would like to pursue in her graduate studies. Though very niche, she feels that a degree in college student development and her working experience in student athlete academic support will compliment her baccalaureate degree in journalism and communication studies. In this way, she seems to have crafted a careful curated plan that will equip her for a career in intercollegiate athletics (Fuller, 2014). Participant 5 is confident in her plan; having sifted through the alternatives, she is secure with the direction she is headed. Further, Participant 5 references the support provided by her parents, which is a theme found throughout this interview (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011). While her plan is to stay in the college athletics industry, she admits that working in an academic support unit was not what she expected:

I'm staying in the world of college athletics

I didn't ever think I was going to end up in academics
I just never thought that would be my path
I thought it would be more like coaching or something like that
[I'm] actually getting more interested in it the more I'm looking into it
I think it's going to be a big challenge, especially with [sport]
But I also think it's cool
I want people to care more about it
I like the direction I'm headed, for sure
I'm really glad I'm staying at a high level
I feel like people really respect that.

Like many student athletes who pursue careers in college athletics after their playing days are over, Participant 5 assumed she would begin her career in a coaching role. However, she is getting more excited to explore this new territory. Anticipating the challenge in working with the athletic teams she has been assigned, Participant 5 is embracing that challenge and emphasizing that she wants to instill a value for academics in others through her role. She continues to unpack her motivation for pursuing a career in intercollegiate athletics:

I feel like now my goal is every day to change the face of athletics
I feel like it's become such a...
I don't even know how to word it
Everything behind it is just that "we have to win at all costs"
My experience kind of motivates me to make sure that other people have a better experience
I know how people should be treated and not treated
I want to go make it a better place
I know it's kind of hard with the world we're in,
But that's just kind of my motivation,
To make it better
That's the main thing that motivates me every day,
Just changing that
Being a woman in that, too
I feel like people kind of underestimate us
They're like oh you're too nice, no one's going to listen to you,
You're too frilly, blah blah blah
I'm just like I'll be a ball buster when I need to be.

Participant 5 is driven by her own experience as a student athlete; after three tumultuous years of misunderstanding with her former head coach and, subsequently, not getting much playing time, Participant 5 had to find value in other components of her student athlete experience. Having resolved that the value of her collegiate career should not rest on her athletic performance, Participant 5 is motivated to ensure that other student athletes have the same realization (Barnes, 2002). In addition to fostering a holistic approach to the experience, Participant 5 is motivated by the gender disparity in college athletics administration. Specifically, she is driven to refute the stereotype held against women in the industry. Her voice strong and persuasive, Participant 5 is confident that she will challenge bigotry towards women, as she will "be a ballbuster when I need to be" (Gilligan et al., 2006).

With graduation only being weeks away at the time the Pre-Transition Interview was conducted, the conversation shifted to address Participant 5's level of anticipation toward her transition out of college. First, Participant 5 clarifies that despite her competitive softball career is coming to an end, her identity salience resides more in her student identity than her athlete one. Ironically, this salience if bolstered by her career path:

[I'm] Still student athlete
Especially now that I kind of figured out what I'm doing next
I feel like that's definitely where my interests lie
I still take pride in being an athlete here, especially this year
But I also take more pride in being a student and a leader
So definitely still student athlete not athlete student,
but I'm curious to see how that feels when that's not there anymore
I thought about it,
But I haven't really thought about it
It's becoming more real
I know I'm going to cry a bunch
I still have a couple weeks left hopefully
I think it's just going to be sad that I won't get to do it everyday
I won't have those workouts

But I'll always have the teammates
I'll always have the things that really matter
I'll find something else... golf, I'll just play golf all summer
I don't know why,
I'm sad but I'm also ready
I think it's a normal feeling.

In foreseeing her next two years as a graduate assistant in student athlete academic support, Participant 5's student identity is reinforced through her role expectations. Though she is proud of her athletic accomplishments, she explains that more of her pride is derived from her academic achievements and growth as a leader. However, Participant 5 does disclose a curiosity toward her identity transition. Specifically, she ponders whether or not her identity salience may shift when she is no longer a competing athlete (Fuller, 2014). Participant 5 also acknowledges that her transition is becoming more realistic as the semester winds down. Though she has accepted the transition, Participant 5 recognizes that she will be remorseful in grieving the loss of her routine. However, Participant 5 is also optimistic that "I'll always have the things that matter", especially her teammates (Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Fuller, 2014). Participant 5 also admits to a juxtaposition: her contrapuntal expression "I'm sad but I'm also ready" suggests that while she is saddened by the loss of transition, her acceptance of the transition has also contributed to her readiness to embark on her next adventure (Gilligan et al., 2006; Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004; Blinde & Stratta, 1992). Finally, Participant 5 brushes briefly on the consideration of athletic alternatives: "I'll find something else... golf, I'll just play golf all summer" suggests that she is considering athletic alternatives that can replicate the competitive environment she is leaving (Barnes, 2002; Fuller, 2014).

As she continues to describe her anticipation of transitioning out of her student athlete experience, Participant 5 has resolved a peaceful end to her career. She feels that because she

liked her softball experience so much more this year with a new coaching staff, she was able to enjoy her senior year, ending on a positive note. On the other hand, had her former coaching staff still been in charge, she postulates that she would have left the experience with bitterness and regret:

Last year I feel like I would have been...
I feel like I would have had a harder time getting by because I didn't like it as much
I didn't like my experience
But now it's more of like a peaceful parting
Instead of like ugh I'm ready to be done with softball
I would have regretted being done last year
I have so much more I could have done with it and enjoyed it again
I feel better about parting ways with it now that I love it again
I love doing it
I love my teammates and my coaches
The experience, all of the above
It's way better ending on a high note
Instead of ending on a note of I really didn't love it anymore
Definitely a better place to part with softball, for sure.

Participant 5 knew that her softball career would be over after four years of collegiate competition. While her career end has long been anticipated, she was prepared to label the entire experience as painful and displeasing. In this way, then, even an anticipated transition can be difficult to navigate, particularly if the individual experiencing it fails to accept and adapt to the transition (Fuller, 2014; Goodmen et al., 2006; Patton et al., 2016). Had her senior year not taken a turn for the better, Participant 5 expresses that she would have had a harder time leaving her student athlete experience. However, she states that “I feel better about parting ways with it now that I love it again”. Throughout this excerpt, Participant 5’s voice is forgiving and thankful that her experience had shifted. Her instances of “I didn’t like it” and “I would have regretted…” are now negated with her present state, exemplified with “I feel better” and “I love…” (Gilligan et al., 2006). Her relationship with softball now reconciled, Participant 5 has embraced the finality

of her playing career and is prepared to part ways with it (Fuller, 2014; Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004).

Satisfaction with one's athletic performance can dictate the degree of difficulty for the transition out of their playing career (Fuller, 2014). Perhaps a contributing factor to her discontentment toward her first three years as a student athlete was her dissatisfaction with her athletic performance. Having not been given many playing opportunities prior to the arrival of the new coaching staff, Participant 5 has been a staple contributor in games throughout her senior season. In reflecting on her perception of her athletic performance, Participant 5 shares:

I feel okay
I feel like I've gotten a lot better
I feel like I'm pretty consistent all the time
I'm never getting yelled at
I'm never getting ignored or anything
I'm just always kind of right in the middle, so that's been good
I feel like I finally earned it
I finally pushed my way in there
I'm kind of showing what I can do
I feel like I could have been even better if these coaches were here for all four years.

After patiently waiting for three years for consistent playing time, Participant 5 feels that she "finally earned it" and is capitalizing on her opportunities on the field. A consistent performer, she feels that she has found a place of balance in the feedback she is getting from the coaching staff, and again ponders what her athletic career could have looked like had this staff arrived earlier in her tenure. Despite dreaming about what could have been, it is clear that Participant 5 is satisfied with how her athletic career is ending. Therefore, with lessened emotional and psychological distress around her athletic performance, Participant 5's transition out of college athletics ought to be less difficult (Bailie, 1993; Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Talor & Ogilvie, 1994; Fuller, 2014). Prior to this reprieve, though, Participant 5 had to reflect on her

athletic goals, assessing what was attainable if she was not playing. In this reflection, Participant 5 refined her goals, allowing new motivation to emerge:

My goal athletically is to be the best and to win,
But it's also to leave the team better than when I started
I realized that that is not just in athletic ways, but in other ways
I feel like that's another thing that motivates me athletically
I love getting stronger
I love getting better at the things I'm doing
I feel like I've accomplished that
I feel like I've worked really hard every single day
Even if I'm not the best softball player,
I definitely got better
I found passion for other things like lifting and doing all that kind of stuff.

It is common in sport to equate one's abilities and value with playing time and performance statistics. In the absence of playing much in her first three years, Participant 5 had to reconsider what her athletic goals could be. Very specifically, her athletic goal is "to be the best and win"; however, she realized the impact she could make for her team did not have to come only from the field on game day. In working hard at every practice, in the classroom, and in the weight room, Participant 5 believes that she distinguished herself by her dependability and strong work ethic (Gilligan et al., 2006). Further, this perspective shift helped her discover a passion for other components of her student athlete experience. It is curious, then, if Participant 5 adjusted her goals to be more attainable objectives; in this way, she was able to still be satisfied with her athletic performance at a time in which she was not getting many playing opportunities. Should that trend have continued, then, it seems that Participant 5 could have still been satisfied with her athletic performance, thus easing the transition out of her athletic career (Fuller, 2014).

Continuing the notion that she has developed a passion for weigh lifting, Participant 5 considers how her body composition might change when she is no longer lifting with her teammates under the direction of her strength coach:

It freaks me out
I'm pretty good about working out on my own
I'm probably going to have to become a member at a gym or something to help motivate me
I'm pretty good about food especially if I'm on a budget
I'm afraid to gain weight
I will probably see my body change
I might take up running
And I hate running
I don't know there could be some cool opportunities to meet people through workout classes
My parents work out, like we're pretty healthy as a family,
I feel like I've always grown up in that way
So, I'm not terribly worried
Hopefully I can find new and creative ways to do that kind of stuff
I think my body is going to change a lot
I still feel pretty strong but it's definitely going to change
I'm not going to be bulky or anything like that anymore
I think that will be weird.

Though she expresses assurance that her healthy upbringing should help motivate her to stay active upon retiring from softball, Participant 5 is anxious for her body composition to change. Student athletes are accustomed to superior levels of physical fitness, thus reinforcing self-confidence (Barnes, 2002). In anticipating imminent changes to her body composition, Participant 5 seems to be predicting a jolt to her self-confidence. As Participant 5 wanes between anxious admissions and confident claims, this excerpt has multiple instances of contrapuntal voices (Gilligan et al., 2006). For example, Participant 5 states "It freaks me out," "I'm afraid to gain weight," and "I think my body is going to change a lot"; these statements are defeated and scared. Contrarily, she also makes bold and definite statements that depict assurance and confidence: "I'm pretty good about working out on my own," "I feel like I've always grown up in that way," and "So, I'm not terribly worried". These contrapuntal voices, then, create a tension in her narrative, suggesting that Participant 5 is quite anxious about the affects her impending transition will have on her physical appearance while also wanting to feel in control of her

emotional reaction to the transition (Barnes, 2002). Intriguing, then, is Participant 5's explanation on the sources of her motivation:

I feel like I motivate myself a lot
But I also allow a lot of outside things to motivate me
I let other people's opinions motivate me, or affect me, a lot more than I probably should
I'm definitely working on that
That's something I'm learning how to do
But I wish I could....
Lean a little bit away from extrinsic motivation and more into intrinsic motivation
I think that's just something I'm going to learn as I get older
I've had all these things to rely on for that so far
But I will have one job and one task next year
I'm going to have to find other ways to be like okay this needs to get done,
You need to be confident in yourself
I have two years to hopefully figure that out before I apply for the next job
But that's my goal, is to become more intrinsically motivated.

Participant 5 shares an interesting paradox: while she yearns to be more intrinsically motivated, she explains that extrinsic factors have a significant influence on her. Sheepishly admitting that she allows others' opinions to affect her more than she would prefer, Participant 5 seems ashamed of her confession. Further, Participant 5 voices "You need to be confident in yourself," offering a glimpse of her internal dialogue (Gilligan et al., 2006). She explains that moving from external motivation to being self-driven is a cognitive process she is working hard to adapt. Participant 5 recognizes that as a student athlete, she has grown used to having multiple sources of outward motivation: "I've had all these things to rely on for so long." Though she may not realize it, it is evident that Participant 5 is motivated to maintain some of these external motivators that are inherent with being a student athlete (Benson et al., 2015). In unpacking this notion, then, it plausible that Participant 5's fear of gaining weight and seeing her body change is derived from the external influences around her: because others' opinions have a strong effect on her, Participant 5's body image and confidence rely on positive external validation (Barnes,

2002; Fuller, 2014). This excerpt is a fascinating illustration of social identity development: the influence she feels from others' perception of her motivate her behaviors to align with normative similarities within the in-group she seeks to be a part of (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987).

As Participant 5's Pre-Transition Interview draws to a close, she reflects what she hopes will be her legacy on her team:

I hope that people come in and [say] she made me feel better about it
She made me feel like I was better at softball
She made me feel like she was really interested in me and my personal life as a friend
I know I'm not the best player
But I hope that I made the team better in general
I made people grateful for their opportunity to be here
And [I] made them realize that softball isn't everything
Like it's very important
I know it's the star of your life right now
But it's not everything
That also doesn't mean to totally disregard it
I feel like last year there was a bad mix of softball
"I don't need to do this"
I had a very kind of negative attitude towards it
As opposed to I'm going to work really hard at this
But it also doesn't define me
So, I hope I changed the culture in that way
To motivate people and really take pride in what they're doing
But I hope people learn from me that, you just got to be tough
You've got to tough it out
I feel like I have motivated people to not quit
Sticking it out is one of the most relieving feelings ever,
Because you get to walk away from it in a better way.

The hope and assurance in Participant 5's voice throughout this excerpt illustrates the confidence she feels toward the legacy she leaves behind (Gilligan et al., 2006). Consistent with her drive to instill holistic value in college athletics, Participant 5 hopes that she embodied this notion for her teammates. In wanting to create an environment of genuine connection and

camaraderie, Participant 5 believes she was able to contribute to her team despite not being in the lineup (Fuller, 2014). Additionally, Participant 5 felt it was her responsibility to impart the value of a holistic experience for student athletes: in branching out and preparing for life after softball, Participant 5 modeled that "softball isn't everything…it's very important… But it's not everything." There are other roles and identities that are equally important to one's athlete identity; Participant 5 hopes she modeled a balance in these other responsibilities (Fuller, 2014). Finally, Participant 5's persistence and commitment to playing in her final season allowed her to feel fully satisfied with her athletic career. Had she concluded her career at its peak of adversity, she knows she would have regretted her decision. Instead, she is satisfied with how her playing career is ending and feels complete relief as she anticipates her transition out of softball (Fuller, 2014). Having depicted the legacy she hopes to leave specifically with her teammates and softball program, Participant 5 considers the effect that being a student athlete has had on her identity as she ventures forth into her transition out of college:

I'm still a [mascot]
Even though I am going somewhere else
I do take a lot of pride in that
I'm still going to watch every game
I'm still going to be a coach's daughter
I'm a leader
I am very hard-working
I think it's finally starting to pay off and lead me in the right direction
Even if I'm not at the top of my goals yet
I feel like it's leading me in the right place
I am a person that has become happy with myself
Even if not everything is going the right way
I'm someone who has learned to handle a lot of different things that have been thrown at me
I've learned a lot
I learn new things every day
I learn how to react to things
I'm open to learning new things
I really do hope people think I work really hard
I have a really good attitude

I hope they perceive me the way I hope to be perceived
I am going to look back and be like that was a good decision
I'm glad I made that decision
No matter where I go,
I will always be a [mascot]
I will always support that
I will always be excited for anyone who goes there
Who knows maybe I'll come back one day,
Who really knows what's going to happen?
I take pride in it.

While her physical situation is nearing imminent transition, Participant 5 exudes a sense of belonging and camaraderie: “No matter where I go, I will always be a [mascot].” In this way, she will always have a distinct and salient in-group identity with her alma mater (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Jenkins, 2008). In her repeated declarations of “learning”, Participant 5 again highlights her ability to adapt to the adversity she faced throughout her collegiate career, signifying the process of identity refinement she endured as she reassessed her goals throughout her tenure (Marcia, 1989). Her voice relieved and proud, Participant 5 is pleased with how her student athlete experience is concluding. By referring to identities that she knows will not change through her transition out of college, Participant 5 reminisces and reminds herself of everything she has accomplished throughout the last four years (Gilligan et al., 2006). In accepting her athletic career retirement, Participant 5 is ready for her transition into a new experience (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004).

Post-Transition Interview

Participant 5 is employed at another Midwest Division I institution as a graduate assistant academic advisor while enrolled in a graduate program. Participant 5 primarily works with football student athletes and has been assigned a caseload of academically at-risk students as

well. As seen in this immediate onset of the interview, Participant 5 is frustrated with her experience thus far:

I don’t do anything on the weekends
But I work 45 plus every week. It's just normal
I really like it there but it's a frustrating experience
I get paid $10 an hour, and I don't get my tuition paid for
Before I go in to talk to [supervisor] I'm going to have facts
I work with a lot of [at-risk student athletes]
Yes, I agreed to it
But I'm realizing now that I'm not doing what I quote unquote signed up for
And I don't like my master's program
It's called college student development, it's okay
I wanted to do more sport management kind of stuff and they don't have that there
I just kind of think it's boring
I don't need a master's to do what I'm doing right now, in my opinion
I just don't
I'm learning more at the job than I am in my masters
And I know that one day I have to have it, it's a requirement now
But I just feel like I'm not getting...
I don't know it's...
I work my ass off there
I just didn't know any better
I just did what she asked me to do, and she uses me a lot
I'm learning a lot but I'm basically running the [team] by myself
I really like where I'm at
I'm glad I'm with football
Like I said it's great
I'm learning a lot,
But it's like it can just be really overwhelming
The first week I forgot I was even in classes
I was so worried about getting people's classes dropped and swapped and all that different stuff
I was like oh shit, I should read my syllabus
I like it now,
I really hated it at first
I was like nope this is not what I want to do.

Participant 5 opens her Post-Transition Interview by airing out her definite frustration with her working experience. As a graduate assistant, Participant 5 believed that her tuition would be included in her assistantship but learned upon beginning the position that she is actually an hourly employee. With intentions to speak with her supervisor about a consideration

for more financial assistance, Participant 5 vents that “I’m not doing what I quote unquote signed up for.” Her frustration is worsened by the fact that she is not enjoying her master’s program. Participant 5 validates her frustration with the assertion that for the career path she intends to pursue, she is learning more through her work experience than she is in the classroom. Aggravating the situation is the imbalanced ratio of Participant 5’s preparation to responsibility: in not receiving any formal onboarding or training, Participant 5 has a significant caseload and feels she is being taken advantage of by a veteran colleague. In transitioning into her role as a graduate assistant and student, Participant 5’s experience has been infuriating and overwhelming. As she navigates the newness of her roles and familiarizes herself with the rules, norms, and boundaries, she is realizing some misunderstandings that are making this experience more difficult than she expected (Schlossberg, 1989; Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). While she tries to negate her annoyance with statements like, “I really like it but…”, “I’m learning a lot…”, and “I really like where I’m at…”, it is apparent that Participant 5 is unsatisfied with her new roles thus far. Despite these contrapuntal voices, the annoyance in her voice throughout this excerpt is palpable and paints a vivid picture of her internal conflict (Gilligan et al., 2006). Participant 5 was asked, then, if she has considered any alternate plans:

I'd like to finish out the year
I feel like I owe it that much
I really do like it there,
But I'm not getting.....
I just feel very undervalued
The hardest part is that I'm not loving my program
Not that I have to be in love with it,
But I just don't...
I thought about switching to an MBA.

For Participant 5, the most disappointing factor of her entire situation is her discontentment with her graduate program. In considering alternative strategies to mitigate this tension, Participant 5 feels obliged to finish the academic year. Participant 5 struggles to find an

adequate way to describe the dissonance she feels in her situation, indicate by her elongated pauses and waning into silences (Gilligan et al., 2006). After a long silence, Participant 5 likens to tension to perceptions of being undervalued. Consistent with her feelings of frustration and exhaustion from being overworked, Participant 5 finds herself in a space that subtly mimics her first three years of her collegiate softball career. Despite the long hours she contributes and the difficult assignments she accepts, Participant 5's voice in these passages resembles the same exasperation she expressed in the Pre-Transition Interview (Gilligan et al., 2006).

Supporting academically at-risk students is a challenge in and of itself. For Participant 5, however, her challenge is intensified as she is also consistently met with crude and sexual comments from students:

I get dirty comments all the time, like sexual comments
Things that they don't know that I've heard. They are just like disgusting
As I'm leaving, I heard [student] turn to the other student and say
"I've only been in here for 2 minutes and this bitch is already leaving"
I popped my head back around the corner and I was like
"I'm going to be gone for 15 minutes,
If you're going to be upset about that you can go get help from someone else,
You're not even my student."
I was talking to my supervisor about some student,
He was like can I talk to you for a little bit?
So I shut the door, and he was like "I have noticed that these guys pick on you a lot"
"I think you're handling everything really well, it's just a really bad class."
It's just not part of my personality to be very stern with people
I was talking to [coworker] about how I just need to develop my work personality
I act appropriately
I'm like no, you know that's against the rules
I just keep repeating that to them over and over again
[coworker] came in the other day and said, you're so pretty
They want to talk to you all the time
And she was like I hate saying that that's the problem, but that's the problem
And it's just frustrating that that would ever be an issue
I've realized that I can't care more than they care, and that's just been really hard
I was telling my mom, we have this conversation every day
I could just very easily get wrecked in this industry
I care so much about this one person [who] really probably doesn't care
I just need to be careful because I could be destroyed

There's just a lot of stuff that happens that I never knew happened.

Participant 5 continues to vent her frustration in her working experience in sharing instances of student athletes saying obscene comments about her. Detailing one specific example of a student athlete making a foul-mouthed comment about her, she addressed the individually immediately. She explains that her supervisor has noticed multiple instances of such behavior, as he tries to attribute the inappropriate behavior of this particular group of students as “just a really bad class.” When a co-worker explains to her “You’re just so pretty, They want to talk to you all the time” Participant 5 is infuriated and perplexed as to why “that would ever be an issue.” Through these maddening experiences, Participant 5 is trying to recognize the silver lining; this is her opportunity to advocate for herself and develop firm professional boundaries with her students. She also confesses that because she lacks a stern personality, she is vulnerable to struggle and conflict in this career path. Throughout this excerpt, Participant 5’s voice is once again agitated. The absence of pauses or silences here signifies that Participant 5 has no trouble describing these experiences and the feelings she has associated with them. Despite her evident anger, Participant 5 is also contemplative about how she must adapt if she wants to stay in this field: “I could just very easily get wrecked in this industry,” and “I just need to be careful because I could get destroyed” illustrate not only her perceived susceptibility, but also the reality that this particular profession can be callous and unrelenting (Gilligan et al., 2006).

In the first few minutes of the Post-Transition Interview, it is evident that Participant 5 is frustrated with where she finds herself six months post-graduation. Curious about the positive aspects of her transition, Participant 5 was asked what she has enjoyed the most about no longer being a student athlete:

I just like making my own schedule
Doing things when I want to do them, instead of…

I don't know, I say that
But I also kind of like when things are scheduled too, because there's always a time for it
I just like having the freedom to be more independent
I'm also away from my family so I feel more independent
I felt like I was pretty independent in college anyway,
But I just feel way more independent now
I just do my own thing and I feel really responsible and all that stuff
I think I like that part the most probably.

Like many retired student athletes, Participant 5 enjoys the freedom to generally decide what her schedule will consist of. With a sure sense of relief, Participant 5 feels that her ability to make her own choices is helping her grow her independence. Momentarily, she does admit that she did appreciate having things scheduled for her as a student athlete. For many student athletes, it is a relief to know that someone else has scheduled important tasks and appointments into your calendar on your behalf. However, Participant 5 is developing a strong feeling of self-reliance and accountability that certainly outweighs the convenience of someone else creating her schedule. In this way, there is relief and freedom in her transition out of sport (Coakley, 1983). Participant 5 also mentions that the physical distance from her family has helped her become more self-reliant as well. While still her primary system of support, Participant 5 anticipated this component of her transition and was ready to embrace the distance (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011; Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004).

One component of her student athlete schedule that she does yearn for is regularly scheduled work outs. In the Pre-Transition Interview, Participant 5 expressed great anxiety about potential changes to her body composition. With her hectic schedule, Participant 5 affirms that this has been a more difficult piece of her transition:

I miss scheduled workouts honestly
It's hard to fit in that time because I'm exhausted
I'm not waking up at 5 in the morning to do this
If I do go, I really try hard to go straight to the rec after [work]
I hate not having a facility to work out in, it's so aggravating

But it's just part of being a normal student.

In working over 45 hours a week on top of being a new graduate student, Participant 5 confesses that it is difficult to find the energy to make it to the gym regularly. Unable to work out during normal working hours and unwilling to work out before heading into the office, Participant 5 is left to get her exercise in at the end of a long workday. This imbalance, then, is potentially causing deceased self-confidence and is likely contributing to the difficulty Participant 5 is experiencing in her transition (Barnes, 2002; Fuller 2014). In addition to these perceived time barriers, Participant 5 also brings to light an interesting element: not only is she aggravated about working out in the campus recreation center, she seems perturbed that this is part of being "a normal student." To this extent, her sense of athlete identity exclusivity has been directly defied. In no longer having access to a training facility designated specifically for student athletes, the privilege that Participant 5 was adapted to in being a student athlete has been disrupted upon her transition into retirement (Benson et al., 2015; Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004). Despite putting more intentional efforts into exercising, Participant 5 echoes her concerns from the Pre-Transition Interview about changes to her body composition and gaining weight:

I feel like I work out more now than I did during softball,
But I'm not doing the same workouts
I'm not even on the same schedule
I sit in an office all day
I don't get my steps in
But I would if I was walking to class or walking to practice
I'm just not used to that
I work out more, but it's only an hour a day instead of moving constantly throughout the day
I have to be really careful about what I eat
I just gain weight really easily, so that's just been frustrating
I really wish I had my muscles
So, I'd say it's been okay
I feel like I am motivated to work out, but the rec is hard
I can't do my normal lifting that I used to do in college.

As Participant 5 continues to adjust to her new daily regimen, she finds it difficult to be consistently active throughout the day like she was as a student athlete. Constantly worrying about gaining weight, it seems that Participant 5 is resting her confidence on an unstable foundation: she clearly hopes to preserve her body composition, but because she is simply unable to maintain the level of training that she did as an athlete it is irrational to expect to maintain the same body composition (Barnes, 2002; Gilligan et al., 2006). This adaptation to this new lifestyle, then, is evidence of Participant 5's transition from student athlete into a "normal student," an identity she seems reluctant to adapt (Marcia, 1989; Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011).

Sports are a widely accepted vehicle for developing social integration and establishing friendships (Marcia, 1989; Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011). Having undoubtedly formed very tight bonds with her teammates, Participant 5 longs for camaraderie in her transition:

I just miss being around my teammates all the time
I'm really, not struggling making friends,
But I just don't have a ton of time.
And it's hard to go out in [college town]
Regardless of where you go, you're going to see someone [student athletes]
I just really try to be smart about when I see them and how I see them
My work friends are my friends, then my roommate is my best friend
I just do whatever she's doing all the time
And she did her undergrad there, so when her friends come up
I just go and do stuff with them
But it's just hard to meet people at this stage I feel like
Especially just not being around people that you enjoy seeing every day,
A lot of the people I work with, like the athletes are people that
I would be friends with if I wasn't in the position I'm in
I really can't talk to you outside of this
It makes me feel like I'm missing out on it
That's been the hardest part.

Having established deep relationships with her teammates as they collectively pursued a common goal, Participant 5 yearns for a similar sense of belonging as she navigates opportunities to make new friends (Hinitz, 1988; Fuller, 2014). While she considers her colleagues her friends and had been adopted into her roommate's social group, Participant 5 expresses the difficulty in making friends in this life stage. Further, Participant 5 explains that she is conflicted in who she befriends, as the student athletes she works with are those who she would typically become friends with. Because of professional boundaries as well as her retirement out of her student athlete identity, Participant 5 expresses sentiment of being in a social out-group, no longer belonging in student athlete social circles (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Jenkins, 2008). Participant 5 illustrates the tension: "I really can't talk to you outside of this; It makes me feel like I'm missing out." In holding herself accountable to her professional boundaries, Participant 5 admits that she feels excluded from potential social connections that she would otherwise have built if she was still a student athlete (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Jenkins, 2008; Fuller, 2014). Participant 5 likens this phase of social reestablishment to a similar experience she had when she began college:

I'm like a freshman again
I feel lonely
But also, I'm not sad or anything
I wish I had something that I could do on Saturday night,
Like go out with a certain group of friends
My work friends are great but they're all like 30 plus,
I guess I can get along with them and that's fine
But I'm at the stage where I want to go have fun, go to a bar that I can dance in
It's just not... You just have to be careful. You always do.

In constructing her understanding not only of her new self but also where this new self belongs socially, Participant 5 essentially describes a social dichotomy: she is in one place, and everyone around her is in another. She reflects on her solitude, concluding that "I'm like a freshman again; I feel lonely." Drawing on her prior experience as a freshman in college,

Participant 5 acknowledges the separateness she feels in not having her social self established in this new place (Gilligan et al., 2006; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Jenkins, 2008). As she is establishing her new social identity, she is particularly keen on the differences in interests between herself and her older colleagues; in articulating these differences, then, Participant 5 is acknowledging that she does not belong in this particular social circle, nor does she belong in the student athlete circles to which she is accustomed (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Jenkins, 2008; Fuller, 2014).

Participant 5 continues to ruminate on the joys of her student athlete experience. In her role as an academic advisor, Participant 5 also serves her students in many ways as a sounding board for anything they might care to share with her. In the grind of the semester, her tired students have been particularly testy lately, complaining about their morning lifts and long traveling weekends. Much to her surprise, Participant 5 craves that feeling:

But I also just miss,
Like the athletes will come in and complain about how tired they are
I'm like I miss that,
I miss being competitive about something, getting the gear
There are just things you don't realize until you don't have it anymore
You're like oh I really miss that.

In no longer having a competitive outlet or receiving the latest team-issued athletic apparel, Participant 5 confesses that she misses these pieces of her student athlete experience. Similar to the struggle she described about her workout regimen, Participant 5 longs for a competitive atmosphere. Many student athletes will take up recreational sport leagues upon their retirement. However, Participant 5 may not have the time to join a recreation team, and therefore does not currently have an outlet for her innate competitiveness (Barnes, 2002). In subtle ways, this revelation shows that the exclusivity of her athlete identity is still meaningful to Participant 5; in receiving apparel that no one else on campus had access to, there is certainly a degree of

distinction among athletes on a college campus (Benson et al., 2015). In no longer being issued the athletic apparel, Participant 5 is again reminded of her retirement and seclusion from the student athlete in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Jenkins, 2008; Fuller, 2014). However, Participant 5 does explain that while she is no longer an active student athlete, she is still recognized as one:

I feel like I relate to all of them
They all somehow gained so much more respect for me
When they found out that I played softball at [institution]
They are like okay she gets it
My roommate did not play a sport, so I think she struggles with that sometimes
I feel like I can have great conversations with some of the guys
I know what it's like to not play
I know what it's like to be tired all the time
I feel like it's really helped me
I don't think I identify as that [student athlete] anymore, which is good
But I also take a lot of pride in it, being like yeah I did that
I understand how you feel because I lived that.

In being recognized as a former student athlete, Participant 5 perceives that she garnered more respect from the student athletes she works with. As a veteran athlete, Participant 5 can commiserate with them in their hardships and celebrate in their victories. In bringing to light the fact that her roommate struggles to relate to the student athletes because she did not compete in a sport in college exemplifies the exclusivity of the student athlete experience that few personally understand (Benson et al., 2015). While Participant 5 states that she does not feel she still identifies as a student athlete, it is curious whether her athlete identity is preserved through her work with current student athletes. Her ability to relate to her students through a shared experience aligns her athlete identity with theirs; in this way, she remains in the student athlete in-group and, thus, may indeed be maintaining her athlete identity despite her retirement (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Jenkins, 2008; Fuller, 2014).

While it is suggested that anticipation of the end of one's athletic career yields a more positive emotional response to the retirement process (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004), Participant 5 is concerned for the emotional response she expects to have when she watches her former teammates compete:

I think it's going to hit me more when I go and watch them play
I feel like I've retired because I'm just not a part of it anymore
I feel like,
I don't know
I hope they don't look at me and say she isn't in the athlete
It's so aggravating because I want to feel athletic still,
And that bothers me that I don't sometimes.

Similar to the emerging themes from the Pre-Transition Interview, Participant 5 is conscientious of others' opinions of her. Specifically, she seems to be seeking affirmation that she is still athletic, thus validating her belonging to the athlete in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Jenkins, 2008). An interesting reflection here, though, is that she is comparing her current state of athleticism to that which she maintained as a competing Division I student athlete. In this way she certainly holding onto her athlete identity, which is threatened by her career retirement (Benson et al., 2015). It is curious, then, what Participant 5 implies when she says "I want to feel athletic still":

I don't know
I just felt like I was a beast when I was an athlete
I felt bad ass all the time
And now I'm like I have to find other ways to feel badass
I have to make work the grind, instead of the physical grind
I'm realizing there are different ways to be badass and grind it out
So that's where I'm using my athletic side,
But no one looks at me anymore and thinks I'm cool or anything like that
But sometimes I have to just say to my mom, you know
I'm bad ass at my job,
I'm killing it at this job
Realizing that I don't have to be a coach to feel the grind of athletics
That's something that's new.

For Participant 5, feeling athletic and “badass” are synonymous. Throughout this excerpt, she depicts the “grind”, or the enduring and toiling in any of her given roles. In no longer having an environment in which she can physically exert herself, or grind, she now turns to her vocational environment for the same gratification (Barnes, 2002). Validating her newfound badassery to her mother, Participant 5 acknowledges and accepts that although she is no longer a student athlete, there are still ways in which she can feel affirmed in the efforts and passion she puts into her work. In stating, “I’m a bad ass at my job” and “I’m killing it at my job,” Participant 5 channels her competitive spirit from the field to the office (Barnes, 2002, Gilligan et al., 2006).

In many ways, Participant 5 likens being “bad ass” to her value or self-worth. As such, longing for this feeling is the most difficult part of transitioning out of being a student athlete for Participant 5:

I think I'm moving through it but almost out of it, like towards the end
I think I've adapted to it a lot better than some of my old teammates
I feel like I'm accepting of where I'm at
I think it's more of the not being a part of the team, the physical aspect
Just the way I look, like not being is toned as I used to be
Or being able to eat whatever I want, or just doing stuff all the time,
[That] has just been really weird for me
I don't know… yeah just feeling bad ass in whatever I'm doing.

Participant 5 believes that she has grown accustomed to the norms of her new identities as a graduate student and a graduate assistant academic advisor and is, therefore, moving through her transition out of her student athlete self. Moreover, she suggests that she feels she could be nearing the end of her transition, denoted by a sense of finality and accepting that she is no longer a student athlete (Schlossberg, 1989; Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006; Brewer, 1999; Benson et al., 2015). Echoing the sentiment she has expressed throughout the interview, she most misses her athletic physique. Reluctant to accept the changes in her body composition,

Participant 5 again aligns this longing with “feeling bad ass in whatever I’m doing.” Be it exclusivity, athletic identity salience, or wanting to be in peak physical condition, the most difficult component of her transition has evidently been those components relating to her physical appearance (Benson et al., 2015; Brewer, 1999; Barnes, 2002).

Prior to the Post-Transition Interview, Participant 5 has intentions of working her way up the administrative ladder in college athletics. Now, however, working with student athletes in an academic support staff role seems to have given her a change of heart:

I realized too, like I always thought I wanted to do Sports admin, like SWA
But I don't want to do that anymore, I don't
I was like I'm going to make a difference
And I'm realizing now that making a difference the way I want to,
Is by interacting with them every day,
And I can do that in this position
If I coach,
I'm honestly more interested in being an assistant coach
No one goes to talk to the head coach
I just would rather have a conversation with an athlete every single day,
Have an office filled with people
And I'm learning to accept that I might not make as much money,
Or my title might not be as strong
I might not feel as bad ass as an SWA might,
But that doesn't mean that what I'm doing isn’t important
[I’m] just learning a lot about what I want to do
So I'm learning to be okay with that being my role
When I first got here
I was like I don't know if this is what I want to do at all
And now I'm starting to become a lot more passionate about it
So we'll see
I'm learning a ton,
But I'm trying to find where I might land, I guess
Do I want to stay here?
Or where am I willing to move?
That stuff is kind of freaking me out too
Where are you willing to go for this job?
Or are you willing to go?
Stuff that I didn't really have to think about before, so it's definitely eye-opening
I appreciate being close to home
I love to stay in the Midwest close to my family
I don't know how far…

I say I'm willing
But I don't know how willing I really am
And I want to stay Division 1, obviously
It's just better to stay like that.

In just the few short months she has been in her role as a graduate assistant in student athlete academic support, Participant 5 has had her eyes opened to the gratification that can come in working on a support staff for students. As mentioned earlier in the interview, it has been a tumultuous transition for Participant 5; however, it seems that while the lows are low, the highs have been high enough for her to consider a career in this path of college athletics. In this way, Participant 5 has branched out and now desires to be in any working capacity that will allow her to have daily interaction with student athletes (Fuller, 2014). Further, in modifying her vocational aspirations, Participant 5 is also shifting her perceptions of her professional identity (Erikson, 1968; Marcia 1989). It is clear throughout the excerpt that Participant 5 feels excited about this new trajectory. Further, there are multiple instances in which she seems to validate her decision: “And I'm learning to accept that I might not make as much money; Or my title might not be as strong; I might not feel as bad ass as an SWA might; But that doesn't mean that what I'm doing isn’t important.” In this instance, Participant 5 brings to light the consideration she has given to this change in direction. Though her compensation and title might not be as exclusive as that of a Senior Woman Administrator, Participant 5 believes that the support she would provide students is just as, if not more, important. In this way, she fully accepts this new possibility (Gilligan et al., 2006). As she continues dreaming about her future career, Participant 5 also opens her self-dialogue as she considers where she might be willing to take a position. As was eluded to throughout the interview, Participant 5 is very close with her family; therefore, she desires to remain close to her primary support system (Schlossberg, 1989; Goodman,

Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). Close with both of her parents, Participant 5 explains the dichotomy of this unit:

I've always known I was like him [dad]
but literally I am just like him when it comes to just like caring about people
I'm just so much like him
She [mom] just stresses so much
I didn't talk to her about school at all for like the first two months
I think one day I told her I didn't really like my master's program and she flipped out
She was like what are you doing there, why are you wasting all this money
I was like Mom, I'm going to hang up the phone now because you're really hurting my feelings
I was calling you to get advice about something
I think she realized there, like it's just different now
I'm learning
I have to remind her that I've never done this before,
I'm learning and I'm like a freshman again
So it's just been a learning curve
But my dad, like when I say something he totally gets what I'm talking about
I just see myself reacting in the same way that he would, just caring so much.

Participant 5's parents are undoubtedly her main support system. In providing affection, affirmation, and aid, Participant 5 has relied on her parents to guide her through her transition out of her college career and into her graduate life. It is interesting that Participant 5 highlights the differences in her parents' responses when she leans on them; her mother offers reactive, tough love while her father aligns much more with her personality and disposition. Regardless, her parents have helped ease Participant 5's transition out of her student athlete identity (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011).

In the concluding moments of the interview, Participant 5 reflects on the ways that she currently identifies. With so much novelty all around her, Participant 5 identifies herself in the transient season in which she finds herself:

I'm like a floater right now, honestly
I'm just…
I feel like I'm just in between so many different stages and progressions
But calling myself a freshman has been the biggest eye-opening thing
I'm like it's okay that I don't have it all together right now

Freshman year, I didn't have it together, for like the whole year,
It's okay that I don't know what I'm doing
I feel lonely sometimes there
I just don't have my routine yet
I have a routine but not completely
I'm still trying to find my adult self, I think is the biggest issue
Sometimes I'm like I'm not ready…
I'm 23 and I feel like I'm so much older than that
It's just finding the right balance I guess
So I'm definitely a floater, that's the best word to describe what I think

In calling herself a floater, Participant 5 is acknowledging the fluidity of her surroundings. Identifying once again as a freshman, she seems to encourage herself; in developing this new sense of self, it is completely permissible to not have every detail and step figured out. Reminiscent of the same realization she had four years ago, Participant 5 rests knowing that it simply takes time and self-reflection to develop a new identity (Gilligan et al., 2006; Erikson, 1968; Marcia 1989). Because Participant 5 is still moving through her student athlete identity transition, she is working to establish her new routine, social circle, and selfhood as she continues to float into her next transition (Schlossberg, 1989; Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Jenkins, 2008; Erikon, 1968; Marcia, 1989).

Participant 6

Pre-Transition Interview

At the time Participant 6's Pre-Transition Interview took place, she had concluded her senior season of basketball. Having just fulfilled her internship hours, Participant 6 has been focused solely on completing her degree requirements so she can graduate. In the few weeks that remain of her undergraduate experience, Participant 6 has been offered a one-year position in her institution's athletic department. However, she is considering another opportunity as a director of basketball operations elsewhere:

A little stressful at the end but hours are done for the internship
I just have our final meeting and then I graduate
Weird, weird
If I didn't...
So I actually got the [internal athletic department] job
So if I wasn't working there,
I'd probably be a little more scared, like oh my God
I'm going to be doing new things
But this is something I already know
I'm supposed to sign an agreement soon
I just applied for a DOBO position at [institution],
And that would take over [internal athletic department] if I do get it
They want me to try to do Graphics stuff
For Boys and Girls club I make flyers on InDesign
I'm not a master at Photoshop, and that's something they want me to do
I can figure out travel plans, food, stuff like that
I figured I'd be kind of good at that.

As the semester winds down. Participant 6 has completed her internship hours and is finishing her remaining obligations before graduation. Having been offered an internal, one-year position in her current athletic department, Participant 6 expresses a sense of relief in knowing that she has at least one professional option on the table. In her relief, Participant 6 subtly depicts a hesitancy to engage in something unfamiliar: "if I wasn't working there; I'd probably be a little

more scared, like oh my God; I'm going to be doing new things; But this is something I already know." In these statements, Participant 6 conveys a discreet angst in pursuing the unknown. There is certainly relief in her voice in knowing that she has the option to remain in her comfort zone (Gilligan et al., 2006). Interestingly, though, she also explains the director of basketball operations position she just applied for at another institution. Considering her experience as a basketball student athlete, Participant 6 feels she has attributes that could bode well in fulfilling the requirements of this position. The irony, though, is that this institution would be a fresh start for her, and thus her processing seems contradictory (Gilligan et al., 2006). Participant 6 was asked, then, if she felt her opportunity to be employed at her alma mater was appealing because it gave her a sense of security:

It would just be more comfortable
I can always go home still, just like I do now
I know what to expect
I know what people are going to say, what they think
I mean I haven't left [state] in 22 years
So, wherever I go next if it is outside of [state], it will be difficult
I just don't want to leave [state]
I'd rather stay here...
But we'll see.

In her desire to stay in her home state, Participant 6 is seemingly adamant to remain in her comfort zone. In the imminent transition out of her college career, then, Participant 6 is validating her reasons to stay. By acknowledging multiple reasons as to why it is advantageous for her to pursue the in-house position, it is evident that Participant 6 is hesitant, even anxious, to consider change. Perhaps, then, Participant 6 is seeking to control or even avoid components her transition out of her student athlete identity; in securing her external environment and ensuring that her support systems are nearby and intact, Participant 6 is better able to predict what life may look like as she enters a new chapter. Further, this excerpt suggests that Participant 6 does

not seek to consider alternatives and abandons them altogether (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011).

The conclusion of one's athletic career is often difficult to endure; when goals are left unmet, it can become even more difficult to accept. In hoping for a different outcome, Participant 6 was disappointed in the fact that her team did not make post-season play once again. Nonetheless, she was still able to meet many of the goals she set out to personally accomplish in the season:

We didn't make the tournament again, so that's okay
I hit my personal goals
I got quite a bit of them
But then the team ones obviously didn't go our way, but that's okay
My face will still be up in [basketball arena]
So, I'm happy about that
Towards the end,
I needed maybe 20 more minutes to have the most minutes ever played
I did
I did
I had like three more steals and two more assists to get 200
and I did
My dad was like I don't want to pressure you, but you're pretty darn close
I really wanted to get that
Like at the beginning of the year, it's like okay
I want to make it to the tournament
but towards the end it was like
Okay we're definitely not going to make the tournament
I need to switch my goals a little bit
Just so I have something to look forward to,
Keep going...

Participant 6 began the season with collective, team-oriented goals including to make post-season competition. However, as the season played out, Participant 6 had to adjust her team-goals to personal goals. In reassessing the trajectory of her team's success, Participant 6 modified her performance objectives "Just so I have something to look forward to." While

Participant 6's voice is proud as she refers to her achievements, she expresses disappointment in her team's outcome. Interestingly, she still includes herself in her collective use of team, indicating that she still perceives herself to be a member of that in-group (Gilligan et al., 2006; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008). While the team did not experience the collective achievement it had hoped, Participant 6 can delight in the achievements she made throughout her playing career. Specifically, Participant 6 basks in the recognition she receives for being remembered as one of the best players in her program's history:

[It feels] amazing. Because even though our record wasn't great,
I can say that I will be one of the few [mascot] really remembered
Towards the end…
I wasn't really thinking about it freshman year
I was just thinking I need to get by
But now that it's senior year,
I was like yeah actually
I really did this all
It was nice at the end, people knowing all the hard work that I put in.

Many student athletes seem to be either athletically or academically driven. Undoubtedly motivated by athletic recognition, Participant 6 also shares a similar mindset toward her academic achievements. Having met her athletic goals, Participant 6 is pleased to have found similar success in the classroom:

I need to graduate
I better do something
I just wanted a good GPA
And first team All-[conference] academics
I wanted it to be three years since I couldn't get it a fourth
I just want to be first team three years in a row
And I did it, woo! Yeah that was a big thing.

As her senior year draws to a close, it seems that Participant 6 was able to achieve nearly every goal she had hoped for. Throughout these excerpts, Participant 6 is elated in her triumphs.

Her voice is confident and cheerful, and it is clear that she is proud of herself (Gilligan et al., 2006). In a special commemorative event for all senior student athletes, Participant 6 reflects on the night, including her selection to give a congratulatory speech on behalf of her fellow seniors:

It was so fun
I was freaking nervous because I had to give that speech
I can probably give it to you now still
I practiced it so much
It was a lot of fun
The ring was great
I like hanging out with [fellow seniors]
I could tell my parents were super proud
I liked it
I was just telling my parents,
I was more nervous
I was just reading my speech like a thousand times on my phone
I was more concerned about that than sitting and talking with people
I hope everyone realizes how important it is
I'm not much of a ring wearer
But any interview I go on,
I will wear it.

Participant 6 relishes the night of celebration with her classmates, capped with the reception of their senior rings. Hoping her peers recognize its symbolism, it seems that Participant 6 deeply values the exclusivity of the ring. A relic that only the student athletes at her institution are gifted, these rings represent a camaraderie and shared story amongst the student athletes. As such, it symbolizes student athlete exclusivity (Benson et al., 2015; Fuller, 2014). This celebration, then, emphasizes the unique experience shared by student athletes, symbolized by their senior rings. It is curious, then, where Participant 6's identity salience lies as she approaches graduation:

I mean right now definitely more student-athlete
Making sure I have everything done to graduate
..... Maybe towards....
Like the end of the year...
It was maybe more athlete

What am I going to do for my internships that are going to take my mind off of basketball?
It was more athlete there
There were no workouts that I needed to attend
There are no obligations within the sport anymore
So the athlete is kind of fading away
And I'm just a student
An alumni athlete.

At the time this interview occurred, Participant 6 was focusing most of her time and energy on completing any academic requirements necessary for her to graduate. However, she notes that at the end of her basketball season, her identity saliences aligned more with her athlete self. Immediately upon the completion of the season, though, she was primarily looking to her internships to take her mind off of basketball. With no more athletic obligations, Participant 6 explains that “the athlete is kind of fading away; And I’m just a student; An alumni student.” This paints a fascinating picture for how Participant 6 sees herself as both a student and an athlete. When Participant 6’s season was drawing to a close, her athlete identity was threatened, and therefore she sought to protect and preserve it. Because the more stable identity, student, was not in threat of termination, it was cast aside. As athletic obligations have subsided, Participant 6 now aligns with the identity in which she is most active, which is student (Gilligan et al., 2006; Benson et al., 2015).

In transitioning out of the daily routine she retained as an athlete, Participant 6 expresses her longing for the physical outlet that her lifting workouts and practices once provided:

I'm kind of bummed I don't get to do workouts and stuff anymore
I'm fine not doing conditioning
But doing something every day that kept me in shape is what I'm going to miss
But giving up basketball,
I think it was easier than I thought
The internships kept me really busy
I had no time to think about it
So, it hasn't been bad
I think once I get like a month off or actually a summer, it'll be like... dang.

At this point, Participant 6 has initiated her transition out of her athlete routine and, in some ways, out of her athlete identity. She reiterates how busy her internship obligations have kept her, which seemed to ameliorate and even delay the processing of her identity transition. Participant 6 anticipates, however, that when she is further removed from the ending of her season and no longer has other responsibilities to serve as a distraction, she may be forced to endure the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral adaptation to transition (Alfermann, Stambuloya, & Zemaityte, 2004). In anticipating the transition, then, Participant 6 continues her thoughts on maintaining her athletic routine after graduation:

I mean after Athletics ends,
I'm trying not to be a bum and not workout,
But that's kind of hard
[It's] so hard to motivate yourself to go workout
I am [working out] at the rec
Pilates, oh my gosh they kicked my butt
So that kind of stuff is what I'm doing
It's nothing that's related to basketball which is weird, but...
I'm trying to keep the same eating habits but, still working out
I always think I can do more, but like...
I never really know how many calories are burned during practice
Compared to what I'm doing now
So, I don't know if what I'm doing is enough
I talked to [former strength coach] for a little bit
I will start things, not weightlifting and more cardio stuff
I mean I don't want to lose all my muscle...
But....
I have a love-hate relationship with that
I mean it's not bad
I can always do more
Once I get into my position wherever that's going to be,
Then I will have a better idea of how much I can do
If I could practice with the team at [institution], that would be pretty cool
I know people here play noon ball
I'll be excited to do that
When's there's a stable schedule, I'll feel a little better
I'll be able to know how much I can actually do

Rather than I just have 30 minutes to do a real quick [one]
I want to say in the best shape, because I was in the best shape about a month ago
But… I go to the rec specifically to compete with someone
To look at them be like aw dang I saw them the other day
I got to do something else now
Something stupid like that because I'm a dork...

It is evident that Participant 6 is quite concerned about maintaining her physical fitness in the wake of her transition. While she seems highly motivated to continue working out at the elite level she is accustomed to, she also admits that she finds it difficult when she is not obligated to work out. Participant 6 seems muddled in trying to comprehend if she is exerting herself enough in her workouts. Further, she seems to seek affirmation throughout the excerpt that she is doing enough; her voice is restless as she is unsatisfied with where she finds herself but is unsure of how to proceed from here (Gilligan et al., 2006). It also seems that perhaps Participant 6 is endorsing unrealistic fitness goals in wanting to maintain the level of fitness she upheld at the pinnacle of her Division I competitive career. In this way, Participant 6 is anticipating a change in her body composition that will alter her physical appearance and, thus, self-confidence (Barnes, 2002; Fuller, 2014). Participant 6 suggests that when she is in a more stable routine professionally, she will feel better about her workout regimen. Interestingly, she mentions that either position will entail an opportunity to continue playing basketball, either as a practice player or with colleagues at noon ball. It seems, then, that Participant 6 is hoping to find a competitive basketball outlet and, thus, preserve her athlete identity in the threat of identity termination (Barnes, 2002; Benson et al., 2015). Further, it seems that the opportunity to continue playing basketball is a criterion that Participant 6 considers in looking at her job opportunities. This indicates, then, that Participant 6 is exhibiting a degree of athlete identity foreclosure, in which she is committed to maintaining pieces of her athlete identity and neglects

to consider occupational alternatives that do not include the option to continue playing basketball in some capacity (Brewer & Petitpas, 2017).

Following her contemplation on physical fitness as she embraces her transition, Participant 6 also expresses her thought process on eating and cooking. While she is not quite as worried about her cooking skills, she is more concerned about buying groceries and budgeting:

Not right now [cook on own]
I have [campus dining hall]
I'm like I'll just save my money, please
If you give me a recipe, I'll be fine
So, it's just having to buy all those groceries on a low budget
That's the part I'm a little concerned about
But I will not settle for McDonald's
I don't think I've eaten there in like 6 years
I hate McDonald's
But I've tried not to snack as much
I think it's getting better... But it's still so difficult!
I know there is that transition eating meeting thing tonight
Hopefully I learn a lot
I probably will [go], but hopefully that will tell me what I need to do.

Because she does not currently buy her own groceries or cook, Participant 6 is not familiar with purchasing and preparing food on her own. She seems to believe that this will be a financial burden for her, but refuses to settle for cheap, fast-food convenience like McDonald's. Participant 6 is working to break poor snacking habits and is embracing opportunities provided by the athletic department to educate herself on this component of her transition out of college athletics. Her statement, "but hopefully that will tell me what I need to do" indicates that Participant 6 is not confident in her current capacity to convert from having all meals provided as a student athlete to being self-sufficient to feed herself (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011). Specifically, she may not necessarily be excited to learn, but is instead eager to be told what to do. In this way, she indicates angst and doubt (Gilligan et al., 2006). Participant 6

continues to convey her some anxiety about her finances and budgeting as she transitions out of her student athlete experience:

I did a pretty good job in college (saving money)
I don't really go out to eat a lot
If I do, it's with people who usually pay for me
I have a lot of money from the stipends and stuff, but...
I don't know how to pay rent
I don't know how that process goes
Oh my gosh
I'm going to have to not take hour long hot showers anymore
And turn off lights when I leave
It's just going to be a different mindset, but it will click sooner rather than later
I'm not too nervous about it
I have enough clothes to last me for years and years.

Participant 6 feels that she was mindful of saving her monthly athletic aid stipends throughout college. In choosing not to dine out or spend her money extravagantly, Participant 6 believes she was fiscally responsible in that regard. As with most student athletes who live on campus, Participant 6 was fortunate to have her housing covered by her athletic scholarship. As such, she has not yet learned the process for paying monthly rent, her utility and internet bills, etc. She realizes, however, that some of her habits will need to change once she is financially responsible for these bills. Opposing her perception toward fitness and food, Participant 6 is optimistic about her ability to adapt this new mindset. This indicates, then, that she is confident in her personal attributes regarding this component of her transition (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011).

At the beginning of her senior year, Participant 6 had considered continuing her basketball career overseas upon graduating from college. In concluding her senior season, however, she has had a change of heart:

No...
I just...

I know myself
I know if I would have gone to like, Australia
I would have been like damn
I really miss my family
I probably wouldn't do that much down there,
Just be trying to find ways to come back here...
I mean I still play basketball with friends, they're still in college basketball
I scrimmage against them like twice a week maybe
But I just know...
I wanted to do something else.

While she once considered extending her basketball career and playing in a semi-professional league, Participant 6 is relieved to have declined the possibility. Because she is incredibly close with her family, Participant 6 felt she would not have been as engaged in her experience elsewhere but instead be looking for opportunities to come home. Her voice drifting into silences, Participant 6 is only able to utter that “I just know” as her reason for choosing to stay; this indicates that although she cannot find the language to express her reasoning, her yearning to stay close to home is deeply intertwined with her identity because she cannot see herself anywhere else (Gilligan et al., 2006). Participant 6 is incredibly close with her family, and as indicated previously, the thought of leaving her primary support system was inhibiting (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011). Further, Participant 6 validates her decision in expressing she still has opportunities to continue playing basketball. In this way, she continues to maintain her athlete identity (Brewer, 1999; Brewer & Pepitas, 2017). As previously mentioned, Participant 6 is also relieved to know she has at least one job opportunity before her. Still, she wants to keep an open mind about her next move, including the possibility of a graduate assistantship:

I kept in contact with coach
But it's just him asking me like what my plan was
I guess there's been some GA openings for other coaches
They've asked what I was doing

Maybe if I can't find something right away,
I'd go back and do something like that
As of right now I'm set on
I either have [internal position] or the DOBO thing
If I still can't find something, then I would probably consider going to grad school.

Though she has not solidified her decision, Participant 6 is optimistic about the first steps in her career after graduation. Interestingly, each of her options revolving around sport to some degree. To this extent, her professional preferences are correlated to her high athlete identity. Specifically, these choices maintain continuity with her athlete identity and allow her to remain in a familiar social structure (Cabrita et al., 2014). Curious about her career planning beyond the next year, Participant 6 was asked what her dream job might entail:

I like the idea of community outreach stuff
I like the marketing and the creativity
With community outreach I can do those things
If I could work at [MLB organization] for community outreach that would be awesome
I mean I have an idea,
But right now, I'm not...
Just because...
Just like please let me get a job and I'll just see where it goes from there
I don't really know a 5-year plan
But after maybe one year of working and not having everything paid for
I will start to figure it out.

Participant 6 has a general understanding of what an ideal job would look like for her. However, she also expresses that her current mentality is to simply land a job and see where it might take her. “I don’t really have a 5-year plan; I will start to figure it out” denotes that Participant 6 is still sifting through her interests and opportunities. In knowing where her professional interests lie, she is confident that given time and exposure she will begin to narrow in on a more specific path (Gilligan et al., 2006; Cabrita et al., 2014).

In the closing minutes of her Pre-Transition Interview, Participant 6 was asked what she hoped her personal legacy would be:

Probably more... Like obviously a hard worker, and personable to fans
I know a lot of fans enjoyed my company and talking to me
I like that idea
Like hard worker, dedication, passionate all around,
And just kind of the overall ideal student-athlete,
Like that's who I was
It's like a childhood dream
I've almost graduated
I played basketball here
I checked everything off...
It's just a dream come true...
I mean I really thought I had no chance being a [mascot],
Like D1 [athletic conference] holy crap
But now that I already did it, it's like oh my gosh
What happened, where did it go?
But now I get to work here and so that's even better, if I do.
I get paid to do SAAC
I get paid to hang out with the best people
I'm probably not going to like everyone that I work with,
Not everyone will probably have the same mentality and determination as I do
I have to learn patience little more...
Because right now that's my weakness...
I am excited though.

As Participant 6 reflects on her career as a student athlete, she is captivated by the fact that she lived out her childhood dream. Throughout this excerpt, Participant's voice is gratified and rejoicing. In giving herself entirely to her experience, Participant 6 hopes to be remembered for her unrelenting efforts and zeal. Enamored by the idea of being beloved by the fans, Participant 6 believes that she epitomizes the ideal student athlete (Gilligan et al., 2006). Very satisfied with her career as a student athlete, Participant 6 is optimistic about her future and the potential opportunity to continue serving her soon-to-be alma mater.

Post-Transition Interview

Six months after graduation, Participant 6 is employed in the athletic department of her alma mater as a program assistant. In interacting with student athletes every day, Participant 6 loves her job and coworkers. With the interview taking place right before Thanksgiving break, Participant 6 begins with her workout plans for the break

I know I'm not going to do anything that week
So I'm like maybe I should work out twice a day
Can I wake up in the morning?
I'm like well maybe once, I don't know
It'll be worth it when I can stuff my face on Thanksgiving.

Interestingly, Participant 6 immediately opens the interview with the topic of exercising. In the Pre-Transition Interview, this was a primary point of angst for Participant 6; she voiced numerous times throughout the conversation that she was reluctant to get out of shape and see her body change. It is implied, then, that because this is the first things she talks about, this is still very much a central concern to Participant 6. She continues with her travel plans for the holiday:

I'm going to Texas to see boyfriend's family
I'll be with them because I haven't met his whole family really
I've met his parents but not like the uncles and stuff
He’s like “I'm leaving soon, and you have to meet them before I pop the question”
I'm like okay that's probably true
He will be the one I marry, he will be
I probably won't see him until May
I might be able to [visit]
This is just worst-case scenario in my head.

In being in a long-term relationship with her boyfriend, Participant 6 is confident that he is the one she will marry someday. Her boyfriend will be moving to the northeast to begin his full-time career, so Participant 6 is spending as much time with him as she can before the move. As on of her main support systems, Participant 6’s boyfriend has helped her throughout her transition out of being a student athlete, including helping her learn to budget her income:

My boyfriend, he's a huge nerd
He made me this Excel file that has my paycheck and what I can spend on groceries,
What I can spend on miscellaneous whatever, so that's helped a lot
It would drive me crazy if I didn't know
I saved a lot when I was a student-athlete
I'm getting a second job, if I wanted it
But it would be another [source of] income to help me, makes me feel a little bit better
I don't go crazy like some other people I think probably do after school.

Voiced in the pervious interview, Participant 6 was nervous about learning how to budget and be mindful of her financial habits, particularly because her expenses were almost always paid for her. Though she feels she is better off than many of her fellow student athletes thanks to responsible choices, she is still learning how to manage her money. As such, Participant 6 is grateful that her boyfriend is helping her track her budgeting. In providing not only affection and affirmation, Participant 6's boyfriend is also providing aid via money, information, and time, thus serving as one of her primary support units (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011). Also wary of making wise nutritional choices, Participant 6 explains that there has also been a learning curve associated with her eating habits upon transitioning out of being a student athlete:

It varies day to day
I'm like crap, nope, got to eat better
Then other days I'm like no I'm okay
It goes... different days
But it hasn't been a huge anxiety point
But I often think about it
The Crock-Pot is my best friend
That's where I usually get most of my stuff.

Participant 6 explains the daily fluctuation she experiences regarding food. Interestingly, she states "But it hasn't been a huge anxiety point," followed immediately with, "But I think about it often." It would seem, then, that while it might not be causing noticeable anxiety, it is still certainly a major concern for Participant 6 if she is habitually cognizant of her dietary choices. With these contrapuntal expressions, then, it seems that this is indeed an incongruous

element of her transition (Gilligan et al., 2006). She then explains that despite the difficulty in learning how to manage food on her own, she is grateful to not be eating campus food again:

I don't want to eat that crap again
I don't want to eat fried chicken cheddar wrap things everyday
I don't want to do that
I don't want to eat the same,
But I want you to enough till I'm full,
But not overeating like I did
I was like my gosh this is free food,
I'm not going to let it go to waste
I'm going to eat it all
But now I'm like okay I can keep this for a week
I wish there was like a don't get fat diet
Or like is this what a normal adult exercise looks like, kind of thing
Yeah like is a run good enough?
Do I need this?
Am I going to get strong?
I don't know.

Participant 6 is adamant that she does not want to return to eating the way she did as a student athlete; the repetition of her “I don’t want” declarations at the beginning of this excerpt signify her unyielding refusal to continue her former dietary routine. Deeper than this, though, the passage reveals a profound consideration: anger toward her eating habits. The consideration of resource is also brought to light; when her food was sourced from something or someone else, Participant 6 felt obliged to not let it go to waste and therefore overate. As such, she has attributed poor eating habits to the meals associated with her student athlete experience. Participant 6 then drifts into pondering about a “don’t get fat diet” and deliberates with herself on whether her exercise routine is adequate. This is evidence, then, that Participant 6 is indeed more anxious about both her eating habits and her physical fitness than she perhaps realizes; these are the two components of her transition that she finds most difficult, as she reverts to them often throughout the interview (Gilligan et al., 2006). Her train of though continues as she merges the conversation back into her fitness regimen:

I like that [lifting] if I don't have noon ball
I prefer noon ball everyday
It's nice to get out of the office to do something else and then come back
I could do more if I really wanted to, but it gets boring on the freaking elliptical or treadmill
I'm not in the same shape as I was, which sucks
I get tired after noon ball which is only an hour
It's just making sure that I do work out as much as I would like to
I don't waste my days
Like [don't] go sit on the couch because I'm so tired today,
But actually doing something
It's a little transition from only 4 hours a day of practicing to staying at work for 8 hours a day
But the transition was easier than I thought it would be.

Like many retired student athletes, Participant 6 is resolute to engage in regular physical activity. In her working role, she has the option to either exercise in the student athlete facility over her lunch hour or play pick-up basketball with campus colleagues. In her preference for noon ball, it seems that Participant 6 has not only found a competitive outlet but has also found an environment in which her athletic identity can be preserved (Barnes, 2002; Brewer, 1999; Benson et al., 2015). Participant 6 explains that "the transition has been easier than I thought" in reference to her transition from being a student athlete to now being a young professional. It is interesting, then, that Participant 6 equates her transition to what she is spending her time doing; while she is no longer acting as a student athlete, it seems that she subconsciously continues to see herself through that lens. In this way, Participant 6 understands her transition not as one, all-encompassing event but rather as a various, unique transitions occurring over time:

I think they're a little separate [transitions]
I think I transition from being a basketball player to being a worker pretty fast
I think I'm still probably maintaining that, job-wise
Food-wise I'm still a little washy
Exercising, I usually do it every day, maybe not
But it's still not what I want it to be, from where it was
It kind of took a drop
I want to go back so it's creeping up a little bit.

For Participant 6, she has categorized her transition from being a student athlete into three categories: vocation, dietary, and physical fitness. While Participant 6 was disappointed with her team's performance at the end of her playing career, she was still satisfied with her personal athletic performance. As such, achieving her athletic goals seems to have led to an easier transition (Fuller, 2014). However, Participant 6 describes the dietary portion of her transition as "a little washy", reinforcing the notion of her uncertainty toward nutrition. Further, she reiterates that while she exercises nearly every day, her physical fitness is "still not what I want it to be, from where it was." In being accustomed to an elite level of fitness as a student athlete, this component of her transition has been the most difficult thus far (Barnes, 2002). Holistically, Participant 6 describes where she finds herself as she continues to grasp her student athlete transition:

I think I'm still transitioning...
I'm still trying to find out what transitioning looks like, in trying different things
When I meal prep, maybe that's not the healthier meal prep
I'm going to try something else
We're working out in the morning, is that what I want?
Or do I like going to classes?
So, I don't know what...
I don't know what, like, "me" on a regular basis will look like
Like, how will "me" be maintained?
Like, what I do every day because it usually changes
It's either not enough or I've done too much
I don't know
I think I'm still trying to transition
I think I got, like my job is down
I got that under control
I know what I'm doing
But the whole life health-wise, exercising wise, I don't know
That still I don't know.

Participant 6 describes her transition out of her student athlete experience not as an all-encompassing occurrence, but rather as a series of fragmented or compartmentalized events. She feels secure in her vocational identity: "I got that under control; I know what I'm doing."

Because she feels that she has adapted to the norms and expectations of this working role, Participant 6 is moving through this component of her transition (Schlossberg, 1989; Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). Conversely, Participant 6 explains that "the whole health-wise, exercise wise, I don't know; That I still don't know." As such, she is still moving into these pieces of her transition because she is still navigating the novelty of her new self as it relates to exercise and diet. In familiarizing herself with the expectations, rules and norms of these new systems, Participant 6 is refining her capabilities to proficiently adapt (Schlossberg, 1989; Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). This excerpt is a fascinating example of Participant 6's internal dialogue as she constructs meaning and understanding of her new multifaceted identity throughout her transition. In traversing this new identity territory, Participant 6 asks many self-reflecting questions as she refines her changing sense of self. Further, she expresses the tension of understanding herself in this transition: "I don't know what, like, 'me' on a regular basis will look like; Like, how will 'me' be maintained?" In developing this new identity, then, Participant 6 analyzes her orientation of where she finds herself now as well as the direction in which she sees herself moving (Gilligan et al., 2006). In essence, Participant 6 is asking herself "Who am I now, and who am I to become?" as she cultivates her identity (Erik Erikson's theory of identity development, n.d.).

As Participant 6 reminisces her student athlete experience, she paints a detailed picture of what she misses the most about it is like to watch her former team play without her:

When I go to the game[s] to watch,
I miss being relied on so heavily, like playing
Like you have to play the whole game,
Like you need to do something so we can win
So many fans come up and are like oh we miss you
You are so calm when you are out there
[Boss] relies on me a lot, I know that, but there's a different type of...
That feeling with basketball

It's weird, I didn't think I was going to feel that
I wish...
I love Coach and I probably love him more outside of basketball than when I was in
But he understood me, he knew what he was going to get out of me
I like that feeling
It's just like when I get in the game...
Just watching a game it's like I'm not there,
He doesn't need me even at the game anymore
It's just like, a complete switch rather than a smooth transition
"I don't rely on you as much"
It was "I really need you" to now "hey how's it going, see you later"
But when people ask me to do stuff, that's similar
They wouldn't ask me if they didn't know that I would do it well
I do like that part of it
But it's different sports wise
It's just missing being a student athlete to be honest.

For Participant 6, one of the most difficult parts of her transition out of being a student athlete is the feeling of being needed and depended on. In this passage, Participant 6 gives a detailed account of her role in helping her team to be successful; in her eyes, she was a vital component of her team's success. In recounting instances of fans expressing how much they miss watching her play, it seems that Participant 6 is further affirmed by the favor she found in others' perceptions of her contributions. This validation, then, constitutes much of Participant 6's source of self-value and worth. In no longer being on the team, then, Participant 6 is no longer receiving this in-group affirmation of belonging (Gilligan et al., 2006; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008). Further, Participant 6 expresses the rashness of the transition. Instead of a seamless shift, the transition felt been abrupt and curt; illustrated by the dialogue she has with her coach, Participant 6 describes the disjunction from once being the epicenter of her team, to now being merely an acquaintance on the periphery. This sudden shift, then, leave Participant 6 longing for her former self:

Do you miss being a student-athlete?

I do
But it's fine, I like noon ball
I think it's enough
I told Coach I would be a practice player if he needed it
I now have two and a half weeks [winter break]
I told him I would be in town
I know a lot of the practice players leave to go home
I can help, but we'll see if he asks
I'll be so out of shape it's so bad, but it's okay.

Many student athletes who are transitioning into new roles and identities seek outlets through which they can channel their competitive energy and maintain their physical fitness. While Participant 6 has found such an outlet through noon ball, she seeks additional opportunities to live out this former self. By inquiring into being a practice player for her former team, it is evident that Participant 6 is still preserving her athlete identity (Barnes, 2002; Brewer, 1999). Further, Participant 6 expresses that she wants to be available to help her former team; in this way, she is seeking permission to be included back into her former in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008). It is curious, then, if Participant 6 feels as that she has retired as an athlete:

I think I have with how much I work out
I'm working out less
I think I'm retired,
But I still think I work out more than the average person my age
I think I got some athlete left in me
I don't think I'm totally retired yet
If I became a GA for a team, I would be able to play still
So, I don't think I'm retired yet
I would say retired is probably not doing anything
Like if I'm saying I'm going to take a walk today, and that's my exercise,
That's probably retirement.

In this excerpt, it is evident that Participant 6 is unsure whether she feels retired as an athlete. Initially Participant 6 states “I think I have with how much I work out…I think I’m retired.” However, she quickly contradicts herself, saying, “I think I still got some athlete left in

me; I don't think I'm retired yet." Her contrapuntal voice suggests, then, that perhaps where Participant 6 *is*, is not where she wishes to be; in other words, she may currently feel retired, but she does not want to accept it. Further, she believes that "I think I got some athlete left in me," indicating that should the call be given, she would be able to resume her athlete self (Gilligan et al., 2006). Participant 6 continues to ponder, then, whether she still identifies as an athlete:

I would say I am an...
Well...
I would say I'm always an athlete just because [I'm] just too competitive
Then when you're not competitive,
That's when you're not an athlete
I was about to rip __'s head off for that soup competition,
I can't help that, so that's never going to go away
That's only because I was an athlete
If I wasn't, I probably wouldn't be as competitive.

For Participant 6, an indisputable quality in an athlete is a competitive drive. Because she considers herself to be such a competitive person, she believes that she will always consider herself to be an athlete. In this way, then, she is employing self-protective defense mechanism of her athlete identity (Benson et al., 2015). It is interesting that she correlates competitiveness and athletic identity, as if such a drive is only existent in athletes. In this way, perhaps Participant 6 is subscribing the exclusivity of the athlete identity, implying that competitiveness is an attribute only present in a chosen few (Benson et al., 2015). With such seemingly strong evidence throughout the interview of Participant 6's athletic identity salience (i.e. exclusivity; self-protective defense mechanisms; seeking in-group status with athletic social circles; engaging in basketball-centered competitive outlets), it is curious if she is content with her decision to forgo the opportunity to continue her career as a semi-professional athlete. On the contrary, she expresses contentment with her decision:

I'm happy that I'm not at that level right now
I wanted to go pro,

But I just know that that's …
I didn't want to go over there,
I wouldn't have much fun,
I wouldn't know anyone.
I just wouldn't have liked it at all, looking at it now.

For Participant 6, the opportunity to continuing her playing career paled in comparison to the sacrifice of leaving home. Though she admits that she would have wanted to "go pro," she is adamant that she would not have enjoyed her experience. Her repetitive "I wouldn't" statements signify her assurance that she made the right decision, even though she did not endeavor in the alternate option (Gilligan et al., 2006). Participant 6 expresses similar affirmation in her decision to stay at her alma mater rather than begin her career at another institution:

I don't know if I would look or feel that comfortable,
I think it would take me a little bit longer than where I'm at right now,
If I was from a different institution
I would still be trying to find my way
I knew of half the people that I work with, [so] it's a little bit easier.

As with the possibility of playing professionally, Participant 6 predicts that she would not have been as comfortable working at a different institution immediately after graduating. Further, she acknowledges that her transition might have been more difficult to navigate without the security of established relationships with her coworkers, as she has at her alma mater. In these relationships, then, Participant 6 has begun building new social in-groups; as such, these support systems provide ease in her transition out of her student athlete experience (Schlossberg, 1989; Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oates, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2008). In choosing to decline external opportunities, Participant 6 is quite satisfied with her decision to stay. Further, she is hopeful for a chance to acquire a long-term position in this athletic department:

I would love to stay [with current organization]
I was kind of wondering when __ left,

I was like I would love that job
I think I would be awesome at it
Something like that I think I would be really good at
I can grab people's attention
But yes, I do love my office,
I love the people
This is probably my favorite job I'll ever have with the best people
They say you won't like everyone you work with,
But I love everyone I work with.

With a vacant position in her office, Participant 6 articulates her belief that she would be an ideal fit for the opening. It is obvious that Participant 6 loves her job and colleagues; however, it is also apparent that for Participant 6, the predictability of her surrounding environment is a motivation for her to stay close to what she knows. In her reluctance to explore new opportunities, it is implied that Participant 6 perceives them as liabilities. On the other hand, control and predictability of her environment as well as proximity to her support systems are her assets. For Participant 6, these liabilities outweigh her assets; as such, she perceives that her adjustment to her transition out of her student athlete experience would be easier if she could remain in a comfortable environment, near her support systems (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011). In this way, Participant 6 is satisfied with her life, expressing fulfilment with where she finds herself compared to where she thought she might be:

Well it's better, I thought it was going to be in the basement,
Or maybe working at a [grocery store], something like that
I didn't know what I was going to do
This is a little better than what I thought
But after this if I'm still not ready to move up to Maryland,
I probably will go back home, which is fine
But I do like it up here
I thought I was going to live at home too
I like living with my roommate
I'm still away from home
I think I'm better than where I thought I was going to be.

Participant 6 explains that life is better than she expected. She expresses that she has branched out from her comfort zone in some ways, such as living away from home. Though it is nearly two years from the time of the interview, Participant 6 is already anticipating a potential move to Maryland where her boyfriend will be working. This excerpt further depicts Participant 6's dependence on her support systems; she explains that "if I'm still not ready to move to Maryland; I probably will go back home, which is fine." Though she is considering alternatives, she is also comforted to know that she has a secure fallback if needed (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011). As Participant 6 continues to branch out in her transition, she expresses what an ideal job might be:

A stay-at-home mom is always the goal
I like what I do now
I love student athlete development
I love working one-on-one
I did not think I'd have the patience for it
But I'm actually not that bad
I still think I would be an amazing DoBO
Organization is top-notch in my head, it's crazy
I would like to see student athlete development
Or if I have to go, because Maryland teachers make a lot of money
If I do want to get a teacher's degree… I might do that
But I don't know,
I don't know. Something.
I don't want to say something with teaching, but I like talking to people
I like helping them understand, as much as I can
Staying-at-home would be cool too
But I know I'd drive myself crazy, so probably won't just be that.

Throughout this excerpt, Participant 6 dreams about potential jobs she would like to explore as she begins her career. In her current role, she capitalizes on her relational strength by connecting with student athletes every day. She also believes that her organizational skills would allow her to be a successful director of basketball operations. Further, she has considered what possibilities may look like outside of college athletics. Should she move away from home to be

closer to her boyfriend, Participant 6 ponders about teaching. Ultimately, Participant 6 states that becoming “A stay-at-home mom is always the goal.” In her dreaming, this passage reveals that Participant 6 has an abundance of career interests. In articulating her strengths, Participant 6’s voice is optimistic and assured; though she does not have a career path perfectly laid out, she is sure that she will find fulfillment in whatever she pursues (Gilligan et al., 2006; Fuller, 2014). Participant 6 finds stability and assurance in her relationship with her boyfriend, who is undeniably her most salient support system. However, the consideration of moving away from home is difficult for Participant 6 to accept. In asking how she feels about leaving home, Participant 6 responds:

Horrible, horrible.
I don't know,
I need to, that's just something you do in life
You just have to move away
But I know, my parents are not helping me
I'm the last one to leave
I'm the only girl
I'm the baby, whatever
So, they always call me if they need me
“Hey I'm going to go visit your brother can you come home and take care of the dogs,” or
“We're putting up Christmas lights you always do that with Dad, can you come home”
I'm like okay well I can't do this in about a year or so
That will help with a year or two
I can spend the whole year with them before I leave
But they're making it hard
But they know it's coming
There are going to be so many different changes that I am not going to be in control of
Moving
This job is only 2 years so I'm going to have to find something else
I can deal with it better than most,
I'm just not going to like it.

For Participant 6, the idea of moving away from home is almost unbearable. However, she acknowledges that “that’s just something you do in life; You just have to move away.” This inner dialogue suggests that Participant 6 has considered this transition before, as she is

reasoning with herself that despite what she might want, it is necessary to move away eventually (Gilligan et al., 2006). Interestingly, Participant 6 also acknowledges that there are several factors adding to the difficulty of her situation. Because she is the youngest child and the only girl, Participant 6 expresses these factors beyond her control have made it more difficult for her to consider moving away. Further, she is easily accessible to her parents because she currently lives within an hour of home. Participant 6 validates her frequent visits, though, because she anticipates moving away from home soon. Despite her preference for staying close to places of acceptance and security, Participant 6 recognizes that she will face many transitions like this throughout her life: "There are going to be so many different changes that I am not going to be in control of… I can deal with it better than most; I'm just not going to like it." While the situation she finds herself in will vary with each transition, Participant 6 is confident in her abilities to navigate these uncharted territories despite her dislike for change (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011).

Chapter 5: Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research

Conclusion

While the previous chapter of this dissertation offered in-depth discussions on the findings for each participant, it is beneficial to highlight some of the emergent themes that appear to be shared among the participants. As such, the first shared theme among all participants is participation in physically exerting or competitive outlets. At the time the Post-Transition Interviews occurred, each of the six participants indicated that they were engaged in some sort of physical exercise. Whether lifting at a local gym, participating in structured recreational sport leagues, or adopting a new activity (i.e. running, golf, CrossFit), each participant sought opportunities to maintain their physical fitness while also living out their innate competitiveness (Barnes, 2002; Fuller, 2014). This collective finding suggests that retired student athletes will seek outlets through which they can be active and even branch out to explore new physical activity (Fuller, 2014). Interestingly, none of the participants in this study became sedentary or physically inactive; this suggests that while some student athletes may no longer participate in their sport post-college (i.e. rowing, track & field, softball), they will still seek outlets through which they can live out the competitive nature. As such, this collective finding illustrates the need to resource retiring student athletes with basic education on physical exercise.

A second emerging collective theme expressed by participants is a dissonance in their daily time structure. Initially, each participant expressed relief and gratefulness for now being able to choose what they do with their free time. Whether it was the freedom to choose when to work out, flexibility to call into work if sick, or autonomy to choose how to spend their weekends, all participants shared a sense of relief in no longer abiding by the rigidity of their student athlete schedule. Concurrently, each participant also expressed a yearning for the

structured that is inherent to the student athlete schedule. Specifically, participants articulated a desire to have a designated time each day to work out. While enjoying this new liberty to structure their days to their liking, participants also expressed that they missed the fullness of their schedules as student athletes. This juxtaposition illustrates how the participants are assessing their new sense of time management, environment, control, and previous experience (Anderson, Goodman, Schlossberg, 2011). Many student athletes are accustomed to their daily schedules being constructed for them by coaches and academic support staff; in transitioning out of college, they are now responsible for structuring their own days. In this way, administrators and program directors in collegiate athletic departments ought to provide education on time management upon the transition out of college. By teaching student athletes how to identify and prioritize their obligations on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis, these retiring student athletes can develop personal accountability and confidence in their time management.

A third commonly shared theme derived from the analysis is a yearning for in-group membership. As student athletes, each participant perceived their belonging with both their team and the collective student athlete body as social groups. Upon transition each participant expressed missing their teammates and student athlete peers, illustrating a loss of camaraderie (Hinitz, 1988; Fuller, 2014). In their new roles, participants explained their strategies for establishing membership into new social circles, thus creating in-group status (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984). Interestingly, some participants established in-group status by maintaining membership in the community of college athletics, specifically in athletic departments. For example, four of the six participants were employed in collegiate athletic departments, while one was seeking an opportunity to volunteer coach. The sixth participant expressed an opportunity to return to his alma mater as a graduate assistant coach, should he choose that path. This was a

fascinating collective theme because while it illustrates the yearning for belonging, it also shows that maintaining membership in an elite social circle (i.e. college athletics) was a motivating factor for each participant to some degree. Based on this emergent theme, then, administrators and program directors would benefit from creating and maintaining an alumni network designed specifically for student athletes. In this way, retired student athletes could sustain in-group membership with their alma mater and student athlete peers.

A final collective theme derived from the data analysis in this dissertation is the notion that identity salience in student athletes is conditional, particularly when one's athletic career is concluding. Regardless of career preparedness for life after college, each participant in this study expressed salience in their athlete identity as their collegiate athletic career was culminating. Specifically, each participant expressed that they wanted to relish in the final days and weeks of their collegiate careers, enjoying the last moments of an experience they knew was drawing to a close. Though there was not a collective theme of athletic identity foreclosure (i.e. participants abandoned any exploration of occupational alternatives; Brewer & Petitpas, 2017), there was a collective essence of athletic identity threat among participants as the end of their competitive careers increased athletic identity exclusivity. This collective theme, then, supports a priori research in that career termination invokes deeper attachment to the athletic identity (Benson et al., 2015). The practical implication derived from this shared theme, then, echoes the findings of Benson et al. (2015): while it seems intuitive to initiate conversations of career preparation toward the end of one's collegiate career, administrators and program directors ought to carefully tread the timing of such conversations. Specifically, the findings of this dissertation suggest that such conversations should not be initiated in the final weeks of a student athlete's career. Instead,

these conversations should take place well before the conclusion of a student athlete's career, so as to not invoke the self-protective functions of athletic identity threat (Benson et al., 2015).

While each participant's transition out of their student athlete experience offered unique findings, one interesting difference amongst participants was the association between body image and confidence. Specially, the female participants in this study each suggested to varying degrees that the changes in their body image upon transition was something that they thought about regularly and, unlike the male participants, eluded to wavering confidence as a result. Though each participant expressed changes in their body composition in their transition, the female participants associated these changes more closely with their self-confidence than did the male participants (Barnes, 2002; Fuller, 2014). This theme suggests that special attention to body image transition in retiring female student athletes is warranted. Specifically, administrators and program directors in athletic departments ought to allocate time and resources into educating all female athletes on nutrition education and healthy body image as they prepare for their transition out of their student athlete experience.

Limitations

The purpose of this study was to explore and establish a better understanding of how student athletes identify themselves and create understanding of their transition out of their final year of baccalaureate study and intercollegiate athletic eligibility. While insight into the phenomenon of identity transition in student athletes was manifested, this study is certainly not without limitations.

One such limitation of this study is that all participants represented non-revenue generating sports as opposed to revenue-generating sports (i.e. football, men's basketball).

Therefore, this research does not explore the phenomenon of identity transition in student athletes who, in many ways, are the fiscal focal point of the athletic department. Further, while student athletes from non-revenue generating sports still have opportunities to continue their athletic careers at the professional level (i.e. Participant 6, women's basketball), it is far more prevalent to see football and men's basketball student athletes aspire to pursue careers as professional athletes. Applying the methodology of this study to such student athletes, then, would likely yield fascinating insight into student athlete identity transition.

Additionally, a limitation in this study is the when the participants' championship season occurred during the academic year. All participants were student athletes who competed in either winter or spring sport programs. As such, at the time of the Pre-Transition Interview, five of the six participants were still competing in their final athletic season. This is notable because these student athletes experience the conclusion of their college careers, both academically and athletically, at roughly the same time. In this way, future research ought to explore the identity transition in student athletes who compete in fall sports. For most of these student athletes, the conclusion of their athletic career in the fall occurs months before the conclusion of their academic careers the following spring (assuming they are on a traditional four-year track). The curiosity, then, is how the transition out of one's student athlete experience is different for those individuals who conclude their athletic careers months before their academic career.

The *Listening Guide* is an intriguing and deeply insightful analysis tool. While it illuminated profound reflection and comprehension of the phenomenon of study, the *Listening Guide*'s intense evolution of traditional qualitative analysis measures can be overwhelming and perplexing. Because of its degree of complexity, it would behoove novice researchers to develop

some level of expertise before utilizing it or work alongside veteran colleagues who are familiar with the intricacies of the methodology.

Future Research

The findings of this study have also brought to the surface many opportunities to continue exploring the phenomenon of identity transition in student athletes. One such direction for future research is an inquiry into the transition experience for individuals who pursue professional roles in athletic departments directly after concluding their student athlete careers. In the present study, four of the six participants engaged in college athletic departments either as graduate assistants, interns, or program assistants. It is curious, then, how being immersed in college athletics as a young professional influenced their identity transition. Specifically, does working in college athletics immediately after concluding one's student athlete experience have an impact on their identity transition? This is an especially curious notion for those individuals who are employed at their alma mater immediately after graduating.

Finally, the present study illustrates identity transition in student athletes who *all* anticipated the conclusion of their athletic careers. Future research ought to explore the phenomenon of identity transition in student athletes who experience an unanticipated end to their careers. One such unanticipated transition is career-ending injuries. Current literature includes such work on the immediate psychological impacts of suddenly ending one's career; however, an exploration of the impacts on one's identity in the weeks and months following the injury is warranted.

While a season- or career-ending injury is catastrophic for the individual, rarely is the wake of this unanticipated event reverberated beyond the individual experiencing it, their team,

or perhaps even their athletic department in extreme cases. However, in March 2020 an unanticipated event shook not only every athletic department across the country but changed the very lives of everyone in the world. As the COVID-19 virus spread across the world, precautionary steps were taken to prevent the spread and exponential impact of the virus. One such measure was to cancel the remainder of all NCAA winter sport championships as well as all spring sport competition. In a matter of hours, thousands of student athletes' careers ended without warning. There are countless implications for this phenomenon, but in line with this study, research is warranted on the identity transition of these student athletes who could not possibly predict the finality of their collegiate careers. Scholars in the field should continue to explore the implications and aftermath of this occurrence in the week, months, and years to follow.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Participant Informed Consent

Who Am I to Become? A study on student athlete identity transition

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The purpose of this study is to better understand the identity of student athletes while competing in college, and to explore the identity transition that occurs when the student athlete has graduated college and is no longer an active student or athlete. I believe that, generally speaking, when a student athlete graduates college and can no longer identify as an active student or athlete, an identity crisis occurs. In this case, a dual-identity crisis occurs, as both identities are phased out.

PROCEDURES
Participants will be asked to take part in six 60-minute open-ended, semi-structured interviews, with the possibility of follow up questions or comments. These interviews will take place over the course of the participant's final year of eligibility at the University of Kansas and into the fall months after the participant's graduation from the institution. Interview 1 will take place at the beginning the Fall 2018 semester; Interview 2 at the end of the Fall 2018 semester. Similarly, Interview 3 will take place at the beginning of the Spring 2019 semester and Interview 4 will be at the end of the semester. Interview 5 will take place in the summer of 2019 after graduation. Interview 6 will take place in the fall of 2019.

All interviews will be recorded and later transcribed by the interviewer (Sari Little) and possibly her faculty advisor Dr. Jordan Bass. The recordings will be done on a hand held device, and at the end of each session converted to the interviewer's computer, which will need a passcode to be accessed, and erased from the hand held device. No personal information will be held on the recordings. Recording is (not) required to participate. Participants may stop taping at any time. Interview transcriptions will be made available to participants upon completion of the study.

RISKS
There are no anticipated risked involved with this study.

BENEFITS
There are no anticipated benefits to the individuals participating in the study.

PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS
There will be no payment made to participants of this study.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY
Your name will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected about you or with the research findings from this study. Instead, the researcher(s) will use a study number or a pseudonym rather than your name. Your identifiable information will not be shared unless (a) it is required by law or university policy, or (b) you give written permission.

"Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form you give permission for the use and disclosure of your information for purposes of this study at any time in the future."

REFUSAL TO GIVE CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION
You are not required to give consent and authorization and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to give consent, you cannot participate in this study.

CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION
You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to Sari Little.

If you cancel permission to use your information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION
Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher(s) listed at the end of this consent form.

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:
I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385, or I may write the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email irb@ku.edu.

Researcher Contact Information

Sari Little
Principal Investigator
Kansas Athletics
2654 Wagnon-Parrott Student Athlete Center
University of Kansas
Lawrence, KS 66045
s.little@ku.edu

Jordan Bass, Ph.D.
Faculty Supervisor
HSES Dept.
160-C Robinson Center
University of Kansas
Lawrence, KS 66045
jrbass@ku.edu

Appendix B: Pre-Transition Interview Questions

Pre-Transition Interview Questions

1. How is your senior season going?
2. Student athlete or athlete student?
3. What are some other ways you identify yourself?
4. Tell me where you're at in terms of meeting your goals/hopes/expectations?
    a. Athletically
    b. Academically
    c. Personally
5. What motivates you?
    a. Athletically
    b. Academically
6. Is recognition important to you?
7. What do you spend your time thinking about?
    a. Short term
    b. Long term
8. Tell me what it's been like to be a student athlete in terms of time management, free time, having time to go do things you want to, times when you couldn't participate in something because of sport, etc.
9. How do you anticipate getting ready for eating on your own, buying groceries, cooking? Working out, staying in shape?
10. Tell me about the Senior celebration/ K-Ring Ceremony?
11. Tell me how you're feeling about graduation coming up? Plans?
12. Summer plans? Fall plans?
13. Your senior season will come to a close soon, and it will be the end of your collegiate career. Tell me how that makes you feel, what that is like? (End of athletics AND end of college)
14. How do you want to be remembered?
15. What does it mean to be a Jayhawk?

Appendix C: Post-Transition Interview Questions

Post-Transition Interview Questions

Social Identity Theory

1. What have the last 6 months been like for you?
    a. What has been the most exciting part?
        i. What feels the most freeing? What are you glad to not be doing?
    b. What has been the hardest part?
        i. What do you miss the most?
        ii. Do you keep in touch with your teammates?
        iii. Do you feel alone, isolated?

2. Are you still participating in sport, in any way?
    a. Do you have a "sport community" of some sort?

3. Do you believe you have retired from sport?

Transition Theory

4. Moving In, Through, and Out
    a. What has it been like to transition out of your student athlete life?
    b. In which of these phases do you find yourself?
    c. Who and/or what has helped you in your transition?

Self-Efficacy, Career Preparedness

5. Where are you working now?
    a. Do you enjoy your job?
    b. Are you where you expected to be?
    c. Do you think you were prepared for transitioning into work?
        i. How has student athlete identity impacted this?

6. Are you satisfied with your life right now?

7. In our last interview, you said you identify yourself as ___; how do you feel now?

8. Walk me through a day in your life as a student athlete? How would you describe it to someone who has no idea what life is like for a student athlete?

9. A day in your life now? How is it different than it was as a student athlete?

10. What advice would you give a student athlete?

Appendix D: Participant I-Poems

Participant 1, Pre-Transition Interview I-Poem

I'm almost done
I feel confident
I know I can finish it
I was drowning last semester

I have the interview today for an internship at UCLA
I'm super excited
I applied like a month ago
I had a phone interview
I had to fill out a questionnaire
I had to make a video of me giving somebody nutrition advice
I made it onto round 3 telling me I had an interview today on Skype
I mean if I don't get it all probably still just continue looking for internships

I think as a team we're improving
I just want more, but you're always going to want more I feel like
I'm doing my part to do that
I'm in the 1v4 now
I'm back in the 1v4
I like the fours
I like it a lot
I like the 8s
I like the fact that of course they get more points
I feel more useful in a four
I can feel my power in a 4
So I really like those.

I'm excited
I never have to row again, but it's also like dang
I don't get to see my best friends everyday
I don't have a team to go to
I don't have all these, like… my schedule, people telling me what workouts I need to do
I'm going to have to do [it] on my own

I think it's like a little bit of everything
I'm sad
but I'm excited
but I'm scared
I think it's definitely everything

I still think I'm an athlete student
I still think athlete comes first

I base everything like my schedule like even when it comes to finals and stuff everything has to be around rowing

I'm an athlete. That is definitely the center of my identity right now
I don't know if that's because it's almost coming to an end and I'm cherishing it a little bit more....
But I feel like....
It's not that I don't know myself outside of Athletics,
It's just that I've always seen myself as an athlete
It's kind of who I am.

I don't necessarily think being on the rowing team is what makes me an athlete
I think just like... Like the fact that I love working out
And I love being active
I love nutrition and building my body and that kind of stuff
That's what intrigues me
That's what I want to do with my life
I don't necessarily feel like I'm losing my athleticism, if that makes sense?

I think it's just the fact that I've been in so many different sports
I [haven't] ever let one sport define me
I wasn't that one kid that specialized in that one thing for so long
But it's all I knew
I picked up so many different things
I realized that I just was physically talented
I was just kind of born into this, kind of a thing

I think the thing that's coming to mind is just... A young woman
I just I don't know that just has so many meanings to me
[I'm] trying to just figure out my place in the world
I never had to think about who is [name] in the greater scheme of things
Not at KU, not to my teammates, not to my sorority sisters,
But who is [name] in the world?
What is she going to do?
Who is she going to impact?
Honestly I just want to make enough to survive
I just want to make a difference
I want to have an impact on somebody
I want to be the person that somebody is like you know what this lady right here changed my life
That's what I feel like I would benefit from in life

I think the only woman that I really, really look up to you as my mom
I'm just like yeah that's cool too, we'll get there, we'll get it alright, we'll figure it out
I don't like to stress out about stuff like that

I PR'ed

I feel stronger
I feel like I'm still making gains
I'm still pushing the boat forward

I have senioritis really bad academically
I don't want to write any more papers
I just want to do the bare minimum
[I will] Make sure my GPA doesn't fall off
I think that's my only goal, just hold on

I've been trying to rekindle some of those relationships
I feel like we got into season and we were traveling a lot
I've lost a lot of connection with my sorority and outside friends
Before I go, making sure people know hey still love you guys

I've been going to all of our recent events
I'm here, so there's no excuse for me not to go
Even if I'm tired
I'll just go because you know that's my sorority, gotta support them
I feel like I'm just involved in so much
I'm [spread] really thin
I have so many groups of friends
Gosh I have so many places to be
But I think I learn to balance it really well
I've tried to cross up some of my friend groups, so bring people to my events with me

I think it's just my love for people in general. A lot of things that I'm involved in is all about making a difference and having people's voices be heard, stuff like that, stuff that I feel like impacts the communities that I am involved in. I think that's where I get that wanting to be everywhere.

[What motivates you?]
I don't know... I don't know...
I think just... Just this idea of leaving a legacy behind me and just having, not necessarily my name be known but just that impact on people.
I don't know why I want to be that way
I don't know why I want to touch so many lives
but I just feel like that's what I was meant to do

I'm just competitive in general
I think my drive just comes from my competitiveness
I've always been competitive, whether it's been board games, whether it's a race, whether it's anything
I [have] just always been like well I've got to beat you

(What about academically, what motivates you?)
The fact that I need a degree (laughs). I think that's about it

I thought about it, I've definitely thought about it (grad school)
I think where I am now, I at least want to take a year off
I am so tired of writing papers and so over school
I feel like if I continue I won't have the want to learn anymore
but I feel like being in an internship, I'm still learning
I'm not want to sit in a classroom
I like Hands-On training, like being in the environment and learning that way
I don't necessarily think I'm done learning
I think eventually I probably will pick up a Masters or something like that
but I don't think I could jump into that right now

I mean it definitely makes me feel good (recognition)
but me knowing that I did it myself, that is a confidence booster
If I help somebody or if I go out of my way to do something
I don't expect anyone to give me a pat on the back, if that makes sense
It's just more for me, my morals, what I stand for
I know that I did it so I give myself a pat on the back and then I keep going

(athletic recognition?)
I don't think so because....
Like rowing is so weird in the sense that, it's like so what if you're good?
If you're not making the boat faster and if the team isn't succeeding, then there's no point.
So I think it's more like me trying to make everyone else around me just as good as me

(academic recognition?)
No. I don't even...
Like when they tell me I made the Dean's List I was like oh really?
half the time I don't even check my GPA
I've never been worried about school
I've always known I'm smart enough to pass, and at that point it's just kind of like whatever

(What do you spend the majority of your time thinking about right now?)
um.... Sleep (laughs) no honestly that is probably one of the biggest things.
I don't necessarily want to say stressing about the future, but just kind of planning out my future and making sure got everything is in line and that I'm sticking to my schedules.
I think that's all I think about right now, is getting to the next thing and making sure I'm not missing anything because if I miss a step something can go wrong
my days are so back to back to back to back like I have something every hour
I have to get to this summer to get to my internship to get to the next step
I have to finish out what I'm doing here

I've always had a busy schedule
One of the reasons why I picked up rowing was because I was so free
I didn't do anything with my time
I feel like knowing me, again I like to be involved in so many things
I'm going to pick up things to fill my schedule

I don't think if I would have the time management skills I have today if I didn't have Athletics
I would definitely procrastinate
Not think about scheduling
not put things in my planner
At least thinking about it
even if I don't check the planner, at least I know it's written in there
it's in my head because I wrote it in my planner

(free time?)
I don't have any
I don't have any
Lately actually I feel like I've had a lot more free time
I also feel like I've procrastinated on one of my school work so it's not necessarily free time
I shouldn't have free time at the moment
I've just kind of, you know, made due
I feel like whatever
I'll get that work done eventually

(feelings about losing student athlete amenities)
Sad face, a little sad!
I mean it might not be the best food
but at least I know I have a meal
I'm not struggling.
I know people who are done with Athletics and they're like dang
I don't make enough money
I don't know where my next meal is going to come from
I don't know what I'm going to do, what kind of thing.

(do you cook on your own?)
I do.
I've disciplined myself
I kind of want to go into nutrition and personal training and that kind of world
I've already made plans for people like workout plans and nutrition plans and meal plans
I told myself I really have no excuse
I can never say oh I don't know what to do today
or I don't know what to meal prep this week

I already have it written down for other people
So all I have to do is bring it up on my laptop and do it
I feel like that's one way I'm going to keep myself disciplined
I think that's another thing, motivating other people helps me motivate myself
I have to leave by example, if I'm being this for someone else

I know this is the field I want to be in,
and it's hard for me to motivate myself when I'm not surround the people who are also pushing themselves
I want to do better and want to get better
But [when] I'm surrounded by all my friends who just want to sit and eat pizza and watch TV, I'm going to get sucked into that
I won't be as disciplined as I can be
[When} I'm surrounded by my teammates who want to do better who want to eat better who want to train extra to get better numbers, and do all that stuff
I see them doing that, then like yeah you're right that's what I need to be doing.
Just being around all the time just makes me more disciplined

(K-Ring ceremony)
I thought it was cool
I was sick that night so I was there but not there
I just thought it was a really cool idea that this one simple can unite so many people
I love being a part of things like that
I love being... It's kind of like being Greek, like wearing your letters and having somebody across the world be like I know what that is
I Know Who You Are because of what that is.
It's just kind of like cool.
It was like okay this is the part of my identity that I won't ever lose
This is something that will always stick with me
I think my letterman jacket is that way
Even my high school Letterman, I still have it in my closet
It's just one of those things I will always remind you of the time here and the time you spent and the Blood Sweat and Tears you put into your sport.
I thought it was fun

It's kind of different for me because I walked onto the team
I didn't get to know most of these girls until, especially the senior class, until maybe last year, and more so the beginning of this year.
So it was kind of, kind of sad because it was like dang as soon as I get close to you guys we're all leaving

(missing graduation due to sport)
I know, it's really sad.

The day I found out I was super upset.
It was two years ago when I first got on the team, and the seniors were missing it.
I was like dang, you guys are missing graduation,
I don't know how I feel about that
I was just kind of like well maybe when I was senior I'll still find a way to go to graduation
I was just thinking, okay well… you don't want to mess up everything that you guys have worked for the whole year.
I wouldn't mess up my team and where we are, even if we do terribly
At least I know I didn't just give up
I feel like if I just walked away,
like oh I'm just going to go graduate instead,
I feel like I'd be giving up something
I worked for three years to get to this point, to perform
I would just be letting it all go for a walk down the hill that technically we can take the next day.
Even though I won't be with everyone else, I can still walk down the hill

(UCLA Internship)
I really want it
But I have other applications out there,
and if not, I have other things I can fall back on,
but that's what I want
I can always stay here and intern with my stepmother
I can fall back on that plan and do stuff with her.
I have other things I can do,
but I really want this because it's like smack dab in the realm that I want to be in

(security in knowing she has something)
I mean.... It takes away a lot of the stress of other people have not knowing what they're going to do after graduation
I'm just going to go home then I guess I don't know figure it out.
I mean I still have that stress
I want this internship
I'm going for, but I feel like... Like it's not the end of the world if I don't get it.
I feel like it takes a little weight off of my shoulders
I do think some of my teammates are a little stressed

(What could have helped your teammates?)
Honestly I don't know.
Honestly I don't even know how I ended up so secure.
If I didn't have my stepmom I'd be in the same boat.
I don't know it's just one of those things like people are either going to hire you or they're not
Either you took the steps to apply early and figure stuff out early
Or you waited until the last minute and now you're confused

(Being more prepared earlier helped you?)
Yeah I think so, but it's also hard when you have rowing and you have things to scheduled
I know two of my phone interviews earlier on,
I was traveling and I was on the bus
And the only time they wanted to talk to you is in the middle of the day
I'm like okay well I'm in between two practices and we're getting lunch right now
And we're supposed to be eating so I can talk to you for like 15 minutes.
People don't always understand that you're an athlete.
It's weird, even in the sports field they don't understand you're an athlete
You can't always be in a completely quiet place where you can sit down and talk
I'm always on the go
I felt like I couldn't do enough
Or couldn't present myself the way I wanted to
I was not in the mindset of okay sit down and talk and have an interview
I think I'm just wired to go-go-go
I'm just like always on the move

I don't like just being at home
I don't like sitting
I feel like I'm not moving forward anywhere
I'm not getting anything done
If I'm always on the move
I'm like well at least I'm getting something done

(last race)
I'm ready
I'm ready
I'm excited
I think we're going to do well.

(Leave a legacy)
I think I will be remembered as the one who is always working hard and just motivating people to work hard
I'm not the best on the team
I don't have the best numbers
But I was always like let's do it
I might have complained along the way, and been like my body hurts
But when it came time to do the work, we got the work done
I think that's what I leave behind, especially for our Littles.
I think when my Little looks at me, she's like okay, she never gives up.
I think that's one of the biggest things

(What does it mean to be a Jayhawk?)

I don't know, I haven't quite put a meaning behind it yet.
... I don't know.
I think for me it's just like... My Athletics comes to mind and that's just all it is...
Being a Jayhawk for me is being able to actually wear my mascot on my chest
I feel more Pride than a lot of students who just kind of like wear it, if that makes sense?
Like when I'm out and people are like oh you go to KU,
They'll see KU rowing on my chest, they'll be like oh you're an athlete at KU,
Yeah I am.
I think for me being a Jayhawk is being a student-athlete and being able to represent this University outside of its walls
I'll always be a Jayhawk.
I will always wear my gear
I will always wear it proudly
I'll probably always cheer louder than anybody else when we play any sport

Participant 1, Post-Transition Interview I-Poem

I'm doing well, adjusting to life in California
It's great, it's just more expensive than I remember.
I'm living with family friends

I think overall of the program we saw the growth that was happening, so I think we are all satisfied with where we were leaving the program
I kind of left right after our ceremony
I was back in LA late May
May 30th I was already out here

I started my internship with UCLA in mid-June
I've just been at UCLA
I also picked up two part-time jobs
I picked up personal training
I'm also a server
I've been really busy working…40 plus hours a week
when I got to LA I didn't have any way of getting funds
I was like all right I've got to find some kind of part-time job to help
I just started looking around, looking for things that I was kind of interested in
I've waitressed before
I've done a lot of group fitness exercising and personal training and stuff before too
I just kind of searched in those areas
I didn't have enough to provide [if it was just the gym job]
so that I picked up the serving job
I have that, that one's a little bit more stable

If I didn't want to I wouldn't have to be a personal trainer
but I've grown just so attached to my clients

The most exciting part for you over the last 6 months, what's been really fun for you?

I would honestly say just figuring it out on my own.
I haven't really had to run to my mom or anything like that
I feel like I'm growing
I can see my growth
I find that super exciting.

I feel like I still am so busy
I don't find, a huge difference in my schedule
At UCLA I'm still technically involved in sports
I'm still up at 5 a.m.
I have to be there by 6, just like I had to when I was an athlete
I'm still basically living a sport schedule

I didn't realize how much stress...
I don't know just how much my body was like breaking down
I miss my teammates
I miss being surrounded by such a great group of girls
I miss my friends
I don't want to be like yeah I'm happier without rowing
but I feel like I'm more in control than when I was on a team
I feel like now
I can actually be more independent and do the things that I want to do
rather than feeling forced to do things.
Like in rowing if you're having a bad day you can't really take a day off
But now if I'm not feeling well one morning I can call
and be like okay I'm not coming in today, and that's okay

Lonely?
No not so much
I think I find a lot of Peace in being alone
I don't think I feel isolated at all
I always know that if I do want to hit up one of my friends on the team
or if I want to talk to somebody they are always there
There's no worry that they are going to turn me away or not talk to me

I've always known that I wanted to be involved in sports
So it's no surprise to me that I found myself still immersed in the sports community

I think it helps me [being a former athlete]

I feel a little different than the other interns…they weren't student-athletes
I have a little more insight
I've been in the athletes' shoes
I know how big a role the nutrition plays and how it affects our day-to-day habits
I will ask athletes how they are doing and talk to them
Even though I was in Kansas there are definitely things that I can relate to here in LA.

I think it's fun for me [personal training]
I think the biggest challenge right now is adapting to my clientele
I work at a women's gym, but most of the ladies who are members are on the older side
So learning how to create programs
accommodate to their needs
I feel like has helped me grow as a personal trainer and as a health advisor in general

There's a lot of nutrition stuff I've learned just in general about people
about athletes that relates to the gen pop
I've definitely used some of those skills and relate them over to Training
I think it's definitely giving me a little leeway on the nutrition side as well

Gaining weight, cooking on your own

I was kind of already prepared for that transition
I knew that of course I wasn't going to be working out as much
I knew that my diet would change
or that it would have to change if I wanted to maintain a certain weight or whatever
I think I mentally prepared myself for that change a while before we graduated
I also feel like I'm very comfortable in my nutrition and in my fitness and just my journey
it hasn't been frightening so much
I don't have people riding me for it anymore
I don't have people keeping track of what I'm eating
when I'm eating
how much I'm working out
I think it's just definitely made me more accountable for what I'm doing
I think I'm doing pretty well.
I also think being a personal trainer and working in nutrition at UCLA
it keeps me on the ball
You know you can't fall off, you kind of have to lead by example
When people look at you and be like well if you're not doing it, then why do I have to do it?

I love them [jobs]
I think each one of them plays a part in where I want to go and what I want to do.
Even down to my serving job… it forces you to kind of be a little more personable
I definitely have some social anxiety, so I think it's helping me
I also have cool opportunity to work in the kitchen and intern with the chef
That's something that I'm leaning towards
[I am] foreseeing myself go to culinary school in the next 6 months

I can get a culinary degree and then move forward on the nutrition side

I've been kind of back and forth [culinary school]
since I wanted to go to school
since I graduated high school
I didn't really know what to do as a chef
I feel like my whole path led me back here for a reason
I feel like the whole nutrition thing and me being super involved
Made me want to know even more now
I can come back and use my skills and what I've learned there to…
Spread education about food help athletes in that way

So would you say that you are where you expected to be 6 months post-graduation?

Definitely not
I think it's definitely moreso because I didn't really want to think about 6 months post-graduation
It wasn't that I was scared
I just know that I get disappointed easily
I didn't want to set any goals that I couldn't obtain
When I originally planned to move out here and do my internship
it was more "okay let's get our internship done, let's just kind of find a job so that we cannot fail"
I think that's all it was, let's just go to LA and survive, see what happens
I didn't expect to have made so many connections and so many friends
Have a path kind of write itself out for me

Do you think you were prepared for this transition into the Working World? Or did this feel very like I don't know I guess I'll just figure it out?

I think a little bit of both
I think rowing prepared us more than we think
You just have to get up and go
You can only make up so many excuses
I think in that sense
I was really prepared for that part
I think the rest of it… you're going to have to try and figure it out at some point
There is only so much you can prepare yourself for, if you don't even know what's coming next
There is definitely just a lot of going with the flow
Just taking leaps of faith and seeing what happens.
I think one of the biggest lessons that I have definitely learned is just keep going
I felt discouraged when I felt like I was failing
Not necessarily because I was failing at something
But because I felt like I wasn't doing as well as I should be
So I felt discouraged.
But now…if I'm not living up to my potential or doing as well as I think I should be doing
It's like okay what can I do instead that makes me feel a little more complete

I know a big thing for me was being a part of KU RISE
I had a lot of mentors in there that really prepared me for the next step
"…there going to be problems
It's just how you handle those problems
How you move forward
It's okay to cry, but at the end of the day you have to pick yourself up and keep going"
That's one of the things that I kind of took and ran with

Transition Theory
I think I'm still kind of moving through
I think my move out here was definitely moving into transition
I don't want to say I have everything figured out
But I am definitely more solid than I was when I got out here
Just a little bit more comfortable
When I first got here, back to LA, it was just like a lot of unsure...
Scared...
Just kind of trying to not let anybody down
I feel like there was so much I had to prove
But I didn't really need to at the time

I think I will always see myself as a student-athlete
It's what made me who I am now
I think honestly I will always identify as a student-athlete
I will always identify as a Jayhawk
Those are the things that got me to where I am right now
I don't think that's going away anytime soon
Maybe when I stop being a student or when I stop being an athlete, then maybe it will change.
I still think being an athlete is a huge part of who I am

What parts of your life are you satisfied with right now?
I feel like all of it
I'm just really excited about the direction I'm headed in
I'm excited about the connections that I'm making
I would definitely say all of it.

What are you missing?
Honestly just my friends
I don't know… honestly as a student-athlete you just feel like you always have a safety net
You have something to fall back on if something doesn't work out
I kind of miss that feeling
I feel like if I fall now then it's on me to get myself back up
I guess that sense of security and safety.

I definitely still think I'm in that…the money is not what I'm chasing
I'm definitely chasing education
Spreading what I know and impacting people through my work

I'm still really passionate about [that]
I have so much anxiety about being so social
But people just kind of gravitate towards me
I'm learning how to deal with it
I'm learning that it's not a bad thing

a day in the life of a student-athlete?
I would just say that it's not all, like practice and games.
There's just more to it
Mentally and emotionally
As student-athletes we invest a lot of time and effort into what we do
We don't always receive all the credit, and we have to be okay with that
I just think that... I would just say that it's a lot harder than you think
I just tell people that all the time, It's just a lot harder than you believe
People just think we get up and we just go to practice and how hard can it actually be
I definitely give it to student-athletes
We definitely deal with a lot more than the average student going to college.
I would just say there's more of a mental component to it that most people just don't realize
"Imagine just kind of being beat down in practice a lot, and then having to still get up and go to school the next day, and then having to go back and feeling like you didn't get a chance to improve on whatever it was that you were being talked to about... You know not having the time to better yourself in the classroom or whatever it may be... There's more to it mentally."

What is a day in the life for you like now, as a working young adult?

[I go] internship, early in the morning
I'm there by 6 a.m.
I leave there at 2 p.m.
And I'm at work by 3:30
and I'm a home a little after midnight

I am, I am [taking care of herself]
I definitely had to learn that balance
but I am definitely getting there
I think when I first got out here, it was just kind of like I need money I need money
I don't care the hours, [just] schedule me so I can get here and get the money that I need
But now, I take Mondays and Thursdays off
I don't do anything on Mondays and Thursdays, those are me days
I definitely had to find time for myself, just so I can recollect mentally and physically
and then go back out there
I grew up in a household where my mom worked all the time
She taught me, like my weekends are for me
I don't schedule anything on my weekends, my weekends are for me
She was always very adamant about spending time on yourself and love and care
I think that's something that has kind of been embedded in me
I think it's something that I kind of lost when I was a student-athlete

But now I'm able to find it again because I have that freedom

Anything you learned as a student athlete that is helping now?
Honestly just organization
That's something I feel like I needed
I have definitely learned as a student-athlete

If you could give advice to a student-athlete who's in their final year, what would you tell them?
To enjoy it!
It's a rough... Up and down Journey as a student-athlete
I think your senior year is really the year to just take it all in
Embrace everything for what it is and just enjoy it

Participant 2, Pre-Transition Interview I-Poem

I am tired
I'm looking forward to that (sunflower showdown)
I don't know it still doesn't really feel real, that I'm graduating

I had my exit interview the end of last week, and even that it still didn't feel real to me
I felt heard
not that I had a lot of bad stuff to say
I like to talk
I enjoyed it
I mean there's good and bad to everything, so I tried to include that
I feel like the things I said, and I want to talk to my coaches too
I've been meaning to talk to them, I'm just trying to figure out when and how I want to do that
I would want to know
I didn't say anything that I wouldn't say to them,
I might as well say it to them.

I feel like I'm kind of in a position
I'm in a position of privilege because I never really had to worry about that (weight gain)
I think every sport has a component of that
I'm going to move the boat faster because I'm not weighing it down as much
I think something needs to be kind of done right there I just don't know what exactly

I have to write this thing, it's like a letter to rowing
I'm going to cry, like I was feeling a little delicate

I hate to say this but I think it will be really good for my class to leave
I just think it'll be a healthier environment once some of us get out of here
I rowed with for 4 years
I don't know just some of them I never thought would act this way
I think some people feel like they haven't gotten the opportunities that other people have
I think often times, we think we're better than we are
I think that's been frustrating for some people who have missed their shot
I'm not satisfied because I still think there's some people sitting
I don't think we've got our lineups just right yet
I don't know any expectations that I had, I don't know how to compare

I just don't want to do anything, I'm so over it
I'm only in three classes
I don't have someone in front of me (online course)
I'm not worried about disappointing her because I haven't met her
If I was in person, I couldn't look at her if I didn't turn in an assignment
I don't ever want to do it

I've done well but…
I just don't... I don't know
I'm really pushing it off
I just…the way I feel right now is my GPA is not going to go up or down,
so I'm like what's the point?

I always asked for seniors if they're sad about leaving
no I'm feeling good it's four years for a reason
I'm always like what the fu** how can I be…
I'm going to be a mess
And I kind of am
I have a good solid few weeks left in me
I am so ready to put my energy somewhere else
I finally do understand that
I'm going to miss it,
I'm going to be so sad
but I'm tired of...
I'm just tired of doing stuff,
I just don't want to do anything
I literally want to just lay around for 3 weeks and just not talk to anybody
academically... I'm ready for all that to be done

Athlete student
I'm just someone who's always been that way
I care more about this
I'm enjoying this more so I'm, yeah I'm going to put the athlete part first because it's fun
I have teammates who definitely feel otherwise
Because yeah it's almost the end
I want to take in every moment
so the athlete part is definitely right there.

I am (sorority sister)
I've actually been kind of disconnected this semester
I've been thinking all rowing
I live with some of the girls in my sorority
I have a lot of other friends in my sorority
I'm just not really worried about those relationships right now
I don't know if this just seems more important

I've been dating one of my teammates
I love her but she just stresses me out
I've never necessarily interacted with her in the boat

I have this crazy fear and maybe it's just silly, but after rowing is done what are we going to talk about?
I don't worry about that just with her I worry about that with a lot of my teammates too.

soon I'm going to move away from... You know being a team.
And so I don't know if certain things that are hard, like overcoming those hard things, I'm doing this for myself because this is going to make me better at this or make me mentally tougher or just make me feel good. I don't know so I've been trying to think about things like that....

My love language is words of affirmation,
So hearing people tell me, seeing you do this inspired me to do this, that kind of shit.
I think most people want to be recognized for the things that they do.
I mean it doesn't need to be like a grand thing, but yeah....
Yeah I think so
but I don't think people just do shit to do it
I don't know maybe in school you don't get as much of that recognition
At the end of the day it's just you and your instructor looking at that assignment and stuff

To me it's easier to be good at school than it has to be good at sports
I think if it was team-voted that would be more meaningful to me
I still think it's a cool honor
I feel so bad saying this out loud,
but that is more whoa than an academics one
I know what I did,
and I know the way that I made people feel
And the connections I made,
and people have validated me in that way
so I don't necessarily need that award.

Everything I do, . I'm doing with rowing in mind
what I eat, when I sleep when I nap
I think about it all the time
I know their strategies (opponents)
I'm thinking about how we're going to combat that
I think about it all the time
Like I'm not going to be able to think about that in 3 weeks,
because I just won't have that...
So what am I going to think about?
I don't know. I need some sort of activity.
I'm just afraid I'll turn into a cross-fitter. I am so scared

I'm always thinking of crazy silly ideas of what I'm going to do next
but also I'm very much like
I'll figure it out
I haven't applied for a job or anything like that

I don't need to be doing that
I'm very much in the moment.

I still keep them up-to-date
but I also think they don't want to think about all the drama
I think, to a point I'm not going to want to know about it

I'm definitely a procrastinator
I just have to do the hard shit and it's made me more accepting of that more tolerant, but I'm afraid I'll probably slip back into old ways
I feel like I'm much more aware
I feel like my time is Super valuable
so now I get that with other people

I'm still super annoying and will talk forever
I'm just more understanding of that.

It's something I really enjoy doing (working out)
I really like lifting and other things like running stairs and shit like that
I think I'll be just fine with that.
But, eating and buying groceries, I don't know how to cook
I learned how to scramble eggs last year, so I literally rely on that. I do a lot of that
I'll probably figure out…I have a Crock-Pot
I'm not really worried about it

I'm just really worried more about my mental state, like going crazy
I don't know
I feel like I'm going to be like.....
I don't know
I don't know how to say this without sounding like super depressing and like a cry for help
But I just think I'll feel empty,
like what am I....
Because every day we got to practice and yeah we're trying to achieve these goals
but, I won't have those so...
I don't know...
I pretty much told my mom like hey for 3 months I need you to make me not do anything
I'll wear black all summer,
Mourning.

I just have always kind of seen it laying around (Grandpa's K Sweater)
I'm not going to wear a dress
I thought it was just a fun thing
I didn't realize it was a big deal

I don't look right in the little hat
I don't think it's going to hit me until next fall

when I see people post things on Facebook about picking up rowing... It's like all these things... Like even my exit interview, it didn't really feel real
I don't know it just still doesn't seem right, like it's actually happening
Like it's exciting but it's also like there's this thing that's actually kind of really sad, for me at least.

I'm just compartmentalizing
I'm just going to think about the exciting part,
Let the sad part happen when it happens
But then I think because I'm not processing it as both of those things,
I think the sad part is going to hit me too hard.

That it....awwww..... Here we go.... Like I don't know... That it's over. I think I also see a lot of this as a security blanket, so now I have to go... Do something else. Measure success in different ways, which I think is actually the scariest part. I'm so used to this and I'm comfortable... aaahh..... That's the sad part.

(What's the exciting part?)
I did this really difficult thing for 4 years, and it made me tougher and stronger
I met some of my best friends
I'm excited, some of the work we do is really fu***ing hard, so I'm psyched don't have to do that again
I like that we have goals everyday and we could go out and accomplish them

I think most people can relate to this, like the way you feel when maybe you just have like a bad a row or have a bad practice, like I'm... I don't know I think I'm someone who takes those things kind of hard… So I'm excited that... I don't know that I won't have to value myself based on those kinds of things
I'm hard on myself but not in a way that... Maybe it's just not visible I don't know

I've thought about how I'm going to feel at the end of this - relieved is something that comes up the most
I'm just going to feel so relieved that I don't have to push myself so hard

(What does it mean to be a Jayhawk?)
I don't know I feel like in 20 years I'll probably have a really good answer for you... But it's just like home. I think the things I did hear and the memories I made, the relationships I built, but it all means so much to me

I feel like I have like a million different things I want to do
I can't really decide
I want to go explore
That's why I want to be a bartender in St Thomas
I just don't want to be tied down for a while
I don't want to have commitments
But I think it would be really cool to be back at University setting someday

But then also coach talk to me briefly about a volunteer coaching thing,
And I'm really torn because...
But I really disagree with some of the things that they do,
And sometimes they just really frustrate me,
And so I feel like being here as a volunteer coach,
And like agreeing to do that,
I'm supporting that in a way
I was like yeah, I'll get back to you
I don't want to decide anything
I want to see how the season plays out
Because maybe, maybe in two weeks I'll fu**ing hate rowing
And I'll never want to see it again.

So, I don't know where I'll be
Would I be sacrificing doing other fun things that I want to do?
I don't know
I already feel like I've given up a lot for rowing...
Like I keep going back and forth
I don't want to miss an opportunity, and that would be a cool experience....
FOMO just really gets me...
So I don't know what to do about that
And I'll probably make a spur-of-the-moment decision.

(How do you want to be remembered?)
this is something I've kind of struggled with this year
I'm very much like you need to pick your battles
I feel like this year I really learned that respect isn't something, you know like you can't control if people like you or not
What you can control I guess is maintaining dignity, maintaining your own set of standards
I learned that from some of the girls that came before me
I had to call out my teammates this year and that sucked, really sucked
I wasn't afraid to say the hard stuff
I also work really hard to make everyone feel valued
Obviously I can't reach everybody all the time

(grad school)
I think I'd like to maybe do it at some point (grad school)
but like I said I think I need to go do some other things
I think it'd be really cool to, teacher or something like that.
Like the discussions I have in my classes really blow my mind
I get so into it
I want to have these conversations forever
I think when we're having these conversations, where else do you do this?
I don't know I just want more of that.
So I can kind of see myself doing that down the road

but it's a lot of work and a big commitment.

Participant 2, Post-Transition I-Poem

I didn't realize my coaches actually did a lot of work
I just didn't think that would be happening
I don't think I'm good at it [coaching], which is okay
I don't want to do things unless I'm good at them
I know how to do this thing at a really high level
I just don't know how to tell someone to do it
I don't know how to be stern with them
They're good kids, so I don't want to be hard on them
Even when they're being shitheads,
don't want to be stern with them
I don't want to be stern with them
But also I want to be like fu*king pull harder.

How was ending school and ending your racing career?
It's… such a busy time
I felt like I didn't really stop and think about it until it was all the way over with
We came out the next two weeks and it was the best practice I've ever had
Oh my gosh it was so solid, so focused.
I was on the high
I really didn't think about anything ending to be honest
[Tells story about last race]
I straight up see their entire boat looking at us
It was so fun oh my gosh, it was so awesome
That was probably one of my favorite races ever,
and it was my last one so it was awesome.

I took on the task of getting all the coaches gifts and support staff
I did a lot of it last minute because I'm a shitty planner
That morning I was running around too
And then it was the banquet and then we have the senior party afterwards
I woke up the next morning
I was like huh now what?
It was just like all of a sudden it was done

I broke up with my girlfriend, and so I didn't really think about it much
I may have thought about it because I saw her every day at rowing

All this time I've been thinking that yeah,
I'm going to be on some Island in the fall
I had gotten the plans worked out for that
then Coach told me, “so this position is now available”
She encouraged me to apply

So I did
I wanted to go to grad school
I wanted to try all of that,
and I wanted to try coaching.

I'm doing The Graduate certificate in leadership studies
[by the time] that I applied this all kind of came together last minute
And for me to really start the job I had to be accepted
They encouraged me to apply to this because I would get accepted faster
But it's not really what I wanted
So I'm actually transferring into the leadership and diversity and inclusion, the actual Masters
I have an interview on Friday
I'm scared shitless
I nervous but it's just a phone interview, which makes it easier
I don't have to worry about pants.

I didn't want to do anything for free
I was like oh I will get back to you, and I never really did.
She was just casually like you know I'm trying to get this position approved,
I'll let you know what happens
And I was like okay, I didn't really think much about it
So in August I came for my interview and then a little while later I heard back

So what was the rest of your summer like?
I went with my friend to Colorado for a concert at Red Rocks
Then I came back and was super sad
I reached out I was like let's get back together so we did
I got a job at a restaurant near home
I had never had a serving job
I'm thinking, if I'm going to this island… some of the opportunities are probably going to be [there]
But I had only done stuff in like customer service
I'll just get some experience doing that
And then I got this job
Coach sent me the policy.
She was like I don't know if this is going to change your mind
There was a little section about coaches and student-athletes and relationships
My girlfriend is on the team
I want the job so I'm not going to make that decision based on her
I got the job
I was like okay well we are going to break up again

If I'm only in The Graduate certificate program, I will only be doing this for a year
But if I get into the Masters I can do it for 2 years
Part of me is also like I could be on an island right now.
I just really wanted to go there for like, six months

Then I wanted to come Back and do this
But obviously I couldn't have guaranteed that this is going to be waiting for me
I'm someone who is like everything happens for a reason
I think it worked out the way it should
I always tell myself the island will still be there, unless…global warming
I don't know that's just what I keep telling myself
I'm just afraid to get... Become an adult where, you know...
Like oh but then there is this opportunity that was too good
And then there was this other opportunity
And it's like I never get around to doing it [going to the island]
Because it is really something I would like to do at some point
And I don't know if that's the life I want necessarily [friends]
But sometimes you just get caught up comparing yourself.
It's like well should I be doing that?
An island is definitely not a part of that equation
Sometimes I feel like I'm in behind
So yeah that's where I'm at.

I'm going to start crying
I mean it's nice to not have to spend so much physical energy, that's so nice
But…I miss it a lot
There is this one particular day, it's called an aerobic threshold
That was my jelly, my jam
I think so many people we value ourselves based on our athletic performance
So every week that was a high I got to ride
Obviously that doesn't determine who you are, but it just makes you feel good
And I don't have that now
Yeah I got this job that I wanted
I'm hoping to get into the program
At the end of the day I still wake up, and I'm still the same person
I don't have these things that are...
I have to deal with my own inadequacies… the things I don't like about myself
Athletics, it just disguises all of that
It's just this big illusion
I'm pouring myself into something and I'm having these really great results
I don't have to think about those other things
It was just such a good distraction
I have to face these things I've been running from for 4 years
I think the thing that makes me sad is now that I'm on this side of things,
I see how the coaches work and I see how they think...
I don't know how to say this besides... Nothing matters
We take these things way too seriously
I used to think... Literally I took one bad stroke
And I would think oh my gosh was does this mean,
But in reality he's standing like this because it's comfortable, he's not mad at me.
All these things and nothing matters

Even a month after rowing, you don't really remember certain races
Obviously the things that matter are the relationships that you build along the way.
And I just can't emphasize that to them enough
It just makes me sad that they are so hard on themselves
I think that's why I struggle with being stern to them
I don't need to beat them up more than they already are beating up themselves
I don't need to do that
I'm very sensitive.

[When] I sat on the ERG I could tell you what would happen before it would happen
If you gave me a number I'm going to hit it,
Or I'm going to pass out trying
But on test days [now] I have no control
If I could just pull it for some of them I would
That would be so much easier than watching their mental struggle on the ERG
I hate that. I hate watching that...
So those are some things that I don't like

I would run stadiums with a freshman in the fall
That was kind of a pride thing
I wanted them to know like hey
I'm kind of washed up
but I can still kick your ass
You know since I'm young and in shape
I'm not going to ask you to do anything I can't do with you
I think that was important
I really like doing that
And I think the freshmen enjoyed that, they told me they did

I guess the other thing I struggle with too is like...
I mean I can draw boundaries, but some of these people are my best friends.
I don't know what is kind of sad
Like the people I hang out with, I probably shouldn't

Does it feel isolating?
A little bit [feeling isolated]
And sometimes the other coaches will invite me to do stuff
I like working with them
I know there's more people around here that I could connect with, but I think...
I don't know...
I don't know how to explain it
But I still in a way don't feel like I should be doing this
I feel like fu** who gave me this Authority?
I just feel like a scrub
Especially when I'm walking around here,

Which I love wearing comfies to work
I love wearing my comfies
I look like an athlete
I think people are probably like, who gave that bitch keys
So I want to get better connected but I think...
I feel like I can't because my insecurities are holding me back from really connecting with other people
I know there are opportunities to connect with the younger peeps
But... I'm really scared to put myself out there
On one hand I feel like I should be comfier here,
but then I'm like well maybe if I was somewhere where I didn't know anyone,
like I was just introduced as this person I would feel more official.
But I didn't want to try coaching anywhere [else].

I've gotten to be a part of lots of conversations, that I didn't know were happening
Sometimes I feel like I shouldn't speak up, which is not good
[mental health issues coming to light, info being shared]
So I felt like I was helpful with that, it made me feel really good
That felt like an area that I needed to advocate for
And the other coach said This team has the most issues of any team I've ever been on
And I'm like WTF
She's someone who's like "I've never had issues with this so get over it."
And that's one of those things that really pisses me off
I'm like okay well yeah like most things obviously it takes experience with it to understand it
But also fu**ing educate yourself because that's what's happening on your team.
It's the reality so don't be a dick
I feel like that's a place where I get to use my voice
I feel very confident doing that.
[The weight thing] that still so delicate
I don't know how to approach that
I don't think they do either, I know they don't
I don't know.

Are you still working out or playing sport in anyway?
I go to the gym almost every morning
I freaking love that place
I still like to be in touch with the ERG a little bit
One of these days if coach calls on me to [common] stroke
She said I can do the common stroke for the day
I'm like ooh when my time comes I'm going to be ready
I'm going to be so fu**ing ready
So I still do that a little bit
Obviously I'm not seeing the numbers that I used to see and that sucks
It's just if it's not easy or I won't be good at it it's not worth doing
I know how to lift weights
but I don't know what to lift with what,

so I just look like a goober
like I'm going to go pick that up and I'm going to go pick that up
I talked to the strength coach, she's going to make me a plan.

[workout at work]
I would be horrified
Maybe I will
That just seems scary to me because it's like oh the adults that work there get to work out
That's theirs, like Adult Swim,
I can't get caught because I don't belong there.

I mean it's something to do and it makes me feel good [work out]
Towards the end of my rowing career I was pretty jacked
It just makes me so sad to think about losing that
I know I have lost by quite a bit
I liked the way I looked, so....
But yeah it's definitely a connection to the athlete identity.

I hate that I love this,
but I love when people are like gosh I wish you were still stroking for us
I'll be like hell yeah, I do too
It feels good
I want them...
It's kind of a struggle right now
I want them to find that figure out [first 8],
but also it's really nice hearing that
I like that y'all miss me in that way
It's kind of fun.

Is it hard being a practice though or regattas, is it hard to watch them compete?
And them celebrating,
I'm so happy for them
but I want to celebrate too
I want to feel that accomplishment
I think that's the thing,
I miss that sense of accomplishment
like I said, it's a disguise for inadequacies
And it's just like a nice little false high.

How has it been being a grad student?
This is going to sound so dumb because it's obvious,
but it is harder than I thought
I’m in one of those eight week courses, so they just Jam pack that sh*t in
Like there's no way you're actually learning it
I'm just memorizing it for the week so I can write my little weekly thing
then I go on to the next one.

I just don't actually think it...
I don't think people are actually learning.
But I feel like I'm doing pretty well.
I like writing and that's basically what it is. So that's my jam.
But what I'm realizing is that obviously…you need a different quality of work
I would read through people's post and be like
You need a comma after that prepositional phrase
And now I'm like I don't feel good about myself
I read other people's and I'm like oh fu** they can actually write
What I've learned is that I'm really good at describing things
I'm not necessarily good at...
I don't really make insightful connections
No one's told me that really, and I'm getting good grades.
But still I feel like that could be better and that's pissing me off

Are you enjoying it?
Sometimes
When I'm on That Adderall high you know
like when I'm about to cry and like this is so meaningful
And then when I'm crashing I'm like fu** this, my teeth are grinding.
But I think what I'm doing is cool.
I don't think a lot of people to have the opportunity
My school is getting paid for, that's awesome.
Like my undergrad was, and this.
I will have two degrees that will be paid for. That's really fu**ing cool.
I'm appreciative of that,
but also I'm tired you know?
It's like so much all the time.
And I get excited because I finish something,
And it is like well here we go week 2.
It just never ends.
I'll procrastinate but it's still always the back of my mind.
I don't feel good about it
It's not like I can ever just go enjoy something,
It's just always in the back of my mind
And I'm not really a checklist person,
I hate checklists
Because it's fun to write it, that's why I love writing my planner
I love writing everything down at the beginning of the semester
I never actually look at it.

... I feel like I'm...
I feel like I'm still moving in,
because in so many ways I still identify...
Like when I think about loyalties
I feel like some of my loyalties are still with the athletes

I still feel closely connected to them
And that's probably why I have a hard time being stern with them
Because it's like I was just there
It's like I'm yelling at myself
And then when they bitch about the coaches
Sometimes I want a bitch, too
I don't because of boundaries and shit but I feel that
But I don't even know... I don't know...
Maybe it's because I'm not there yet
I can't even imagine what that transition out would look like.
Especially in this role...
Sometimes I'm like fu*k what am I doing
Why did I sign up for this job
Again I just said all of this
I like it.
I don't know I just feel overwhelmed.
... I feel like in some ways I'm still trying to maintain...
I like being liked, who doesn't right?
But as an athlete I was well liked by my teammates,
I had fun parties
And so in some ways I think I'm scared of them seeing me as something else
I feel like I spend a lot of time worrying about how do the athletes see me?
What do they still see me as fun?
Or am I now a hard-ass bitch that they don't want to talk to?
And they need to talk to me
but I don't want that to change,
but then again, I want to be taken seriously
I want to be professional
I want the coaches to think that about me.
And so it's like I have these two very opposing things I want...
And I can't get them both but...
Sometimes I'm like I don't give a fu** what the athletes think of me,
and sometimes I'm like I don't give a fu** about what the coaches think of me,
like they hired me so they can fire me anytime.
And I know I'm doing okay at both
but I want more of both at times, and that's just a struggle because it doesn't work that way.
But then I guess that's what makes this transition hard,
I have to say bye to that.
And then I could be on an island, in my swimmies, you know?
Here we are.

... I think it's hard because I feel confused about a lot of things
I still consider myself an athlete
That I know
But that's confusing to me also
I say that I know, but is that the most important thing?

Probably not but it's still a thing that's at the Forefront of my mind....
I'm super gay and that is super important to me.
But I think... Even the construct of gender, that is confusing to me.
And I've never felt particularly strong for that identity...
Which is another thing that I didn't used to think about
Because I was always thinking about rowing...
I think... For the most part I'm a good listener...
That I am [very reflective]...
I think too, to call myself... I'm a good friend
I'm… thinking too highly of myself
I don't know
I actually realized the other day
Because I like to just say dumb things, be like oh my God I'm a stupid bitch
I was like you know what it's funny
I don't actually believe I'm stupid, but maybe I just shouldn't say those things to myself
So I feel like, the self-deprecating
I should probably do less of that
So I don't know if that contributes to… I don't want to, say anything nice about myself,
Or even call myself a friend.
Like well are you? But then again that's my own insecurities.
I don't know...

[personal mental health]
I think I could definitely...
So you know as a student-athlete that kind of stuff is free
So I was all up on that
I'm very privileged
if I reach out to my parents of course we can make something happen, you know?
But I don't want to do that
I could probably benefit about getting back into a routine with that
but it's just another thing to do...
I think I know things I could do to make myself happier
But to do that would be scary
Like putting myself out there more,
Just reaching out more to other people
.... I don't know if that really make sense
I think overall I'm doing better than I thought I would
And I think that's because here
I am still with it
But that can actually be making things worse
Here I am, jealous that they get to go do a 5K
and I don't.
I have to fu**ing yell at them through a megaphone.

I am in this weird spot
I'm trying to be professional

Should I go back into her office and be like this this and this it just feels like...

I'm an emotional sponge
Anything you are feeling I'm just going to soak that shit up
And take it home and think about it and maybe cry about somebody else's feelings
And so that's something that happened to me
In this role I am privy to a lot of conversations that happened with athletes come in
And I then worry about them.
And of course if I told the head coach,
Like hey I need a hot sec she would be so receptive and totally cool.
But also I think they know that I'm a super emotional being,
because I tear up about everything.
That's just how I was as an athlete,
Like if you ask me to say something in a huddle
I'll say it but I'll cry.
I'll share anything but I'm going to cry about it.
And so I sometimes worry that they are like...
Again my insecurities
Like why did we hire her?
Not that I cry all day, I make it sound like a cry all the time and I don't.
But I just worried that they think she's not far enough removed
Or this didn't go as we planned,
Or she's just not what we wanted
I don't want to tell them no,
I don't want to be a part of this or know these things
because I do...
But it's hard to know all that's going on in all these people's lives
So sometimes I think being closer to this helps the transition, but also...
Sometimes I think for me to continue just,
still trying to act like I'm one of them,
that's kind of selfish
It's not helping them
But it's easier sometimes.

I feel like if I wouldn't have taken this job,
I would have been sad.
But I did take this job,
and I'm still kind of sad.
I just really think, it's one of those things that the only way out is through. You know?

So walk me through back in the spring, like a dawn to dusk or even later, a day look like for you as a student-athlete?
"I would wake up, go to weights, have a fat breakfast at deBruce, I'm probably have like two classes, be back at debruce for lunch. Maybe have an afternoon class maybe not. Realistically I probably went to treatment somewhere in there. Go home, relax until practice. And I'm a Nut so I have to be at practice an hour early, so I get there an hour early and do random shit like roll

out, gossip with everybody, get my erg picked out if we are inside, have to have the erg picked out. I just realized something. You know in classes, like it's a spoken agreement like we don't have assigned seats that you don't sit here, because I sit here. I realize I got there every day to pick out my erg, but no one would have sat there. Everyone knew I sat there. Why did I do that? Always the same erg. Ridiculous. I went to practice came home same thing. Well I usually did homework then at that point, so I was up doing homework."

Day in the life now?
You go [to the gym] first thing in the morning?
If not I try to go after practice
And then I go workout, go back to my apartment and shower
or not because sometimes that's a lot of work
And get dressed, come to work
I usually eat my lunch here
And then I leave around 2:15 everyday,
I have a dog that I met on Rover that I walk on weekdays
Then I go to practice
I get home at like 7:30
then put on my Jam jams and that's kind of it.
I was good with like 7 hours of sleep as an athlete
But now I need 9 or I'm upset.
And I don't know why I'm so much more tired
maybe it's because I'm sad
I feel like when you ask other people to compare who aren't in something like this it's vastly different
Yeah I still have practice... I don't know.

Okay last question for you. If you could give advice to any student-athlete who is about to finish their career, what would you tell them?
Like no one remembered the boat that you were in
I think those things at the time feel so important
like oh I'm racing the second 8, blah blah blah.
Or maybe you feel embarrassed or ashamed or something like that
I don't really remember the lineups
You just remember...
The relationships that you built
The way being on the team made you feel
I would say cherish that
but also spend the time investing in those relationships,
because those are going to be long term.
Those are the things that matter the most to me now
I never really did a ton of that [drama, gossip]
but yeah I like the tea, let's hear it.
Because it seem like you have a lot of friends on the team
I remember after I graduate it was kind of like
where did all those friends go?

And realistically yeah I have my good good friends from there
but also being able to recognize that some of these people you don't get along with
or there's drama or some people you are kind of friends with what kind of not
but you still care about their opinion,
these are like time and place relationships.
It doesn't mean that they're not important to you and they don't matter but they are important
because of the time and the place.
In 2 months, they won't matter.
So try to find the ones that will.

Participant 3, Pre-Transition Interview I-Poem

I'm pretty much done with that class
I'm so stressed about my other class because this is a time of year where it's all coming to a close
I feel fine it's not as bad as it was the beginning of the year when we're away for like 25 or 29 days or something… So just a little busy.

It's good I've been playing more than I have in the past 3 years of my college career
I'm cherishing every moment I can because it is coming to an end
I've had a couple mental breakdowns
It's like, wow I'm going to be done after this.
But I have a lot to look forward to this summer,
And in my career I guess.

I've been performing okay
I've gotten more playing time but my average does not show how well I've been doing
I've been hitting balls hard everywhere
I've been playing excellent defense.
It's the worst statistical season I've ever had, but like I've been playing so well so it's hard to...

I think Coach models his coaching after the coach there who is in Air Force, because Coach wants us to be good Fathers and get husbands, Men of first class, that's what it's kind of modeled after
if I was a freshman or senior in high school and I wanted to visit the Air Force, and their coach talk to me I think I would have been sold on going there
To be honest I felt like I had no purpose when this guy was telling us that these guys are going to put their life on the line for you guys

I've missed so many classes
I've completed a couple of assignments late but hopefully he grades okay
Should graduate.

I'm going to walk for my parents
I mean I feel like it's all coming way too quick
I don't feel ready to graduate,
I don't feel ready for the real world
I know probably nobody is
I mean, I'm ready
But I'm not ready
I'm ready for the schooling part of it to be done,
I know after a couple of years working,
I'll come back and get my masters,
So it's not totally done.

I mean to have so many... To be a part of something so beyond just me and extends for Generations, and I will be able to have that for the rest And relate to former and current and future Jayhawks, but something that's super cool
I felt like the whole athletic department, the whole school what's behind us in our accomplishments

Right now since you've been gone so much I feel more like an athlete than a student, but as soon as I get in the classroom, I mean I don't even think about Athletics when I get in the classroom because I'm so focused on having to get all this stuff done

it's my senior year and I want to play all of our games at home
I think we're all tired of playing on the road but... We all get really excited for home games

My whole life I've never been a person who's wanted to be recognized. I'm kind of on the shyer side of things. I'd like to just, like if I can be recognized anonymously that's pretty cool. I mean it's cool to walk up on the stage and have your name set out loud, that's not necessarily what that means to me. I mean being a part of the team and being successful team is what means more to me I think

I mean with baseball you have to have success for yourself as well to succeed on the team
I've just really trying to just be a team leader and make sure that my legacy on the team is left
I've just really been working on picking people up
That's what I've been trying to do
I'm just trying to be a good teammate, trying to be a good leader

I'm a future husband, I guess. We've been doing marriage classes
I've been really working on that
We're going to Disney World for our wedding. We chose a pastor there, and they sent us some stuff to do like marriage books that we're reading
June 17th, so if we make a regional I'm not getting married.

he tells me I'm an overachiever because I got my fiancé already. Yeah he's called me the All-American boy countless amounts of times, which is kind of cool.

I start Cerner July 25th
It will be a business analyst role. Very entry level job
So it seems like you've got a lot of your stuff kind of lined up pretty nice and neat for the next foreseeable future?
I'd like to think so, yeah it seems like it right now for sure. But once it comes to it, it won't seem that way
to have it all figured out it's a huge weight lifted off my shoulders. Definitely
I probably wouldn't have my job if I didn't go to the career fair

I've thought about it a lot. I don't think baseball will ever leave my life, which is a good thing.
Playing might, but I can coach, I can be an athletic director if I want to.
So it's never going to leave my life. ,
but the fact that I've been playing it for 18 years , and it's all coming to a close,
I mean that's all I've really known.
We play so, so much. It's all I've really known.
So to have the free time I will have, I probably won't know what to do with myself.
I just have no idea what to do with my spare time, because usually it's occupied by baseball.
So I'm excited for that,
I'm not excited for it to be done

Time management and sport
yeah a hundred percent. Being able to manage School your Athletics your social life your relationship to the other people it stuff it teaches you real quick how to manage that

I have nothing to worry about there (fiancé is a good cook)
I talked to our strength and conditioning coach,
I talked to him about what I should probably do like when I'm done here
I won't have a free place to go workout.
I think I'm going to take up Crossfit because there's a competitive aspect to that
I think I need in my life is that competitiveness
I don't really think I'll get that
I'll get it in the workplace a little bit like competing for roles and stuff
but athletic competitiveness I'll miss a little bit
I think that's a good outlet for me

I strained my hamstring 2 weeks ago in a scrimmage, it was so stupid
I was only out for the West Virginia series
I started that game but it sat me out for a week
I was mad at myself for going super hard in the scrimmage
I was really mad at myself about that, but it's all okay

I played a lot in both of those games
I was leading off the inning and got a single end up scoring the game-winning run
And then Sunday, I had a triple
I was lead off that inning too
if I don't score we don't go into extras
I think that was the highlight of my KU career so far

I started the season 0 for 20
The worst slump I've ever had
I was so mad
I was mad that I was losing opportunities because I wasn't performing

I was mad at myself because Coach kept giving me opportunities
I'm finally starting to perform the way he wants me to and the way I want to
I was frustrated then because I knew this was my last season
I don't want to go out on an 0 for 40 year
I was hitting balls hard the whole year, they just weren't finding holes
I hit two balls super hard the wall but they got caught
And we just started flowing after that
It was a huge relief

Staying connected with family
It's been tough since we've been on the road for so long
I know my dad wishes he could see me play more but we've been gone so much
When I'm home I go back to Kansas City to eat dinner with them whenever I can go see them

I think they're more proud of the man I'm becoming as opposed to the athletic performance, like over the last 18 years
I don't want to settle for who I am now
I know once I start a career in something other than sport it might change me
I hope to continue to be a guy of first class
But I'm proud as of right now, and I'd like to keep it that way

How do you want to be remembered?

As a good leader
as a good teammate
I mean a lot of people want to be remembered by their stats, which is a given in sports.
I'd like to be remembered as the guy that I was,
The teammate that I was,
And the leader that I was to the younger guys
I cherish those things, those relationships I build with people
Such a beautiful thing to make those connections
It's something I really cherish

Are you ready for it? (Senior Game)

No...kinda.
I've been preparing a speech in my head for the last, like, 3 months
What I'm going to say
But I still have no idea what I'm going to say
I never thought I'd get to where I am now
I didn't see myself here
I couldn't see myself here giving this speech 3 years ago...
So now that I'm having to do it I can totally get what they were saying
It totally flies by

As a freshman I did not ever see myself getting up there giving a speech, and now the day has come

Are you sad about it?

Yeah. But I have so much to look forward to, I mean I put those mental breakdown moments but... But to be able to have so much to look forward to, is a huge stress relief

What does it mean to be a Jayhawk?

Well for me...
I don't know...
Because I've had the athletic experience and the academic experience.
I'm honored to graduate from here
I'm also honored to play baseball here, and.....and.... relate to the guys who played before me...
And that will play after me, and to be able to be an alumni here is something that is truly honorable, I think.... So yeah it means the world to me to be a Jayhawk

I wouldn't be able to do.....
I'd be so stressed out if I didn't have Christ in my life
It's helped me so much my building my relationship through him.
I think I started that on the baseball field too, just every chance I get honoring him with whatever I can.
It's usually not vocal but... Thanking him for every hit or something like that.
We pray before every game, stuff like that...
Yeah it's a huge anchor in my life, to have Christ in it

(How did that help when you were in your slump?)
I was mad
I was mad at God, but it's tough to be mad at God.
I know it's teaching me a lesson that's bigger than what I can comprehend
I know there's plans in there for me
When I was struggling, I knew there was a plan
And I still don't know what those plans are, and I won't know.

Are you anxious about getting married?

Well I... The thing is I don't think it'll be that different
We've been dating for three, three and a half years almost
We had this rule that we wouldn't move in with each other until we're married
so I'm excited to move in with her
That will be an experience. Permanent roommate.
I think I'm more nervous about standing in front of people and saying all the words I have to say,

afraid of messing up
That's what I'm nervous about.

Participant 3, Post-Transition Interview I-Poem

I've had of lot more free time on my hands, especially on weekends.
I picked up CrossFit
I've only been doing that for two weeks though
Before I was going early to work and working out at like 6 in the morning
So I was doing that, then work from like 7:30 to 4 each day
We got another dog
Yeah that's been my life so far.

[My] Last game was really bittersweet
a lot of crying and a lot of smiling and hugging teammates
We are only one game away from making a regional, so it was super tough
I got to hang out with all the guys
The wedding was amazing
we got to go to Disney World and got married at 9:30 in the morning
We went to Ireland for our honeymoon
I started my job about 2 weeks after.

I lived with my grandparents, well we did
We stayed there for a month-and-a-half
I moved into our brand-new apartment at the beginning of September

When people ask me what I did in college
I say that I played baseball, good conversation point
At the beginning of my work experience I was kind of hesitant
like is this what I want to do?
And I'm still not sure if this is what I want to do.
We do reporting, datametrics, we deal with the government
but I don't know if it's what I want to do.

Everyday I think about going back and getting a master's in sport management
so I can be an athletic director,
which I think is my end goal still,
I think that's still is my end goal.
So working for a couple years
maybe they'll pay for my college, which would be cool
So that's the plan for now.

I haven't talked to him [coach] in a while
I plan on coming up this spring and talking and seeing him, visiting with him.
Maybe after I work for a couple years and get some money saved up,
Now that I am married

that Could be something
My wife is doing her Masters,
So we have to pay for that
So it might be set on hold, my stuff.

Was it nice to have a little bit of a break?
Yeah it was but I did not know what to do with myself
Especially the days when I had nothing
it was super nice to have the summer off
but it was weird going into August and not going back to school,
going back to the routine of playing baseball, lifting

I played slow pitch softball, once a week
It was different, it was fun though.
I play with friends that I've never gotten to play a sport with
I got to play with friends from high school who played college baseball at other places,
so we all came back and played together.
It's been amazing [reconnecting]
We've hung out pretty much every weekend
I definitely miss my friends in Lawrence
We came to a couple of football games
I just go back to the old house that I lived at
Once in a while I'll go in the locker room

This past weekend we had our wedding reception
A bunch of them came up and hung out with me
That's something I really wanted

What's been the most liberating part of no longer being a student-athlete?
I would say weights
but I get up early still to go lift
I don't know
I really miss being a student-athlete
.... I miss the routine
When I get back at 4:30 in the afternoon, it’s nice to see my wife and the dogs
but I find myself wanting to do more
On the nights when I don't do anything
I feel so tired and lethargic
When I was a student athlete we had stuff in the evenings
we would get done at 7
I would be wide awake till 10 or 11 at night
So that's the one thing I miss

What do you not miss?
The time constraints on everything
I have my own schedule, the weekends are free

My afternoons are free, which is a win and a lose to me
Time is the most liberating I think.

When I don't have anything to do at work it bothers me so much
When I was a student-athlete
I could just go hang out with my friends in the locker room if I wanted to
Or in between classes that's what I would do
But recently since I found CrossFit
I've been going from 5:30 to 6:30, so that feels like quite a bit of time in the evenings
Then after that I feel super awake which is good
I get grumpy when I'm lethargic and tired

Is that [Crossfit] fulfilling to you right now?
Yes definitely
[I] can go back and see what you could have done better
everybody's doing the same workout
Try to beat the person next to you
That's fun to me.

Do you feel lonely or isolated at all?
No, I think it helps that I got married so quickly
I have my high school friends who are always around
But having somebody to go home to every evening to keep me sane...
I picked up golf
I've always wanted to be a golfer
If I didn't play baseball, I think I would have been a golfer.
I'm okay at it. I'm looking to get better.
I'd say [I play] once every two weeks
I find it therapeutic
I get to go hit off a tee just like in baseball
I can do the same thing in golf
I can videotape myself swinging
I get very similar things from it, like being able to go watch my swing and fix it

I always have leftovers for lunch the next day
I make the easy stuff
I don't make, like the fancy stuff
And the healthy stuff I don't make.
I've weighed a couple times
I've weighed pretty much the same
I would like to do a dexa scan again, but those are expensive when you're not an athlete
I'll be interesting to see what my body looks like after I do CrossFit for a little while
See if it's better than what it was when I was in college, I don't know.
I'd like to have lower body fat percentage
In college I was trying to kind of put on weight and it didn't really matter what it was

Do you feel like you've retired from sport?
From baseball yeah
Well.... I guess so
I don't know...
I don't know
I haven't played, it's been 6 months probably
But I think I could still go hit BP
[I'm] pretty sure I could still hit live pitching
Maybe in a few years when I'm totally out of the picture,
then I guess I'll retire.

What do you think it means to retire from a sport?
Maybe when I start being more sedentary and don't work out so much
I still feel like I could go out there and compete if I really wanted to
If I really work hard and tried out for an independent ball team
I think I would make it
But I would say when you think you can't do that that's when you're retired
I don't know about [becoming] sedentary
I think I'll pick up golf
I'll do that and get a lot better at it and hopefully compete in tournaments
I retired from one sport, moved onto another

[Transition Theory]
I think I definitely have accepted it
I'd say I'm walking, like one foot is out the door of out
I'm through it and out of it at the same time
I still keep in contact with the guys that are playing
I feel like I'm still kind of in it
but I've accepted that I'm in a working role now
I have a big boy job
I have accepted that I'm out of it.

I can think of what I probably would be doing
I think I'd probably be doing a graduate assistant gig,
If I did not have a job lined up
I'd probably still be in school
I probably just would have gone to get my Master's right away
If I didn't have this job lined up
Then again that goes back to the fact that I was getting married, to have a job
If I wasn't getting married and didn't have a job right away
I think that's what I would be doing. Coaching.

I knew I was graduating in 4 years
I knew [it was] my senior year and [I] was graduating
I had to start looking for a job either way
Especially if there wasn't a ga spot open, I'd want to have a backup.

All the cards kind of unfolded how they were

I get my fix with sports in that way [watching siblings]
my mind is starting to move more towards coaching
one day I'll have kids and be coaching them up

Luckily I have people
One of the people who played a huge impact on my life is my High School athletic director
He is offered to talk to me about becoming an athletic director
So there is that outlet that I can go

I have my duties to do at work
I get those done
I enjoy doing some of them, but there are some of them that I don't enjoy doing
That's when I think about what I could be doing
If I think about that every day,
Then I should go pursue that opportunity
I haven't quite got to that place yet,
so I think I'm okay right now.
The problem-solving stuff I enjoy,
Interacting with people I enjoy
[As an] athletic director, those are some of the roles.
I enjoy working with my coworker and my manager
I enjoy working with other teams
Getting you talk with those teams and problem solving
That's what data analytics is, looking at data and solving these problems, finding Solutions
But then it's a double-edged sword
Because something I don't like is data entry and dealing with a lot of numbers.
I have learned a whole lot about data analytics,
Probably more than I learned in school.
I don't know
I feel like in college I was pretty mature about things
I kind of had a working mindset in college
So I haven't learned too much about myself working
I've learned that I like to be active and workout
I don't like sitting around a lot.
I've seen Some people go through those issues [workplace]
but I feel like I'm pretty empathetic,
and [I] can see what the other person's point of view is
I feel like I could diffuse it pretty easily.
Yeah I am [happy]
I don't know if it's something I want to do for the rest of my life
but I don't know if anybody ever does know.

Do you think being a student-athlete has helped you prepare for work?

Yeah. Being able to manage my time, being able to work well with others. And being competitive too, wanting to do well at my job.

I always think about where I would be if I had met my wife
if I had [not] done all these things
It's not where I want to end up I don't think
but it's where I'm at right now
I pictured myself doing an entry-level job for the first few years
If it's something I didn't want to do that I'm not going to do it
I haven't got there yet
but if I do get there, I'm still young in my career
I can drop everything and find something else.
I've thought about being a teacher, going to get my teaching degree
I could coach while teaching
I can always go be an admin at a school, then High School athletic director, then college athletic director
I've thought about those steps
I mean based on my relationship that I have with my High School athletic director
I think he has a more Hands-On way to have relationships with students and student-athletes.
I didn't have much interaction with our athletic director while I was there
So I don't know, there is positives to both
I don't know which one I'd want to do.

I enjoy thinking about the future and where I could be
I think my next goal in life is to get my pilot's license, which is super off topic
Yep my grandpa has his pilot's license, my grandma, my uncle
Now that I have more free time, it's something I really want to do
I think I'll do ground school this winter, and then get my hours in flying
I'd be able to fly us down to Dallas and it would only take 2 hours instead of 8
I don't think my wife thinks that's a fun thought yet
because I haven't done any flying yet
But once I get a little more trust from her, it'll be fun.

Yeah we joined a small group, through Grace [church]
We became members of the Church of the Resurrection
I've definitely grown in my faith in the last 5 months more than I ever have
I've learned so much from the pastor at Church of the Resurrection, he is so good

We meet every Sunday night for about 2 hours [small group]
We are the only married couple
I would like to get involved in all men's small group
Right now, it's just me and my guy friend and five other girls
It's hard to get guys to talk about subjects like this.

I am a husband
I am a person of Christ

I'm a family guy, I'm always around my family
I'm a dog person
I wouldn't say I'm a business analyst, I would just say I work at [company].
I think it's cool to say that you are a student athlete
But I would never use it to my advantage in class or anything
I think it's cool to be known as a student-athlete
I can say yeah I played baseball there. That's a conversation point right there
I think it makes people think I'm more important than I am
I think it's super cool because the majority of people didn't play sports in college.

So the best that you can remember, walk me through what it was like to be a student-athlete, like a day in your life?
I would want 8 a.m. classes, I asked for 8 a.m. classes
That's just how I am
I'm a morning person, I'd rather get it knocked out
So I would have class from 8 to noon, then practice 1 to 4, then weights after, then hang out with my friends after that, then my day is over
I get homework done sometime, not during another class
I would go to the debruce Center for breakfast and lunch.
I miss the crunchy chicken cheddar wraps.

So walk me through a day in the life now?
I get up around 6:15, Let out the dogs
I shower and get ready
I'm at work by 7:30 most mornings
I do all my data stuff, till 4, then pack up and head home
I try to work out 4 times a week, that's what my goal is now
So I get home and hang out with my wife because she is there at 4 after school
We hang out and then I go workout,
[I] come back and eat, sit on the couch and watch Netflix or something, depends on the night
Fridays, my wife and I usually go out on a date night
Saturdays we go hang out with friends, go out to the Westport or Crossroads area

If you could give advice to any student-athlete who's in their final year and was about to graduate, what would you say to them?
Try to slow down as much as you can, don't think about what's after college too much. If I didn't find my job so early, I'm sure I would still have a job. I think college prepares you to have a job, and being a student-athlete prepares you to have a job. So just focus on having fun and spending time with your friends while you can, because it all comes to an end. Being a student-athlete was kind of freeing, well-being a college student was kind of freeing. Yeah I just slow down and have fun, try to remember each moment you can, because the four years that I was in college it just flew by.
Do you feel like you did a good job of slowing down and enjoying each day?
I thought it was when I was there, but I don't think you really can't slow down.

Participant 4, Pre-Transition Interview I-Poem

[I] Kind of came off a pretty good week
I'm ready for this meet

... I'm kind of getting a little more sad...
Just like not wanting it to end so soon
I remember at the beginning of the semester I was just kind of like alright
I'm ready to get this out of the way
but now I'm trying to make it last as long as I can
I just feel like I've been getting along with everyone,
just everything's kind of been running smoothly
I won that award on Monday, which helped a little bit.
It was one of the most fun experiences I've had in my life
I mean obviously there's been a lot with track
but it was just really cool being honored for that
for putting in four hard years of work
and then finally being able to be recognized for that academically
Because in athletics sometimes you don't really know or understand...
How good you're doing in academics
Like a GPA is just a number, but it says a lot more than what's just on the transcript.
It was really nice to be recognized for that.
The kind of Justified sticking it out all four years as a student-athlete
I just remember like right before they announced the award
I was just like oh my gosh that would be awesome to get
And then right when they called my name
I was like it's me, I got to go up there!
Yeah it was funny everyone is like you looked so surprised
I'm like oh I know!
my coach actually texted a picture of me while I was up on the stage
He sent it in our group chat and was like congrats, well deserved
So it was nice being recognized like that by everyone
it's just nice knowing at the end of the day they are recognizing your accomplishments in that aspect.
Because in athletics they see your athletic side everyday
but how would they ever know about your academics if they don't ever ask about it?
So it's just kind of nice to reinforce that

We could be doing better
but I'm not too worried about that
We have some really big meets coming up
I think my Peak is coming for the season
I am just looking forward to that
I've been jumping consistent marks just right below my PR, which is really annoying, because it's just like Get over

Like this is what I told myself
I said that no matter how I do this season,
I'm never going to stress it just because I know...
Like... Like...
Especially because of the award too, my four years have been Justified here,
And I've kind of come at peace with whatever I end up doing athletically
that will be good enough for me
I'm still going to strive to be as good as I can be
but I'm not going to dwell on poor performances if they occur
I mean, that's just kind of how life goes

I know that this is a chapter of my life that's closing
I don't want to have a bad... Memory of my final moments of it
…just saying enjoy the moment,
enjoy the experience not necessarily the outcome.
Because at the end of the day I've got two or three meets left

I've got basically everything lined up, for this summer and next year.
I'm not worried about that at all.
So I'm just kind of coasting right now.
Except for getting ready for finals those are actually going to be kind of hard this semester.
I mean I would honestly say these classes I've had...
Are probably my most rigorous classes I've had throughout my four years here.
But I mean they're not giving me too much trouble
I spent 5 hours last night doing a take home math test.
I finish it at like 12, got home and went to bed at like 1
I should have started it a little earlier
I did not anticipate it taking that long
I thought it was going to take me 3 hours max
I was like I will be in bed by 11, but then I was like nope

Honestly right now...
I would have said like 6 months ago definitely student-athlete
but I feel like since I know the end of the Athletics side is closing in,
I kind of want to focus more on the athletic side right now
like I said my academics are a lock,
I mean I don't really have too much to lose in that aspect,
so I think I want to put a lot of my attention On Athletics right now because...
This is actually the last time I get to be competitive in this sport
so I really want to put that at the top of my priority list

I actually have an outdoor [season] I could take
However, I won't be pursuing that because of my master's program
I'll be a TA, hopefully.
I'm actually getting the news either today or tomorrow if I made the TA.
But regardless my academic schedule is going to be extremely busy.

If I get the TA-ship,
100% I'm going to be booked all day everyday
I will be in 15 hours of graduate classes
And if I'm a TA
I have to go to both of the lectures and teach one or two labs
I think it'll be good
it will prepare me more for working those long weeks in my professional career,
because accountants, during their busy Seasons they end up working like 70 hour weeks, 70-80
I think it will be a good practice, a good experience

(last season)
It's sad, but I mean it's...
I definitely have prepared for it and accepted it...
I'm happy that like I said I stuck it out all four years
I mean doing for years in college athletics is strenuous,
on your body and your social life and in a lot of mental aspects.
I'm really proud of myself for getting all that accomplished.
There were a lot of times that I was considering quitting,
even after my freshman year after nothing major had even happened
I had one injury and was like
do I still want to do this
I don't know.
Sticking it out... Multiple more injuries...
No it's been nothing but fun times and a good experience
I can't really say any negative thing about it

I mean everyone kind of accepts that point
I'm not going professional
I know I'm not good enough to do that
I know I've given everything that I have
I'm just going to try and squeeze out that last bit, try to get a PR

I think the people that have had, that are more subject to not come to peace with ending their athletic career are people that, A. Don't necessarily do well in academics or they think they are good enough to go to the next level. I mean this sounds bad but they think they're good enough to go to the next level but they're not, they're kind of putting all their eggs in one basket. And that's never a good thing to do, especially with Athletics when anything could happen. So I don't personally know any specific person that is thinking wow I'm freaking out because I don't have anything after Athletics, I don't really have a plan after I graduate college, I'm screwed. I don't really think anyone's like that, I think there are people that are going to be a little lost like in terms of what they, like in terms of what their priorities are going to be after college because they put so much emphasis on Athletics, and they put like I said all of their eggs in one basket, incident really focusing on what they want to do in the professional world outside of Athletics

(How do you identify yourself right now?)

I am...
I've never thought of this but next year,
if I get this TA-ship I will be a teacher
I will be teaching a lab. Like it's a lab, but that's scary. I
mean think about it, you're in charge however many 25 to 30 people, all their stuff, being organized
I've never really thought about.... Me like that,
but it's really exciting
I think it's going to be really good for my public speaking skills
I'm not saying a struggle with that
but there are definitely times when I'm not extremely comfortable talking in front of a large group of people.
I think that will be a really good way to break the ice
just kind of get me out of my comfort zone
Like I said, right now I'm an athlete,
I'm a student.
I kind of want to...
Right now I want to kind of sick with those two, and not think about...
like this summer I'll be employed
I'll be an intern
I'll be in a professional job and it's going to be...

(is that overwhelming to think about?)
Kind of
I never get too stressed out about that
But it's going to be a big life change
I'm really excited to see how I handle it
see how I thrive with it
and see what I need to change about myself to adapt to being in those new positions

(grocery shopping and working out)
Oh my gosh, now that's another thing I'm going to have to balance too
I'm definitely going to work out, that's something that's not going to change
I'll probably do a lot more upper body lifting, probably not as much cardio.
I'll still run but I won't do nearly as much as I would do during track
But yeah eating is going to be a tough...
That's going to be one of the toughest things
I've never really been super... Keen... On cooking
I'm not a good chef or anything
I'll make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, that's my forte
I'm going to have to learn how to do that
I'm going to have to go grocery shopping a lot more
That's one perk you don't really think about
is the free food when you're a student-athlete
And then when you don't have it it's like

oh my gosh
I can't believe I used to have this for free and now I don't
I wouldn't say I take it for granted
I do use it a lot, it's just something that you're so used to having
it's a big shock when you don't have it
I bet that some people to take it for granted. And then they are screwed after
I haven't gone to any of those cooking classes
I haven't really found too much interested in it
I can definitely learn how to make simple stuff
I can figure that stuff
it's just like doing it, like putting actual effort into it
I just spent 15 hours doing academic stuff
I don't want to spend another hour cooking
I'd rather just eat

I love my teammates this year
My coach has been really supportive. He really wants me to PR too
He's been waiting patiently
he's been really accommodating for everything
I've had some important interviews for the TA and some projects that I had to finish
One day I was like coach
I've got this meeting and this meeting
I only had like an hour window in between everything
I can maybe do something
but he was like No just go when you can
I was like okay

My first three years weren't super hard in terms of my schedule
there weren't really many obstacles in my way
This year has just been a lot more
I've had to apply for a lot of different things
I've had to do a lot more outside of just my regular classes that I've been taking
I think just overall I've been a lot more busy this year
I was thinking about that last night
I was doing my math test
I kind of looked out the window and it was dark out
I was looking at the buildings
I was like I can't believe I used to go up on that Hill like everyday
was just thinking about my freshman year, all my classes...
That was like 3 years ago but it feels like yesterday
I almost felt weird studying at capfed, like what am I doing here?
I'm about to be an intern
I'm about to be graduated
I'm doing something I would have been doing three years ago...

Last night was just weird
I felt like kind of like a freshman
doing all my math homework
it like brought me back to how I used to be in college
But yeah it's just crazy...
How your schedule and how your mindset of college changes
especially when you get to your senior year...
It's almost like do I still belong here?
I'm trying to think of the right word
it's like freshman year, you're always looking forward to the next four years
you're like I have so much time
But then Senior Year, you're like oh I'm almost done...
It doesn't really feel like I'm in college anymore
even though I have another year
but that's a completely different thing
It was just kind of a funny experience
I felt like I was in my freshman shoes again

(do you feel ready to be done?)
Yeah, especially with undergraduate
when I was doing all that work last night
I feel like a freshman and honestly this isn't as fun
I remember grinding
last night I was grinding hard
I haven't grinded that hard all semester just because that test took me so long
But I was like you know what
I'm ready to... Elevate to the next level...
Like this is just kind of a reinforcement…
yeah this was fun to grind for 5 hours
but I'd rather get up to the higher stuff

(did you accomplish your dreams?)
Academically, 100%.
I would say for the most part everything I've set out to do in college,
I have achieved so far
I got a really good GPA
I got a degree that's going to be really useful
I got a math minor just because I was in love with math in high school
I'm telling you, this class
if there is any regret of getting a math minor it's this class that I'm in right now!
But it's almost done, I'm almost out
But anyways, so like I said I got a good degree
I got a math minor and an accounting majo

I competed at the division 1 college level for 4 years
I had decent success at it
I'm not saying I was a superstar
Obviously I wasn't. There's still time
I made so many friendships...
And I just did something that... A minority of People can say that they've done.
And that's an intangible that you can't really take away.
I forgot who said this, but they were like it literally doesn't matter what your marks are
in 20 years nobody's going to remember what you jumped
but they're going to remember that you competed
and who you were when you competed
and how people remembered you.
So I thought that was important
you can be the best but if you're not someone who is supportive
or not someone who is a team player,
I don't really respect you as much

I think I will be remembered as an extremely positive influence
kind of a motivator, especially for the freshmen
I'm kind of always get done on their butts about making sure they are on time
doing everything right
I'm just always making sure that they have a ride out to [practice]
I don't know just kind of giving them advice
like how to thrive
I know some things that you don't want to
[some] that I've done that were mistakes
athletically how you should train, what you should do, get more sleep, hydrate more
I'm not saying I want people to have a different experience than me
but I want them to avoid mistakes that I have made
I think that's something I can give back
Okay mistakes is kind of a bad word
I would just say, like habits
I'm not saying that I did something to… harm me or anything.
I was talking more of injury wise
I would consider a mistake is not giving your body the proper care
Have I learned from it? Probably not fully
I've always been a night owl
I'm not great at getting a ton of sleep
I'd say for the most part I definitely learned...
The stuff I've learned in track and field
I can maybe apply some of that to my professional life
You have to be on top of your stuff night and day
I'm not going to need to ice my hamstring to do well as an accountant

But if you can understand what you need to do at all times, it's better in your professional life

I would say my sophomore to senior year, I was much better about taking care of my
body, physically
My freshman year I had a big injury
I was like I can't... dwell on
I kind of learned it myself.
Everyone will give you advice about what you can do…blah blah blah all that good stuff
It's been reinforced in my mind a million times
but until you actually encounter something
That kind of inhibits you… that's the biggest wake-up call.
Especially in an individual sport like track and field.
You literally just have to tell yourself... It's going to get better.
And that's a hard thing to tell yourself sometimes, especially when it seems like it's not going to get better
At the time it seemed so bad...
I can never get back to the way I was before
But you definitely can, it just takes time.
And unfortunately time is very limited.
So you just kind of have to do what you can when you can

(What motivates you?)
I would honestly just say trying to be...
I'm kind of a perfectionis
I just want to be the best at everything I do
I feel like that's what motivates me
Academically, honestly my dad probably motivates me the most, he is so smart
I want to be smarter than him
he's a way better accountant than I am
He's not even really an accountant, what he does all the stuff on the side
I can't let my dad be a better accountant than I am what he's not even an accountant
I want to be as smart or smarter than him, so that's kind of like my end goal
I'm very competitive
It's not even that I want to beat him I just want to...
I don't want to be inferior
I'm in his shoes I don't want to be...
I want to have the same amount of knowledge and experience as him
But he's extremely supportive
he motivates me
But my motivation is kind of on a different perspective
where I want to be instead of somebody pushing me
I just kind of want to get to his level

(Is his recognition important to you?)
I mean yeah.
I think... More of the recognition will probably come from him
just seeing how much I've progressed
like in college
when I get out into the real world doing an actual job
seeing how I've had success in there
I think that's kind of… kind of the recognition that I want to see

(graduation)
I don't think I'm going to [walk] for my undergrad
I'm going to be doing graduate
I just really don't want to do it twice
I haven't fully decided yet
I'm like 90-10%...
I'd rather all my family be there for the big one, The Graduate one instead of the undergrad
But we'll see
I'm not a hundred percent sure if I'll do that
I'll probably just end up doing it for my graduate because that one's a lot more intimate
I'll still walk on that Sunday

The last 4 weeks of every spring semester always kind of has this weird vibe to it.
Everyone's kind of checked out academically
everyone just kind of ready for the summer to come
But then you got finals so you can't check out 100%
you have to stay on top of your stuff
Especially the senior year it's felt really weird...
Like everything's just kind of coming to a close
I see all the freshmen, they are all looking forward to next 3 years,
I'm just kind of at peace
I'm done
but I'm happy about it.

I'm planning on working there [internship site] full-time right after my masters
after I get my CPA done
I don't want to live in Omaha
I don't want to live in Omaha
I don't want to live in Lincoln and drive down
I'd rather just working Lincoln if I was going to
I think it will be better for me to stay in Kansas and be more independent
learn how to live by myself more
I just needed to get a girlfriend that knows how to cook

(What do you spend your time thinking about?)
Recently, like the last couple of days it's been...
Like the last 2 weeks right when I wake up
I check my email
I'm looking to see if I got accepted for the TA
today when I woke up,
instantly I went to my email
I was like dang they haven't responded. They said they are going to respond to this week
I'm assuming it's going to be tomorrow
that's what I'm crossing my fingers for

I was talking to another teammate about this
on Monday I got the scholarship
And if I find out I got the TA
and then I PR at the national relays
it's like a trifecta good week
I'm hoping for it.
I'm not saying that's guaranteed, that would be really cool
I think I'll be a lot less stressed when...
I won't have to be waiting to know
I'd rather just know sooner rather than later

Like lately school's been kind of piling up
I almost completely...
It's almost like I have to completely separate the two more
Like usually they Blend together, like my Athletics and academics
I'm cognizant of what I have, but lately it's like...
Like oh crap we're leaving for a track meet tomorrow
I'm like what else do I have today
I'm like oh shit we're leaving
I had already known and I had all my stuff prepared for it,
it was like sometimes just kind of like.... Like yeah...
Like the reality that we leave tomorrow.
It's just like this time of the year is so busy with all the meets and all the traveling and just getting all your school work in
I just feel like you don't get a free minute
I've definitely had a lot more things that I've been dwelling on
I coast for the first 13 weeks
And in the last three I just have to start making sure I have all my stuff done
I feel like…every teacher has their big project kind of creep up in the same week.
I need to talk to make so and so emails that
manage your time
know which ones have more priority

which ones are going to take you longer time so you can start those earlier
Plus then you have a meet
And you're like okay I'm traveling back this day, what do I have on Monday
It’s just kind of a lot
I think I'm kind of milking it
it's not really that bad.
It just seems worse right now because of the beginning of the semester, it's not hard at all
The beginning of the spring semester I swear it is like the slowest thing
I think the nice weather… speeds everything up for me
It's weird how it does that
I love the summer
If it was summer 100% of the time, I'd be fine with that
I don't think the time crunch is too overwhelming right now
I mean it's definitely ramped up
But I don't think there's ever a point where I don't think I can get everything done
I think if you're smart and you try in your classes
you kind of get a sense of how much time you need to spend doing your academics
along with your Athletics
It kind of depends too and what you're majoring in
It just depends on the classes you're taking
I think some who aren't disciplined
yes they're going to have a harder time sitting in all their academics
they may be using their spare time for stuff that isn't really a priority
I would definitely say for student-athletes you have less free time
the people that aren't disciplined have a lot more trouble just making…making ends meet

I watch TV
I play video games, I'll just hang out
I'm very simple
I really like to golf
I love to golf, I actually golfed yesterday
There's actually probably one of the mistakes I made
I probably should have started doing that test earlier
I only thought it was going to be 3 hours
I was like I'll start to sit like 6:30, 6 be done by 9, be in bed by 10:30
But Yeah I ended up getting it all done
I'm actually pretty confident that I did well on it too
It took a long time
I was struggling on some of the parts
but I finally got it all done
I was like holy crap... It's like 10 pages long
It's called applied numerical linear algebra, kind of hard.
It's an interesting class, and it requires a lot of work

I enjoy it
Yeah I do that a lot [veg out]
I've been able to do that a lot this semester
I'll finish the work in a decent amount of time
I don't really have anything else to do
I definitely think I take enough rest
I think the hardest part is getting to sleep on a good hour
Sometimes…I'll be in bed at a good time
but I won't end up falling asleep for another hour or two
I'm watching something on my laptop or whatever

(K Ring Ceremony)
I almost forgot to RSVP for the event!
I got the invitation and for some reason in my brain I thought I rsvp'd right away
I was like yeah sorry I'm coming
I knew my parents weren't coming so that's probably why I thought I rsvp'd
I just thought I said yeah.
I knew it was going to be formal
I was really impressed with all the stuff that they had.
And the ceremony too
I just thought that event and that ceremony was one of the coolest things I've been to since I've been here

(What does it mean to be a Jayhawk)
I think it's almost kind of like...
Weird to think that I've been here for four years...
Like looking back when I'm an adult and I can say,
I didn't stay the status quo like a lot of my friends
I didn't just take the easy way...
Not to say they took the easy way out but it was comfortable, simple
I can look back and say
hey I took a chance
I moved somewhere that I've never been
Doing something that people, some people just can't physically do
they're not strong enough to get away from their comfortability
I think that's something that's amazing
I have loved my experience here at this University
the teachers the people here the campus the coaches the teammates
I can't really say a bad thing about it
The fact that I can say I was a part of this community
I went to this University,
I feel like this is one of the more unique places to go to school

(What legacy do you want to leave behind?)
I don't know if I leave a huge athletic one
I want people to remember me as a genuine nice guy that you can talk to
I could give you advice
I'm not trying to be a superstar or anything
I just want... Like when someone hears my name,
I want them to think I really like that guy
He was a really good leader on the team,
he was inspirational to people.
[I would] Probably rather have that reputation...
Actually probably rather school records, that would probably be really cool
But no, I want people to have a really positive thought of me
Especially my personality and how I influence others

Participant 4, Post-Transition Interview I-Poem

I am in 15 hours of the Masters of accounting program
I'm also an accounting 200 TA this semester
I think we talked about that in our last meeting, I was waiting for the response
I think the day we travel to Arkansas, that was the day when I got the offer.
I teach two sections of that
I actually just came from there lecture at 8:00
It's been really fun, teaching is... I like it.
I don't really see it going past this TA-ship
I mean it's just, it's a good skill to have
I've actually led a group, two different groups of people
Oh yeah it definitely improves my Public speaking
I've got to think on my feet a lot more which is always good
I don't think I've actually had a point where I told a kid actually I have no idea
But I know it's coming
It's not as hard as I thought it was going to be
I was really nervous for the first lab I taught
I'm definitely the superior one in terms of how much I know
And it's kind of a fun feeling, like being looked up to like that.
I like to share knowledge that may not be intuitive to people
Add some of my own tricks and thoughts to it, because there is always more than one way to solve problem.

Hopefully I can get a 4.0 this semester
I'm in a tax class, an audit class, accounting Theory class, in analytics class… advanced accounting class
I'm literally in the business school…like 8 in the morning until like 5 or 6
I definitely have some breaks to eat and stuff, and workout
I'm spending about 9 or 10 hours a day either doing school stuff or TA stuff
Which I like

I like to stay busy.

Working out has been great, I workout everyday
I really like it [gym]
Honestly I don't like the rec. It kind of feels weird being there
Not weird because I'm still a student here
But it just feels like, not that I'm better than the rec but I just don't like working out there
Unless I'm going to go play basketball or something
I don't know I just don't like the vibe there, in the rec
Yeah it's not like I'm paying $50 a month or anything.

I had a lot of fun [summer internship]
I was actually just thinking about that today
I'm starting to miss it already kind of
I'm really enjoying my grad year
But I'm excited to start full-time
So I got an offer at that place.
Yeah so I got the job. They offered right after the internship
I will just take my CPA from March until July, August, somewhere in that range.
Hopefully [I will] pass them all on the first try and then start.

I bounced around a lot between a few different clients
I did a lot of kind of busy work
[I was] just doing the stuff that the Associate's didn't really have time for
I really like the people I worked with.
Yes so just kind of builds upon itself
I know once you kind of learn the ropes of the business, can you start to progress into a senior role and it just kind of builds up on there.
I don't know where I'm going to live yet
I'll figure that out eventually
[over the summer] I lived in Lawrence
I would say it's been a good amount of time in Kansas City
I would go there five times a week
Sometimes I would stay later if we are doing something after work
I would come back to Lawrence basically every night
I think I spent maybe two or three nights in Kansas City

I went home after the internship for probably about 10 days
I had to be back for GTA training like August 19th or something
I mean it was fine it just wasn't very interesting
I don't think I learned much from it

I have mine [Help Room hours] on Wednesdays and Thursdays in the evening
I will do all my gradingI'll do my homework in there
I spent a lot of my time in there.

Honestly... I haven't gotten a lot of sleep this semester
I've just been really busy and if I'm not, then I'll be out with friends
Saturday's are just always really hectic
I'm just out of the bars all day or having fun.
Oh yeah it's been fun, I've just neglected sleep a little bit more than I should
That's what winter break is for, catching back up on that
I'm taking care of myself
I've been doing some grocery shopping
I need to do a little bit better job of doing that
but I try to do the best I can.
I still don't know how to cook much, but I can make it by
I can buy bread and turkey and all that and I can make sandwiches,
I can make soup, that's not really that hard
I mean, usually when I spend that much time in the office,
Sometimes I just have to go out and get something
I'm not going to run all the way home to make something
I don't have time for that
I could bring stuff but I,
I usually don't do much in the morning besides get up get ready and then go to class or the officer or whatever.

Do you feel like you have transitioned out of being a student-athlete?
Yeah, I mean it's definitely weird.
I haven't been in this building at all since...
Like this is the first time I've been here this semester
So it was almost weird walking over here because I didn't feel...
Like I remember walking and I was like holy crap
I haven't been here in like 6 months
And it just felt normal
I just walked in and I'm like oh shit
I'm not actually an athlete anymore.
But I mean it's like...
I don't think much has really changed in terms of like how I feel about me as an athlete
I'm obviously not a certified athlete anymore
But I don't feel like I have change that much in terms of body composition or anything like that
I definitely do miss it at times
But there are definitely things I don't miss about it.

Tell me about that, what do you not miss? What is it nice to not have to do anymore?
Being obligated to work out a day designated time every single day
I can choose whenever I need to do that, and that's kind of nice
I don't have to fit my schedule around that.

What do you miss?
I miss doing the sport that I did for 8 years
I miss the teammates and all that, and all the people. That's the big thing.

Do you keep in contact with people?
Yeah my old roommate… We are still really good friends
When I was walking up that spiral staircase, I ran into my coach
I think I'm going to help assistant coach a little bit during the winter
Like when they start with competitions
I was going to start this fall but for some reason he decided you 6:30 am practices every day
I was like I'm not coming to those
They are just conditioning, why do I need to be there
I feel like I have more value when they actually start doing the serious stuff
I'm actually going to meet with him right after this meeting
He asked me this summer, he called me
Actually we talked about it very briefly at the end of the year last year
I was like yeah I'll think about it
I'm trying to figure out my schedule. I have my schedule now
And the thing is next semester I will be way less busy
I will only have 9 credit hours and one of them will be an online class
So I will have a lot more free time
I'm in 15 hours of physical classes right now, it's a lot

I didn't end up PRing
The last meet, actually I scratched a couple really good ones
But I was content
I'm satisfied with how my career went
I stuck it out for 4 years and that was the goal
I didn't give in to some of the pressures that some people have
Where they're just like I just can't do this anymore, or like I'm not good enough
I never thought that was the case
Just my hamstrings didn't want to cooperate with me.

I haven't sprinted since the last meet I competed in
I'm feeling good
I've been able to lift a lot more like upper body
We don't really do that as much as track and field
That's always something I really enjoy doing but we never really did a lot
I would do it during the Summers
I've been lifting a lot more
I've really only gained about 3 or 4 pounds
I didn't want to gain weight
I knew I was going to just because if you lift more it's obvious that you're going to gain weight.
I'm doing a good amount of cardio, obviously not as much as if I were a track athlete
I just don't really need to
I mean I still do as much as I can but it's not a really big obligation.
I honestly feel more obligated to workout now than I did during track just because...
Since I'm not obligated now
I feel like if I don't then I'm just kind of like tapering off and then just getting in a bad rut

So I just try to stay on top of it as much as I can.
I always try to do something
Even if… I'm not feeling like working out one day
I'll just say hey just go to the gym maybe run a mile and do some core
You don't have to do a full hour lifting workout,
You can be there for 30 to 40 minutes, just do something.
And it makes you feel accomplished, it's a good feeling.
Yeah it's a good way to just kind of get away from everything.
I always work out so late
I usually work out at like 8 at night
I've never been a morning workout guy
Everything starts at 8:30 or before so I would have to start working out at like 6
I just will not do that
So I somehow muster up... It's getting harder now too especially because the sun is setting
I just feel so much more tired now than I did in the summer and fall

[Assistant coaching opportunity]
I wanted to... I wanted to kind of give back a little bit
I wanted to stay in touch with the team
I mean I love the sport
I like the people that I was teammates with last year
I wanted to see them and help them in any way I could
I wouldn't necessarily say I felt disconnected
Maybe that was an underlying Factor...
Maybe I'm still holding on a little bit... So that could be. Maybe.
I wouldn't say I feel disconnected at all
I'm always going to be a student-athlete here.

[social identity theory]
I've always been a really independent person
And I love being a part of group too, especially with the TAs that I work with
Actually I see a lot of them out, sometimes I'll go out with them
But I will always see some of them out
But I will usually go out with my roommates and some other people that used to be on the track team.
It kind of just varies, who I'm hanging out with
I think it's always good to talk to people, especially when...
Like some of the classes have been really hard this semester
It is a really important thing to find a social outlet
If you spend too much time racking your brain about something by yourself,
That can lead to pretty destructive things.

In what ways have you retired from sport?
I mean I'm physically not on the roster anymore
That's one way I'm retired
I don't practice long jump anymore

I still workout
I still consider myself an athlete, even though I'm not actually an NCAA athlete
I'll always be an athletic person
So that's one way I don't necessarily feel retired
but... how I do feel retired…I'm not on the roster anymore
I'm not talking to people on the team as much anymore

Assistant coaching
I obviously have my school and other obligations
like the labs I would teach
I'm not going to have people cover my lab so I can go assistant coach
Because my first obligation is school and TA
This is just completely my volunteering.

I have about 47 students I think total across two labs.

Transition Theory. Moving in moving through moving out...
Honestly I would probably say I'm out of it by now
I didn't... I don't know if maybe it'll hit me just really late
but I didn't have a period of time where I was very... Emotional...
I didn't... I didn't really feel sad after I was done
I felt like... I felt relieved
I felt like I was like…
I told myself one day you're going to be like wow, I really wish I was still competing
And right now I still feel like I miss competing
I miss the practices
but I think it's going to hit me probably more in the future then it is right now
it's still pretty fresh. I'm still...
Yes so I would....
Maybe I'm still in the transition, but maybe because it finally hasn't hit me yet...
But right now I... I feel...
I don't really feel like I'm still lingering, holding onto track and field
I feel like I'm out of the transition
it's not like I ever feel like while I wish I could go practice right now, you know what I mean?

You're still continuing on as a student so you're continuing part of that identity, so do you think maybe that's impacted that all for you? Because you just been so busy you really haven't had time just to sit...
Honestly yeah me being so busy is probably a really big factor
If I had way more free time I would probably feel way more... Like...
Like "I wish I was still doing a sport, I'm bored."
But I'm not bored, I have a lot of things that are taking up my time
So that's probably why I don't feel super... Connected...
Like lingering on to what I did for the last 4 years.

I'm completely content with my undergrad

I remember the day I got here, it was crazy...
I have nothing but good things to say about the program, about my time here
I'm still here
I'm a grad student but it's just…
being a grad student is so much different than being an undergrad just because...
You feel like you shouldn't be here…
I shouldn't say I shouldn't feel like I should be here
I'm paying tuition for this so I definitely should be here
But it's a little bit different
I have a job lined up, so it's not really like the grades I get in college anymore really matter
I'm still a really competitive person
I always... Like getting a bad grade pisses me off. So that's my motivator, just me being...
My ego... I can't suck.
The only thing I got to worry about is just... Staying up with my job and school
I'm just waiting until I prepare for the CPA
It's just weird because... These Halls…
you literally walk them for 4 years you like Oh I'm a student-athlete
and then now I walk them and I'm like
wow I'm not a part of this anymore,
but I'm in the same spot.
So it almost feels... Weird.
I don't feel unwelcome, it's just very weird.

I haven't really thought about that that much [being smarter than dad]
I'm not home a lot anymore
I know eventually I will be smarter than him, just give it time
I don't feel pressure
Like I said I have an ego.

I've always been really good with time management
I've never really had an issue with that
I don't think being a student-athlete really taught me… time management
It just kind of forced it
I just [have] always been really good about staying on top of my stuff
I'm not saying I didn't learn anything from being a student-athlete
But I wouldn't necessarily say being a student-athlete has made me better at my time management
I think just my work ethic has always been like that
I didn't think being a student-athlete was that much work in terms of
"Oh crap I'm so bogged down with practice and work."
I could always make time for it.

Do you feel satisfied with your life right now?
Yeah. I've got a lot of stuff lined up
I took care of what I needed to in undergrad
I didn't slack off

I really can't think of anything that doesn't feel settled right now.

I would say definitely kind of like a role model or like an influencer
Because of my TA-ship
I wear two hats
I'm a student, but if I'm talking to one of my students
I've kind of got to be like okay I'm in a position of superiority
I have to help and inform and get them the right information
I have to make sure that they know the stuff that they need to know
I have this other responsibility that has nothing to do with my school work
I've got to completely throw that out the window
This is who I am right now so I've got to, I need to help them.

So do you feel like okay at this time I have to devote to this hat, and then at this time I need to swap over and do this?
It's actually honestly how it feels
If I'm talking to one of the other TAs or just a friend
I'm like, like the way I talk to them compared to how I talk to a student
I have to sound smarter to the students
I can't just sound like an idiot like I can with my friends
It does feel like I'm wearing multiple hats.

I've definitely like, let loose more this semester than I have
I've stayed out later
I need to catch up on sleep
I wouldn't say I've been more irresponsible,
But I've just been less uptight
Like sometimes I'll be like I need to go to bed,
But sometimes I'll be like screw it I can stay up
I'm young, I have the rest of my life to sleep.
I's not like I'm getting one hour or two hours of sleep
I at least get 4 to 5 hours, at a minimum
It's not like I'm a Zombie staying up
But I'm definitely not like saying oh crap I have practice tomorrow
I need to get 8 hours of sleep
I've also noticed I just can't sleep in much anymore, even if I try
I've just been so busy
I'm just always used to getting up and going to do something
So sleeping in past 10 just feels awful, especially on the weekends
I would never sleep in during a school day
Like on a Saturday morning back when I was in track,
I could sleep till 1 if I wanted to because I was like screw this
I just had a full week of practice, this is my day off so I'm going to sleep in
And now on Saturday I'm like wow I worked all week,
I want to have fun and I don't want to waste the weekend
I love the weekends

It's weird I love the week because it's a grind
[Then] like oh yeah, it's Saturday I don't have to do anything for work
I can just go hang out with people and watch the game or whatever.
I always try to work out Saturday morning, that's always my thing
If I'm going to be drinking during the day,
I'm not going to want to work out after
I need to work out in the morning
I usually try to wake up at like 9, go right away
That's one nice thing I don't really have to worry about
I can't drink because I'm on the track team
I can drink more than I want to

What is a day in the life for you like as a student-athlete?
Go to class early in the morning, practice in the afternoon. Go to practice around 3:30 or 4, if you have tutoring that's more of your like a freshman, not necessarily if you're an upperclassman but... on weekends during the season, you always had to prepare for any classwork that you were going to miss, if you had a Friday class or late Thursday class that you were going to miss due to traveling. You always have to make accommodations for that. Just staying on top of your stuff throughout the day, making sure you have enough time during the evening to get your homework done based on how long you are at practice. Like I said I'm a bad example because I never had a problem with that. But you might have other obligations too like, like I have to go get treatment after practice. That's always something that honestly, that was probably like one of the bigger time commitments, getting treatment. Because sometimes you'd spend like an hour in the training room just doing rehab if you were injured or getting stem or whatever all that stuff. Yeah so I mean that's as basic as I can make it. That's what it felt like to me, get your class work done by 1 at the latest. I sometimes had a 4 o'clock class that I had to go to after practice, but yeah just always kind of accounting for about a 3-hour gap in the middle of your day every day, and that is solely not school work, it's track.

So how is that different than what your day today is like now?
Honestly, I think the biggest difference between my schedule is like if we're just talking strictly classes, my classes are way more spread out this semester. My Mondays and Wednesdays I have an 8:30 and one, and my Tuesdays and Thursdays, one class I don't have anymore. But I have to go to the 8am accounting 200 lecture that I'm a TA for. And my labs are on Fridays, but that's the only thing I have on Fridays. So I have to go to the 8:00 lectures on Tuesdays and Thursdays I did have 11:00 but that just ended last week, so I won't have to be at that class anymore. And then a 4:00. So right now my Tuesdays and Thursdays are in 8, and then at 4. And then on Thursdays I have a 1, which is a once-a-week meeting. How I would compare that to me being a student-athlete is all my classes of the student-athlete would be 8, 930, 11, like boom boom boom and then I'm done. But now basically I'll have a class and then I'll go to the office, get some stuff done maybe for class maybe file some homework, maybe some stuff for the TA. You don't really have to do that much work outside of the TA besides turning into homework from the students quizzes to be graded that they took in lecture, which is easy. And then yeah I just feel like I have a lot more gaps. And sometimes I will be like okay I've got three and a half hours right here and I don't have any work to do, so I'm going to go work out so I don't have to do it at night. If I can find a job to work out in the afternoon I will, because by 12 unlike

you I can work out right now. Especially now because I feel like I just get so much more tired when Daylight Savings Time ends. Like yesterday I could have fallen asleep at 6. So I just feel like I have a lot more gaps, set alarm or time to do my work. And I don't have to worry about practice.

The last question. If you could give advice to a student-athlete in their final year what would you tell them?
If things get tough and you feel like quitting, don't. You'll always regret not finishing it all the way through. Things will always get better and you will never have this opportunity again in your life.

Participant 5, Pre-Transition Interview I-Poem

[I'm] Good. Good now
[I] Got a job finally, which is good.
I feel relieved, it's not here but that's okay
I'm excited
I'm excited that it's an hour away,
I'm excited for something new.
I'm ready for it, I think.

I've been looking for graduate assistant positions
so I can help get my Master's paid for
I'd really like to pursue a master's in something sport related or College administration,
I ended up accepting a position at ~~Kansas State~~ as a graduate assistant academic advisor for football, men's golf, and maybe a little bit of rowing.
It's been like the 20th thing that I applied for
I did like four interviews, and this one is finally the one that stuck
I'm excited.
I definitely feel relieved
I finally found something
I didn't think I was going to
I was like okay I'm going to have to come up with a different plan here
But I finally figured that out
I feel relieved for sure

I don't think our record really shows what's going on
I feel like we're a lot better
I'm feeling really sad
Like last year I probably could have been done with softball and been fine,
I'm really sad to be done with it, but it's all good.
I think we actually made Big 12's
I feel like you should take advantage of any kind of postseason opportunity.
I know it cost a lot of money to be in it.
I think we're getting a lot better, and it's fun.

I feel okay
I feel like I've gotten a lot better
I feel like I'm pretty consistent all the time
I'm never getting yelled at
I'm never getting ignored or anything
I'm just always kind of right in the middle, so that's been good.
I feel like I finally earned it
I finally pushed my way in there
I'm kind of showing what I can do

I feel like I could have been even better if these coaches were here for all four years

I'm in some hard classes
I came in last night to do that extra tutoring
I remembered more than I thought I would
I'm starting to understand it so that's good
I've realized that for the two walk-throughs for the final presentation I will be gone

I will have more school after
I feel like I... Did pretty well in school for the last 4 years
I feel like I can now focus a little bit more on classes that are more specific to what I want to do
I'm looking forward to that too
I'm ready for it.

[I'm] Still student-athlete
especially now that I kind of figured out what I'm doing next.
I feel like that's definitely where my interests lie
I still take pride in being an athlete here, especially this year.
I feel like we've changed a lot.
But I also take more pride in being a student and a leader
So definitely still student-athlete not athlete student,
but I'm curious to see how that feels when that's not there anymore.
I thought about it but I haven't really thought about it, it's becoming more real.
I know I'm going to cry a bunch
I still have a couple weeks left hopefully
I think it's just going to be sad that I won't get to do it everyday
I won't have those workouts
But I'll always have the teammates
I'll always have the things that really matter
I'll find something else... golf, I'll just play golf all summer
I don't know why I'm sad but I'm also ready
I think it's a normal feeling.

Last year I feel like I would have been...
I feel like I would have had a harder time getting by because I didn't like it as much
I didn't like my experience.
But now it's more of like a peaceful parting instead of like ugh I'm ready to be done with softball.
I would have regretted being done last year
I have so much more I could have done with it and enjoyed it again
I feel better about parting ways with it now that I love it again
I love doing it
I love my teammates and my coaches.

The experience, all of the above.
It's way better ending on a high note instead of ending on a note of I really didn't love it anymore.
Definitely a better place to part with softball, for sure.

I'm staying in the world of College athletics
I didn't ever think I was going to end up in academics
I just never thought that would be my path.
I thought it would be more like coaching or something like that
[I'm] actually getting more interested in it the more I'm looking into it.
think it's going to be a big challenge especially with football.
But I think sometimes people can Overlook it and be like oh you're just a babysitter
But I also think it's cool because I want people to care more about it, and that's the whole point of me wanting to go into Administration, to kind of change the face of College athletics.
I feel like this is a good way to do that, or at least start, or at least understand it
I like the direction I'm headed for sure
I'm really glad I'm staying at a high level
I feel like people really respect that
I'm excited to go away from Lawrence but only be an hour away,
I've never really been away from my family
I can always come back
I think my mom will be more sad than I will
I've always been here.

Athletically I'm ready to step into a different kind of role in the athletic department
I might even try to get involved with their SAAC
I'm interested to see how another school kind of runs things.
I've experienced kind of different ways things occur here,
I'm just kind of ready to see if I like it somewhere else or if maybe one day I want to come back
I don't really know, but I feel good about it and I'm ready

I mean my goal was always to play at this level
I don't think it turned out exactly how I thought
I was like I'm going to start as a freshman and play all four years it's going to be great
I don't think people realize how challenging that is
I get to turn around and say I played at the highest level for four years and in the best conference, and against the best schools.
And it was I the best? No not even close, but it doesn't matter and no one really cares about that.
I'm realizing now like when I got my ring… people were like dang you really did the damn thing
It's something I'm really proud of
I'm glad that it went the way it did
I feel a lot better about it than I did in the past.

I'm kind of looking at it now like I'm glad I'm leaving
I need to venture out in more ways than just my job and what I'm going to be doing
I'll get to know a lot more people and especially other GAs and people who have the same goals
I feel like I've been around people that are similar to me, because we all play softball
I'm ready to be around people that have the same goals and aspirations that I do
I think that will be good, it will be a good social Fresh Start for me
I'm probably going to live on my own, which I've never done that either
I'm actually really excited to have my own bathroom and all that stuff again.
I'm just ready for it.
You know what I'm talking about it I'm like yeah this is good, this was a good decision

I feel like now my goal is every day to change the face of Athletics
I feel like it's become such a...
I don't even know how to word it, everything behind it is just that we have to win at all costs, when people forget all the other things that really matter.
My experience kind of motivates me to make sure that other people have a better experience.
I know what I like and what I don't like
I know how people should be treated and not treated
I want to go make it a better place, some people enjoy playing their sport and it doesn't become all about only playing time and money or whatever. It becomes so much more than that.
I know it's kind of hard with the world we're in, but that's just kind of my motivation, to make it better. That's the main thing that motivates me everyday, just changing that.
Being a woman in that, too.
I feel like people kind of underestimate us just because they're like oh you're too nice, no one's going to listen to you, you're too frilly, blah blah blah.
I'm just like I'll be a ball buster when I need to be, it's going to happen.
I think some people realize that
I think some people will realize that, yeah. Preaching to the choir.

If I didn't play at the division 1 level I wasn't going to play, because...
This sounds terrible but I didn't see the value in it I guess.
I probably still would have made the same decision
My goal athletically is to be the best in to win, but it's also to leave the team better than when it started
I realized that that is not just an athletic ways but in other ways
I feel like that's another thing that motivates me athletically
love getting stronger
I love getting better at the things I'm doing
I feel like I've accomplished that
I feel like I've worked really hard every single day
Even if I'm not the best softball player definitely got better
I found passion for other things like lifting and doing all that kind of stuff

So my brother is really smart and I'm like okay I got to do really well, prove I can do it too
I don't know my parents have always instilled to me to always try your best
I pushed myself in college more than I did in high school
feel like I wanted to prove that I can hold my own in many different ways
I feel like that was a big part of the motivation for me to do well
I feel like you can't tell another person to do unless you're doing it the right ways too
I know not everyone is super smart naturally, I'm not.
But I just feel like you can succeed in so many ways academically just by doing the right stuff.
I feel like my dad was my biggest motivator in that way. And my mom too.
Proving that I'm pretty smart
I can do this, be successful while playing a sport at the same time

(Is recognition important to you?)
I realized yes it is important but...
I feel like it's more important for me to be recognized in other ways besides softball
I work pretty hard
I get good enough grades
I don't know how all that happens (Academic All-American)
I know the past I didn't play nothing even be in that pool
if I was to get recognized for that, it would just make everything worth it
I competed at such a high level and did so well in school at the same time.
But at the end of the day, that's not why I did it, for recognition.
It's just the cherry on top
I know my parents are more proud of that stuff than me doing well in softball
Not that it's everything but it definitely helps boost your confidence and make you feel like you did all the right things
I will say this whole job process, getting denied multiple times that's been really hard.
Maybe I'm not as ready as I thought I was
I'm not the only one working hard
I got to interview with these different schools and they saw potential clearly
I feel like that kind of stuff is taught me a lot about my own self-confidence
I'm just moving forward and being like just because something doesn't work out doesn't mean that you're not doing really well at what you're doing

I feel like immediate recognition from __ definitely made me feel like hell yeah
I can do this
I feel more confident now than I didn't my last few years
whether that's softball related or life in general
I feel like I've accomplishing so much this year
I'm graduating
I'm finally accomplishing the things I've been working that has made me feel more confident.
But I feel like that's still a work in progress

I feel like I motivate myself a lot
but I also allow a lot of outside things to motivate me
I let other people's opinions motivate me, or affect me, a lot more than I probably should
I'm definitely working on.
That's something I'm learning how to do.
But I wish I could.... lean a little bit away from extrinsic motivation and more into intrinsic motivation
I think that's just something I'm going to learn as I get older
I've had all these things to rely on for that so far
But I will have one job and one task next year
I'm going to have to find other ways to be like okay this needs to get done, you need to be confident in yourself.
I have two years to hopefully figure that out before I apply for the next job
But that's my goal is to become more intrinsically motivated

I don't like when people don't like me, or have an issue with me
I don't know I just don't like when people don't like me, it bothers me.
I try really hard to be nice to everyone, do that kind of stuff,
but I've also learned to... Get better at not caring about certain people and their thoughts
But getting denied for jobs and stuff like that... That's been hard
I feel like I want to make everyone happy and do the right stuff for them
I'm definitely a people pleaser

Money really stresses me out.
Like my parents are pretty good at making me pay for a lot of things now
I have a very strong understanding of the value of money.
But… your first job out of college you're not going to get paid a lot
I'm like okay how am I going to pay for all this different stuff I didn't have to pay for before, even being an athlete
I wasn't on a full ride or anything
I understand the value of having to pay for your own things
I hope… these next two years…that I get the opportunity to really work, not just be...
It sounds bad but like a coffee Runner
I'm thinking already about where I'm going to be after those two years
I'm nervous to be away from home
I've never done that
I'm not afraid to do it
I just never done it so it will be very different
I don't want to leave everything behind with KU just because I'm moving somewhere else
…just even staying in contact with old teammates and coming back to KU sometimes
I hope I can do that
I think it will be [fun]

I don't think people realize how big of an accomplishment it is until you get there [graduation]
I'm excited
I'm excited with my GPA
I'm excited with how things are ending
I'm excited that I stayed with the degree that I have, it's hard
but I really liked it.
I'm just ready
I'm excited to walk to the Campanile, it'll be really cool
I've got my dress picked out
I'm excited about it
I think maybe my brother from Colorado will be able to come to graduation
This summer I'm just going to work and hopefully go to that forum, and that will be really cool
They invited me to go
I talked to my parents and they were like yeah
It's a 3-day form thing
I'm excited, it'll be really cool, I hope
The NCAA Sports Forum.
It's through their leadership Department, in working in college athletics and stuff like that.
I'm hoping to get a better gauge of after grad school
What can I do
What can I get involved in
What are people looking for
I really only heard from a couple people on what they're looking for
I think it'll be a cool opportunity
I'm excited about that

(What has student athlete time management been like?)
Hectic
Honestly I'm way more productive when I am busy and don't have a lot of time
I'm like alright I have to get this done and this done and this done
But sometimes I catch myself
If I don't have anything to do
I'm like okay something's wrong.
Because I feel like I'm wasting a day if I don't have something to do.
I'm going to have to find new ways to stay on task because nobody's watching over me,
Now I'm watching over other people
I feel like I've always been pretty good about time management
getting stuff done
setting small goals
It's definitely prepared me for work-life being this busy all the time
and traveling and being up late or whatever.
I feel like I'm pretty good at it
but I'm interested to see how it kind of matures

Like how my skills mature when I'm in more of a leadership position
That will be interesting to see too

I feel like I'm wasting time if I'm sitting at home and watching an hour of TV
I always put other things I have to do on my off days
I need to learn how to balance that more for myself
I'm pretty tired
I've had a lot going on these last 3 weeks
it will be interesting I manage all of that when I don't have a mandatory three-hour practice a day
I'm going to have to find ways to fill my time
but I'm also going to have to learn how to balance it all again, which will be new.
No one's going to write my schedule for me again
It freaks me out
I'm pretty good about working out on my own
I'm probably going to have to become a member at a gym or something to help motivate me
I'm pretty good about food especially if I'm on a budget
I'm afraid to gain weight
I will probably see my body change
I might take a running and I hate running.
I don't know there could be some cool opportunities to meet people through workout classes
My parents work out, like we're pretty healthy as a family,
I feel like I've always grown up in that way
so I'm not terribly worried
They're like if I don't have to do it anymore then I'm not going to do it
But to me I never felt like I was forced to go to a work out because I like them
Hopefully I can find new and creative ways to do that kind of stuff
I think my body is going to change a lot
It's already changed from the fall to now
I've lost like 8 lbs since the fall
I still feel pretty strong but it's definitely going to change
I'm not going to be bulky or anything like that anymore
I think that will be weird
I think I'll look a lot more like my mom
I'll probably start running and doing all that sort of stuff

I know how to make a lot of the basic stuff for myself
I make eggs and avocado toast for myself all the time
I can make pasta and vegetables
I know how to make a lot of the basic stuff
I feel like some people just don't even know where to begin
I don't eat a lot of packaged Foods
I will have to become more creative so I don't go out
I'm going to have to try new stuff and learn what's good leftover and how to pack lunches

I'm going to have to learn how to think ahead
I don't love meal prepping
I don't love eating the same thing 5 days in a row
My mom is really interested in helping me with stuff like that too
I'll figure it out

(K Ring ceremony)
My dad started talking about me and I started to cry
It wasn't sad it was just kind of like Bittersweet that we got to do that together
I'm wearing it right now
I need to get it resized but it was cool
That's the recognition thing that I was talking about
I wasn't even specifically recognized but as a group we are recognized as you competed at the highest level for 4 years and you did it really well
so it was cool to post about it and show people what you did
I really appreciated it
I have been through the wringer

I'm looking to see if someone can sublease
so I can try to save some money and just live in the basement at my house
it's what I signed up for
I knew I was going to be paying that rent anyway
I'll be at home probably a good amount of the time,
Working and hanging out with my family while I can.
Maybe traveling some.
I'll be here all summer
I'll enjoy it while I can

I think I'm going to do the college student development one with a focus on Intercollegiate Athletics.
I'm probably going to end up doing that
I want to further my education in that department anyway
I already have the communications and journalism
I'm not really interested in business, but it's just a good thing to have I guess.
I'm getting that athletic side too, hopefully with the advising and stuff like that
I think it'll be a good choice
I talked about with my parents too
That's like kind of the road I'm looking at right now

They offered me the job yesterday
I've been talking to my parents
I like the people I interviewed with
I know a few people there but it's just going to be a fresh start.

I did make this decision pretty quickly but it just felt right.
It is very hard to get a graduate assistant position anywhere
I didn't want to wait and pass up the opportunities
It's 2 years, if anything I will learn a lot from it and see if that's really what I want to do
The decision was quick
I'm also really excited for it
I feel so relieved to making the decision
I was like why wait any longer?

I just feel like the stuff I've been working for is now headed to a more directed place
Like it's all kind of narrowing down
it's more specific
I feel like I'm on the right path now
Instead of like I don't know if I'm going to go to grad school
I don't know if I'm going to try and get a job.
And it just feels like I'm finally doing things the right way
I'm getting to where I need to be
I definitely feel relieved
I'm more nervous for the job and making sure I do all that stuff right
Than my social life and living alone and all that stuff
that stuff it will happen
I'm pretty good at being alone and doing things on my own
I'm just thinking about the job now.
I'm nervous and excited

I just… know that it's really hard doing what we do every day
I hope that people come in and [say] she made me feel better about it
She made me feel like I was better at softball
She made me feel like she was really interested in me and my personal life in as a friend
I know I'm not the best player
But I hope that I made the team better in general
I made people grateful for their opportunity to be here
And [I] made them realize that softball isn't everything
Like it's very important
I know it's the star of your life right now
but it's not everything.
That also doesn't mean to totally disregard it.
I feel like last year there was a bad mix of softball
I don't need to do this
I had a very kind of negative attitude towards it
As opposed to I'm going to work really hard at this
but it also doesn't Define me.
So I hope I changed the culture in that way

To motivate people and really take pride in what they're doing
But also don't let it ruin everything else that's going on your life just because you don't feel confident
Or you don't like how the coaches treat you
And this year has also opened up my eyes
There are a lot of younger girls on the team that could be really good
They get a lot of the attention on our team
Sometimes they can take that as the coaches don't like me or they're like really hard on me
I don't get a lot of attention from the coaches
I just kind of look at them and I'm like I wish I had that
I wish I had some of that was hard on me
Because that means they know that I'm really good
I think a lot of the younger girls don't realize that
But I'm hoping that they do
I told them I wish coach would yell at me about hitting
So I guess in that way I am intrinsically motivated
I've learned to get good at I guess
I don't understand what people necessarily want the coaches to say to them
I wish I had that
I think it is a personality thing too
I realized that I don't need that to.... Be happy or be whatever I am on the team
I guess it's good or bad both ways
But I hope people learn from me that, you just got to be tough
You've got to tough it out
I feel like I have motivated people to not quit
Sticking it out is one of the most relieving feelings ever, because you get to walk away from it in a better way

I'm still a Jayhawk
Even though I am going somewhere else
I do take a lot of pride in that
I'm still going to watch every KU basketball game
I'm still going to be a coach's daughter
I’m a leader
I am very hard-working
I think it's finally starting to pay off and lead me in the right direction
Even if I'm not at the top of my goals yet
I feel like it's leading me in the right place
I am a person that has become happy with myself
Even if not everything is going the right way
I'm someone who has learned to handle a lot of different things that have been thrown at me
I've learned a lot
I learn new things every day

I learn how to react to things
I'm open to learning new things
I really do hope people think I work really hard
I have a really good attitude
I hope they perceive me the way I hope to be perceived.
I am going to look back and be like that was a good decision
I'm glad I made that decision
No matter where I go I will always be a Jayhawk
I will always support that
I will always be excited for anyone who goes there
Who knows maybe I'll come back one day
Who really knows what's going to happen
I take pride in it.

Participant 5, Post-Transition Interview I-Poem

I don't do anything on the weekends
But I work 45 plus every week. It's just normal
I think I'm going to do my practicum as a learning specialist
I think it's really interesting
I really like it there but it's a frustrating experience
I get paid $10 an hour, and I don't get my tuition paid for
before I go in to talk to [supervisor] I'm going to have facts
I work with a lot of [at-risk student athletes]
Yes, I agreed to it
But I'm realizing now that I'm not doing what I quote on quote signed up for
And I don't like my master's program. It's called college student development, it's okay.
I wanted to do more sport management kind of stuff and they don't have that there.
I just kind of think it's boring.
I'm not actively seeking it out, but I have been keeping my eye out for things
I don't need a master's to do what I'm doing right now, in my opinion
I just don't
I'm learning more at the job than I am in my masters
And I know that one day I have to have it, it's a requirement now
But I just feel like I'm not getting... I don't know it's...
I work my ass off there
So [other GA] and I were like we have no idea what we don't even know
Or what we need to learn or what we need to do
I just didn't know any better
I just did what she asked me to do, and she uses me a lot
I'm learning a lot but I'm basically running the [team] by myself
I really like where I'm at
I'm glad I'm with football
Like I said it's great and I'm learning a lot but it's like it can just be really overwhelming
The first week I forgot I was even in classes

I was so worried about getting people's classes dropped and swapped and all that different stuff
I was like oh shit, I should read my syllabus
I like it now, I really hated it at first
I was like nope this is not what I want to do.

I'd like to finish out the year
I feel like I owe it that much
I really do like it there, but I'm not getting...
I just feel very undervalued
The hardest part is that I'm not loving my program
Not that I have to be in love with it but I just don't...
I thought about switching to an MBA
I'll have to look over during winter break
I'm already enrolled for next semester
But I'm really worried with the hours that I put in to work,
I'm just going to drown in that program
I don't know, there are a lot of different things to think about
I was doing really well and then this last week,
I think they're all feeling burnt out too, like the guys.
Like this last week has been really challenging professionally
I get dirty comments all the time, like sexual comments
Some of them are to me, not nasty but just like flirty, like I want to take you out on a date
And then other comments I've heard from other people,
Things that they don't know that I've heard. They are just like disgusting
As I'm leaving I heard [student] turn to the other student and say
"I've only been in here for 2 minutes and this bitch is already leaving"
So I popped my head back around the corner and I was like
“I'm going to be gone for 15 minutes
If you're going to be upset about that you can go get help from someone else,
you're not even my student.”
I've just had a lot of issues in regards to that
I want to scream at him [male GA] and be like
you don't get sexual comments
you don't ever have to question if they're coming to you because they think you're pretty
I was talking to my supervisor about some student,
He was like can I talk to you for a little bit?
So I shut the door, and he was like “I have noticed that these guys pick on you a lot”
“I think you're handling everything really well it's just a really bad class.”
It's just not part of my personality to be very stern with people
I was talking to [coworker] about how I just need to develop my work personality
Not that I've let them take advantage with me
I dress well
I act appropriately
I'm like no you know that's against the rules
I just keep repeating that to them over and over again
[coworker] came in the other day and said, you're so pretty

they want to talk to you all the time
And she was like I hate saying that that's the problem but that's the problem
And it's just frustrating that that would ever be an issue
And I talked to my mom about it sometimes,
She's like can someone like you really work in football?
And I turned around one day and I was like eff that
I can say the same things that [male football ga] says to them in the same way,
But they take it a different way
So that has just probably been the one thing that's been the biggest learning curve for me,
Just how to act around them
I've realized that I can't care more than they care, and that's just been really hard.

I was telling my mom, we have this conversation every day
I could just very easily get wrecked in this industry
I care so much about this one person [who] really probably doesn't care
I just need to be careful because I could be destroyed
I think I'm getting better at it, like if they burn me okay my guard is up on you now
I don't want to have to have a guard up with you
But I have to tell myself that's not on you,
I have to be okay calling him out
There's just a lot of stuff that happens that I never knew happened.

I love my roommate we're besties
I realize that I think I'm a little bit over school,
And I didn't realize it until I started again
I felt done at graduation, I was like oh yes I'm done,
I've heard your Master's isn't as hard. And it's not as hard
I'm just over school
I made a lot of money I worked all summer pretty much.

Would you consider a GA in coaching?
Yes, I was really upset when I first got to [current Institution] because
that's really what I want to be doing
I think I was hung up on that for a while,
but now I'm starting to really like what I'm doing
Sometimes I feel like I didn't pursue it enough
I'm worried that I might have missed my opportunity if I ever do you want to get into that
I didn't do a lot, besides work. I kind of just enjoyed it [summer] off
I knew I was going to be busy when I got here.

I just like making my own schedule
Doing things when I want to do them, instead of…
I don't know, I say that
But I also kind of like when things are scheduled too, because there's always a time for it
I just like having the freedom to be more independent
I'm also away from my family so I feel more independent

I felt like I was pretty independent in college anyway,
But I just feel way more independent now
I just do my own thing and I feel really responsible and all that stuff
I think I like that part the most probably.

I miss scheduled workouts honestly
It's hard to fit in that time because I'm exhausted
I'm not waking up at 5 in the morning to do this
If I do go, I really try hard to go straight to the rec after [work]
I hate not having a facility to work out in, it's so aggravating
But it's just part of being a normal student
I just miss being around my teammates all the time
I'm really, not struggling making friends,
But I just don't have a ton of time.
And it's hard to go out in [college town]
Regardless of where you go, you're going to see someone
I just really try to be smart about when I see them and how I see them
My work friends are my friends, then my roommate is my best friend
I just do whatever she's doing all the time
And she did her undergrad there, so when her friends come up
I just go and do stuff with them
But it's just hard to meet people at this stage I feel like
Especially just not being around people that you enjoy seeing every day,
that's been the hardest part.
But I also just miss,
like the athletes will come in and complain about how tired they are
I'm like I miss that,
I miss being competitive about something, getting the gear
There are just things you don't realize until you don't have it anymore
You're like oh I really miss that

In our last interview you told me you were really nervous about staying on top of workouts, gaining weight and stuff like that. Is that going okay for you?
It's going okay
I feel like I work out more now than I did during softball,
But I'm not doing the same workouts
I'm not even on the same schedule
I sit in an office all day
I don't get my steps in
But I would if I was walking to class or walking to practice
I'm just not used to that
I work out more, but it's only an hour a day instead of moving constantly throughout the day
I have to be really careful about what I eat
I just gain weight really easily, so that's just been frustrating
I really wish I had my muscles
So I'd say it's been okay

I feel like I am motivated to work out, but the rec is hard
I can't do my normal lifting that I used to do in college
But [former strength coach] has sent me quite a few things to do.

So are you feeling lonely? Or isolated a little bit?
A lot of the people I work with like the athletes are people that
I would be friends with if I wasn't in the position I'm in
I really can't talk to you outside of this
It makes me feel like I'm missing out on it
I'm like a freshman again
I feel lonely but also I'm not sad or anything
I wish I had something that I could do on Saturday night,
Like go out with a certain group of friends.
My work friends are great but they're all like 30 plus,
I guess I can get along with them and that's fine
but I'm at the stage where I want to go have fun, go to a bar that I can dance in
It's just not... You just have to be careful. You always do.

Do you feel like being so entrenched in athletics, do you feel like that has kind of preserved your student-athlete identity a little bit? Do you still identify as an athlete?
I feel like to relate to all of them
They all somehow gained so much more respect for me
when they found out that I played softball [Division I]
They are like okay she gets it
My roommate did not play a sport, so I think she struggles with that sometimes
I feel like I can have great conversations with some of the guys
I know what it's like to not play
I know what it's like to be tired all the time
I feel like it's really helped me
I don't think I identify as that [student athlete] anymore, which is good.
But I also take a lot of pride in it, being like yeah I did that
I understand how you feel because I lived that
My roommate just doesn't get it in the same perspective
I think she gets her feelings hurt because she wants to be their friend and help them so much

So do you feel like you retired from sport then?
I think it's going to hit me more when I go and watch them play
I feel like I've retired because I'm just not a part of it anymore
I feel like, I don't know
I hope they don't look at me and say she isn't in the athlete
It's so aggravating because I want to feel athletic still,
And that bothers me that I don't sometimes.

What does it mean to feel athletic?
I don't know
I just felt like I was a beast when I was an athlete

I felt bad ass all the time
And now I'm like I have to find other ways to feel badass
I have to make work the grind, instead of the physical grind
I'm realizing there are different ways to be badass and grind it out
So that's where I'm using my athletic side,
But no one looks at me anymore and thinks I'm cool or anything like that.

You're in transition it is weird. Moving in moving through and moving out. Where do you think you might be in your transition?
I think I'm moving through it but almost out of it, like towards the end
I think I've adapted to it a lot better than some of my old teammates
I feel like I'm accepting of where I'm at
I think it's more of the not being a part of the team, the physical aspect
Just the way I look, like not being is toned as I used to be
Or being able to eat whatever I want, or just doing stuff all the time,
[That] has just been really weird for me
I don't know… yeah just feeling bad ass in whatever I'm doing
But sometimes I have to just say to my mom, you know
I'm bad ass at my job,
I'm killing it at this job
Realizing that I don't have to be a coach to feel the grind of Athletics
That's something that's new.
People don't take what we do seriously sometimes
I'm like there wouldn't even be people on that field if it wasn't for us
I appreciate it so much more now
I felt like I appreciated it when I was in, like tutoring, all that different stuff
I realized too, like I always thought I wanted to do Sports admin, like SWA
But I don't want to do that anymore, I don't.
I was like I'm going to make a difference
And I'm realizing now that making a difference the way I want to is by
Interacting with them every day,
And I can do that in this position
If I coach, I'm honestly more interested in being an assistant coach
No one goes to talk to the head coach
But I think our director misses interactions with student-athletes
I just would rather have a conversation with an athlete every single day,
have an office filled with people
And I'm learning to accept that I might not make as much money,
Or my title might not be as strong
I might not feel as bad ass as an SWA might,
But that doesn't mean that what I'm doing is important
[I'm]just learning a lot about what I want to do
So I'm learning to be okay with that being my role
When I first got here I was like I don't know if this is what I want to do at all
And now I'm starting to become a lot more passionate about it. So we'll see.

I'm becoming a runner and I hate it,
but I'm also getting a lot better at it. It's horrible
I can run like three and a half max now, which is way more than I used to
It's awesome, it's hard
I was like you're going to think I'm so slow and I won't be able to do it
We ran for 35 minutes
I was like that was actually not that bad. She's been really helpful
I was like I did not talk shit, and she just...
I think she is pretty better at me sometimes because my senior year was amazing
It was hard sometimes but I loved every second of softball,
I got to end it on a high note
I don't think she will ever get over how miserable her senior year was

I've always known I was like him [dad]
but literally I am just like him when it comes to just like caring about people
I'm just so much like him
She [mom] just stresses so much
I didn't talk to her about school at all for like the first two months
I think one day I told her I didn't really like my master's program and she flipped out
She was like what are you doing there, why are you wasting all this money
I was like Mom, I'm going to hang up the phone now because you're really hurting my feelings
I was calling you to get advice about something
I think she realized there, like it's just different now
I'm learning
I have to remind her that I've never done this before,
I'm learning and I'm like a freshman again
So it's just been a learning curve
But my dad, like when I say something he totally gets what I'm talking about
I just see myself reacting in the same way that he would, just caring so much

I know how to handle that now [money]
I know now that you can't just go in and ask for something
You need to have proof and you need to earn it first
I was really worried I was going to be bored,
Because I didn't really have that many at risk people originally in my groups,
I was like okay this is like softball
You have to prove that you are good at this first, and then you can ask for more
Prove that you can play this position and then you can ask for this
So that's really helped me a lot
I just know how to grind through things
I think my roommate gets really overwhelmed sometimes
I'm kind of like it's not life or death
I just know what the grind feels like
Being a student-athlete you just have so much thrown at you all the time
I'm really good at handling, like I'm just busy all the time
And I'm tired all the time, but I don't let that affect what I'm doing

Which is totally what I was doing when I was a [student athlete]
You just kind of make it work
That part has really helped me understand where I'm at and where I want to be,
Setting attainable goals,
Knowing how to organize and manage two different aspects of your life it's something that I've learned being a student-athlete.

I wish they did more professional development stuff
The one thing that I will say was really helpful was how to dress
I think they should do a lot of stuff with women in the workplace
I know not everyone is necessarily going to work with 18 year old boys,
But just in general know how to carry yourself and dress and speak,
Always go to the person of the office that has a higher title
I just didn't know when I first got here
I think me applying for jobs actually really helps me a lot.
I applied for so many, it was exhausting, so exhausting
And being turned down was very hard, it was super hard.
So just finding a place that I felt wanted me right away,
It was just like being recruited all over again
Like who's going to make you feel like they want you the most?
I've learned a lot which is good.

I'm like a floater right now, honestly.
I'm just…
I feel like I'm just in between so many different stages and progressions
But calling myself a freshman has been the biggest eye opening thing
I'm like it's okay that I don't have it all together right now
Freshman year, I didn't have it together, for like the whole year,
It's okay that I don't know what I'm doing
I feel lonely sometimes there
I just don't have my routine yet
I have a routine but not completely
I'm still trying to find my adult self I think is the biggest issue
In college, you're not forced to do that
Yeah in school I was forced to act a certain way,
And I knew how to communicate with teachers and people who were outside of Athletics but this is really forcing me to become a professional in and outside of work.
Sometimes I'm like I'm not ready…
I'm 23 and I feel like I'm so much older than that
It's just finding the right balance I guess
So I'm definitely a floater, that's the best word to describe what I think
I'm learning the ton,
But I'm trying to find where I might land I guess
Do I want to stay here,
or where am I willing to move?
That stuff is kind of freaking me out too

Where are you willing to go for this job?
Or are you willing to go?
Stuff that I didn't really have to think about before, so it's definitely eye-opening.

I appreciate being close to home
I love to stay in the Midwest close to my family
I don't know how far…
I say I'm willing but I don't know how willing I really am
And I want to stay Division 1, obviously. It's just better to stay like that

So tell me what it was like to be a student-athlete. Like sunup till you go to bed.
The fall sucks. In the fall you would be up at 5:30 in the morning because you have weights at 6. They complain right now and they only have it three times a week, I'm like I don't want to hear anything because we had it four times. So you have weights at 6 then you get breakfast, and then I would usually have class from 8 until 12:15 or 12:30. Then you'd have kind of an hour or an hour and a half break to get lunch. Then go to practice from like 2:30 to 5:30 ish, go get dinner. And then I do my homework, I'm usually on top of that stuff. The dining hall was probably one of my favorite things too because that's where you actually get to talk to people at night. Then go home. I live with people my senior that weren't athletes anymore, so I got to catch up with them and just hang out and stuff like that. It's weird to think, and I feel this now too, whenever I'm not doing something or I'm watching TV I feel like I'm getting way behind in what I'm doing. I shouldn't feel like that, I should be able to relax and not even think twice about it but that's how I was when I was an athlete, like if I sat down for an hour I was like I'm missing something. You always feel like you've got to do something all the time. So I would do homework until 8 or 9, shower, hang out with my roommates and then try to go to bed early, or just relax or something like that. Then wake up and do it all over again.

So what are you doing now?
I wake up at 6:30
I have to make my own breakfast now,
Which you don't realize how much time it takes to make lunch and breakfast
I take my lunch every single day
I don't pay for anything
Oh managing money, that's another thing. I thought I was going to be horrible at it
But I'm actually pretty good at it
I'm always texting my mom about the deals that I'm getting
I saved $9 at the grocery store the other day and I was like I am so good! It's the best feeling
I'm like I'm so cheap but it's going to work out one day
My parents want me to get an IRA,
But I think you have to put a minimum of $3,000 in there
I'm like that's like half of my money right now. So that's really scary
I have a savings account and a checking account. It's not a lot but it's enough to be fine
I have a credit card,
I got one of my junior year,
so I've had that for a little bit too.
Money stresses me out more than anything in this world

I feel like if I spend on one thing it's just going to disappear
I'm realizing that in this progression,
You're going to make enough
But am I going to make that much? I don't know
I'm Single for the first time in a long time, so that's pretty new too, just figuring out...
I used to be into athletes,
and now I'm not doing that
I'm worried like where am I going to meet them or how am I going to meet them
But I'm very happy being single right now, like for the first time ever
I can go home and not worry about seeing anyone, or buying stuff for anyone
It sounds dumb but I'm like I can just do my own thing
I don't have to tell people where I'm going.
I can apply for a job wherever I want because there's nothing here holding me down
Anyway, I wake up at 6:30
I decide what I want to look like that day
like do I do my hair?
But I make my breakfast
I make my lunch to take,
I do that everyday which is good
Then I get to work at like 7:45, because session start at 8 for football
I have some meetings early in the morning
I always like to be there before my supervisors
I can read my emails and do what I need to do
Then [I] go ask them what they need me to do
I'm typically there from 7:45 till 4, so pretty long days
I've had to start taking walks in the middle of the day
I'm like I'm going to lose my mind if I stay in this office, which is another thing,
Do I really want to do this?
I'm in a room with no windows
I think it stresses me out
You don't have access to the outside world so I have to take walks
I leave at 4, and then I really try hard to go to the rec right after
I know if I go home it's going to be hard to go back out again
I should have looked for an apartment that had a gym
I use the rec for the first time in my life, and I hate when it's busy
I'd rather it be empty
I go home and shower, and then I cook a lot at home
I pretty much only go out to eat once a week, which is pretty good for me
My roommate and I cook together on Tuesdays
And then I'll do homework
I have like three papers due every week, all my classes are paper-based
I'd love for them all to be online but I know I need to have some interaction
My roommate and I are the only ones that work within Athletics [in cohort]
I wish that they were more athletics-based
I really wish they had sport management. They need to put that program there

I hate it, I hate class checking so much
I'm an expert on Excel now
I just know how to do everything on there
I meet with the learning specialist a lot
So I know what's going on in classes
I spend a lot of my time chasing them, like getting them to come to meetings
From what I heard everyone says this is the toughest Freshman Class they've ever had
I have nothing to compare it to
I get like 5 hours 6 hours of sleep maybe
I'm so tired, but I work so much better from 8 p.m. on
I don't know I'm not a morning person.
If I'm going to be up in the morning I need to be moving and doing stuff
I get really tired sitting in my office at 8 a.m.
I'm not used to being set in one area.
It's just a different kind of grind. So those are my days.
One more question for you - if you could give advice to any student-athlete who is in their senior year, what would you tell them?
I would utilize student athlete development, but in a professional standpoint, like get those clothes, do the resume workshops and learn how to do interviews, but for specific jobs. I think I kind of went in blind to a lot of my interviews, and I didn't realize that I needed to tailor what I said to job descriptions or something like that. So I would utilize that a lot more. Just be prepared to not look and feel the same way when you're done, I think that's been the biggest shock just not feeling... I don't know just finding my place without having a sport to rely on, I think it's a big deal. Looks-wise and mentally, just feeling like you're getting stuff done during the day without physically doing something. And just really enjoy being around people that you enjoy being around all the time, because once you get to work it's not fun all the time. You don't realize how fun it actually is to play that sport, even though it sucks sometimes it is just so much fun. You get to do the stuff and be outside and do this with people that you enjoy being around, and that work is just not the same. It's fun, but it's not fun in the same way at all. So I would just encourage them to really take out stuff in because it's just not the same. There's nothing that's ever going to be the same as that, that's probably my biggest thing.

Participant 6, Pre-Transition Interview I-Poem

A little stressful at the end but hours are done for the internship
I just have our final meeting and then I graduate
Weird, weird
If I didn't...
So I actually got the __ job.
So if I wasn't working there,
I'd probably be a little more scared, like oh my God
I'm going to be doing new things
But this is something I already know
I'm either taking over __ or __ , their responsibilities
I'm supposed to sign an agreement soon
I just applied for a dobo position at George Mason, and that would take over _ if I do get it
My brother said I should apply, so why not
They want me to try to do Graphics stuff
For boys and girls club I make flyers on InDesign
I'm not a master at Photoshop, and that's something they want me to do
I can figure out travel plans food stuff like that
I figured I'd be kind of good at that

I like my internships
they've kept me really busy, took up most of my day
that was a nice transition from busy to busy
It wasn't hard for me to adjust
I was doing some stuff during season
I didn't have classes, but it was only like 2 hours
I can't really do that much in 2 hours
I'm done with alumni
I'm done with marketing
I'm just helping out at the Boys & Girls Club because they have a big event
I didn't want to be like oh sorry you're by yourself now
I'm just working like two days a week

We didn't make the tournament again, so that's okay
I hit my personal goals
I got quite a bit of them
But then the team ones obviously didn't go our way, but that's okay.
My face will still be up in Allen
So I'm happy about that
I'm kind of bummed I don't get to do workouts and stuff anymore
I'm fine not doing conditioning
but doing something everyday that kept me in shape is what I'm going to miss
But giving up basketball, I think it was easier than I thought

the internships kept me really busy
I had no time to think about it
So it hasn't been bad
I think once I get like a month off or actually a summer, it'll be like... dang

I mean right now definitely more student-athlete
Making sure I have everything done to graduate.
..... Maybe towards....
Like the end of the year...
It was maybe more athlete
What am I going to do for my internships that are going to take my mind off of basketball
It was more athlete there
There were no workouts that I needed to attend
There are no obligations within the sport anymore
So the athlete is kind of fading away
and I'm just a student
An alumni athlete

(*Do you feel like there is a void, when athletic stuff is done. Like is there an emptiness at all? Or is that more like a freedom, like I don't have to do this anymore?*)

I think there is probably more of a void
I will miss the obligations
It is kind of… It is like one less thing I have to stress about right now
so that was probably nice to give away

(thoughts on going pro/ playing overseas)
No...
I just...
I Know Myself
I know if I would have gone to like, Australia
I would have been like damn
I really miss my family
I probably wouldn't do that much down there, just be trying to find ways to come back here...
I mean I still play basketball with friends, they're still in college basketball
I scrimmage against them like twice a week maybe.
But I just know...
I wanted to do something else

It was actually kind of a relief not having to play
He (dad) didn't tell me that until...
He felt better about going in this directions rather than me being so far away
He'd rather me still be in the United States than go somewhere out far
I mean he would never obviously say that like please stay here,

but it seems like much more of a relief

She's (mom) okay with it
I mean she's going to miss watching me play, but now...
So there's like the boyfriend in the picture
She is like the most girly girl you'll probably ever meet
she's like you guys are probably going to end up getting married
so why don't I start looking up wedding stuff and wedding vendors.
So she's already on to the next phase of my life, before I am
I'm like that's cool, you want to plan it that's fine
I mean it doesn't matter to me when that happens
but I know my mom's dying for it
I'm just like we got to chill

(internships)
What's the Boys & Girls Club I worked on Flyers
I had to make from-scratch certificates, invites, informational Flyers, in different creative ways
Alumni, I did a lot of the scrub work, folded a crap ton of t shirts
I painted a bunch of flowers, folded a lot of pamphlets
[I] did a lot of research on events in the local area to see what they did differently
And then marketing, I did nothing in the office
I'm pretty sure I could have left at any time and they wouldn't know I was gone
I just did it to get hours in
on the weekend I just sat at the marketing table and passed out posters

I feel like I'm in a working role
I mean I have to do weekly logs, which are horrible
after I'm done with that, I feel like a working person
It helps fill some Gap time
I'll just do this for the next 3 weeks

(season ending)
It was hard to motivate some people that didn't play much
and half of them were seniors
before the conference tournament people already had their ticket to go to spring break.
That was kind of hard to be like okay let's go in today and get better
but not really
Even if we did win the tournament, people didn't want to win the tournament
I know we're definitely not going to win the tournament, but to go further...
We could have like, beat __ if everyone had bought in.
But only half of us did
It's hard to motivate when you have a specific mindset

(What motivates you?)
Towards the end I needed, maybe 20 more minutes to have the most minutes ever played by a player KU
I did [get it]
I did
I had like three more Steals and two more assists to get 200
and I did
My dad was like I don't want to pressure you but you're pretty darn close
I Really wanted to get that
Like at the beginning of the year, it's like okay I want to make it to the tournament
but towards the end it was like okay we're definitely not going to make the tournament
I need to switch my goals a little bit
just so I have something to look forward to, keep going...

(academic motivation)
I need to graduate
My brothers paid for plane tickets to get here
So don't screw it up because the parents will be kind of mad
And then grandparents are coming too, so yeah
I better do something
I just wanted a good GPA
And first team All-Big 12 academics
I wanted it to be three years since I couldn't get it a fourth
I just want to be first team three years in a row
And I did it, woo! Yeah that was a big thing

(Is recognition important to you?)
To a point
I know I'm not going to get recognized for everything that I do
I've been so consistent is kind of like… They've kind of taken advantage of it
they know what they are expecting
Like at the end of the day if people are getting praise for doing a good thing once
I won't get it then maybe sometimes that will hurt...
I know different coaching styles, if you don't praise them for what they do then they won't keep doing it...
I kind of saw that towards the end.
I mean I'm not going to do anything differently

(how does it make you feel to have all those records?)
Amazing. Because even though our record wasn't great
I can say that I will be one of the few Jayhawks really remembered
Towards the end (that motivated me)
I wasn't really thinking about it freshman year

I was just thinking I need to get by
But now that it's senior year I was like yeah actually
I really did this all
it was nice at the end, people knowing all the hard work that I put in

(What do you spend your time thinking about?)
Depending on the day
Today I just applied for that position
I had to get a cover letter made a new resume made
I'm trying to get letters of recommendation
I've just been trying to get all that together before I leave for the month and then come back, and then maybe leave forever
I'm just trying to get everything I can out of this school before something else happens
I guess you like all the resources
Like the professional wear, I'm trying to get all the money spent
I'm trying to... Kind of overdrive...
With as many people as I can to be like hey how's it going, if you see a job let me know
But it's mostly just for networking
things that I can do to help myself for the future with the resources that I have
I probably could have taken more advantage of them
all four years rather than just senior year
I'm trying to figure it all out

I mean after Athletics ends,
I'm trying not to be a bum and not workout,
but that's kind of hard
[It’s] so hard to motivate yourself to go workout
I am [working out] at the rec
Pilates, oh my gosh they kicked my butt
I've never felt like an unathletic person in my life. It's horrible.
I'm over here like okay this is going to be easy
then I'm like oh my gosh I can't even do a push-up, this is horrible.
So that kind of stuff is what I'm doing
it's nothing that's related to basketball which is weird, but...
I'm trying to keep the same eating habits but, still working out

I was kept in contact with coach
but it's just him asking me like what my plan was
I guess there's been some GA openings for other coaches
they've asked what I was doing
Maybe if I can't find something right away, I'd go back and do something like that
As of right now I'm set on
I either have __ or the dobo thing

If I still can't find something then I would probably consider going to grad school

(sense of security)
I think so
I'm just glad to have something instead of nothing
if I had nothing then I'd be like okay then I have to move back with my parents
I probably work at Target for like a month and see about something after that

(eating and working out)
I mean it's been okay
I always think I can do more, but like...
I never really know how many calories are burned during practice
compared to what I'm doing now
so I don't know if what I'm doing is enough
I talked to _ for a little bit and she gave me some, like a (basic) thing
I will start things, not weightlifting and more cardio stuff
Which is probably a reason why weight is dropping
because it's probably muscle, which is okay
I mean I don't want to lose all my muscle... But....
I have a love-hate relationship with that
I mean it's not bad
I can always do more
once I get into my position wherever that's going to be,
then I will have a better idea of how much I can do
If I could practice with the team at George Mason that would be pretty cool
I know people here play noon ball
I'll be excited to do that.
When's there's a stable schedule, I'll feel a little better
I'll be able to know how much I can actually do
rather than I just have 30 minutes to do a real quick [one]

It's probably a little bit of both (stay in shape and be competitive)
I want to say in the best shape, because I was in the best shape about a month ago
But… I go to the rec specifically to compete with someone
to look at them be like aw dang I saw them the other day
I got to do something else now
something stupid like that because I'm a dork...
Probably both, I'd say both

(what about eating?)
OOh the eating is hard.
Eating is tough, because we have debruce
sometimes it's not the best options

But I've tried not to snack as much
I think it's getting better... But it's still so difficult!
I know there is that transition eating meeting thing tonight
hopefully I learn a lot
I probably will, but hopefully that will tell me what I need to do

(do you cook?)
Not right now just because I have deBruce
I'm like I'll just save my money, please
If you give me a recipe I'll be fine
but if it's like make this awesome chicken from freaking Chopped then no I can't do that
So it's just having to buy all those groceries on a low budget
That's the part I'm a little concerned about
but I will not settle for McDonald's
I don't think I've eaten there in like 6 years
I hate McDonald's

(K Ring Ceremony)
It was so fun
I was freaking nervous because I had to give that speec
I can probably give it to you now still
I practiced it so much
But they told me they would come get me, to bring me up on stage
but nobody was getting me so it's freaking out
I saw _ walking out up there and they're like we will come get you
And then I didn't know I was getting that award
so I would already be up there.
And after I got it they were like oh and you're giving the speech
It was a lot of fun
The ring was great. I like hanging out with __
I could tell my parents were super proud
they were holding that secret for a while, of me winning
The senior scholar athlete
I liked it.
I was just telling my parents I was more nervous
I was just reading my speech like a thousand times on my phone
I was more concerned about that than sitting and talking with people
I hope everyone realizes how important it is
I'm not much of a ring wearer
But any interview I go on I will wear it

(graduation)
It hasn't really hit me yet

I am [excited]
I'm just concerned about how I'm going to deal with my cap...
I don't know what to do with mine.
I'm pretty sure it's going to have an Office quote
but I just don't know which one

(pros and cons of staying at KU vs leaving)
It would just be more comfortable
I can always go home still just like I do now
I know what to expect
I know what people are going to say, what they think
I mean I haven't left Kansas in 22 years
so wherever I go next if it is outside of Kansas, it will be difficult
I just don't want to leave Kansas
I'd rather stay here... But we'll see

(dream job)
I like the idea of community outreach stuff
I like the marketing and the creativity
With community outreach I can do those things
If I could work at Kauffman Stadium for community outreach that would be awesome
I mean I have an idea, but right now I'm not...
Just because...
Just like please let me get a job and I'll just see where it goes from there
I don't really know a 5 year plan
but after maybe one year of working and not having everything paid for
I will start to figure it out
But that's the biggest thing right now
I is a pretty good job in college (saving money)
I don't really go out to eat a lot
if I do, it's with people who usually pay for me
I have a lot of money from the stipends and stuff, but...
I don't know how to pay rent
I don't know how that process goes
_ and I are going to live at (apartment complex) because she got GA job....
But like monthly payments...
Oh my gosh I'm going to have to not take hour long hot showers anymore
And turn off lights when I leave
It's just going to be a different mindset, but it will click sooner rather than later
I'm not too nervous about it
I have enough clothes to last me for years and years

(how do you want to be remembered?)

Probably more... Like obviously a hard worker, and personable to fans
I know a lot of fans enjoyed my company and talking to me
I like that idea
Like hard worker, dedication, passionate all around,
and just kind of the overall ideal student-athlete,
like that's who I was.
But I would talk to them for hours if they wanted to
I think my teammates would Define me as a little...
I wouldn't say annoying
but I would always say stuff about step outside
like step into SAAC
they're probably annoyed of me saying come to one team games
none of them did but it's fine
Annoyingly positive during season,
like it's okay don't think about spring break, do that...
Which would probably be annoying. And that's fine
I wouldn't have done anything differently

(What does it mean to be a Jayhawk?)
I have [been a Jayhawk all her life]
It's like a childhood dream
I've almost graduated
I played basketball here
I checked everything off...
It's just a dream come true...
I mean I really thought I had no chance being a Jayhawk,
like D1 Big 12 holy crap
But now that I already did it, it's like oh my gosh what happened, where did it go?
But now I get to work here and so that's even better, if I do.
Oh I am (excited)
I get paid to do SAAC
I get paid to hang out with the best people
I'm probably not going to like everyone that I work with,
not everyone will probably have the same mentality and determination as I do
I have to learn patience little more...
Because right now that's my weakness...
I am excited though.

Participant 6, Post-Transition Interview I-Poem

I know I'm not going to do anything that week [Thanksgiving]
So I'm like maybe I should work out twice a day
Can I wake up in the morning

I'm like well maybe once, I don't know.
It'll be worth it when I can stuff my face on Thanksgiving
I'm going to Texas to see boyfriend's family
I'll be with them because I haven't met his whole family really
I've met his parents but not like the uncles and stuff
He's like "I'm leaving soon, and you have to meet them before I pop the question."
I'm like okay that's probably true.
Have you guys talked about that seriously?
He will be the one I marry, he will be
I probably won't see him until May
I might be able to [go visit on weekends] this is just worst case scenario in my head
I'll get a job at Orange Leaf to make more money
I live right by it.

It was a lot of fun [graduation]
I actually didn't have to sit in the bleachers, there was a senior leadership award thing
I sat behind the professors in then the comfy seats
Doesn't feel real yet,
Even though I'm not playing a sport and I sit at a desk.

I went to the lake Like every other weekend

I am in charge of SAAC
I'm figuring out what to do with that.

I'm not in the same shape as I was, which sucks
I get tired after noon ball which is only an hour
But the transition was easier than I thought it would be
It's just making sure that I do work out as much as I would like to
I don't waste my days
Like [don't] go sit on the couch because I'm so tired today, but actually doing something
It's a little transition from only 4 hours a day of practicing to staying at work for 8 hours a day.

When I was on basketball I just kind of stayed toward my team
I didn't really have a best friend on the team
I didn't really go find close friends with other teams
But now even though I am an authority figure to them now,
The relationships I've already built with [student athletes]
They come in my office and just talk which is super cool
I'm just like dang
I wish I could have taken more advantage of getting outside of my team a little bit more
And actually engaging in those relationships and maintaining them
I'm probably thinking I had way more times than I actually did,
To go out and meet new people or whatever.

Over the last six months no longer being a student-athlete, what has been the best part?

Not running, not running
I miss the free food
I hate the bills
I do love deciding maybe I will go to this game or I'm not feeling this game
Choosing when I get to do stuff is probably the biggest thing
Not having to look at the itinerary for my week. That's nice.

What part do you miss the most?
When I go to the game[s] to watch,
I miss being relied on so heavily, like playing
Like you have to play the whole game, like you need to do something so we can win
So many fans come up and are like oh we miss you
You are so calm when you are out there
[Boss] relies on me a lot, I know that, but there's a different type of...
That feeling with basketball
It's weird I didn't think I was going to feel that
I wish...
I love coach and I probably love him more outside of basketball than when I was in
But he understood me, he knew what he was going to get out of me
I like that feeling
It's just like when I get in the game...
Just watching a game it's like I'm not there,
He doesn't need me even at the game anymore
It's just like a complete switch rather than a smooth transition
I don't rely on you as much
It was “I really need you” to now “hey how's it going, see you later”
But when people ask me to do stuff, that's similar
They wouldn't ask me if they didn't know that I would do it well
I do like that part of it
But it's different sports wise
It's just missing being a student-athlete to be honest
Do you miss being a student-athlete?
I do
But honestly if you gave me one more year,
I probably wouldn't want to be on this team
It's just that they will come in last, they are not going to do well in the [conference]
Even if I was there, [we] wouldn't win, really
But it's fine, I like noon ball
I think it's enough
I told Coach I would be a practice player if he needed it
I now have two and a half weeks [winter break]
I told him I would be in town
I know a lot of the practice players leave to go home
I can help, but we'll see if he asks
I'll be so out of shape it's so bad but it's okay.

It varies day to day
I'm like crap, nope, got to eat better
Then other days I'm like no I'm okay
It goes... different days
But it hasn't been a huge anxiety point
But I often think about it.
The Crock-Pot is my best friend
That's where I usually get most of my stuff
My boyfriend, he's a huge nerd
He made me this Excel file that has my paycheck and what I can spend on groceries,
What I can spend on miscellaneous whatever, so that's helped a lot.
It would drive me crazy if I didn't know
I saved a lot when I was a student-athlete
I'm getting a second job, if I wanted it
But it would be another [source of] income to help me, makes me feel a little bit better
I don't go crazy like some other people I think probably do after school.

I was thinking about that but it would only be if I had a job up there
I'm not sure about Pittsburgh
And I'll stay here for another year.
I honestly just think that's probably better
I can make more money and not have to rely on my boyfriend as much as I probably do now
I spent a lot of his money now because he buys dinner all the time

What is ideally the job that you want to get into then?
A stay-at-home mom is always the goal
I like what I do now
I love student-athlete development
I love working one-on-one
I did not think I'd have the patience for it
But I'm actually not that bad
I still think I would be an amazing DoBO
Organization is top-notch in my head, it's crazy
I would like to see student-athlete development
Or if I have to go, because Maryland teachers make a lot of money
If I do want to get a teacher's degree… I might do that
But I don't know, I don't know. Something.
I don't want to say something with teaching but I like talking to people
I like helping them understand, as much as I can
Staying at home would be cool too
But I know I'd drive myself crazy, so probably won't just be that.

So potentially moving away from home, how does that feel?
Horrible, horrible.
I don't know, I need to, that's just something you do in life
You just have to move away

But I know, my parents are not helping me
I'm the last one to leave
I'm the only girl
I'm the baby, whatever
So they always call me if they need me
“Hey I'm going to go visit your brother can you come home and take care of the dogs,” or
“We're putting up Christmas lights you always do that with Dad can you come home”
I'm like okay well I can't do this in about a year or so
That will help with a year or two [apart from boyfriend, before moving]
I can spend the whole year with them before I leave
But they're making it hard. But they know it's coming.

I don't want to do it yet [get married]
The more she [mom] talks about it, the more I'm like nope
I just know she wants to do it
She didn't really get to plan my brother's wedding
She's excited that there's a chance there will be a wedding. She is great, but my gosh.

Do you still feel like you have a sport Community somewhere?
Not really
I mean they [teammates] came back for a game but I wasn't there
I didn't really know they were coming back
But even if they were there and I was at the game,
I probably say hi to them and I'll go sit with my parents
I like the GA's that we have in [office]
So it's so easy to come in here and actually want to be here
They are my team, we do a lot of the work together so that's fun
I would take them over a lot of people, so it's fun to be with them
So I still do you think I have the team.

I like that [lifting] if I don't have noon ball
I preferred noon ball everyday
It's nice to get out of the office to do something else and then come back.
I didn't realize how similar I was to [coworker]
I did not realize that. That's been fun.

Do you feel like you've retired from sport?
I think I have with how much I worked out
I'm working out less
I think I'm retired, but I still think I work out more than the average person my age
I think I got some athlete left in me
I could do more if I really wanted to but it gets boring on the freaking elliptical or treadmill
I don't think I'm totally retired yet
If I became a GA for a team, I would be able to play still
So I don't think I'm retired yet
I would say retired is probably not doing anything

Like if I'm saying I'm going to take a walk today, and that's my exercise,
That's probably retirement
Like my parents, they walk the dogs and that's it, that's retirement to me.

I would say I am an... Well...
I would say I'm always an athlete just because you just too competitive
Then when you're not competitive,
That's when you're not an athlete
I was about to rip __'s head off for that soup competition,
I can't help that so that's never going to go away
That's only because I was an athlete
If I wasn't, I probably wouldn't be as competitive.

I think I'm still transitioning...
I'm still trying to find out what transitioning looks like, in trying different things
When I meal prep, maybe that's not the healthier meal prep
I'm going to try something else
We're working out in the morning, is that what I want? Or do I like going to classes
So I don't know what...
I don't know what, like, "me" on a regular basis will look like
Like, how will "me" be maintained
Like, what I do every day because it usually changes
It's either not enough or I've done too much
I don't know
I think I'm still trying to transition
I think I got, like my job is down. I got that under control, I know what I'm doing
But the whole life health-wise, exercising wise, I don't know. That still I don't know.

I think they're a little separate [transitions]
I think I transition from being a basketball player to being a worker pretty fast
I think I'm still probably maintaining that, job-wise
Food-wise I'm still a little Washy
Exercising, I usually do it every day, maybe not
But it's still not what I wanted to be, from where it was
It kind of took a drop
I want to go back so it's creeping up a little bit.
I don't want to eat that crap again
I don't want to eat fried chicken cheddar wrap things everyday
I don't want to do that
I don't want to eat the same, but I want you to enough till I'm full,
But not overeating like I did
I was like my gosh this is free food I'm not going to let it go to waste
I'm going to eat it all
But now I'm like okay I can keep this for a week
I wish there was like a don't get fat diet
Or like this is what a normal adult exercise looks like, kind of thing

Yeah like is a run good enough?
Do I need this, am I going to get strong, I don't know.

Who have been some people that have helped you in all this transitioning?
] I complain to him the most
I've kind of asked my mom some different things that she's done
I mostly talked to him about it, we usually eat together.
One of the other strength coaches gave my friend and I a workout week thing
I kind of use that
If I don't want to do pull ups one day then I'll do something else that pulls
I like being told what to do, but not at like a cross-fit standard
I can't just spontaneously think I'm going to go do this today

I'm happy that I'm not at that [playing] level right now
I wanted to go pro, but I just know that that's …
I didn't want to go over there,
I wouldn't have much fun,
I wouldn't know anyone.
I just wouldn't have liked it at all, looking at it now.

I would love to stay [with current organization]
I was kind of wondering when __ left I was like I would love that job
I think I would be awesome at it
Something like that I think I would be really good at
I can grab people's attention
But yes I do love my office, I love the people
This is probably my favorite job I'll ever have with the best people
They say you won't like everyone you work with, but I love everyone I work with.

Are you where you expected to be?
Well it's better, I thought it was going to be in the basement,
or maybe working at a [grocery store], something like that
I didn't know what I was going to do
This is a little better than what I thought
But after this if I'm still not ready to move up to Maryland,
I probably will go back home, which is fine
But I do like it up here
I thought I was going to live at home too
I like living with my roommate
I'm still away from home
I think I'm better than where I thought I was going to be.
I think so because I was horrible [public speaking]
but SAAC made me change, I talk all the time
And sounding more confident when I talk to freshmen
Instead of I don't know what I'm talking about right now
[I had] to do a presentation on why I should be the vice president,

I was horrible. I was out of breath it was bad.

I don't know if I would look or feel that comfortable,
I think it would take me a little bit longer than where I'm at right now,
if I was from a different Institution
I would still be trying to find my way
I knew of half the people that I work with, [so] it's a little bit easier

Do you like change?
No, no. But I have to be okay with it
There are going to be so many different changes that I am not going to be in control of
Moving
This job is only 2 years so I'm going to have to find something else
I can deal with it better than most, I'm just not going to like it.

What parts of your life are you really satisfied with right now?
The relationships I have, with my co-workers my boyfriend my parents, some friends back home
I am close and I do talk to them
If I don't talk to my friends probably once a day they think something's wrong
I like that probably the best, I'm able to talk to a lot of people more now
Than me being tired of being like a few I'll call you guys tomorrow
So I like that.

What parts of your life feel kind of empty right now, where are the things that are missing from having been a student-athlete?
..... I missed the nerves before the games
They come up when I go to the games and I hear the band playing
I'm like oh I'm kind of nervous, even for a team that's not very good
I don't know I miss...
I don't know...
I don't think I missed that much
Obviously I miss working out everyday
I just missed playing everyday. That's really it though.

I'm an adult....
I would say I'm a hard worker
Once I start something I have to finish it
I am a.... Very OCD
If my bed is not made I will cry, if there's something on the floor I will freak out
I'm hard-working, super organized and very determined. Those are my three.
If you met somebody for the first time and they had no idea what it was like to be a student-athlete, what would you tell them? Like walk me through a day in your life as a student-athlete?
So long ago. I probably had an 8 a.m. class because I pissed someone off, I don't know why. Then I had breakfast at DeBruce, probably had to go see the trainer to roll out, which is something that I hated to do. I probably went back to my apartment to take a nap before I had to

come back for weights at 2, then practice and then dinner. And then I probably got ice cream with my boyfriend.

And walk me through in a day in your life right now?
.... Well today I woke up and I went on the elliptical and did some weights, I made some eggs. Got here and had to carry in some Waters. Then I'm going to lunch with some awesome females, I'm going to go watch my friends game at 5, and then I have SAAC.
Do you feel like you still are as busy as you are as a student-athlete, just in different kind of things? Or do you feel like you have a lot more free time now?
I feel like I'm more busy during the week, weekends are not as busy, just because I kind of get to do whatever I want. It would still be like a day of sitting around, like that's never going to happen. But I would say during the week I'm more busy and less busy on the weekends.

What advice would you give a student athlete in their final year?
It’s only one year left that you won’t get back
Peak your performance for what you have been working for.

References

Adams, H., Dziedzicki, D., Eberman, L., Kahanov, L., Mata, H., & Niemann, A. (2013). Alcohol consumption behaviors among collegiate athletes. *International Journal of Athletic Therapy & Training,18),* 35–38.

Alfermann, D., Stambulova, N., & Zemaityte A. (2004). Reactions to sport career termination: a cross-national comparison of German, Lithuanian, and Russian athletes. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise 5* (2004) 61–75.

American College Health Association. (2017). National College Health Assessment II: Spring 2017 reference group executive summary. Hanover, MD: Ameri-can College Health Association. Retrieved from https://www.acha-ncha.org/docs/NCHA-II_SPRING_2017_REFERENCE_GROUP_EXECUTIVE_SUMMARY.pdf

Anderson, M., Goodman, J. & Schlossberg, N. K. (2011). *Counseling adults in transition* (4th ed.). Springer Publishing Company.

Bailie, P. H. F. (1993). Understanding retirement from sports: Therapeutic ideas for helping athletes in transition. *The Counseling Psychologist, 21*, 399-410.

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84, 191-215.

Barnes, C. J. (2002). *The retirement experiences of female collegiate team sport athletes* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Alliant International University, San Diego, CA.

Beauchemin, J. (2014). College student-athlete wellness: An integrative outreach model. *College Student Journal, 48,* 268–280.

Benson, A. J., Evans, M. B., Surya, M., Martin, L. J., & Eys, M. A. (2015). Embracing athletic identity in the face of threat. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*, 4, 303-315.

Bimper, A. Y. (2014). Game changers: The role athletic Identity and racial identity play on academic performance. *Journal of College Student Development, 55*, 8, 795-807.

Blinde, E. M., & Stratta, T. M. (1992). The 'sport career death' of college athletes: Involuntary and unanticipated sport exits. *The Journal of Sport Behavior, 15*, 3-20.

Brenner, J., & Swanik, K. (2007). High-risk drinking characteristics in collegiate athletes. *Journal of American College Health, 56*, 267–272.

Brewer, B. W. (1999). *Athletic identity revisited: A five-year update*. Unpublished manuscript, Springfield College, Springfield, MA

Brewer, B. W., & Petitpas, A. J. (2017). Athletic identity foreclosure. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 16,* 118-122.

Brewer, B. W., Van Raalte, J. L., & Linder, D. E. (1993). Athletic identity: Hercules' muscles or Achilles heel? *International Journal of Sport Psychology, 24* (2), 237-254.

Brown, G. (Ed.), (2014). *Mind, body and sport: Understanding and supporting student-athlete mental wellness*. Indianapolis, IN: National Collegiate Athletic Association.

Brown, L. M., & Gilligan, C. (1992). *Meeting at the crossroads: Women's psychology and girls development.* New York, NY: Ballantine Books.

Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019) Retrieved from https://www.bls.gov/news.release/atus.t01.htm

Burns, G. N., Jasinski, D., Dunn, S. C., Fletcher, D. (2012). Athlete identity and athlete satisfaction: The nonconformity of exclusivity. *Personality and Individual Differences, 52*, 280-284.

Burns, G. N., Jasinski, D., Dunn, S., & Fletcher, D. (2013). Academic support services and career decision-making self-efficacy in student athletes. *The Career Development Quarterly, 61,* 161-167.

Burnsed, B. (2014). Rates of excessive drinking among student-athletes falling: An NCAA substance use study revealed fewer student-athletes are drinking heavily, but more are using prescription painkillers and ADHD medication. Retrieved from https://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/media-center/news/rates-excessive-drinking-among-student-athletes-falling

Cabrita, T.M., Rosado, A B., Leite, T.O., Serpa, S.O., & Sousa, P.M. (2014). The relationship between athletic identity and career decisions in athletes. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 26*, 471–481.

Chatterton, J., & Petrie, T. (2013). Prevalence of disordered eating and pathogenic weight control behaviors among male collegiate athletes. *Eating Disorders, 21*, 328–341.

Cieslak, T. (2004). *Describing and measuring the athletic identity construct: Scale development and validation.* (Electronic Thesis or Dissertation). Retrieved from https://etd.ohiolink.edu/

Cieslak, T.J., Fink, J.S., & Pastore, D.L. (2005). Measuring the athletic identity construct: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 27, 48

Clopton, A. W. (2011). Social capital and college sport: In search of the bridging potential of intercollegiate athletics. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport, 4*, 174-189.

Coakley, J. J. (1983). Leaving competitive sport: Retirement or rebirth? Quest, 35, 1-11.

Coakley, J. J. (Ed.). (2009). *Sport in society: Issues and controversies* (10th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Connell, R. W., & Messerchmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender and Society,19*, 829–859.

Corbin, C. (2019). *The human cost of raising youth sports to a '$17 billion' industry*. Retrieved from https://www.foxnews.com/sports/youth-sports-17-billion-industry-human-cost.

Cox, R.H., Sadberry, S., McGuire, R.T., & McBride, A. (2009). Predicting student athlete career situation awareness from college experience. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 3,* 156-181.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage.

Eisenberg, D., Lipson, S. K., & Posselt, J. (2016). Promoting resilience, retention, and mental health. *New Directions for Student Services,156,* 87–95.

Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis.* New York: W.W. Norton.

Etzel, E. F., Watson, J. C., Visek, A. J., & Maniar, S. D. (2006). Understanding and promoting college student-athlete health: Essential issues for student affairs professionals. *NASPA Journal,43,* 518–546.

Fuller, R. D. (2014). Transition experiences out of intercollegiate athletics: A meta-synthesis. *The Qualitative Report, 19,* 1-15.

Gilligan, C. (2015). The listening guide method of psychological inquiry. *Qualitative Psychology, 2,* 69-77.

Gilligan, C., Spencer, R., Weinberg, M. K., Bertsch, T. (2006). On the listening guide: A voice-centered relational method. In Hesse-Biber, S. N., Leavy, P. (Eds.), Emergent methods in social research (pp. 253–271). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Giorgi, A. (2008). Difficulties encountered in the application of the phenomenological method in the social sciences. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology, 8,* 1-9.

Goodman, J., Schlossberg, N.K., & Anderson, M.L. (2006). *Counseling adults in transition* (3rd

ed.). New York: Springer.

Gough, C. (2019). *North America sports market size from 2009 to 2022 (in billion U.S. dollars).* Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/214960/revenue-of-the-north-american-sports-market/

Greendorfer, S. L., & Blinde, E. M. (1985). "Retirement'' from intercollegiate sport: Theoretical and empirical considerations. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 2*, 101–110.

Greenleaf, C., Petrie, T. A., Carter, J., & Reel, J. J. (2009). Female collegiate athletes: Prevalence of eating disorders and disordered eating behaviors. *Journal of American College Health,57,* 489–496.

Griffith, K.A. & Johnson, KA. (2002). Athletic identity and life roles of division I and division III collegiate athletes. *University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Journal of Undergraduate Research*, 5, 225-231.

Gulliver, A., Griffiths, K. M., & Christensen, H. (2012). Barriers and facilitators to mental health help-seeking for young elite athletes: A qualitative study. *BMC Psychiatry,12*, 1–14.

Heininger, W. (2019). *Transition Out of Sport: A Foundation for Wellness*. Retrieved from https://athletesconnected.umich.edu/transition-out-of-sport-a-foundation-for-wellness/

Hinitz, D. R. (1988). *Role theory and the retirement of collegiate gymnasts* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Nevada, Reno, NV.

Houle, J.L., Brewer, B.W., & Kluck, A.S. (2010). Developmental trends in athletic identity: A two-part retrospective study. *Journal of Sport Behavior, 33,* 2, 146 – 159.

Jenkins, R. (2008). *Social identity* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Jones, S. R., Torres, V., & Arminio, J. (2014). *Negotiating the complexities of qualitative research in higher education* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Kitzrow, M. A. (2009). The mental health needs of today's college students: Challenges and recommendations. *NASPA Journal, 46,* 464-660.

Lally, P. (2007). Identity and athletic retirement: A prospective study. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise,* 8, 85-99.

Lally, P. S., & Kerr, G. A. (2005). The career planning, athletic identity, and student role identity of intercollegiate student athletes. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 76,* 275-285.

Lazarus, R. & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York: Springer Pub. Co.

Locke, B., Wallace, D., & Brunner, J. (2016). Emerging issues and models in college mental health services. *New Directions for Student Services,156,* 19–30.

Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego-identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 3,* 551-558.

Marcia, J. E. (1989). Identity and intervention. *Journal of Adolescence, 12,* 401-410.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G.B. (2016). Designing qualitative research (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interpretative approach*. Thousand Oaks: CA. Sage.

Miller, P. S., & Kerr, G. (2002). Conceptualizing excellence: Past, present and future. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 14, 140-153.

Moore, J. (2019) *The After-Sport Adjustment*. Retrieved from https://athletesconnected.umich.edu/after-sport-adjustment/

Moving On! – Helping athletes make healthy transitions out of sport. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://athletesmovingon.org/.

Moreland, J., Coxe, K., & Yang, J. (2017). Collegiate athletes' mental health services utilization: A systematic review of conceptualizations, operationalizations, facilitators, and barriers. *Journal of Sport and Health Science, 2017*, 1–12.

Moustaskas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Muuss, R. E. (1996). Erik Erikson's theory of identity development. In Theories of adolescence (pp. 42-57). New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2016a). NCAA GOALS study of the student-athlete experience: Initial summary of findings, January 2016. Retrieved from https://www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/GOALS_2015_summary_jan2016_final_20160627.pdf

National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2016b). Results from the 2015 GOALS study of the student-athlete experience. Retrieved From https://www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/GOALS_convention_slidebank_jan2016_public.pdf

National Collegiate Athletic Association (2019a). Estimated probability of competing in college athletics. Retrieved from http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/estimated-probability-competing-college-athletics

National Collegiate Athletic Association (2019b). How we support college athletes. Retrieved from http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/media-center/ncaa-101/how-we-support-college-athletes

National Collegiate Athletic Association (2019c). Awards, benefits and expenses – medical expenses – mental health services and resources. Retrieved from https://web3.ncaa.org/lsdbi/search/proposalView?id=103873

National Federation of State High School Associations (2019). *2018-2019 High School Athletics Participation Survey*. Retrieved from https://www.nfhs.org/media/1020412/2018-19_participation_survey.pdf

National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. (2017). Alcohol facts and statistics. Retrieved from https://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/AlcoholFacts&Stats/AlcoholFacts&Stats.pdf

Navarro, K. M., & Malvaso, S. (2016). Millennial student-athletes and career development: Toward an understanding of academic, athletic and parental spheres of influence on career aspirations and undergraduate major choices. *College Student Affairs Journal, 34*, 30-47.

Navarro, K. & McCormick, H. (2017). Outcomes-based career preparation programs for contemporary student-athletes. *Journal of Applied Sport Management, 9,* 135-163.

Novak Djokavic Foundation (2015). *The importance of sports for children.* Retrieved from https://novakdjokovicfoundation.org/the-importance-of-sports-for-children/

Ogilvie, B. C., & Taylor, J. (1993a). *Career termination in sports: when the dream dies.* In J. M. Williams (Ed.), Applied sport psychology: Personal growth to peak performance (pp. 356–365). Mountain View: Mayfield.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Patton, L. D., Renn, K. A., Guido, F. M., & Quaye, S. J. (2016). *Student Development in College* (3rd Ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Pearlin, L. I., & Schooler, C. (1978). The structure of coping. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 19* (1), 2-21.

Peterson, G. W., Sampson, J. P., Jr., Lenz, J. G., & Reardon, R. C. (2002). Becoming career problem solvers and decision makers: A cognitive information processing approach. In D. Brown (Ed.), *Career choice and development* (pp. 312-369) (4th. Ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Poux, K. N., & Fry, M. D. (2015). Athletes' perceptions of their team motivational climate, career exploration and engagement, and athletic identity. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 9*, 360-372.

Putnam, R.D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Raider-Roth, M. (2000). *Trusting what you know: Examining the relational complexities of student self-assessment work.* (Unpublished dissertation). Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Raider-Roth, M. (2014). The listening guide. In D. Coghlan & M. Brydon-Miller (Eds.), *The Sage Encyclopedia of Action Research* (pp. 510-512). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ryan, H., Gayles, J. G., & Bell, L. (2018). Student-athletes and mental health experiences, *New Directions for Student Services, 163,* 67-79.

Sandstedt, S.D., Cox, R.H., Martens, M.P., Ward, D.G., Webber, S.N., & Ivey, S. (2004). Development of the student-athlete career situation inventory (SACSI). *Journal of Career Development, 31*, 79-93.

Savickas, M. (1999). Introduction: John L. Holland. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 1*, 1–4.

Shachar, B., Brewer, B.W., Cornelius, A.E., & Petitpas, A.J. (2004). Career decision-making, athletic identity, and adjustment difficulties among retired athletes: A comparison between coaches and noncoaches. *Kinesiologia Slovenica, 10*, 71–85.

Schlossberg, N. K. (1989). *Overwhelmed: Coping with life's ups and downs.* Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Schlossberg, N. K., Waters, E. B., & Goodman, J. (1995). *Counseling adults in transition* (2nd ed.). New York: Springer.

Shurts, W. M., & Shoffner, M. F. (2004). Providing career counseling for collegiate student-athletes: A learning theory approach. *Journal of Career Development, 31*, 95-109.

Tajfel, H. (1970). Experiments in intergroup discrimination. *Scientific American, 223,* 96-102.

Tajfel, H. (Eds.) (1978). *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations*. London: Academic Press.

Tajfel, H. (Eds.) (1982). *Social identity and intergroup relations.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tajfel, H. & Turner, J.C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W.G. Austin & S. Worchel (eds.) *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations.* Monterey: Brooks Cole.

Taylor, J. M., Gilligan, C., & Sullivan, A. M. (1995). *Between voice and silence: Women and girls, race and relationship.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Taylor, J., & Ogilvie, B. C. (1994). A conceptual model of adaption to retirement among athletes. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 6,* 1-20.

The Aspen Institute (2019). Project Play. Retrieved from https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/

Thompson, D. (2018). ***A****merican Meritocracy Is Killing Youth Sports: Expensive travel leagues siphon off talented young athletes from well-off families—and leave everyone else behind*. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/11/income-inequality-explains-decline-youth-sports/574975/ .

Thompson, R. A., & Sherman, R. T. (2007). Managing student-athletes mental health issues. National Collegiate Athletic Association. Retrieved from https://www.wellawaresp.org/pdf/112012/2007NCAA_managing_mental_health.pdf

Turner, J.C., Hogg, M.a., Oakes, P.J., Reicher, S.D., & Wetherell, M.S. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self categorization theory.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Tyrance, S.C., Harris, H.L, & Post, P. (2013). Predicting positive career planning attitudes among NCAA division I college student-athletes. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 7*, 22-40.

van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

van Manen, M. (2017). Phenomenology in its original sense. *Qualitative Health Research, 27*, 810-825.

Van Raalte, J. L., Andrews, S. R., Cornelius, A. E., Brewer, B. W., & Petitpas, A. J. (2017). Student-athlete career self-efficacy: Workshop development and evaluation. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 11*, 1-13.

Wahto, R. S., Swift, J. K., & Whipple, J. L. (2016). The role of stigma and referral source in predicting college student-athletes' attitudes toward psychological help-seeking. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology,10*, 85–98.

Watson, J. C. (2005). College student-athletes attitudes toward help-seeking behavior and expectations of counseling services. *Journal of College Student Development, 46*, 442–449.

Way, N. (1998). *Everyday courage: The lives and stories of urban teenagers.* New York: New York University Press.

Webb, W. M., Nasco, S. A., Riley, S., & Headrick, B. (1998). Athlete identity and reactions to retirement from sports. *Journal of Sport Behavior, 21,* 338-362.

Wilson, T. M., (2007). *Women who endure: A grounded theory study of black female former student-athletes* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Capella University, Minneapolis, MN.

Woodcock, C. (2010). The listening guide for coaching: Exploring qualitative, relational, voice-centered methodology for coaches. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice, 3,* 144-154.

Woodcock, C. (2016). The listening guide: A how-to approach on ways to promote educational democracy. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods,* 1-10.