SPORT CAREER TRANSITION: STORIES OF ELITE INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN SPORTSMEN

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A thesis submitted to the University of Technology Sydney in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

January 2012

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student

____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In late 2006 I experienced a life-changing event. Although it was a distressing and painful experience for me and those people around me, it became a powerful and motivating force. As a consequence, I realised that we are all vulnerable, and life is short and sweet. I also learnt that I am a strong and resilient woman. It was at this time that I decided to do something significant, constructive, and worthy with my life, and to try and transform the experience into something positive. This thesis is the result. However, it would not have been possible without the guidance and help of several people, who in one way or another contributed and extended their valuable assistance in the preparation and completion of this study. It is my pleasure now to thank those individuals.

First and foremost, my utmost gratitude to my principal supervisor, Dr. Daryl Adair, Associate Professor in the School of Leisure, Sport and Tourism, University of Technology, Sydney, whose never-ending confidence and belief in me, along with his enthusiasm and encouragement, I will never forget. Daryl has been inspirational as I somehow managed to hurdle all the obstacles towards the completion of this research project. It has been an honour to be his PhD student.

I am also extremely grateful to the other members of my supervisory panel, Professor Tracy Taylor and Associate Professor Simon Darcy for their patient and steadfast encouragement. Both have been generous with their advice and support. In particular, I thank Tracy for her keen eye for detail, and uncanny ability to get to the ‘root’ of the problem, and I especially acknowledge Simon’s expertise during the development of the methodology of the study.

Despite the ‘tyranny of distance’, many individuals from the School of Leisure, Sport and Tourism, and the Faculty of Business more broadly, contributed immensely to my personal and professional time at UTS. The group has been a source of friendship as well as good advice, help, and information, and I especially thank my fellow PG students for their camaraderie. I also gratefully acknowledge the Faculty of Business scholarship funding that made my PhD work possible.

It is a pleasure to pay tribute to the expertise of my ‘technical collaborators’. Firstly to my sister, Fiona, who helped with the interviews, and secondly, to my niece, Lucy, who worked tirelessly doing the transcriptions, and also contributed her own valuable insights from the point of view of an elite athlete. I am especially indebted to members of the Advisory Committee for lending me their knowledge, sensitivity, and understanding to help with the research design and the analysis of findings, especially Barb Davis, who as always, gave of herself far and beyond the call of duty.

Then, most importantly, there were the 30 wonderful and bighearted athletes—the boxers, AFL and NRL players—who collaborated during the development of the thesis. They were generous with their time, reflections, and suggestions. Without their input, this work would simply not have been possible. I thoroughly enjoyed each and every interview, and it was a privilege to have had the opportunity to meet with these remarkable men. I am deeply grateful.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family and friends for all their love and encouragement. To the Traill family in Sydney, you were always there with a bed or a meal, and I particularly appreciated Alison’s support during my DA presentation. The entire Redgrove family in Hobart has helped in many ways. To my mother, who was always ready to read chapters, or to cook a meal for us, thanks Grambo! To the TGIF ladies, I enjoy our sessions, and your willingness to listen to me offload was always appreciated. To my loving, supportive, and patient husband Ken—again you know I couldn’t have done this without you. And finally, my boys, Beale and Fin: you are the ones who really convinced me to do this work. You are two fine young men, and I am very proud of you both. Thank you.

AUTHOR NOTES

Capitalisation: This thesis will follow the guidelines of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (2005) regarding capitalisation, as follows:

- The 'A' in 'Aboriginal' is capitalised similar to other designations like 'Australian', 'Arabic' or 'Nordic'. The word 'aboriginal' with a lowercase 'a' refers to an indigenous person from any part of the world. As such, it does not necessarily refer to the Aboriginal people of Australia. 'Aboriginal people' is a collective name for the original people of Australia and their descendants and does not emphasise the diversity of languages, cultural practices and spiritual; beliefs. This diversity is acknowledged by adding an 's' to 'people' ('Aboriginal peoples'). 'Aboriginal peoples' can also be used to refer to more than one Aboriginal person.

- The 'I' in 'Indigenous' is capitalised when referring specifically to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The lower case 'i' for 'indigenous' is only used when referring to people originating in more than one region or country such as the Pacific region, Canada or New Zealand.

Abbreviations: A deliberate decision was made when developing this Thesis not to abbreviate the descriptive phrase 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'. Verbalising the acronyms "ATSI" or "TI" or: "TSI" is considered culturally insensitive, as is the abbreviation of terms such as Indigenous, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (NIPAAC, 2002, p. 24)**.** All other phrases that could be abbreviated are set out in full the first time they are referred to in each chapter prior to being used as an abbreviation thereafter.

PRECAUTIONARY NOTE

The significance of cultural practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are recognised throughout this thesis. The use of names has been kept to a minimum to respect customary laws and prevent offence to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers of this Thesis. However, at the time of reading, there may be persons named or referred to who are now deceased. The researcher does not wish to cause offence to readers, and for this reason it may not be appropriate to continue to read this Thesis.

This Thesis has been referenced according to APA 5th Guidelines. Formatting was undertaken with the use of *EndNote 9* software.

PREAMBLE

"It's a rude awakening. People need to know that it's not good. People think you're flying but you're not" (David, retired AFL footballer, 2009).

"My heritage gives me so much power it's unbelievable. I've got the confidence to go out and speak in front of anyone and present Aboriginal culture. At the end of the day that's going to stay with me for the rest of my life" (retired Indigenous footballer, David Wirrpanda, cited in the official website of The David Wirrpanda Foundation, 2011).

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ACRONYMS

ACE	Athlete Career and Education
ACG	Australian Commonwealth Government
ACGA	Australian Commonwealth Games Association
AFL	Australian Football League
AFLPA	Australian Football League Players' Association
AI	Athletic Identity
AIBA	International Amateur Boxing Association
AIMS	Athlete Identity Measurement Scale
AIS	Australian Institute of Sport
AOC	Australian Olympic Committee
ARDI	Athletes' Retirement Decision Inventory
ARL	Australian Rugby League
ASC	Australian Sports Commission
BAI	Boxing Australia Inc.
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CMACT	Conceptual Model of Adaptation to Career Transition
CTBI	Chronic Traumatic Brain Injury
EAFU	Elite Athlete Friendly University
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
MCG	Melbourne Cricket Ground (also colloquially referred to as the 'G')

MHAT	Model of Human Adaptation to Transition
NASCA	National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy
NFL	National Football League
NRL	National Rugby League
NSO	National Sporting Organisation
NTID	National Talent Identification and Development
NYC	National Youth Competition
PDM	Player Development Manager
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plan
RLPA	Rugby League Players' Association
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SCT	Sport Career Transition
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TEA	Tertiary Education Allowance
TPP	Total Player Payment
UK	United Kingdom
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VFA	Victorian Football Association
VFL	Victorian Football League
WBA	World Boxing Association

ABSTRACT

International research into sport career transition (SCT) has consistently found that life after sport is fraught with uncertainty for elite athletes. Planning for post-sport careers is therefore most important, something that progressive sporting bodies have begun to realise in recent years. Within the sport industry, SCT programs have emerged to provide frameworks through which athletes plan for retirement, and pathways by which to transition out of sport into a new career and lifestyle.

The thesis focuses on a key problem within the SCT paradigm: that it has been presumed that an end to elite sport requires a process of adjustment that is common to all players. That rather narrow perspective fails to acknowledge the situational complexity and socio-cultural diversity of elite athletes, a population group with varied personal circumstances, and thus arguably different individual SCT needs. In developing that argument, this thesis focuses on an athlete group that does not fit 'mainstream' participation in elite sport, nor the 'conventional' SCT policy milieu. The context is Australian sport, and the focus is with a small but significant number of Indigenous athletes who, notwithstanding substantial socioeconomic, geographic, and cultural obstacles, have contributed significantly to elite-level Australian sport. While many Indigenous Australians have assumed high profile careers in sport, little is known about their transition to a life after sport, or their experiences of retirement.

To address this research gap, the thesis explores the SCT experiences of 30 current and former male Indigenous athletes from three sports: Australian Rules football (i.e., AFL), rugby league (i.e., NRL), as well as professional and amateur boxing. The inquiry uses an interpretive phenomenological methodology, and draws inspiration from a Bourdieuian conceptual framework. In depth, face-to-face interviews featuring open ended questions facilitate story-telling and narrative data collection: there is a strong emphasis on giving voice to the participants. Subsequently, Bourdieu's sociological theories of habitus, capital, and field, provide an interpretive lens around which to frame and analyse the interview responses.

The thesis concludes that although elite sport provides Indigenous Australian athletes with many opportunities for a secure life beyond sport, these athletes remain vulnerable and at risk due to:

1) the primacy of Indigenous athletic identity;
2) assumptions about their ‘natural’ acumen as athletes;
3) the perpetuation of racialised beliefs and behaviours;
4) the sense of Indigenous responsibility for, and commitment to, extended families and traditional community networks, and
5) a perceived Indigenous invisibility that tends to reduce the range career choices thought available to Indigenous athletes after sport.

Indigenous AFL footballers, rugby league players and boxers have needs that will continue to evolve over time. Sport managers need to recognise this changing environment, their responsibilities to the professional development of athletes, and the needs and perspectives of Indigenous sportsmen playing elite-level sport. The thesis provides an understanding of this situation, by giving voice to stakeholders, who demonstrate that Indigenous athletes experience SCT in complex and unique ways.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with issues involved in sport career transition (SCT), with a primary focus on the experiences of sportspeople who undergo this. International research has consistently indicated that SCT has the potential to be challenging and problematic. Sport career transition refers to a process and passage of time whereby an athlete moves from an elite sport career into a new life, livelihood and sense of identity, while athletic retirement is generally viewed as the point at which a person completely stops their involvement in a particular activity or employment. These two interlinked areas involve sport participants, managers and coaches, who either directly experience career change in sport or are involved in mentoring people undergoing transition—sometimes in dedicated SCT programs. Such processes have been of interest to academic researchers in a variety of fields, notably sport psychology (Lavallee & Wylleman, 2000; Stambulova, Stephan, & Jäphag, 2007; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1998), sport sociology (Allison & Meyer, 1988), and, to a lesser extent, sport management (Smith & Stewart, 1999). Despite these different disciplinary foci, there is general agreement among researchers and practitioners that transitioning out of elite-level sport is a complex and multifaceted process and, furthermore, that preparation for retirement significantly influences the nature of the transition and post-sport experience (Lavallee, D., Gorely, Lavallee, R., & Wylleman, 2001; Petitpas, Champagne, Chartrand, Danish, Murphy, 1997). In short, for elite competitors, there are numerous challenges involved in preparing to move on, and eventually leave, their profession.

Elite-level sport is, for many athletes, a professional career, such as playing basketball in the NBA. For others in high performance sport, it is a full-time activity but with little prospect of significant financial remuneration, such as in niche activities like rowing and archery. Notwithstanding these contrasts in remuneration, all elite-level athletes show dedication and commitment to performance excellence. What is more, irrespective of the nature of their engagement in elite sport, whether professional or amateur, each athlete

faces the inevitability of retirement. The present thesis is, therefore, open to exploring the experiences of elite-level athletes from across the participation spectrum.

International research has consistently indicated that SCT experiences are difficult to predict. Scholars have found that some athletes cope satisfactorily with these processes—approaching their post-sport life with confidence, and feeling well prepared for engagement in a new career. Yet the same studies have also revealed that many athletes become lost, confused, and disoriented in the lead-up to and after retirement, with some even becoming socially dysfunctional (Frith, 1990; Mihovilovic, 1968; Stephan, Bilard, Ninot, & Delignieres, 2003; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1998). Indeed, Mihovilovic (1968) described incidents of substance abuse in his study of 44 retired footballers from the former Republic of Yugoslavia, while Stephan et al. (2003) described difficulties experienced by French athletes upon retirement from sport after the 2000 Olympic Games. Various studies into athletic retirement have shown that athletes may encounter serious economic difficulties, lose contact with teammates, miss the camaraderie of the team, have decreased life satisfaction, suffer depression, lose self-esteem, have a greater probability of marriage breakdown, and/or engage in pathological behaviours, including crime and substance abuse (Butt & Molnar, 2009; Lerch, 1981; Mihovilovic, 1968; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996; Stephan, Torregrosa, Sanchez, 2007). In extreme cases, there have also been reports of suicide, as documented by Frith (1990) in his studies of retired English, Australian, South African, and New Zealand Test cricketers. Conversely, other studies have found high levels of post-sport life satisfaction, indicating that athletic retirement may be experienced as a relief; indeed, as an opportunity for former athletes to pursue new roles and experiences once released from the burden of heavy training routines and other high-performance sport demands (Coakley, 1983; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Stephan et al., 2003). For example, in a study of 34 elite Greek athletes, most athletes left sport voluntarily and experienced feelings of rebirth (Koukouris, 1991). Furthermore, in a study of 28 retired female tennis professionals, Allison and Meyer (1988) explained that, in general, the athletes did not find disengagement from their competitive years traumatic, but rather found it to be a chance to re-establish more traditional societal roles and lifestyles.

Research by sport psychologists into the experiences of athletic retirement has evolved to a point where there is consensus among scholars about the multifaceted and idiosyncratic nature of adjustment to sport career transitions (Alfermann, Stambulova, & Zemaityte. 2004; Fernandez, Stephan, & Fouquereau. 2006; Stambulova et al., 2007). Jean Lussier, a retired Canadian professional ice hockey player, provided an insight into this complexity by drawing on his own experience:

> I have gone through some difficult patches. I left a world I adored, for me hockey was more than just a simple passion. I have had to readjust. Life here in Quebec is not the same as Switzerland [….] Though I never wanted to push myself into the spotlight, I still found myself there! But you have to be able to turn the page. From being a public figure, you become just another man in the street. Golf has enabled me to meet new people and make new contacts. Sportsmen who withdraw and cut themselves off can spiral into dark depressions. When you're involved in sport, everyone wants to shake your hand. When you become just another citizen, no-one is interested any more (Jean Lussier, former professional Canadian ice hockey player, cited in de Rouffignac, 2007).

Therefore, according to current research, the SCT experiences of elite-level sportspeople appear to be difficult to predict—notwithstanding the introduction of SCT programs in progressive sport organisations.

1.1 RESEARCH RATIONALE

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, studies of SCT have become more nuanced and holistic (Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009; Stambulova et al., 2007). Attention has shifted from one particular transition (i.e., career transition) towards a greater life-span perspective of athlete involvement. This approach runs parallel with research from fields of talent development, deliberate practice, and career development (Stambulova et al., 2007). Along the same lines, as sport has become more professional, the notion of a career in sport has been developed more fully in recent years by player agents, development managers and player associations, who have sought to develop what they describe as the whole person, not just the athlete, and thus to prepare them for post-sport careers and life experiences (Australian Sports Commission, 2008). In recent years, the life-span approach has been successfully deployed in Europe to conduct cross-national studies of athletes' adjustment to retirement. For example, a group of researchers collaborated to produce cross-cultural

evaluations of the retirement experiences of elite athletes in France, Sweden, Germany, Lithuania, and Russia (Alfermann et al., 2004; 2002; Stambulova, 2001; Stambulova et al., 2007). This international and comparative approach is a welcome addition to the literature.

Scholarship into the complex subject of SCT has covered a range of sports and athletes, and addressed both team and individual. However, both academic researchers and sport managers generally adopted a rather generic and, therefore, largely undifferentiated perspective on the SCT needs of elite athletes (Lavallee & Wylleman, 2000; Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009). This seems problematic in an SCT context because, as Stambulova and Alfermann put it, "the universal knowledge about 'athletes in general' seems insufficient to explain the behavior of athletes from different cultures" (Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009, p. 292). According to these scholars, both researchers and policymakers have treated athletes who leave sport as socio-culturally similar subjects with common issues of adjustment (Alfermann et al., 2004; Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009; Stambulova et al., 2007). This is a problem as the diversity of underlying distinctive social, demographic, and ethno-cultural factors brought to sport by athletes from a range of backgrounds and locations suggests that they will also have a diverse range of SCT needs and experiences.

In the Australian context, there has been limited scholarship about adjustment to life after sport—with the literature emanating from medicine, sociology, and sport psychology, but little from within sport management (Albion & Fogarty, 2003; Speed & Morris, 2001; Gorely, Bruce, & Teale., 1998; Fish, 1994). Given this lacuna, it is no surprise that the experiences of numerous minority groups, such as Indigenous Australians, as well as migrants from non-English-speaking backgrounds—now generally referred to as people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD)—have not been explored. Yet there seems to be the potential and importance for such investigations in the Australian context, given that athletes from CALD backgrounds have emerged as significant contributors to elite-level sport (NSW Rugby League, 2010; Zakus & Horton, 2009). Moreover, researchers have neglected to consider the SCT needs of Indigenous Australians, even though many have become significant contributors to Australian sport in recent decades.

Taking all of this into account, the present study concentrates on the SCT experiences of Indigenous sportsmen. There are several key reasons for this focus. Firstly, in recent decades Indigenous athletes have become high-profile performers in three major sports (Korff, 2008; Tatz, 1995). Indigenous Australians currently constitute less than 3% of the national population (ABS, 2004), but Australian Rules Football (i.e., AFL), rugby league (i.e., NRL), and boxing feature significant proportions of Indigenous Australian males competing at the elite level. Indeed, they are now statistically over-represented, constituting well over 10% in the football codes alone (AFL, 2007; Masters, 2009; Tatz, 1996).

Secondly, there is a disparity in the literature in that there is considerable interest in the recruitment of Indigenous athletes into elite sport, but negligible focus on their transition out of sport and into a post-athletic career. Specifically, there has been growing research into the recruitment of Indigenous athletes into elite sport, as well as support mechanisms to assist them with adjusting to life as full-time professional performers (AFL, 2008; Boxing Australia Inc, 2008; Campbell, 2008; Mitchell & Egudo, 2003; Nicholson, Hoye, & Gallant, 2011). This academic interest reflects the realisation, by several professional sports in Australia, that Indigenous athletes have particular ethno-cultural needs upon their recruitment into elite sport. These needs are sometimes met by mentoring from experienced Indigenous sportspeople, based on expectations that Indigenous athletes will have ethno-culturally-specific adjustment needs in making the transition from ‘rookie’ to seasoned performer. During such transitions, these athletes are not only likely to become elite-level players but also public figures. In short, the nature and extent of pressures and disciplines associated with professional sport and media attention are typically unfamiliar to Indigenous people, regardless of whether they come from remote, rural, or urban communities. Sport organisations have come to recognise that support programs play an important role in effectively familiarising Indigenous players into assuming the roles of elite athletes. It is now less likely that an indigenous person will be ‘mainstreamed’ by sport organisations and treated as ‘just another player’ without ethno-cultural needs of their own (AFL, 2008; ARL, 2010; Boxing Australia Inc, 2008).

Conversely, there is a significant gap in the literature dealing with SCT experiences of Indigenous Australian athletes. In fact, little is presently known beyond anecdotes and biographies—many of which seem to present a grim picture. There is the well-known story of Lionel Rose, the first Australian Aboriginal World Boxing Champion and 1969 Australian of the Year. Rose retired in 1970, after having won more money than any other Australian fighter. In his own words, he spent most of it on 'wine, women and song' (Tatz, 1987). Beyond boxing, Rose created income with a string of country and western hits in 1970, but his life began to fall apart owing to womanising, drinking, smoking, run-ins with the law, and a conviction for burglary. He eventually succumbed to alcoholism, which robbed him of almost everything (Tatz, 1987). Similarly, one of the AFL's most exciting Indigenous players of the late 1970s and early 1980s, Jim Krakouer, floundered in retirement from the game, amassing large gambling debts. To pay back these debts he turned to crime. In 1995 he was convicted for drug trafficking and served eight years in gaol (Gorman, 2005). More recently, Ezra Bray, a speedy and skilled Indigenous AFL midfielder, left the AFL system in 2002 and ended up in and out of gaol, with a lifestyle laden with alcohol and substance abuse (McCalman, Tsey, Wenitong, Whiteside, Haswell, Cadet, & James, 2006). Whether these stories are typical, or otherwise, is not yet known. A key goal of this thesis, therefore, is to systematically investigate the SCT experiences of elite-level Indigenous athletes.

Thirdly, any study of career transition among Indigenous Australian athletes must also take into account SCT policies and programs (where they exist) established by sport organisations. National Sporting Organisations (NSO) like the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS), the Australian Football League (AFL) and the National Rugby League (NRL), have conventional programs, but to date there have been no custom-designed programs to accommodate the needs of cohorts from CALD backgrounds. As previously mentioned, key sport organisations now invest heavily in programs to recruit Indigenous athletes (many of whom are from rural or remote settings) into elite-level sport, and there are culturally appropriate support mechanisms to assist them with adjusting to life as full-time professionals in urban settings. At the other end of this career sequence there are SCT programs for athletes, but as yet these have not involved culturally-nuanced support

initiatives. The first working assumption of this thesis, therefore, is that elite Indigenous athletes have an important need, *during* their athletic career, for sport organisations to provide professional development opportunities and ethno-culturally relevant resources towards their effective transition out of sport.

1.2 RESEARCH AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTION

According to Stambulova and Alfermann (2009), athletes' perceptions of their sport transitions, along with researchers' perceptions and interpretations of data, are infused by their cultures. Therefore, in order to understand both mono-cultural and cross-cultural studies and practice, researchers interested in studying career transitions should consider cultures in more depth and treat them as discrete contexts with particular sets of characteristics. Stambulova and Alfermann argued that because people internalise meanings from their cultural contexts, it is impossible to separate their development and behaviour from these frameworks. It is also important, they averred, to appreciate that cultural context is fairly rigid; it cannot be readily changed by an individual. Thus, to further deepen contemporary understanding of SCT, it is important to consider athletes in their group contexts, using approaches that deal specifically with culture specific differences. Correspondingly, the second working assumption of this thesis is that an understanding of the SCT experiences of CALD groups requires a focus on underlying distinctive social, demographic, and ethno-cultural factors.

Accordingly, there is a key research question that stems from the discussion outlined above, in addition to cognate research objectives:

What are the retirement experiences of elite Indigenous Australian athletes?

To answer the research question two initial objectives have been framed. Investigation of these objectives will amplify the research question, and enable further clarification of the phenomenon under investigation.

1) to explore the experiences of elite Indigenous Australian athletes as they undergo SCT or prepare to do so, and

2) to identify any ethno-culturally distinctive SCT characteristics of Indigenous Australian athletes.

In the case of the population group under focus, there is a concurrent issue to consider. A popular myth about Australians in general is their love for sport, and the enduring perception of sport being devoid of any social or political issues that exist outside of sport (Hallinan, Bruce, & Coram, 1999). Many metaphors relating to sport allude to a level playing field encapsulating equal opportunity, justice and fairness (Tatz, 1996). Yet sport in Australia has also mirrored political, social, and economic problems, with research indicating that sport has been the site of both engagement and discrimination for Indigenous people (Tatz, 1987). These points reflect longstanding problems associated with racism and class-based differences of opportunity within Australian society and sport (Gardiner, 1997; Tatz, 1987; Warren & Tsaousis, 1997).

A further key issue is racialisation. This is generally understood as a process by which understandings of 'race' are used to classify individuals or groups of people. It is more than just categorising people based on physical features, but is also an important factor in the reproduction of patterns of power and inequality in society (Garner, 2010). Aboriginal scholar Darren Godwell warned that one risk connected with the racialisation of Indigenous athletes is that of being forever typecast as sportspeople, this having the potential to limit the range of life and career possibilities which are deemed to be 'available' to this group (Godwell, 2000). A third working assumption of this thesis, therefore, is that Indigenous Australian athletes will experience tensions associated with racism and racialisation when undergoing SCT, and consequently the third objective of the research is:

3) to investigate whether racism and racialisation have affected the SCT experiences of Indigenous athletes.

While the major focus of the study is to explore the nature of SCT for elite Indigenous Australian athletes, the dialogue with respondents is expected to help inform recommendations about culturally relevant SCT programs and support mechanisms. Therefore, the fourth objective of the research is:

4) to evaluate SCT protocols offered by Australian Rules football, rugby league and boxing, to ascertain how (if at all) they cater to the needs of Indigenous Australian athletes, and (where appropriate) to suggest reforms to these protocols.

To better comprehend and clarify Indigenous cultures, values and beliefs, the study is informed and guided by an Indigenous philosophy, *Dadirri*. This philosophy acts as a pathway for the researcher, a non-Indigenous woman, to appreciate how and why Indigenous Australian people function in their own cultures and environments. While not a research methodology in the Western scientific tradition, *Dadirri* advocates gathering information through quiet observation and deep listening, building knowledge inductively through sensitivity and awareness, and developing understanding by contemplation and reflection (Atkinson, 2000).

As the study involves research in culturally complex settings, it needs an approach that can address these complexities. It therefore requires a philosophical framework to underpin inquiry. The transformative paradigm, with its associated philosophical assumptions, has been adopted as a critical framework supporting the study. The paradigm provides a tool to examine a world view that directly engages the complexity that researchers encounter in culturally diverse communities (Mertens, 2005). It addresses inequality and injustice in society by challenging mainstream and institutionalised findings and interpretations (Field, 1991). In this study, the paradigm offers the prospects of exploring SCT, as well as the possibility of identifying program improvements for Indigenous athletes. Complementing this is the theoretical framework that forms the foundation of the study: this is the adaptation of Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital, and habitus to the processes of SCT in order to critically examine the sport career transition process. With a Bourdieuian approach, the *habitus* is a central construct that aligns closely with identity, seeking to explain the dispositions that influence individuals to become who they are. *Capital* relates to a form of value associated with a particular set of tastes, consumption patterns, attributes, skills and awards, and *the field* is the setting in which individuals are located and socially positioned.

This theoretical triad:

1) provides a framework to interpret phenomena in the findings;
2) facilitates both the analysis of responses from participants and the presentation of findings, specifically in regard to their individual and group habitus and capital;
3) positions the influence of the field on the social practices of participants, and
4) allows for an analysis of dynamic social behaviours of individuals through notions of identity and the wider social and cultural arena (i.e., familial, occupational and institutional arrangements).

In this study, qualitative research, using interviews featuring open ended question and, wherever possible, face-to-face discussions, was selected as the most culturally appropriate approach to collect data. It offered the capacity for a greater insight into Indigenous athletes' understanding, meaning and experiences, thus facilitating the building of stories around the topic of SCT (Kingsley, Phillips, Townsend, & Henderson-Wilson, 2010). Earlier scholarship into SCT most often featured quantitative approaches, as much of that research emanated from sport psychology. In recent years, however, there has been a noticeable trend for authors to employ qualitative methodologies (Kadlcik & Flemr, 2008; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Tinley, 2002), or mixed methodologies to complement quantitative approaches (Gilmore, 2008; Price, 2007; Stephan et al., 2003). This thesis offers a mixed methods approach by deploying a short survey, the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linde, 1993), to measure the degree to which an individual identifies with the role of 'athlete'. However, the study is predominantly qualitative, which is consistent with the vast body of research into Indigenous Australians (for examples, see Atkinson, 2000; dé Ishtar, 2005; Kingsley et al., 2010).

According to Tuhiwai-Smith (2003), it is important for non-Indigenous researchers working with Indigenous people to position themselves in relation to the people for whom the research counts. As a mature aged, non-Indigenous woman, my motivation to undertake this study was twofold—due to a personal interest in both the subjects of sport career

transition and athletic retirement. This interest was heightened by in-depth reading and preliminary research. I am a qualified swim coach and sport manager with many years of experience, yet in these roles I felt that I lacked the skills needed for understanding the problems encountered by many of my athletes. My early research into the subject indicated a need for inquiry into the situations of Indigenous Australian athletes; although I recognised that research with Indigenous peoples in Australia would require a sensitive and enlightened approach, one that needed to be informed by important ethical considerations. Thus, I entered this research with an expectation that interaction with this group of athletes would likely be a challenging and thought-provoking learning experience.

1.3 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

This thesis seeks to make a number of original contributions to the existing body of knowledge. The study is a starting point for studies of elite Indigenous Australian athletes undergoing SCT, and discusses issues of cultural diversity related to their athletic retirement experiences. In particular, the research contributes to the academic literature in sport management by building theory on Indigenous athletic retirement, as it explores the unique situations of elite male Indigenous Australian athletes, and the factors that shape the nature of their athletic retirement. A significant gap in the literature is identified: the lack of research into the situations of elite-level Indigenous Australian athletes as they approach and experience SCT. It uses the Bourdieuian theoretical triad of field, capital, and habitus, concepts that allow an analysis of behaviours of Indigenous athletes through notions of identity and the wider social, sporting and cultural domains.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The thesis is organised into five chapters.

An overview of the thesis is provided in *Chapter One*, with the study located in the context of Australian and international elite-level sport scholarship. The research question and objectives are introduced along with a rationale for the study, and a glossary of terms.

The academic literature that underpins the research is examined in *Chapter Two.* It starts with an overview of different disciplinary approaches to SCT. Major theoretical approaches and frameworks that have been applied to explain the phenomenon of athletic retirement are then examined. An analysis of the Bourdieuian theoretical concepts of field, habitus and capital—the adapted theoretical framework to be deployed in the thesis—follows. Existing research that features Australian athletes, and/or sport programs, is evaluated. Next, a background and a context for the thesis are provided, with a focus on themes and issues especially relevant to the population under scrutiny, by presenting:

1) an historical context for race relations in Australia;
2) a profile of Indigenous circumstances;
3) a discussion of racism and racialisation as they relate to Indigenous Australians, and
4) an overview of the elite Australian sport environment.

The chapter finishes with the introduction of a conceptual flowchart designed to visually demonstrate the concept of the SCT experience.

The methodology used to collect data is outlined in *Chapter Three.* Two interrelated sections are discussed:

1) the research methodology, and
2) the research methods.

The methodology section provides the theoretical and philosophical concepts that underpin this research and also details the interpretive phenomenological research design. The methods section describes the three main qualitative methods used for data collection:

1) interviews;
2) key stakeholder interviews, and
3) document analysis.

These are supported by the fourth method:

4) the Athlete Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) (Brewer et al., 1993).

Later sections of the chapter concentrate on the thematic analysis process, acknowledge potential areas of bias, and highlight the ethical considerations underpinning the research.

Research findings and discussion are presented in *Chapter Four*, starting with the organisations that support SCT, along with relevant policies and programs. Interview data findings are reported in accordance with the research question and objectives. In *Chapter Five*, the implications of the findings are considered in light of the original research question and associated aims. A culturally-specific framework to illustrate the characteristics of SCT for Indigenous athletes is presented. Adapting the Bourdieuian concepts results in the development of new theoretical approaches, based upon modifications of the notion of capital, into Indigenous contexts.

1.5 CONCLUSIONS

There is a growing body of global research into the nature of SCT (Alfermann, 2000; Lavallee & Wylleman, 2000; Petitpas & Champagne, 1988; Stambulova et al., 2007; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). However, there are still gaps and limitations in the body of research, notably in relation to the SCT experiences and needs of particular ethno-cultural groups. In the context of this thesis, it is argued that there is a lack of understanding about preparation for life after sport for elite Indigenous Australian athletes, and that this study intends go some way towards establishing a knowledge base in respect of that problem.

1.6 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

This section defines or outlines common definitions and terminology that will be used throughout this thesis.

Aboriginal: Aboriginal Australians are those whose traditional cultures and lands lie on the Australian mainland and most of the islands, including Tasmania (in the south) and Fraser Island, Palm Island, Mornington Island, Groote Eylandt, Bathurst, and Melville Islands (in the north) (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2005).

Agency: Bourdieu believed that individuals are equipped with the ability to understand and control their own actions, regardless of the circumstances of their lives. This notion is referred to as agency (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002)

Athletic career: As in the general workforce, sport also represents a vocation because the role often reflects a serious commitment and preoccupation for ten years or more duration (Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick., 1998). This era may take as many hours as a full-time job, or often, even more, as well as a considerable investment into the athlete's career by family members and significant others. Professional sports, as opposed to amateur sports, are those in which athletes receive payment for their performance (while amateur athletes may or may not receive support towards the pursuit of their athletic aspirations).

Capital: A Bourdieuian concept relating to a form of value associated with a particular set of tastes, consumption patterns, attributes, skills and awards. In the field of sport—strength, stamina, suppleness, as well as competency in a particular set of skills, may constitute physical capital (Webb et al., 2002).

Culture: refers to meaning systems and lifestyles of particular groups of people, or "the learned, socially acquired traditions and lifestyles of the members of a society, including their patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling and acting" (Harris, 1983, p. 5). In isolation, the term *culture* makes no reference to biological characteristics because it refers to learned patterns of behaviour. Culture is typically used to describe beliefs, behaviours, and attitudes among groups that are linked together by way of geography (e.g., Tasmanians), ethnicity (e.g., Chinese-Australians), or Indigeneity (e.g., Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples).

Elite: The definition of *elite* in terms of an athlete is not always clear-cut. While the majority of elite athletes in Australia are on scholarship with the Australian Institute of Sport or the network of institutes and academies of sport, there are many athletes that may fall outside of this cohort (ANU, 2008). Athlete-friendly universities in Australia use the

following suggested strategies for identifying elite athletes. To be categorised as *elite*, athletes must be identified and recognised by one of the following organisations:

- AFL Players' Association
- Australian Cricketers' Association
- Australian Institute of Sport
- Australian Professional Footballers' Association
- Rugby League Professionals' Association
- Rugby Union Players' Association
- National senior squad members from ACE supported sports
- State Institutes or Academies of Sport

However, if an athlete falls outside these organisations, they may still make an application to the cohort of athlete-friendly universities to be considered *elite* (ANU, 2008).

Ethnicity: a term widely used to refer to the categories by which people may choose to label or identify themselves and others. These labels may be based on attributes such as cultural identity, ancestry, descent, or nationality (Thomas & Dyall, 1999). Ethnicity in this study is used as a social construction that indicates identification with a particular group that is often descended from common ancestors. Members of the group share common cultural traits (such as language, religion, and dress) and are an identifiable minority in a larger nation-state (Thomas & Dyall, 1999).

Field (or *cultural field*): Bourdieu's metaphor for sites of cultural practice, defined as a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations and appointments which constitute an objective hierarchy, producing and authorising certain discourses and activities (Webb et al., 2002).

Future capital: a form of value associated with a bank of skills and connections that may not provide immediate benefits, but instead facilitate the capacity to thrive in the future. The concept embraces a striving for self-actualisation and independence in later life by amassing a diverse range of resources. These may include: (a) vocational qualifications or an academic degree which provides the potential to find gainful employment; (b)

competencies in life skills (such as financial or time management); (c) emotional intelligence, gained from life experiences; and (d) financial security. Arguably 'future capital' is both a pathway and process towards an athlete having greater choice of lifestyle, employment, and mobility, once his/her sport career has ended.

Habitus: Bourdieu's concept that expresses the way in which individuals 'become themselves' (i.e., develop attitudes and dispositions), and the ways in which those individuals engage in practices (Webb et al., 2002).

Indigenous: Officially, Australia has two groups of Indigenous peoples; Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2005), and the term *Indigenous* is used to refer to both groups, separately and collectively. In this paper, the term *Indigenous* will be capitalised when denoting this specific social group rather than indigenous peoples more generally. To be consistent with National Health and Medical Research Guidelines, and in line with the Australian Government's definition, Indigenous Australian people are those who:

1) are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent;
2) identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples, and
3) are accepted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples by the communities in which they live (ABS, 2004).

Race: a term that has generally been a way of socially constructing and categorising people based on their physical appearance (usually skin colour), and sometimes other external physiological characteristics. In recent years most scientists have ceased using the term *race* as a way of demarcating human groups, as the concept lacks scientific validity (Tatz & Adair, 2009). Nevertheless, racial categorisation is still used in the media and other public discourses. Thus it has on-going sociological and cultural significance. In this study, the concept of *race* will be used only where necessary to illustrate long held physiological, intellectual, and behavioural stereotypes accorded to 'types' of skin colour, as well as ideologies of difference (e.g., racism and discrimination) associated with these pseudo-scientific or socially constructed categories.

Racialisation: generally understood as a process by which understandings of 'race' are used to classify individuals or groups of people. It is more than just categorising people based on physical features, but is also an important factor in the reproduction of patterns of power and inequality in society (Garner, 2010).

Racial discrimination: "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life" (ANTaR, 2010). Three out of four Indigenous Australians are said to experience racism in their everyday lives (ANTaR, 2010).

Torres Strait Islanders: The Torres Strait Islands lie between the northern tip of Cape York in Queensland and the south west coast of Papua New Guinea. The Torres Strait Islanders have many cultural similarities with the peoples of Papua New Guinea and the Pacific. One must be a descendant of a traditional inhabitant of the Torres Strait Islands to be recognised as a Torres Strait Islander. The history of the definition of Torres Strait Islanders is slightly different from that of Aboriginal people. Although Torres Strait Islanders are also Indigenous to Australia, they were not separately mentioned in the Constitution. Legislatively, there has been no agreement as to the definition of a Torres Strait Islander; however, the Commonwealth definition of *Indigenous* was extended to include Torres Strait Islanders in 1972 following representations by Torres Strait Islanders (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2005).

Retirement*:* Retirement is often viewed, if not explicitly at least implicitly, as "a one-time event in a person's life and a permanent late-life status prior to death" (Hayward, Crimmins, & Wray, 1994, p. 219). In the workplace, retirement is generally the point at which a person stops employment completely. This usually happens upon reaching a determined age, or when physical conditions do not allow the person to work anymore (by illness or accident) (Hayward et al., 1994). It may even be a carefully planned and eagerly-anticipated occasion.

Sport Career Transition: A transition is defined as "an event or non-event which requires a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behaviour and relationships" (Schlossberg, 1981, p. 5). In this study the term *sport career transition* will be used to refer to a process or passage experienced over time whereby an athlete moves from an elite sport career into a new life, livelihood and sense of identity.

Usage in this study: In colloquial speech, withdrawal from sport or exiting a sport career is often referred to as *athletic retirement*. That is used interchangeably with the terms *sport career transition*, and *transition to the post-sport career*. The acronym *SCT* will be used to refer to sport career transition.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This study builds on, and contributes to, 40 years of extensive research into sport career transition (SCT). In terms of SCT, the most extensive and relevant scholarship has emerged from within sport psychology, sport sociology, and sport medicine. The extensive literature on SCT indicates a burgeoning interest in the 'athlete-as-worker', and reflects specialised growth in the study of sport career transitions since the late 1960s. This evolving scholarly inquiry and industry application has resulted in the emergence of a realisation that retiring from elite sport is somewhat different from the routine career adjustment problems of everyday life (Belda, 1999). There is rising awareness that elite athletes are likely to have their own set of aspirations, needs, and adjustment patterns after retiring, either willingly or unwillingly, from a sport career. These change management factors should, and now largely do, concern coaches, human resource stakeholders, and sport organisations (Allison & Meyer, 1988; Torregrosa, Boixadós, Valiente, & Cruz., 2004, Smith & Stewart, 1999).

This chapter commences with discussion of key underlying concepts that will feature in the study. It then moves into a roughly chronological examination of athletic retirement issues, structured for convenience as 'Four Phases of Inquiry'. The section introduces the theoretical approaches and frameworks that have been applied to try to explain the phenomenon of athletic retirement. That is followed by a discussion of the Bourdieuian theoretical concepts of habitus, capital, and field; concepts that provide a platform for analysis and the presentation of findings. This chapter then turns to a review of SCT research conducted by sociologists and psychologists, with a particular focus on the Australian context. That research reveals a significant gap: the post-sport situations and experiences of a significant group of Australian sportspeople—Indigenous Australian athletes—have been overlooked. This is a serious omission, as this group of athletes features amongst Australia's most successful sportspeople, as exemplified by an examination of three major sports where Indigenous athletes have excelled. The final

section of the chapter is the introduction of a conceptual flowchart, derived from a critical reading of the academic literature, which aims to visually illustrate the SCT process, and to demonstrate how the phenomenon has been conceptualised as a linear process.

The sequence of this chapter is illustrated below in the Literature Review Concept Map (*Figure 2.1*).

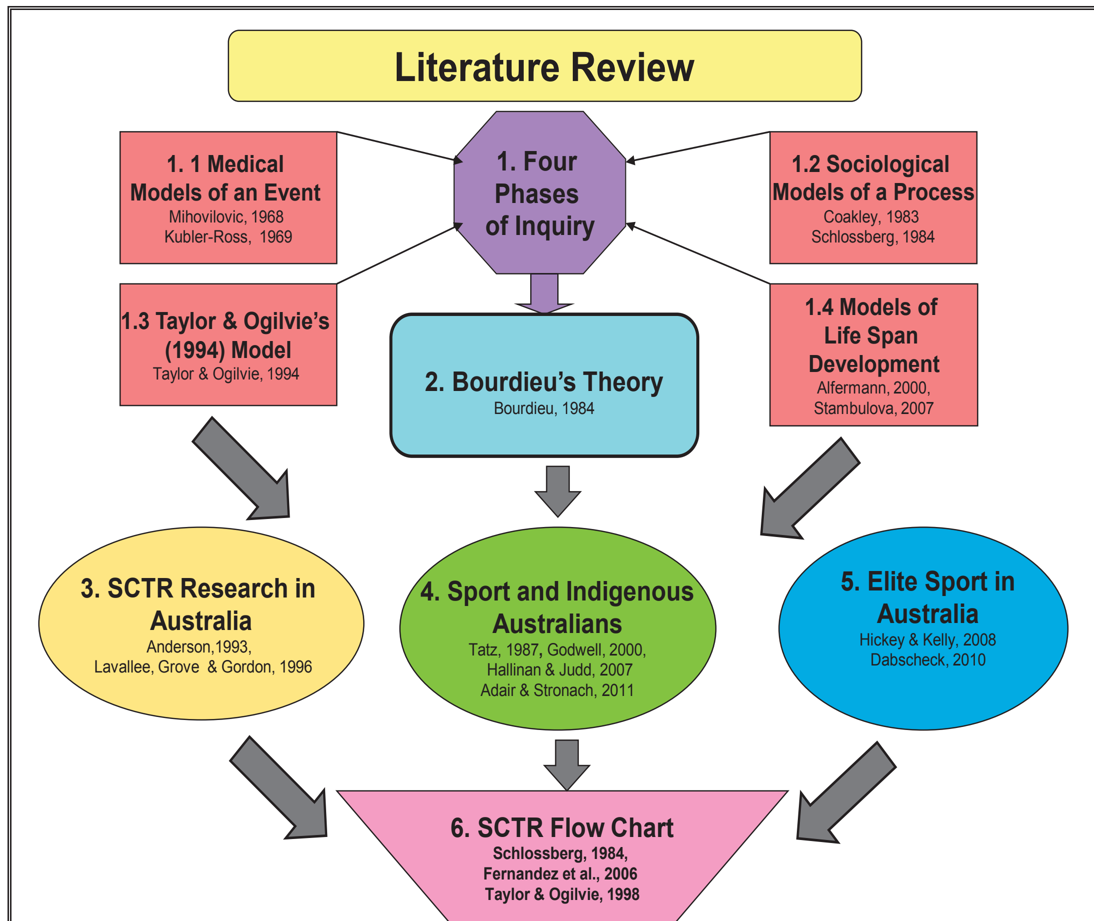

Figure 2.1: Literature review concept map

2.2 BACKGROUND

This section provides an insight into the development and impact of a career in elite sport, and serves as a backdrop for the study. The etymology of the word 'career' comes from the Latin word *carrera,* meaning race. The French equivalent of the word is *carrière*, or road.

Obsolete or archaic meanings of the word include a ‘racing course’ or a ‘swift course’. A more contemporary meaning of ‘career’ retains the suggestion of a course, with the *Penguin English Dictionary* defining the word as an individual's “course or path through history” or “field of employment in which one expects to spend a significant part of one’s working life” (Allen, 2000, p. 207). It is usually considered to pertain to remunerative work (and sometimes also formal education). Haerle (1975, p. 463) used the term ‘career’ to refer to “the fate of a man running his life cycle in a particular society at a particular time”.

2.2.1 Careers in sport

It has been suggested that a career in sport can be viewed as a compressed version of a normal working experience (Côté & Salmela, 1994; Rosenberg, 1981); however, major differences in terms of the uncertainty and insecurity that characterise a sport career have been noted (Adair & Vamplew, 1997; McPherson, 1980). Over the past two decades, sport has progressed from a once amateur recreational pastime to a more professional working environment where sport and elite participants are driven by profits and production. As a result, it has been suggested that sport is no longer a playful alternative to the world of work, but rather, its mirror image (Rigauer, 1981). Using football in Britain as an example, Hunt argued how sport now reflects the world of work:

> Professional football has most of the characteristics of a vast capitalistic industry. It is on the lines of big business that the clubs are organised, with their boards of directors, their managers, their shareholders, and their employees. The monopoly of the means of satisfying the demands of the consumers (or spectators) is for the most part concentrated in the hands of comparatively small groups of industrialists and financiers […] The driving force, the overriding motive, of professional football clubs is not the satisfaction of public demand, but the acquisition of profits (Hunt, 1981, cited in Polkinghorne, 1995).

While Hunt was discussing British football, a similar argument can be made for professional football in Australia, in relation to clubs—each with Chief Executive Officers, managers, and administrators—and athletes as the employees. These sport organisations (even though they are often not-for-profit enterprises) sell their sport to the entertainment market for profit, which is clearly different to the amateur-based origins and culture of the games (Price, 2007). The nature of modern professional sport as a working environment

means there is a focus on performance, production and profit. To achieve these outcomes, athletes must operate effectively and efficiently to maximise on-field performance. According to staunch critics, modern sport engages in a manipulation of human rights through the use of doctors, psychologists, bio-chemists and trainers (Brohm, 1989; Hoberman, 1992; Shogun, 1999; Young, 2004). The manufacture of champions was described as early as 1978, with Brohm (1978, p. 41) arguing that "training turns men and children into efficient machines who know no joy other than the grim satisfaction of mastering and exploiting their own bodies".

Research has attempted to show that participation in sport enhances psychosocial development, but data is inconsistent and contradictory (Gilmore, 2008). Similarly, there is a great deal of debate as to whether sport has any side-effect on character development (Petitpas & Champagne, 1988). Some studies have shown that an emphasis on sport may be developmentally detrimental, particularly if it comes at the expense of education (Blann, 1985; McPherson, 1980; Stephan, & Demulier, 2008). With that said, physical activity, teamwork and competition may also have positive impacts on social, physical and personal development, including improved athletic skills, enhanced physical abilities and improved physiological functioning (Gilmore, 2008). Participation in sport may also enhance leadership skills, increase feelings of self-worth and bring about improved family and peer interaction (Baillie & Danish, 1992). A number of personality traits are believed to be particularly salient in elite athletes, including competitiveness, independence, self-assertiveness, tough-mindedness and conscientiousness (Young & Pearce, 2009). There can, of course, be negative attributes associated with an elite sport focus. Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000) argued that participation in elite-level gymnastics may have the effect of postponing identity formation, while Thomas and Ermler (1988) contended that elite sport participation could impede an athlete's social support systems due to its all-encompassing nature, disrupting everything from family relationships, work responsibilities, and physical health to personal comfort. In some cases a heavy focus on sport can even leave athletes without basic, fully-developed social skills, such as "reading and writing, looking for a sale or balancing a chequebook" (Thomas & Ermler, 1988, p. 139). In addition to the pressures

and problems of everyday life, athletes face distinctive personal and physical problems. For example, research into the careers of boxers demonstrates the extreme physical effects that the sport can have in the short term, and its detrimental long-term effects (Stronach & Adair, 2010; Sugden, 1996; Tatz, 1987; Wacquant, 1995).

The once-popular myth that sport can serve as an effective vehicle for widespread upward social mobility has been hotly debated in recent years. Dubois mentioned a typical and widely held belief wherein:

> Economically disadvantaged individuals in general and ethnic minorities in particular are the most often mentioned beneficiaries of the 'upward mobility through sport' belief (Dubois, 1980, p. 104).

In recent times writers such as the American academic John Hoberman (1997) and the Indigenous Australian scholar Darren Godwell (1997) argued against this way of thinking. Godwell concluded that professional sport is not a realistic career path for the overwhelming majority of Indigenous Australians. As Adair and Stronach (2010, p. 123) put it: "scoring tries on the red dust of outback Queensland was the Aboriginal equivalent of 'hoop dreams' basketball in urban America". This was a childhood dream of professional sport that very few could actually realise (Godwell, 1997). Dubois (1980, p. 104) succinctly concluded that "the notion of sport as a stepping stone to high status attainment is a myth". In summary, therefore, the research findings in relation to the positive and negative effects of elite sport participation, and the impact on cognate areas such as education and career planning, are underdeveloped and, at present, inconsistent.

The next section analyses four particular phases of research into the subject of SCT over the past 40 years, conceptualised as 'Four Phases of Inquiry'. It intends to illustrate the motivating factors for undertaking this research, along with the parameters underpinning it.

2.3 FOUR PHASES OF INQUIRY

2.3.1 First phase of inquiry: 'Medical' models

From as early as 1968, researchers responded to reports on the incidence of apparent distress experienced by retiring athletes and sought an appropriate theoretical framework

through which to investigate the phenomenon. At that time, athletic retirement was simplistically conceptualised as being similar to retirement from the workforce in general, and therefore, conceptualised as a complex interaction of generic stressors—including financial, social, psychological, and physical—which can produce cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and/or social trauma (Mihovilovic, 1968; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). This was a surprising mistake, as athletic retirement represents a unique period of life change that, unlike retirement from other careers, usually occurs early in life (Webb et al., 1998). In addition to this, the sport environment creates a lifestyle based upon commitment, discipline and routine which is often designed to shelter an athlete from external distractions (Stephan et al., 2003). Furthermore, a vocation in sport often reflects a serious pre-occupation for ten years or more duration. This era may take as many hours as a full-time job or often, even more. It is also a considerable investment into the athlete's career by family members and significant others. Retirement from the workplace is broadly defined as a departure; leaving; the giving up work, or withdrawal from it. It is often viewed, if not explicitly at least implicitly, as "a one-time event in a person's life and a permanent late-life status prior to death" (Hayward et al., 1994, p. 219). In the workplace, retirement is generally the point at which a person stops employment completely, and is often a carefully planned and eagerly anticipated occasion. Retirement from the workplace usually happens upon reaching a determined age, or when physical conditions do not allow the person to work anymore (by illness or accident) (Hayward et al., 1994). In the late 1960s and early 1970s these broad parameters typically guided the way that researchers approached the subject of athletic retirement, and the focus of these early studies centred around traumatic and negative career-concluding events (Gearing, 1999; Koukouris, 1994; Mihovilovic, 1968). Paralleling the end of an athletic career to that of retirement from the workforce, or even to the process of dying, sport psychologists initially drew from the medical fields of social gerontology and thanatology.

2.3.1.1 Social Gerontology

Gerontology is defined as the systematic analysis of the aging process (Atchley, 1991). Social gerontology concentrates on the mutual interaction between society and the aged,

and attempts to explain the lives and activities of those who appear to age successfully (Lavallee, 2000). When applied to sport, social gerontology provides a theoretical perspective on SCT—with an emphasis on aging and life satisfaction through the experience. An early example is Mihovilovic's (1968) gerontological study of 44 former first league Yugoslavian soccer players. Findings from this study indicated that not only did 95% of these soccer players end their career involuntarily and suddenly, but that this end was perceived to be particularly negative by players who did not have ready access to an alternative profession upon retirement.

2.3.1.2 Social Death: Thanatology

Thanatology, or the study of the process of death and dying, is a diverse area of study, with disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, sociology, and theology all contributing to the sphere of knowledge (Lavallee, 2000). The sport-scientific community has recognised several thanatological theories as having implications for the athletic retirement process, most significantly the notion of social death (Rosenberg, 1982). Inherent within this notion is a loss of social functioning, isolation, and even ostracism from former teammates experienced by players upon retirement. Kübler-Ross (1969) described five stages in the grieving process of loss that have become well accepted in the literature. Her early work was done within a framework of studying death and dying, in which she interviewed over 200 terminally ill patients. Many researchers (for example: Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Lerch, 1981; Rosenberg, 1984) have used Kübler-Ross's early work as a form of loss theory, adapting it to the loss experienced in athletic retirement. An explanation of The Five Stages of Grief follows:

1) Denial: An important and very strong self-protection mechanism, enabling people from being overwhelmed or rendered helpless by frightening or depressing events of life (Aiken, 2001). Accordingly, athletes may refuse to acknowledge the reality that their career is really over.
2) Anger: The next stage includes a partial acceptance of retirement accompanied by anger. This may be non-discriminating, directed at family friends, team mates etc, but of course the real target is the perceived unfairness of an unwanted

retirement, and lack of control.

3) Bargaining: During this stage the athlete desperately attempts to buy time to postpone the inevitable, by negotiating for improved conditions.
4) Depression: During this fourth stage realisation becomes more complete, and having bargained to lengthen their career, athletes may experience a distress reaction to their retirement.
5) Acceptance: Finally, the athlete comes to accept the end of their career. They may reminisce, and perhaps recognise that their sporting life has been good and meaningful. This then leads to eventual disengagement.

However, others (Gordon, 1995; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1998) have argued against the use of thanatological and gerontological models in an athletic retirement context, questioning the capacity and ability of such models to comprehensively capture the varied processes at play in leaving elite sport. For example, as Blinde and Greendorfer (1985) explained, the stages experienced by athletes are hardly likely to be the same as a dying person, and the stages of 'decline' may not occur at the same time, in the same sequence, or indeed, at all. There have also been suggestions that the notion of social death may be fraught with melodrama and excessive negativity (Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985). Further, Blinde and Greendorfer (1985) argued that the use of social gerontology, as applied to the study of athletic retirement, lacks empirical support for the relationship between athletic retirement and non-athletic retirement. They point out that differences in age, life experience and expectations between athletes and mainstream retirees are too great to share the same model (Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985). It is certainly important to note that Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief theory was developed with non-sport populations and so caution ought to be applied to their use in an athletic retirement context. Nevertheless, if used in a flexible way, the Five Stages of Grief offers a capacity to explore the different phases which retiring athletes might go through (Baillie, 1993).

Lavallee (2000) explained that the stages of death and dying represented a descriptive rather than normative view of the stages of the terminally ill, and even within that cohort, not every person goes through every stage in the exact sequence and at a predictable pace.

Moreover, Lavallee (2000) asserted that social gerontological, thanatological, and human adaptation theories of the 1960s and 1970s, are unable to adequately capture the diverse nature and complex dynamics of SCT; specifically, the varying individual, situational, and personal characteristics of athletic retirement. Therefore, he argued, it is difficult to compare retirement from the workforce with the athletic retirement that, biologically and chronologically, typically occurs at a much younger age (Lavallee, 2000). In summary, while 'medical' models have been applied to sport career termination research, each possesses limitations that underscore the need for alternative investigative strategies in order to achieve an empirical-theoretical balance.

2.3.2 Second phase of inquiry: Career termination as a transition

Towards the end of the 20th century, researchers widened their relatively narrow field of interest—which had heretofore focused purely on athletic retirement—to investigations of career transitions within sport. Whereas social gerontological and thanatological models had depicted retirement as a singular event, the notion of a sport career transition is somewhat dissimilar. Schlossberg (1981, p. 5) described transition as "an event or non-event which requires a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behaviour and relationships". Coakley expanded on this viewpoint by describing transition as a process which occurs when "a person disengages from one set of activities to develop or expand other activities and relationships" (1983, p. 3). The term *sport career transition* clearly has different inferences from the singular event of retirement, as again, it commonly occurs at a much younger age than retirement from the general workforce (indeed some elite athletes may retire from elite sport even before completing high school). The nature of a sport career is quite different to that of the normal workforce, and while some of the most elite professional sportspeople can retire on their earnings, the vast majority of former athletes find themselves in a situation where they must rapidly develop a new set of skills, find a job, and move on to a new and quite different lifestyle (Stephan et al., 2003). Added to these considerations was Coakley's perceptive suggestion that sport termination could actually serve as an opportunity for 'social rebirth' (Coakley, 1983). This iconoclastic proposition, put nearly 30 years ago, resulted in a

discernible shift away from earlier ‘medical’ models.

The most frequently employed theory of adult transition during what is conceptualised as the second phase of inquiry, emerged from the germinal work of social psychologist Dr. Nancy Schlossberg (Charner & Schlossberg, 1986; Schlossberg, 1984). Schlossberg’s ‘Model of Human Adaptation to Transition’ (MHAT) (1984) is designed to address this question**:**

> since people react and adapt so differently to transitions, and since the same person can react and adapt so differently at different points in life, how can we *understand* and *help* adults as they face the inevitable but non-predictable transitions of life? (Schlossberg, 1981 p. 3, emphasis in the original).

Schlossberg (1984) described four major sets of factors that are said to interact during a transition, called the ‘4S’ system:

1) Self: the characteristics of the individual experiencing the transition (psycho-social competence, sex, age, state of health, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, value orientation, and previous experience with a transition of a similar nature).
2) Situation: the perception of the particular transition (role change, affect, source, onset, duration, and degree of stress).
3) Support: the characteristics of the pre-transition and post-transition environments, including internal support systems, institutional support, and physical settings.
4) Strategies: number and types of coping strategies, and the individual’s ability to cope with transition by changing the situation, the meaning of the situation or managing stress reactions, including therapeutic interventions from sport psychologists (Schlossberg, 1984).

The situational aspect of Schlossberg’s MHAT (1984) emphasised the phenomenological nature of transitions; that is, not only are transitions important, but so are the individual variables (such as economic and educational factors, family, support structures, and coping ability). Issues of resources and power have different salience depending on the transition

and the individual. For example, depending on the athlete's perception of the situation, every transition has the potential to be a crisis, a relief, or a combination of both (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). In considering the characteristics of pre-and post-transition environments, Schlossberg's (1984) model acknowledged internal support systems, institutional support, and physical settings. Although widely used in many settings and contexts, Schlossberg's MHAT (1984) was found to be lacking details of the specific components related to transition. For example, Coakley (1983) asserted that if the model were to be applied to sport career transitions and athletic retirement then a diversity of factors influencing the athlete in transition must be acknowledged in order to understand the overall adjustment process, pointing out:

> [that] the dynamics of the athletic retirement process are grounded in the social structural context in which retirement takes place. Factors such as gender, age, socioeconomic status and social and emotional support networks shape the manner in which one makes the transition out of sport. Therefore, retirement from sport sometimes may be the scene of stress and trauma but, by itself, it often is not the major cause of those problems. (Coakley, 1983, p. 1)

Subsequently, sport psychologists Taylor and Ogilvie (1994), applied the theory to SCT and thus 'operationalised' the personal and situational factors that may affect retirement and an athlete's ability to adapt to retirement. Their approach will now be discussed.

2.3.3 Taylor and Ogilvie's (1994) Conceptual Model of Adaptation to Career Transition

The Conceptual Model of Adaptation to Career Transition (CMACT) (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) again arguably employs a 'medical' framework. It was particularly designed to illustrate the final athletic career transition, in response to concerns such as:

> a noticeable lack of empirical data to substantiate the positions held by leading thinkers in the area […]; as a consequence, a program of empirical research based on a sound working model of the career termination process should be the goal (Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993a, p. 771).

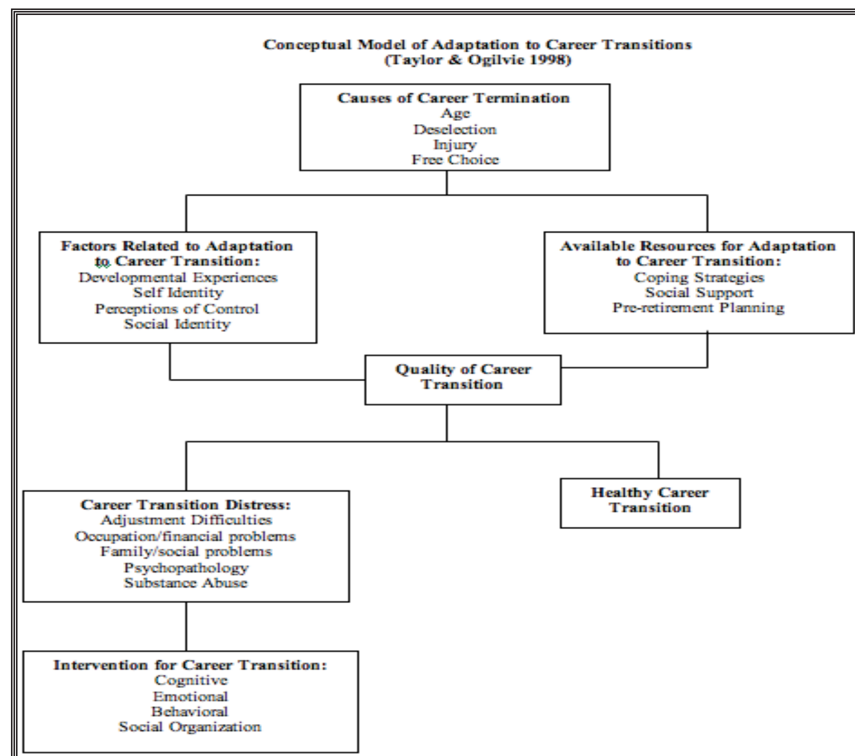

Figure 2.2: Conceptual model of adaptation to career transition (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1998)

It was believed that a multi-dimensional, *sport-specific* career transition model was needed for theorists to be able to investigate and give meaning to the number of interrelated variables thought to explain some of the individual variations in levels of overall quality of life and life satisfaction in SCT (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). The seven-step model developed by Taylor and Ogilvie is shown above in *Figure 2.2*. It illustrates causal factors that may initiate career transition (i.e., age, de-selection, injury, and free choice), and then progresses through factors relating to adaptation to retirement (i.e., developmental experiences, self-identity, perceptions of control, and social identity), and identifies resources thought to assist with the transition (i.e., coping skills, social support, and pre-retirement planning). Stressful factors that may occur are identified (i.e., psychopathology, substance abuse, occupational problems, and family/social problems). Finally, interventions are suggested, including cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and social therapies. Using the medical terminology of the model, the eventual and desired outcome is, of course, a 'healthy' transition out of sport.

While generally acknowledged and certainly widely used as a theoretical framework for much academic inquiry, there have also been criticisms of the CMACT. For example, Coakley (2006) found little data to support its validity or efficacy. The limitations of the model are said to include its narrow focus on athletic factors, with critics arguing that SCT is also affected by non-athletic factors, in particular negative non-athletic transitions and the former athletes' educational status (Coakley, 2006; Stephan et al., 2003). Furthermore, with regard to SCT, it has been suggested that athletic and non-athletic aspects of life seem to be closely connected and mutually interdependent, and that these variables could have an impact on the athletes' identities and social roles, as they relate to education, family, and the job market (Cecic Erpic , Wylleman, & Zupancic, 2004). Other limitations of the model are that it does not take into account bodily changes after SCT (e.g., weight gain, loss of muscle mass, and increased bodily pain) that are considered to be significant repercussions of athletic retirement (Stephan et al., 2003; Stephan et al., 2007). It is also argued that these factors should be considered as an aspect of athletes' post-career adjustment difficulties, even when sportspeople had experienced what they described as a successful socio-professional transition out of full-time sport (Lavallee & Robinson, 2007; Stephan et al., 2007). Finally, Taylor and Ogilvie's work to develop their model was based on former American college athletes, and it has been argued that the needs and situations of these college athletes may be quite different from professional athletes, as the American (amateur) college sport structure is unique, and thus, very different to other educational and elite sport environments (Kadlcik & Flemr, 2008). In summary, Taylor and Ogilvie's (1998) model has some limitations underscoring concerns that it remains too narrowly a 'medical' construct. However, the model served a useful purpose in propagating early research, and indeed is still widely used in psychological studies (e.g., Gilmore, 2008; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Tinley, 2002). Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000), who based their research on the CMACT, interviewed five former elite female gymnasts, utilising qualitative methods involving face-to-face interviews with athletes. Such methodology allowed the participants to describe their experiences from a phenomenological perspective, with the researchers endeavouring to capture the complexity and situational aspects of the athlete career transition process through the lived experiences of subjects.

Kerr and Dacyshyn's (2000) work also corroborated Schlossberg's MHAT (1984) in that they described three phases within the transition process. However, rather than retaining Schlossberg's labels for these phases: (a) '*moving into'*, (b) '*moving through'*, and (c) '*moving on'*, Kerr and Dacyshyn created alternative labels which, they believed, better depicted the typical experience of sport career transition. They adopted the terminology:

1) *Exiting Sport* (the actual withdrawal from sport)
2) *Nowhere Land* (disorientation, feeling void, and reorientation)
3) *New Beginnings* (a period of exit from *Nowhere Land* and emergence of a new existence) (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000).

Kerr and Dacyshyn's research is significant as it increases the current understanding of identity formation of young female athletes. Schlossberg's MHAT (1984) is illustrated below, incorporating the labels for the three phases of transition as suggested by Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000), and representing the '4S' system within *Nowhere Land.*

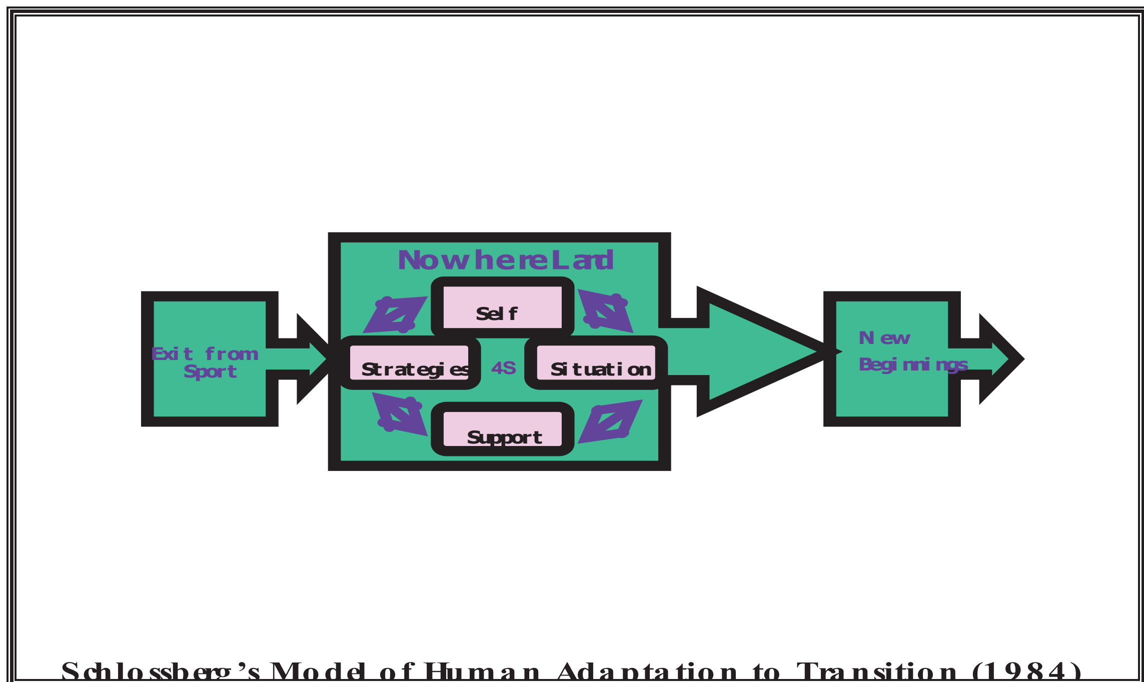

Figure 2.3: Schlossberg's model of human adaptation to transition (1984)

A new direction for investigations of sport career transitions appeared warranted, with theorists moving away from earlier ‘medical’ approaches towards appraisals of normative transitions from elite sport within ecological and cultural contexts. However, before moving to a discussion of these approaches—conceptualised as the ‘fourth phase of inquiry’—it is important to first discuss four important factors that have been identified as influencing adjustment to SCT.

2.3.4 Factors influencing adjustment to SCT

Four major factors are believed to influence the quality of SCT. They are:

1) the underlying reasons towards the decision to leave sport;
2) Athletic Identity (AI);
3) social support, and
4) levels of pre-planning.

These factors are regarded as significant predictors of the quality of adaptation to athletic retirement (Lavallee, 2000; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1998). A discussion of each factor follows.

Voluntary/Involuntary Causes of Retirement

Taylor and Ogilvie’s (1998) model referred to two basic dimensions in the decision-making process to retire from sport: voluntary or involuntary. Involuntary retirement from sport is said to be the result of one of three conditions: (a) age, (b) injury, or (c) deselection (Lavallee & Wylleman, 2000). It is generally believed that an athlete who retires due to involuntary reasons is more likely to experience difficulties than one who retires voluntarily—in a planned and organised manner (Lavallee, Gordon, & Grove, 1997b). However, Webb et al (1998) reduced the number of causal factors to just two categories: (a) those that are freely chosen, and (b) those that are forced by circumstances out of the athlete’s control. Alfermann (2000) noted more differences within these two categories, for example, that the decision to retire due to performance loss may be qualitatively different from retirement due to injury. In the first instance the athlete may have reached the top of their potential, whereas in the second instance, they may not have yet reached that

potential.

A recent European study focused specifically on the complexity and multi-faceted nature of the retirement decision-making process (Fernandez et al., 2006). The research initially drew on the findings of Lavallee et al. (1997b) which demonstrated that work/study commitments, loss of motivation, the politics of sport, decreased performance, finance and decreased enjoyment are the main causes of retirement. Despite this, Fernandez et al. (2006, p. 408) commented that the reasons for deciding to end a sport career “resembled the chaos theory: numerous, varied and cumulative”. In an attempt to differentiate and clarify reasons for sport career termination, those researchers undertook empirical studies, aiming to develop a theoretical framework to organise, structure and illustrate the retirement decision process of competitive athletes (Fernandez et al. 2006). The resulting analytical instrument, the ARDI (Athletes’ Retirement Decision Inventory) listed four factors:

1) The anti-pull factor includes the overall risk and cost aspects relating to the post-career life, and expresses perceived difficulties and feelings of insecurity associated with the prospect of a new life;
2) The pull factor corresponds to what are typically seen as positive aspects of post-sport career life;
3) The anti-push factor corresponds to attachment to the sport career, with participants in the study explaining that strong attachment to sport meant that making the decision to end their sport career was more difficult, and
4) The push factor expresses negative considerations of the athlete’s present life (Fernandez et al., 2006).

The ARDI offered a means to assess the pattern of reasons that lead athletes to terminate their career. It has been suggested that the decision to retire from sport is rarely a single cause decision and may rather be the result of a variety of factors residing both inside and outside the sport domain (Alfermann, 2000; Fernandez et al., 2006; Stambulova, 1994).

Athletic identity (AI)

The concept of AI was developed by sport psychologists (such as Eldridge, 1983; Heyman, 1986; Rosenberg, 1981) and purported to establish the degree to which an individual identifies with their role as an athlete (Brewer, 1993). More recently, Li (2006, p. 22) refined the interpretation as “the degree of importance, strength, and exclusivity attached to the athlete role that is maintained by the athletes and influenced by environment”. Described this way, the athletic role becomes an important social dimension of self-concept that influences experiences, relationships with others, and the pursuit of sport activity. Advantages associated with a strong AI are widely acknowledged, in particular, a determination to achieve athletic performance. A strong AI may also have longer lasting personal benefits for an athlete, such as a higher likelihood of long-term participation in exercise, with corresponding health and fitness benefits (Brewer, 1993; Brewer et al., 1993; Lavallee, Gordon, & Grove, 1995a; Lavallee, Gordon, & Grove., 1997a). Athletes with a multiply-defined identity; that is, an identity not purely defined by their success in sport, but also by social relationships, experiences, and successes outside sport, are said to be less likely to experience difficulties during their sport career transition (Baillie & Danish, 1992; Brewer et al., 2000; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Lavallee & Robinson, 2007; Webb et al., 1998).

Yet there are also risks associated with AI. Athletes who place too much emphasis on sport, to the exclusion of other identity factors are more likely to experience social and psychological difficulties during a sport cessation or transition period—such as being cut from a team, experiencing an injury, or retirement from their athletic careers (Brewer et al., 1993; Lavallee et al., 1995a; Lavallee et al., 1997a). Strong AI is also related to over-commitment to the athletic role, identity foreclosure, and delays in career maturity. Career immaturity has been related to the features of identity foreclosure (Good, Brewer, Petitpas, Van Raalte, & Mahar, 1993), and individuals who make commitments to roles without experiencing exploratory periods are said to be in a state of identity foreclosure (Li, 2006). Murphy and his colleagues (1996) explained that the two constructs of AI and identity foreclosure may have inhibiting effects on career decision-making and the exploration of

alternative roles via different mechanisms. High levels of AI have also been closely linked with zeteophobia, a term defined by Krumboltz as an anxiety or fear of career planning (Krumboltz, 1999). Zeteophobia may appear as general indecisiveness, lack of knowledge about occupations, the experience of internal conflicts about career choice, and lack of awareness regarding how to get additional information (Albion & Fogarty, 2005).

Social support

According to Lavallee (2000), social support could be the key to an optimal athletic career transition. While social support systems for retired athletes has been largely overlooked in empirical research (Lavallee, 2000), *the need* for this support for athletes during the sport career transition process is well-documented in the literature (Alfermann, 1995; Lavallee, 2000, 1984; Swain, 1991). Indeed, it has been acknowledged that an athlete feeling comfortable with social support and encouragement, along with the social relationships in which they are involved, is one of the four key predictors of a good quality SCT (Brown, 1985; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). Social support is defined as "a complex and dynamic process involving transactions between individuals and their social networks within a social ecology" (Schinke, Eys, Michel, Danielson, Peltier, & Pheasant, 2006, p. 330). Many writers discuss the obligations, or at least the moral responsibilities, of coaches and sport organisations in actually preparing athletes *for* retirement *from* high-level competition (Baillie, 1993; Denison, 1996; Stephan et al., 2007; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994; Webb et al., 1998), yet there is limited attention in the literature as to how this support can be best provided. One exception is provided by the work of Alfermann (1995) who documented the crucial role played by coaches in providing support to retiring athletes, while the important supportive roles of family, friends, and other athletes, are also described (Stambulova, 1994; Swain, 1991). A significant attitude reported by athletes surveyed by Sinclair and Orlick (1993, p. 146) was that "coaches and institutional networks should treat retired/retiring athletes with respect, rather than disposable commodities".

Level of pre-planning

Ogilvie and Taylor (1993b) stated that pre-retirement planning is an effective coping skill for athletic career transitions, and certainly research outside of sport indicates that more effective adjustment to retirement is significantly related to such planning. Pre-retirement planning may be supplemented by counselling, continued education, and social networking, and these strategies are also shown to be effective in SCT. Early studies (Haerle, 1975; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982) demonstrated that individuals who plan alternative areas in which to direct their attention are more likely to experience healthy career transitions. Yet later studies (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Wylleman, De Knop, Menkehort, Theeboom, & Annerel, 1993) illustrated reluctance on behalf of athletes to undertake career pre-planning, due to what has been described as 'unfounded myths'. One of these is a belief that pre-retirement planning will distract athletes from their focus on high level performance (Albion & Fogarty, 2005). In addition, Ferraro and Rush (2000) described an unwillingness among athletes to undertake counselling, believing that this may appear to be a sign of weakness and a lack of confidence in the stability and longevity of their sport career (Ferraro & Rush, 2000).

In recent years a number of pre-retirement planning programs for elite athletes have been developed globally, following the often repeated suggestion that such support is indeed a responsibility of sport institutions and organisations (Denison, 1996; Sinclair & Hackfort, 2000; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). In Australia, the Lifeskills for Elite Athletes Program was launched in 1989, and later merged with the Athlete Career and Education Program (ACE) to provide a nationally consistent career and education service for the country's elite athletes (Australian Institute of Sport, 2009). The program will be further discussed in *Section 2.5* of this chapter.

2.3.5 Fourth phase of inquiry: Life span perspectives

The fourth phase of inquiry consists of a more holistic approach to the study of sport career transitions, first appearing in the late twentieth century. Recent studies have examined factors that can affect the quality of adaptation to retirement, potential cultural differences

in the career termination process, and provision of support for athletes experiencing difficult transitions (see for example Alfermann et al., 2004; Cecic Erpic et al., 2004; Gilmore, 2008; Lally, 2007; Wylleman, Alfermann, & Lavallee, 2004). Attention has shifted from one particular transition (i.e., career termination) towards a broader lifespan perspective of athlete involvement. This approach runs parallel with research from fields of talent development, deliberate practice, and career development, resulting from greater awareness of discrete stages through which talented individuals typically pass. In conceptualising these stages, Côté (1999) described (a) an initiation stage or 'sampling years', (b) a development stage or 'specialising years', and (c) a stage of perfection or 'investment years'. Concurrently, more models of sport career transitions have been developed. Wylleman and Lavallee (2003) utilised research data on the career development of pupil-athletes, student-athletes, professional and elite athletes, and of former Olympians, to develop a model that includes normative transitions faced by athletes at athletic, individual, psychosocial, and academic/vocational levels (see *Figure 2.4,* below).

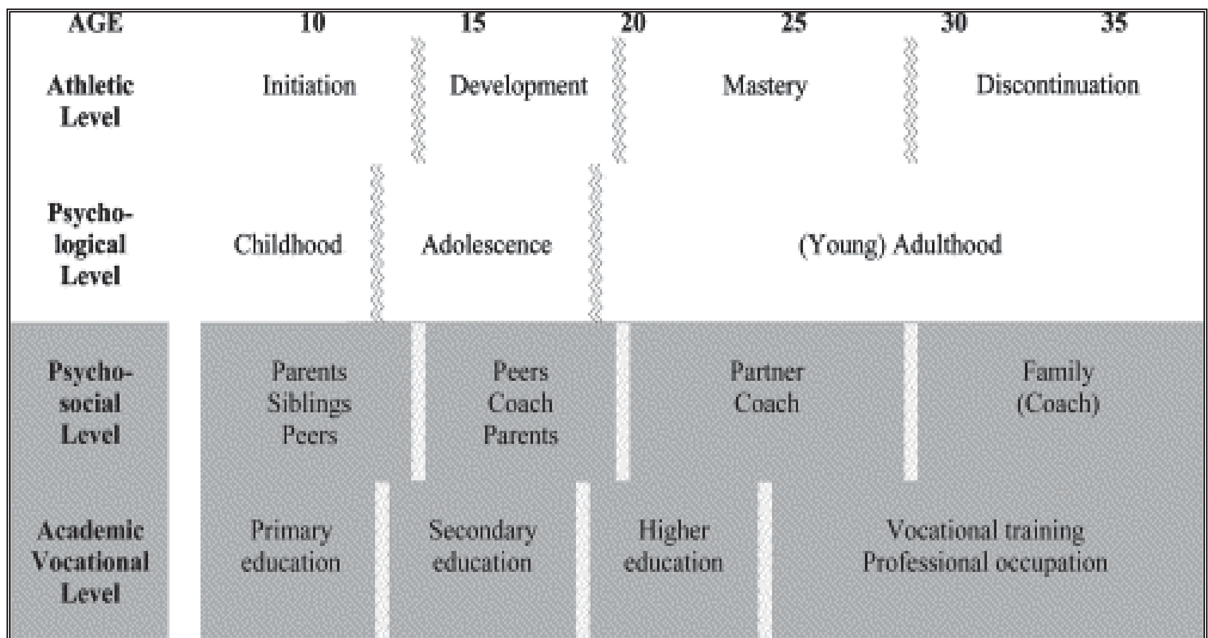

Figure 2.4: Developmental model of athlete transitions (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2003)

The model provides a framework to situate and reflect upon the developmental, interactive and interdependent nature of transitions and stages faced by an athlete (Wylleman et al., 2004) and features four levels.

1) The top layer depicts the athletic level, showing the stages and transitions that athletes face in their athletic development (Côté, 1999). It also shows a discontinuation stage which reflects a transition out of competitive sport and a process that could have a relatively long duration.
2) The second layer portrays the psychological level, and reflects developmental stages and transitions, including childhood, adolescence, and (young) adulthood.
3) The third layer shows the psychosocial level, and represents the changes that can occur in an athlete's psychosocial development, including the athletic family, peer relationships, coach-athlete relationships, marital relationships, and other significant interpersonal relationships.
4) The lowest layer illustrates the vocational level, and denotes the academic and vocational stages and transitions, including transition into primary education/school, secondary education or high school, higher education (i.e., college/university), and finally transition into vocational training and/or a professional occupation.

The model underlines not only the interactive nature of transitions across the different domains of the lives of athletes, but also that non-athletic transitions may affect the development of sport careers (Wylleman et al., 2004). However, the model does not include non-normative transitions (e.g., a season-ending injury, a change of personal coach, or an unanticipated transfer to another team) or those transitions that were expected or hoped for but that did not happen (e.g., not making the Olympic Games)—such occurrences have been labelled "non-events" (Schlossberg, 1984, p. 5).

The experience of any sport career, and its transitional phase, will be affected by the social and cultural climate within which it takes place (Gilmore, 2008). Wylleman (cited in

Stambulova et al., 2007; Wylleman et al., 2004) utilised an ecological approach (illustrated below in *Figure 2.5*) to describe the elite sport climate within a country.

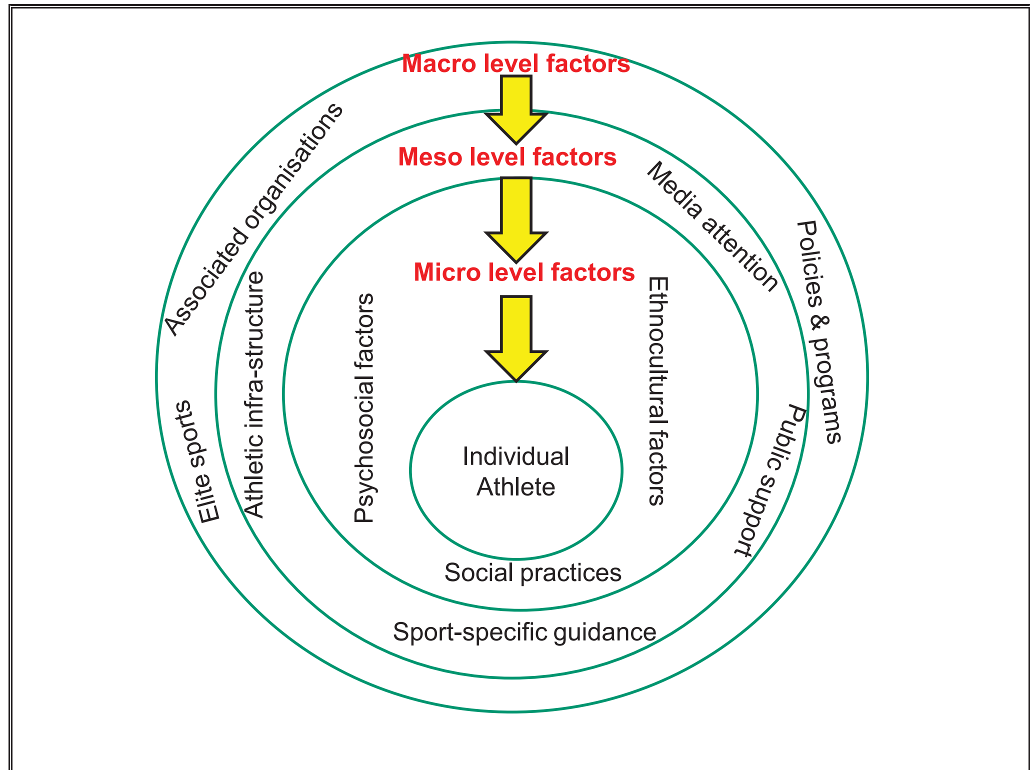

Figure 2.5: Wylleman's concept of ecological factors in sport (2004)

With this approach, three conceptual levels are suggested:

1) The macro-level considers aspects such as the size of the country, the population, and the level of welfare;
2) The meso-level relates to the quality of sport-specific guidance, the athletic infrastructure, the level of media attention received, and public support for elite athletes; and
3) The micro-level is concerned with the athlete's psychosocial situation.

This approach highlights the impact of cultural aspects on SCT. Wylleman's conceptualisation provides a means to interpret the experiences of retired athletes, by taking into account the characteristics of sport systems and cultural traditions in different settings.

A combination of models, featuring transitional (Schlossberg, 1984), ecological (Wylleman, 2004) and lifespan (Stambulova et al, 2007) models appears in *Figure 2.6.*

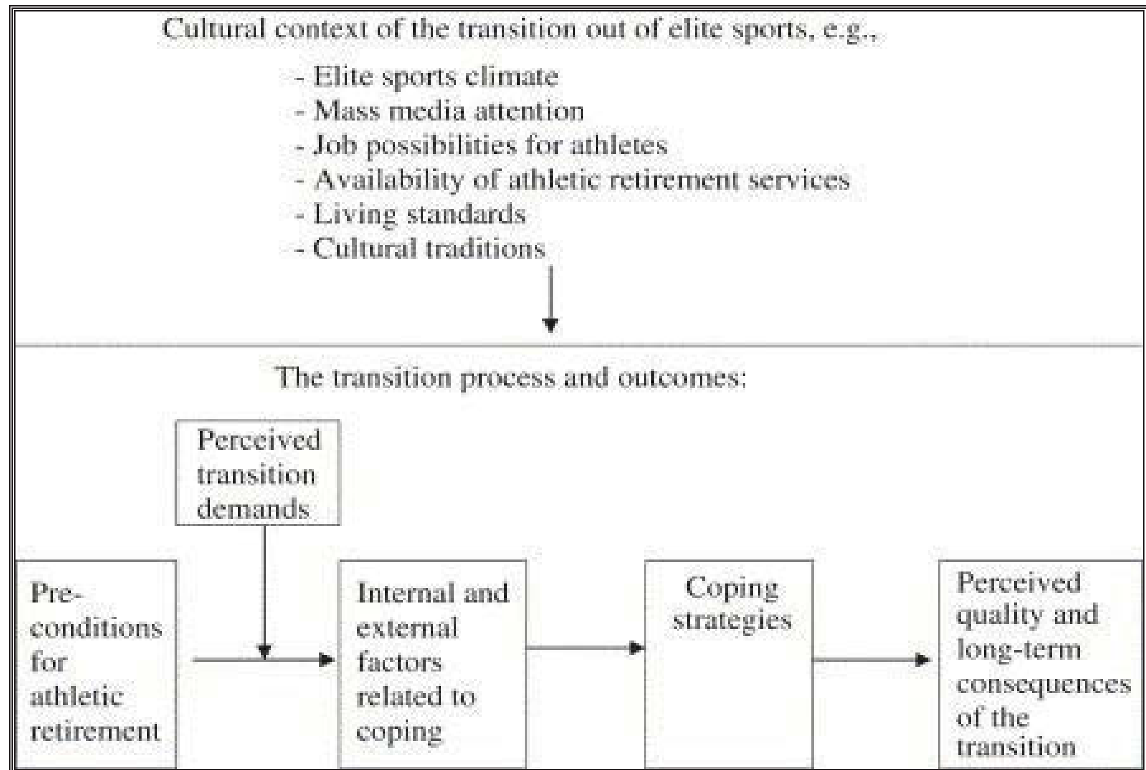

Figure 2.6: Combined ecological approach and career transition framework (Stambulova et al., 2007)

This later approach has been successfully deployed in Europe in recent years to conduct cross-national studies of athletes' adjustment to retirement (Alfermann et al., 2004; Stambulova, 2001; Stambulova et al., 2007). Studies that have emerged considered the characteristics of the sport systems, cultural traditions and what are described as people's 'mentalities' in different countries (Stambulova et al., 2007). Variables investigated include:

1) pre-conditions for athletic retirement;
2) coping and related factors, and
3) perceived quality and long-term consequences of the transition.

The importance of nationality and culture were seen as further significant factors. These studies enabled comparative analysis of the elite sports climates in the countries under investigation. The innovative approach to inquiry highlights a shortcoming in earlier studies, as "the universal knowledge about 'athletes in general' seems insufficient to explain the behaviour of athletes from different cultures" (Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009, p. 292). Stambulova and Alfermann argued that:

> Because people internalize meanings from their cultural context, it is impossible to separate their development and behavior from these contexts. It is also important to note that cultural context is fairly rigid; therefore it cannot be readily changed by an individual. To further deepen our understanding of athletic career development and transitions, we need to consider athletes in their cultural contexts using psychological approaches that deal specifically with culture (2009, p. 293).

These authors recommended three steps to incorporate a cultural psychology perspective into career development and transition research, to make studies more 'contextually sensitive'. They are:

1) Encouraging modification of internationally recognised career models to match their respective culture, or developing culturally-specific frameworks
2) Using narrative and low structured interview approaches to assess mental representations of career development, infused by their culture, in the athletes' mindsets, and
3) Studying not only athletes but also the career development environment as a multi-level context penetrated by national culture and several sub-cultures (Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009).

2.3.6 Summary

The preceding sections have examined and analysed several of the various theoretical models that have appeared throughout the past 40 years in investigations of sport career transition. The models have allowed viewing SCT as a process involving pre-conditions related to the transition, perceived transition demands, coping strategies, and outcomes or consequences of the transition. Research designs may have varied over the years yet each has enabled investigation, whether in a particular context, a particular type of study, and/or

a particular environment. It is significant that the findings have been so consistent; indicating SCT to be a dynamic, multi-dimensional, multi-level and multi-factored process, with a unique range of challenges and outcomes. In light of the recommendations of Stambulova and Alfermann listed above—both in terms of assuming a "cultural mindset" (Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009, p. 304), and in adopting the cultural turn for studying culture in society (Ryba, T., Schinke, R., & Tenenbaum, G., 2010)—it is imperative at this stage to turn to a discussion of a theoretical approach that will enable more nuanced research. As will now be explained, Bourdieu's theoretical concepts of habitus, capital, and field, provide an ideal approach for understanding the behaviours of Indigenous athletes before, during, and after SCT, within a unique cultural context.

2.4 BOURDIEU'S THEORETICAL TRIAD: HABITUS, CAPITAL, AND FIELD

In this study, Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, and field are most relevant and indeed of assistance in providing analytical coherence to the sport career transition process. Bourdieu's work is useful in studies theorising how various groups of people come to gain a sense of self as they move through life (for examples, see Burdsey, 2004; McGillivray, Fearn, & McIntosh., 2005; Wacquant, 1995; Zevenbergen, 2006), and thus instructive in this research. It is important that Bourdieu's concepts are not considered as discrete entities, but rather that each concept is seen to interrelate with the others. Bourdieu himself emphasised the differences between capital and habitus as well as their inherent connections in his summary formula: "(Habitus x Capital) + Field = Practice" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 101). The formula shows that it is not simply the capital resources that a person has that determine actions or decisions, but the interaction between the individual's capital and habitus, and the location of those within a particular field. Each of the three constructs is discussed in more detail, below.

Within a Bourdieuian approach, the habitus is a central construct that aligns closely with identity and seeks to explain the dispositions that influence individuals to become who they are. For Bourdieu "the habitus is a system of durable, transposable dispositions which predispose the individual to act, think and behave in a particular way" (Zevenbergen, 2006,

p. 617). These ‘durable dispositions’ are carried with us, and work to shape “attitudes, behaviours and responses to given situations” (Webb et al., 2002, p. 114). In other words, habitus can be understood as the values and dispositions gained from one’s cultural history which generally stay with the individual across contexts (as they are durable and transposable). The habitus allows individuals to respond to situations in a variety of ways, but the responses are largely determined by where and who they have been in terms of their culture. Thus, the concept of habitus explains certain cultural behaviours such as habits, beliefs, values, tastes, bodily postures, feelings, and thoughts which Bourdieu argued are socially produced (Johnson, 2006). Johnson (2006) argued that the inculcation of dispositions happens throughout childhood, as children watch and listen, thereby adopting the cultural capital of those around them. As a result, the habitus is not “something one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something one is” (Webb et al., 2002, p. 114), and in this respect it is “unconscious and unthinking and absorbed unwittingly, based on what we might call an unreflective routinisation” (McGillivray & McIntosh, 2006, p. 373). Similarly, the habitus with which one enters a particular context can reshape practices within that context (Zevenbergen, 2006). In this study, therefore, accepting that the habitus is “unconscious and unthinking […] based on […] unreflective routinisation” (McGillivray & McIntosh, 2006, p. 373) enables an understanding of the values and social practices brought by the research participants to their sport careers. The habitus of Indigenous athletes is shaped by childhood and family lives where they have been encultured into what constitutes appropriate behaviours and values within that context. The cultural capital found in the habitus of the family and class naturally also becomes their habitus (Johnson, 2006).

Similarly, the concept of the habitus has clear synergies with diverse personal attributes relating to what have been called “deep level differences” (Taylor, Doherty, & McGraw, 2008, p. 229). Underlying psychological characteristics such as values, beliefs, and attitudes, may not be outwardly observable and generally only become known as people interact over extended periods. Furthermore, the notion of habitus links with Stead’s definition of culture as “a social system of shared symbols, meanings, perspectives, and social actions that are mutually negotiated by people in their relationships with others” (Stead, 2006, p. 392). It is important to acknowledge that, according to Stambulova and

Alfermann (2009, p. 293), "people internalize meanings from their cultural context [therefore] it is impossible to separate their development and behaviour from these contexts".

When discussing the second concept—capital—it is again important to consider how the three concepts of the Bourdieuian triad interrelate. Capital is best understood as "currency tradable within a specific field" (McGillivray & McIntosh, 2006, p. 374). The term encompasses "all the goods, material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation" (Harker, Mahar, & Wilkes, 1990, p. 1). Capital includes primarily knowledge and expertise, that is, things individuals *have*—as opposed to habitus which includes primarily preferences and practices, or things which individuals *do* or *are*. Where status is gained in a field, it is via the accumulation of capital within that field, however, what is seen as capital in one field may not confer status in another. In Bourdieuian terms, the habitus is a form of capital that can be exchanged for goods, whether by salary or a job (Bourdieu, 1983)—Bourdieu (1986) described this as 'commodification'. Within the field of elite sport, participants who have dispositions (i.e., habitus) which are valued by those in power are more likely to be able to trade such dispositions for status (Zevenbergen, 2006). Those who have more of the dispositions favoured by the structuring practices within the field are likely to be positioned more favourably than those who do not have such dispositions. Thus, there is considerable motivation to acquire the capital of the field. By drawing on the constructs as proposed by Bourdieu, it is possible to theorise how the early lives of Indigenous athletes may create opportunities to develop particular dispositions towards performing sport at elite-levels.

By better understanding the dynamics and power of the structuring practices of the field, there is better opportunity for understanding social practices. A field can be defined as "a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations, appointments, and titles which constitute an objective hierarchy and which produce certain discourses and activities" (Webb et al., 2002, p. 22). Bourdieu (1990) likened a field and the practices that occur within it to knowing the 'rules of the game' or 'how the game is played'. Bourdieu's conceptualisation of a field referred to fluid and dynamic—rather than static—entities. He

argued that fields are not simply made up of institutions and rules, but rather, of the interactions between institutions, rules and practices (Webb et al., 2002). Fields identify agents and stakeholders who set the behaviour agenda, and whose values and dispositions "shape the conduct" of other participants in these "social games" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 40). In sport, these may include coaches, managers, administrators, media and other, more established athletes.

Fields also have active relationships with habitus and capital, and play a crucial role in creating and defining the relative value of capital found within. A field is subject to potential tension as different groups or individuals attempt to determine what constitutes capital, or struggle to gain control over a field's capital—along with the responses of other individuals in determining how that capital is to be distributed (McNay, 1999; Zevenbergen, 2006). In the context of this study, arguably the capital most valued is likely to be physical capital. This refers to physical performance, expressions of (hyper) masculinised identities and the possession of embodied competence (i.e., speed, skill, and strength). However, it is also necessary to consider the fields of sport where the individual is likely to find a position or a role. While it seems that physical capital is more likely to be rewarded within a field of sport, it is possible that within fields of sport, other forms of capital (educational, cultural, social) may have different values, or that other fields may come into play during an athletic career. In turn, the developing identity of the athlete is strongly influenced by the structuring practices within those fields (Zevenbergen, 2006).

There has been some criticism of the construct of habitus as being deterministic—limiting individuals to reproduce only what they know (Johnson, 2006). However, Bourdieu claimed that the habitus can change over time and across circumstances. As Reay argued:

> While habitus reflects the social position in which it was constructed, it also carries within it the genesis of new creative responses that are capable of transcending the social conditions in which it was produced (Reay, 2004, p. 434-435).

Reay referred to another concept, that of 'agency', which is defined as "the idea that individuals are equipped with the ability to understand and control their own actions, regardless of the circumstances of their lives" (Webb et al., 2002, p. ix). In other words,

even with a durable and transposable habitus, individuals still have the capacity to take opportunities that come their way—although these may be limited within particular contexts.

In summary, the application of the Bourdieuian theoretical concepts of habitus, capital, and field to the phenomenon under examination provides analytical coherence to the sport career transition process. This theoretical triad:

1) provides a framework to interpret phenomena in the findings;
2) facilitates both the analysis of responses from participants and the presentation of findings, specifically in regard to their individual and group habitus and capital;
3) positions the influence of the field within the social practices of participants, and
4) allows an analysis of dynamic social behaviours of individuals through notions of identity and the wider social, cultural, arena (i.e., familial, occupational and institutional arrangements) within which identity can be construed (McGillivray et al., 2005; McGillivray & McIntosh, 2006; Wacquant, 1995; Webb et al., 2002).

2.5 SCT RESEARCH IN AUSTRALIA

According to Gordon and Lavallee (2004), SCT has been generally overlooked by sport researchers in Australia. Those authors also remarked that even general career retirement issues have received haphazard attention in this country (Gordon & Lavallee, 2004). Within the literature deriving from Australia, an imbalance certainly appears, as much of the empirical material produced in Australia focuses more on sport career transition issues, rather than athletic retirement as a discrete area of investigation. This may, however, reflect

1) the fact that research on these subjects commenced relatively late, with researchers following the trends in research already established overseas, or
2) the (im)maturity of the sport industry at the time.

At the time researchers commenced investigating SCT in Australia, there was general acceptance that the experience should be viewed as a transition, rather than one all-ending

significant event. In line with this way of thinking, Hawkins and Blann (1993) investigated the role of both Australian coaches and elite male and female athletes in the sport career transition process, with an aim to

1) develop an instrument to assess athletes' and coaches' career development and awareness needs;
2) assess the levels of career awareness, and the post-sport career planning involvement, and career transition needs of the two groups, and
3) determine the types of programs most useful in meeting career transition needs.

Using quantitative survey tools, findings from this study revealed that athletes generally had a higher awareness of the need for career development than do coaches. In fact, coaches in the study seemed reluctant to consider careers outside their own professions—despite expressions of job insecurity. The study also identified differences between the way that male and female athletes viewed their career development needs. However, both groups agreed on the need for career counselling programs both during and after their sport careers (Hawkins & Blann, 1993).

Hawkins and Blann's study was the first of a steady, but small, stream of research in Australia focussing on sport career transitions over the next seven years. Research generally emanated from sport psychology faculties and schools or by academics and practitioners from within that milieu, and most often the research examined specific psychological components relating to the sport career transition experience. These included the impact of athletic career and education programs on both athletic performance and mood states (Anderson, 1993; Morris & Anderson, 1994), and the use of transferable skills in non-athletic careers among elite athletes (Mayocchi & Hanrahan, 1997). Both of these studies had implications for career transition programs, which were under development within Australia and abroad at this time. Along with these were early studies investigating the significance of AI on sport career transition. For example, basing his investigation on Schlossberg's MHAT (1984), Redmond (1994) examined retirement experiences among elite female netballers, and described a phase of acclimatisation back into society. In this

situation, high AI remained evident, even after career termination. Thus, Redmond claimed that the individual's identity remains largely defined by their success in sport, rather than by social relationships, experiences, or successes outside sport.

Further studies focusing on high profile players in Australia's most popular football code, Australian Rules Football (i.e., AFL), examined adjustment processes to involuntary retirement, and explore issues relating to loss of identity, control, financial issues, and social support (Fortunato, 1996; Fortunato, Anderson, Morris, & Seedsman, 1994, Fortunato & Gilbert, 2003). Their findings showed that the reason/s that athletes cited for making the decision to retire in turn affected the quality of their transition. Those who terminated their careers voluntarily experienced more positive transitions than those whose careers ended involuntarily. A study investigating SCT and sport management explored the short- and long-term impact of deselection on retirement in three sports: cricket, water polo, and hockey (Fish, 1994). Methodologically, this study represented a major change of approach, as the research employed in-depth interview techniques and qualitative analysis. Results revealed a lack of understanding about SCT among sport organisations, officials, teammates, and family members. The report recommended greater managerial professionalism in player relations, selection procedures, and increased athlete support, such as vocational training and life-style support programs (Fish, 1994).

In the mid-1990s, a series of studies was undertaken by Gordon, Grove and Lavallee to investigate key psychological issues in relation to athletic retirement. These are summarised below.

1) The first study in the series investigated coping strategies during the career transition process and the effects of career termination on AI. Results suggested that confiding in others (account-making) could moderate adjustment and stress following athletic retirement and changes in AI (Lavallee et al., 1995b).
2) The second study examined career beliefs and perceptions of life skills learned in sport by Australian athletes, and found that these skills can be transferred to post-sport careers (Lavallee, Gordon, & Grove, 1996).

3) The third study examined the causes for departing sport and the degree of adjustment required among former elite Australian athletes. It found that voluntary retirement leads to a more positive experience (Lavallee et al., 1997b).

In a related study by the same authors, data was collected which related to financial, occupational, emotional, and social adjustment to athletic retirement, as well as AI at the time of retirement (Grove, Lavallee, & Gordon, 1997). The findings noted that AI at the time of retirement is significantly related to coping processes, emotional and social adjustment, pre-retirement planning and zeteophobia (Lavallee et al., 1995a). Another study by Lavallee, Grove, Gordon, & Ford, (1998) explored the notion of loss in the context of elite-level sport, and findings identify symbolic losses associated with performance slumps, athletic injuries, and retirement. Finally, Fish, Grove, & Eklund (1997) surveyed 47 women vying for selection at state trials in basketball, volleyball and field hockey, with results showing a statistically significant change in AI among those not selected. The authors suggested that the change in this domain-specific self-concept may be driven more by motives of self-protection than self-enhancement. This phenomenon could be explained by the athletes' desires to reduce dissonance and tension by also reducing the perceived commitment to the athlete role. On the other hand, the athletes might publicly attribute the deselection to their lack of commitment, so that they did not have to attribute it to their personal sporting abilities.

Around the turn of the century, researchers turned their attention to the ACE program, which was implemented in 1994 to support elite athletes through the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) and various state and territory academies and institutes of sport. Fortunato et al. (1994) published an outline of their research program, wherein they described the content of the ACE program. They perceived many potential benefits to be gained from comprehensive lifeskills programs, yet a national evaluation of the program four years later demonstrated that only 18% of eligible Australian athletes were aware of the services offered (Gorely et al., 1998). A subsequent report again demonstrated low uptake rates among the target group. This later report showed that of the 878 active athletes surveyed (across 48 sports) who could have benefited from the ACE program, services were used by

less than 1% (specifically 0.7%). Results also demonstrated a low perceived importance from these athletes towards retirement issues (Lavallee et al., 2001). In 2003, a report by the University of Southern Queensland presented the first part of a five-year longitudinal study commissioned by the Australian Sports Commission (ASC). This study involved surveying athletes on AIS scholarships over a five-year period to evaluate the ACE program (Albion & Fogarty, 2003). In the initial phase, almost 3000 surveys were distributed with a response rate of 29.4% (i.e., 856 surveys were returned). Recommendations from the first phase included:

1) the need to continue to promote the full range of ACE services;
2) the need for programs to be targeted to meet the specific needs of athletes whose singular focus may cause adjustment difficulties if their plans do not come to fruition;
3) the need for programs to be targeted to different age groups, and
4) the need for services to be provided in a timely and efficient manner to overcome the perceived barrier of ACE being a distraction from sport commitment and performance.

The report also indicated that the athletes most likely to have career and adjustment difficulties were young males in high profile and professional sports—due to high levels of AI (Albion & Fogarty, 2003). It appears that by 2004 many of these barriers and administrative concerns had been resolved as another study produced strong evidence for the usefulness of ACE services to athletes, in particular the specialist training provided to counsellors within the program (Dagley, 2004).

In 2005, Albion and Fogarty presented what they claimed to be common 'myths' (Albion & Fogarty, 2005) linked to sport career transition. One such so-called myth was the notion that athletic success would automatically lead to post-sport success. Another was the idea that thinking about non-sport caused concerns about time constraints and a focus on the present—issues that had been previously identified (Brown, Glastetter-Fender, & Shelton, 2000; McPherson, 1980). The report noted however, that most research into student athletes

had been in the context of the American college system, a structure quite different from Australian educational and sport environments, and covering a slightly older age group than the high school sample in their study. The authors concluded that their study provided some unique and interesting insights into the nature and extent of young Australian athletes' zeteophobia, a topic on which heretofore there had been little research within the Australian context (Albion & Fogarty, 2005).

In recent years, the subject of SCT continues to be largely neglected by Australian researchers, although a number of Australian authors contributed to a major international publication entitled *Career Transitions in Sport: International Perspectives* (Lavallee & Wylleman, 2000). These included Anderson and Morris, Mayocchi and Hanrahan, and also Patton and Ryan. Since the appearance of this publication, there has been limited further research. In 2001 Speed and Morris reported on the welfare of Victorian racing jockeys, finding many emotional and physical challenges to this group following retirement. Another study was the 2002 report commissioned by a major National Sporting Organisation—Tennis Australia. Tennis managers sought a greater understanding into the experiences of elite Australian female tennis players upon leaving the professional tennis circuit (Young, Kane, & Pain, 2003), and engaged consultants to undertake a psychological enquiry on their behalf. Participants completed a questionnaire developed from Taylor and Ogilvie's (1994) model of adaptation to career termination. Findings suggested that athletes who had planned their retirement found the transition process easier than those athletes who had not undergone retirement planning. Based on the results of the study, Tennis Australia implemented strategies to assist current players on the professional tour with their transition process. The study was later published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* (Young Pearce, Kane, & Pain, 2006).

Some SCT postgraduate research has appeared in recent years. A study by Lynch (2006) investigated how former professional horse racing jockeys adjust to athletic retirement. Retired jockeys were examined in relation to physical, mental, and social adjustment to retirement. Adjustment was also assessed in terms of the different forms of (voluntary or involuntary), and in terms of length of retirement. In relation to the length of retirement,

Lynch (2006) claimed there were significant differences in the adjustment processes relating to the duration of time since retirement. Furthermore, jockeys who had retired for involuntarily reasons generally reported more adjustment difficulties than those who had retired voluntarily (Lynch, 2006). In a largely qualitative study using interview techniques, Price (2007) examined the experiences of 25 young men who were part of the first group of elite players to experience professional rugby in Australia and New Zealand. The study explored issues such as rugby as a career choice for young men, and how the athletes prepared for life outside rugby. Price concluded that there was a need for greater focus on the support, assistance, and resources provided to young elite rugby players in their career development and planning for their post-rugby future.

It is important to note that previous Australian studies do not make specific reference to Indigenous athletes, although Indigenous people MAY have been included amongst participants. A summary of Australian research over the past 18 years is presented over (*Table 2.1*).

Table 2.1: Summary of Australian SCT research 1993-2011

Author	Year	Area of Interest	Major Outcomes/Findings
Hawkins & Blann	(1993)	SCT and athletes' and coaches' career development needs	Recognition that career counselling programs needed
Anderson Morris & Anderson	(1993) (1994)	Athletic performance and mood states	Career and education program development
Mayocchi & Hanrahan	(1997)	SCT and transferable skills	Career and education program development
Redmond	(1994)	SCT experiences and AI, female netballers	Enhanced understanding of AI
Fortunato et al. Fortunato Fortunato & Gilbert	(1994) (1996) (2003)	SCT experiences, AFL footballers	Voluntary retirement leads to more positive experience
Fish	(1994)	SCT and impact of deselection in cricket, water polo and hockey	Qualitative study, revealed lack of SCT understanding
Lavallee et al.	(1996)	AI as predictor of zeteophobia in SCT	Account making could moderate adjustment to SCT
Grove et al.	(1997)	Coping factors, AI and SCT	AI significantly related to coping ability after SCT
Lavallee et al.	(1996)	Career beliefs in SCT	Skills in sport can transfer to post-sport careers
Lavallee et al.	(1997a)	Causes of career termination and adjustment after SCT	Voluntary retirement leads to more positive experience
Fish et al.	(1997)	AI after deselection leading to SCT	Statistically significant changes in AI in deselected athletes
Lavallee et al.	(1998)	Experience of loss in SCT	Significant losses perceived with SCT

Gorely et al.	(1998)	ACE program	Only 18% of eligible athletes aware of ACE services
Gorely et al.	(2001)	ACE program	Low uptake rates of ACE services persist
Albion & Fogarty	(2003)	ACE program	Recommendations to increase program participation rates
Dagley	(2004)	ACE program	Earlier concerns about program participation largely resolved
Albion & Fogarty	(2005)	Career decision and SCT	Common myths about SCT and zeteophobia revealed
Speed, Seedsman, & Morris	(2001)	Welfare of retired Victorian jockeys	Significant psychological and physical difficulties at SCT
Young et al.	(2006)	SCT experiences, professional female tennis players	Tennis Australia implements strategies to assist players
Lynch	(2006)	SCT experiences, professional horse racing jockeys	Significant differences in adjustment relating to time
Price	(2007)	SCT experiences, professional rugby players	Rugby players need greater support and resources at SCT

The review of Australian research and literature reveals some stark omissions. The first of these is that research emanating from Australia on the subject of SCT is scarce—surprisingly so in a nation that so enjoys sport and reveres its sport heroes who emerge from the rank and file of the population. Furthermore, most of the literature reviewed thus far emanates from disciplines other than sport management, such as medicine, sociology, and sport psychology, with the sport management literature relevant to the subject proving to be sparse. Finally, researchers have neglected to consider the experiences and needs of Indigenous Australian athletes retiring from elite sport. Indigenous Australian athletes perform at the highest levels, yet the situations of these athletes outside the world of elite sport in which they have thrived have not been taken in to account. Therefore, the literature is incomplete as it disregards:

1) how SCT is perceived and experienced by Indigenous Australian athletes;
2) how, or indeed, whether, these athletes encounter unique circumstances during the transitional period, and
3) how, or if, the ethno-cultural traditions and obligations of these individuals impact their athletic retirement experiences.

Consequently, the next section focuses specifically on areas of relevance to the target population of the research: elite Indigenous Australian athletes.

2.6 SPORT AND INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN ATHLETES

Bearing in mind that SCT will likely be affected by the social and cultural environment within which it takes place, this section provides a background to, and a context for, this thesis. It includes a profile of Indigenous Australians:

1) from historical and contemporary perspectives;
2) in terms of Indigenous disadvantage, and
3) in terms of their contribution to Australian sport.

This section also features a critique of a long and widely-held belief in the so-called 'natural' physical prowess of Indigenous athletes, presenting an argument that such a belief could affect the range of life and career possibilities of Indigenous Australian people.

2.6.1 Historical context: Race relations in Australia

The Indigenous peoples of Australia are the inheritors of one of the oldest continuous cultures in the world. According to archaeological research, they have occupied the Australian continent for at least 40 millennia (Mulvaney, 1970). Indigenous peoples across Australia developed highly successful and stable societies that sustained a diversity of cultures and languages (Hallinan & Judd, 2009). From the late 18th century, however, their traditional way of life has slowly been eroded by the impact of European settlement—accelerated since the 19th century due to the imposition of colonial laws and practices that subjugated and ostracised the original inhabitants (Adair, 2009). The impact of British

colonisation for Indigenous peoples in Australia was catastrophic—mirroring the destructive colonial projects in the Americas and the Pacific (Gorman, 2010; Tatz, 2010). Dispossession of land, the devastation of culture and language, together with the denial of common law rights, transformed once proud and independent people into "passive welfare recipients dependant on the charity of colonial governments" (Hallinan & Judd, 2009, p. 1222). By the turn of the 20th century it was widely presumed, at least among whites, that Aboriginal people were a 'dying race' (Cowlishaw, 1986; Judd, 2008; Sansom, 1981). Nonetheless, Indigenous Australians survived against great odds, including their lack of immunity to European diseases and loss of traditional hunting territories (Stronach & Adair, 2010). The deliberate transformation of Indigenous Australians from independent and self-determining peoples into passive recipients of government handouts has had severe negative consequences which continue to impact race relations in contemporary Australia (Broome, 1982; Chesterman & Galligan, 1997).

On 13 February 2008, the then Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd, issued a national apology to victims of the Stolen Generations;[1] this was an expression of regret at the pain and suffering experienced as a result of state-sanctioned policies that allowed the removal of Aboriginal children from their parents for permanent relocation with white families (Rudd, 2008). The apology was also about momentum towards another goal—reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. At the time, it was argued that this would only be possible by recognising past failings and then moving towards regeneration (Mellor, Bretherton, & Firth, 2007). Since 2007, however, the Howard conservative government, and successive Labor governments have been engaged in what critics label, among other things, 'coercive reconciliation' (Altman & Hinkson,

[1] The forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families was official Australian government policy from 1909 to 1969. Governments, churches and welfare bodies all took part, with the power to remove children without parental consent and without a court order. Removal of children from their families under the government policies of the time did not depend on evidence of neglect (Kurongkurl Katitjin, 2010); the policy was imposed largely on the basis of colour. These children became known as the Stolen Generations. Today many of these people still struggle with issues of identity and deep feelings of hurt.

2007). In remote areas of the Northern Territory, reports of Aboriginal alcoholism, domestic violence, and the sexual abuse of children, provided a rationale for successive Commonwealth governments to intervene, literally, and thus micro-manage Indigenous communities that were deemed to be chronically dysfunctional. This state paternalism, which still continues in 2011, has been both praised and damned across the political spectrum (Johns, 2008; Toohey, 2008)—with major disagreements also among Indigenous leaders, some of whom defend Aboriginal rights to autonomy, while others view state intervention as an appropriate response to a so-called 'emergency'.

In August 2010, the United Nations Human Rights panel rebuked the Australian government over its continued mistreatment of Aboriginal people. At the release of a report from the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in Geneva, one of the authors said that discrimination had become 'embedded' in the Australian way of life. Committee member Patrick Thornberry lamented the fact that the Australian Constitution lacked any entrenched protection against racial discrimination. The committee criticised what it called the "unacceptably high level of disadvantage and social dislocation" (Alberici, 2010) of Indigenous people in the Northern Territory. It welcomed the Rudd Labor government's national apology to Indigenous Australians in 2008, but said that concrete steps to increase life expectancy and lower the rate of Aboriginal deaths in custody had not yet been demonstrated (Alberici, 2010). Failures in dealing with Indigenous disadvantage were acknowledged by both the current Prime Minister Julia Gillard as well as the Opposition Leader in February 2011, as the Government presented its annual 'Closing the Gap' report to the House of Representatives. Prime Minister Gillard said it would be extremely difficult to close the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by the goal year of 2031 (Lane, 2011). In summary, Indigenous people continue to have a multitude of reasons to feel disenchanted by, and disengaged from, Australian society, past and present.

Table 2.2: Social indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Altman Biddle, & Hunter, 2008).

Social Indicator (source: 2006 census)	**Indigenous Australians**	**Other Australians**
Unemployment Rate (% labour force)	15.6	5.1
Employment to population ratio (% adults)	43.2	60.5
Private Sector employment (% adults)	32.8	52.1
Labour force participation rate (% adults)	51.2	63.7
Median weekly personal income (A$ 2006)	267.4	465.2
Household size	3.4	2.6
Median weekly household income (A$ 2006)	1072.7	1375.3
Home owner or purchasing (% population)	30.0	73.4
Never attended school (% adults)	2.7	0.9
Post-school qualification (%adults0	23.8	45.9
Degree or higher (% adults)	4.4	18.3
Attending educational institution (15-24 year olds)	34.4	55.2
Population aged over 55 years (%)	8.2	24.7
Male life expectancy at birth (years) (2001 Census, 2006 figures not available)	56.0	76.0
Female life expectancy at birth (years) (2001 Census, 2006 figures not available)	63.0	82.0

2.6.2 Profile of Indigenous disadvantage

In the 21st century, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, once the sole custodians of the Australian continent, constitute less than 3% of the national population (ABS, 2004), with an estimated population of 517,200 (ABS, 2007). The pernicious legacy of colonialism remains with Indigenous disadvantage evident across virtually every socio-economic indicator. Indigenous people have, as examples, significantly lower life expectancy than other Australians,[2] much higher levels of unemployment,[3] considerably lower levels of education and income,[4] and are vastly over-represented in the nation's prisons.[5] The figures shown in *Table 2.2* indicate that Indigenous Australians have disproportionately higher rates of unemployment, absence from post-secondary education, and overcrowded accommodation than non-Indigenous Australians.

In terms of health outcomes, Indigenous Australians are three times more likely to have cardiovascular diseases, 1.3 times more likely to develop cancer, 3.9 times more likely to develop respiratory diseases, and 7.5 times more likely to contract diabetes. Added to these 'lifestyle' diseases of the First World is a range of infectious diseases, more commonly associated with Third World countries. Indigenous people are seven times more likely to contract tuberculosis, eight times more likely to contract Hepatitis A and three times more likely to contract Hepatitis B. As an indicator of mental health, Indigenous people are 2.5

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[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics figures for 2005-7 indicate that life expectancy of Indigenous men is 11.5 years lower than for non-Indigenous men, while life expectancy of Indigenous women is 9.7 years lower than for non-Indigenous women (Statham, 2010).

[3] In 2001 the unemployment rate for Indigenous Australians was 20.0%, compared to 7.2% for non-Indigenous Australians (Stephan et al., 2003).

[4] For example, 39% of Indigenous students stayed on to year 12 at high school, compared with 75% for the total Australian population (ABS, 2004a). Both high unemployment and low levels of education have affected the economic circumstances of Indigenous people. In 2002, the average household income for Indigenous Australian adults was 60% of the non-Indigenous average (ABS, 2005).

[5] Australian Bureau of Statistics figures for 2004 indicate that Indigenous persons were 11 times more likely to be in prison compared with non-Indigenous persons, and that in 2003 some 20% of prisoners self-identified as Indigenous (ABS, 2005a).

times more likely to self-harm than non-Indigenous Australians (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008). Further comparative statistics in *Table 2.3* illustrate that in spite of some notable improvements since 1971, the socio-economic outcomes for Indigenous Australians remain at lower levels across all variables when compared to other Australians (ABS, 2008).

Table 2.3: Employment and work status of Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons

Education and work status of Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons (Source: Statistics ABS: 4714.0 - National Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2008)				
	Indigenous Persons		**Non-Indigenous Persons**	
Adults	**2002 (%)**	**2008 (%)**	**2002 (%)**	**2008 (%)**
Education				
Highest year of school completed is year 12 or equivalent (15–64 years)	17.7	21.2	46.3	53.8
Highest year of school completed is year 12 or equivalent (20-24 years)	28.1	31.3	71.3	76.2
Has a non-school qualification (15–64 years)	26.8	32.9	48.5	54.3
Has a non-school qualification (25-64 years)	32.1	40.2	54.6	61.3
Work				
Labour force participation rate (15-64 years)	62.6	64.5	74.6	76.5
Unemployment rate (15-64 years)	23.0	16.6	6.3	5.0

2.6.3 Sport, racism and the national psyche

Historical perspectives

Sport has long played an important social and cultural role in Australia. According to Cashman (2003), sport is important for:

> providing a metaphorical social cement that both creates and represents broader imagined communities. Sport has helped promote Australian symbols, emblems, and colours, and has contributed to a burgeoning national consciousness. Sport played a role in the coming of Federation and in the process of nation-making after 1901. It has enriched the Australian language and added to its humour. It has developed a rich celebrity culture as well as revered sites and traditions. At the professional level, Australian sporting knowledge and expertise are earning an increasing amount of export dollars for the country (Cashman, 2003).

Sport is now an intrinsic part of the Australian landscape, and an indelible part of the Australian home, via radio and television and the Internet. No longer confined to the back pages, sport, it seems, now has almost universal appeal. On the face of it, sport seems to be an ideal way to connect many Australians, and thus to join similar and disparate people in a shared set of values and norms, as well as to provide a focus for group loyalties. However, this is disputed by many writers (including Adair, 2009; and Tatz, 1987) who have indicated that historically, sport has brought together only those who were already connected in a substantial sense by class, religion, gender, or race. Nevertheless, sport has increasingly become a facet of Australian culture—an activity very much interwoven with other threads that make up the social fabric—perhaps with the potential to play the crucial role of connecting the disconnected in a more on-going, less fleeting way, than history has hitherto allowed (Booth & Tatz, 2000).

Australia's vibrant sport culture has, for the most part, relied on the import of sports and associated customs from Britain. Sport arrived in Australia with those early settlers, bringing with it much of the culture and norms of 18th century English society. However, prior to the arrival of European settlers, Indigenous Australians were known to engage in sophisticated physical activities with rules and guidelines, and tournament-like competitions with other tribes (Edwards, 2009; Atkinson, 1991; Tatz, 1987). These activities played an important practical role for developing skills and social roles within

tribes or communities (Atkinson, 1991). Since colonisation, Australians have instilled their own values and norms of participation into imported sports (Adair & Vamplew, 1997). Above all, according to the ideal, Australian sport is said to be based on an ethos of play, competition and opportunities being fair and equal for all (Tatz, 1996). Yet, sport in Australia has also mirrored political, social, and economic problems, and this has reflected the Indigenous experience. While Indigenous achievement in some key sports has been exceptional (Cashman, 1995; Tatz, 2011), it has happened in the face of much adversity. This is delineated by Tatz as:

> genocidal impulses of settler society, physical isolation, legal separation, social segregation, and racial discrimination in all its forms [...] For Aboriginal people, there has been exclusion from competition, discrimination within it, and at times gross inequality of chances, choices, and facilities (Tatz, 1996, p. 1).

Colin Tatz remains the most prolific Australian author to have focused on the nature of involvement of Indigenous athletes in the nation's physical culture. In his book *Aborigines in Sport*, Tatz (1987, p. 4) bluntly stated that "Australian society is racist. It also worships sport". A number of authors investigated the important role that sport plays within Australian society, however, most academic literature starkly acknowledges the paucity of our knowledge about the Indigenous contribution to Australian sport (Adair & Vamplew, 1997; Booth & Tatz, 2000; Lawrence & Rowe, 1986). In addition to this, there continues to be cultural differences and barriers that Indigenous peoples face with regards to equal participation in some sports. Indigenous men have been actively recruited into boxing and the major football codes for many years, but this has not been the case in cricket, golf, sailing, or other sports with pretensions of class and status (Adair & Stronach, 2011; Cashman, 1995; Hallinan & Judd, 2009). Such a discrepancy is a reflection of ongoing racism and class-based differences of opportunity within Australian society and sport. Tatz (1987, p. 90) acerbically explains the paradox in the following way: "[Indigenous peoples are] Australians when they're winning and Aborigines at other times".

Contemporary perspectives

In spite of the pessimism referred to above, a few key areas of professional sport appear to be "good news" stories for Indigenous athletes (Adair, 2006, p. 69). In recent years they have been statistically over-represented as contracted players in the two major football codes: Australian Rules (i.e., AFL) and rugby league (i.e., NRL), with ratios of around 10% far exceeding the 2.6% of Indigenous people in the most recent Australian census (ABS, 2007; AFL, 2007b; Masters, 2009). Many of them are now both sports stars and celebrities. Widespread public appreciation of Indigenous athletes is, however, quite a recent phenomenon. The contemporary adulation of Indigenous athletes should, therefore, be measured by an awareness of the long term disregard, disrespect, and dishonesty in respect of Indigenous people in Australian sport (Nielson, 2009; Sampson, 2009; Stephen, 2009; Tatz, 1995a, 2009). Nevertheless, sporting acumen has been a great source of pride to the wider and diverse Indigenous community. Two other sports to feature large numbers of elite Indigenous athletes are boxing and athletics. It has been estimated that between 1912 and 1980 some 15% of Australian boxing titles went to Aboriginal fighters (Broome, 1980, p. 53). Indigenous boxers have also excelled internationally, with Commonwealth or professional world titles from Dave Sands (1940s), Lionel Rose (1968), Anthony Mundine (2001, 2009), Daniel Geale (2004, 2011) and Robert Peden (2005). In athletics, world title holder and Olympic gold medallist Cathy Freeman, described as a "national treasure" (Tatz, 2011, p. 111), not only flies the flag for Aboriginal people, but for their women (Adair & Stronach, 2011). While she has clearly been the most successful Indigenous athlete in recent Australian history, Indigenous runners (particularly sprinters) have a long tradition of outstanding performances dating back to the 19th century (Broome, 1995; Tatz, 1995a). Today Indigenous sprinters such as Joshua Ross (Stawell Gift[6] winner, 2003, 2005) and Patrick Johnson (a personal best of 9.93 seconds for the 100m) continue a longstanding tradition.

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[6] The most famous and richest of all Australian professional races, the Stawell Easter Gift in Victoria was won by Aboriginal runners in 1883 (Bobby Kinnear), 1910 (Tom Dancey), 1929 (Lynch Cooper) and again in 2003 and 2005 (Joshua Ross).

Tatz has pointed to "monumental contradictions" (Tatz, 2011, p. 105) in the adulation of non-Indigenous Australians for so many Indigenous stars of sport. The affection is genuine, but most fans have little knowledge about where these players come from, or the nature of their lives before coming to prominence as boxers, runners or footballers. It can be all too easy, indeed convenient, for non-Aboriginal people to look to these athletes as examples of rising Indigenous circumstances (Tatz, 2011). However, it seems hopelessly naïve to imagine that deep-seated structural inequalities will be influenced substantially by the individual successes of one hundred or so elite Aboriginal athletes (Coram, 1999). Indeed, Tatz pointed to the absurdity of anyone appropriating Cathy Freeman's sporting success "as though she has single-handedly transformed the whole Aboriginal experience into the opposite of what it really is" (Tatz, 2011, p. 112). Yet fantasies about such a connection exist, particularly when associated with simplistic ideas about 'opportunity for all'. The more that non-Indigenous Australians cheer for Aboriginal athletes, the more they can lay claim to championing Aboriginal advancement and 'fighting' racism (Bruce & Hallinan, 2001). On the other hand, some Australians do not fit this mindset at all. In a study of letters to the editor of newspapers during the Sydney 2000 Olympics, Bruce (2009) found numerous examples of correspondents vehemently opposed to the notion that gold medallist Cathy Freeman somehow embodied the Australian nation. Several of these writers raged against what they saw as the 'political correctness' of having an Indigenous person light the flame at the opening ceremony of the Games (Bruce & Wensing, 2009).

The significance of local sport to Indigenous Australians has been demonstrated in various historical, biographical, and community studies (Gorman, 2004; Hayward, 2006; Tatz, 1995a). In rural and remote areas, as well as the islands of the Torres Strait, sport appears to have a particular resonance. As suggested by the remark of an Aboriginal Tiwi Islander: "For the Tiwi people, football means hope, it means pride, and most of all it means life" (Moodie 2008, cited in Tatz, 2010). Football itself, not so much sport in general, was the focus in this situation. Indeed, because of economic pressures and lack of social capital, Indigenous people tend to play a fairly narrow range of sports, those highlighted earlier. Despite restrictions like this, Hallinan and Judd (2009) contended that Indigenous people take part in sport at rates far above those of Australians in general. In making this judgment

they admitted to drawing upon a rather inconclusive data set (Hallinan & Judd, 2009, fns 6 & 7, p. 1233). A Human Rights and Equality Opportunity Commission report echoed concerns at this lack of research, concluding that:

> while there is a plethora of information available on the general number and characteristics of Australian people who participate in sport and recreational activities (including age, gender, frequency and type of participation), very little data focuses on the ethnic or cultural background of participants (Oliver, 2006, p. 19).

The study noted that "while many sporting organisations have dedicated Indigenous sporting programs, some have yet to develop specific initiatives to promote Indigenous participation in sport" (Oliver, 2006, p.20). The report also emphasised that Indigenous people are "not represented proportionally in sporting organisations, and very few have represented at the elite and national level" (Oliver, 2006, p. 19).

Issues of race in Australian sport

The rise to prominence of Indigenous athletes has arisen despite a long history of marginalisation from, and discrimination within Australian sport. Not until the mid 1990s, and after considerable struggle, did professional Indigenous athletes persuade sport authorities to introduce anti-vilification legislation on playing fields that were, after all, also their place of work (AFL, 2009b; Boxing Australia Inc, 2008; Oliver, 2006). Many Indigenous athletes have played crucial roles in stopping racial and religious vilification. In the AFL there have been two defining moments related to the struggle. The first of these was Nicky Winmar's defiant and now famous gesture of pride in his black skin during an AFL match in 1993 (Klugman & Osmond, 2009). Reacting to overt racism from the Collingwood crowd at Victoria Park at the end of a game between St Kilda and Collingwood in 1993, Winmar turned to face the offending segments of the crowd, lifted his guernsey and defiantly pointed to his skin. At the time Winmar felt his gesture was meant to show he had 'guts' in facing up to the racial taunts, but the image of a proud Aboriginal man showing off his brown skin to counter racist taunts from the crowd was exceptionally powerful. Winmar's reaction is considered one of the most important events resulting in driving the reform in the AFL to stamp out racism, particularly towards Indigenous Australians (Klugman & Osmond, 2009). Another important event occurred in

1995. Following an ANZAC Day game between Essendon and Collingwood, champion Indigenous Essendon player Michael Long highlighted racial abuse when he reported offensive language used by an opposition player during the game. Long's actions led the AFL to address the issue of on-field racial abuse (Adair & Vamplew, 1997; Gardiner, 1997). The AFL introduced its Rule 30 under the Player Rules, aimed at stopping racial and religious vilification. Rules were established to deal with any complaints, and annual education programs were set out to be conducted for all clubs and officials. Following the 1997 season, the AFL upgraded Rule 30 to include new conditions for conciliation, education and confidentiality (AFL, 2009b; Hallinan & Judd, 2009).

Long retired as a professional footballer in 2001, but not from working to help Indigenous Australians. Following his retirement, Long became a spokesman for Indigenous Australians. He was also a critic of then Prime Minister John Howard's policies towards Indigenous Australians, most notably Howard's refusal to make an apology to the Stolen Generations. In a letter published in Melbourne's *The Age*, Long likened Howard to "those cold-hearted pricks" who stole his parents (Gordon, 1994). Long's political activities culminated in a protest march from Melbourne to Canberra, Australia's national capital. The aim of the walk was to obtain a meeting with the Prime Minister. Thousands of people joined the walk which became known as 'The Long Walk'. When informed of the trek, the Prime Minister immediately granted Long a meeting. Long then called an end to the walk, though after having completed about 300 km of the planned 650 km journey. Long subsequently apologised to Prime Minister Howard for likening him to the "cold-hearted pricks" who had implemented the policy of forced removal. This, however, did not prompt an apology by the Prime Minister to the victims of the Stolen Generations. The Long Walk has a legacy: a shorter trek is now held each year as a charity event in the lead up to the AFL's 'Dreamtime at the G'[7] match. The walk highlights issues that are important to Indigenous Australians, though it is an event for people of all ages, values, beliefs, religions and cultures, and is seen as a way for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to come

[7] The Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG).

together and bring about community awareness and a better future for all Australians. The 'Dreamtime at the G' match is dedicated to the role played by Indigenous footballers in Australian Rules Football (AFL, 2008b).

In 2010, the NRL launched the 'All Stars' concept as the centrepiece of Rugby League's commitment to Indigenous Australia—an event designed to promote harmony across all cultures whilst also celebrating the game's best athletes. During that year 12.25% of NRL players had Indigenous heritage, compared to the general population national average of less than 3% (ARL, 2010). The 'All Stars' concept was initially the brainchild of Gold Coast Titans NRL team member, Preston Campbell. Appropriately, Campbell was appointed to captain the Indigenous All Stars team in the inaugural clash against the NRL All Stars on the Gold Coast in February 2010 (Proszenko, 2010). Campbell viewed the match as a giant step towards the healing process, and his statement (below) was translated into traditional Gamilaraay language (the language of the Kamilaroi people and Kamilaroi country, northern New South Wales, Australia) to acknowledge the significance of the event (Giacon, 2010).

> This is part of the healing process. It's a football game but it's about a lot more than just football. Football is a big part of a lot of Indigenous people's lives and I don't think people realise how important it is for us to be able to put this game on. So many devastating things have happened, people are finding it hard to get over that and the consequences of what happened are still around. It is something we can't forget but maybe there is a chance we can forgive. I think the only way we can move forward as a country and as human beings is to work together and that is what this game is about (Campbell, cited in Giacon, 2010).

Another Indigenous athlete who has been outspoken about racism is former rugby league champion and world champion boxer, Anthony Mundine. After playing three NRL state-of-origin games for New South Wales in 2000, Mundine was disappointed that further representative honours did not follow, and believed that his representative opportunities did not reflect his abilities and achievements at club level. To explain his non-selection, Mundine accused the NRL of racism, and amid the ensuing media storm he switched from rugby league, walking out on a record $600,000 a year contract with the St. George-Illawarra Dragons to take up boxing, the sport of his famous father. Mundine is now the

most financially successful boxer in Australia's history, and having won three professional world titles and reached the pinnacle in both rugby league and boxing, he can justifiably lay claim to being one of Australia's great sportsmen. Yet, because of his outspoken views on racism, his conversion to Islam, his often-stated belief in his own greatness and comments such as "it's not about terrorism, it's about fighting for God's laws and Americans brought it upon themselves for what they've done" (in the weeks after September 11), he remains disliked intensely by a large percentage of the public and sections of the media, particularly News Ltd, which part owns the game he scorned (Bearup, 2010). Offering some insight into his tendency to make controversial comments in the media, Mundine bluntly stated, "If you want to toe the line, if you want to be some corporate guy and say the right things, do the right things, you might be okay in the media's eye, but it won't be real for me" (Mundine cited in Harlan, 2007). Nevertheless, Mundine is widely regarded as an inspiration to disadvantaged Indigenous youth, and uses his celebrity status to achieve more philanthropic goals. In an interview in the *Canberra Times* in 2005, Mundine declared:

> My people are pretty much on the brink, with health, with housing. I've got major plans: building hospitals, building schools, you know, giving back to the community and the people. Using my status, that's why I have to be the best, to get governments to look at certain issues (Mundine cited in Brennan, 2005).

It has been claimed that since the turn of the century, overt racism in Australian sport has diminished, to a considerable degree, by the threat of penalties against on-field transgressors; though, as researchers point out, covert racism (beyond the referee's whistle) is still experienced by some Indigenous athletes (Campbell, 2008; Oliver, 2006). Moreover, these measures are limited in their focus on players, not spectators (McNamara, 1998, 2001).

2.6.4 The 'natural' athlete

This section considers more fully the public prominence of Indigenous Australian athletes in the early 21st century, and evaluates ideas about identity which 'explain' their sporting prowess. A key to all this is the assumption that Indigenous Australians have a 'natural' or innate athletic ability; something they are said to be 'born with' (Godwell, 2000; Hallinan

& Judd, 2007; Judd, 2008; Ramsay, 1998). Indigenous athletes are regularly described in the mass media as being instinctive, naturally talented, magical, inventive and having a 'sixth sense', (Hallinan & Judd, 2007), but it has also frequently been suggested that they are unreliable, lacking in self-discipline, and unable to manage success and leadership (Tatz, 1995a, 1995b). There are reasons to be doubtful about claims to inherent physical acumen or distinguishing traits, even more so when they are couched in 'racial' terms (Adair & Stronach, 2011; Coram, 2011; Godwell, 2000). In the early 21st century, Australian researchers of sport, 'race' and Aboriginality have focused mainly on the discursive construction and impact of inferential racism (Coram, 2007; Hallinan & Judd, 2009). For example, through the work of the media, stereotypes tend to be recognised by mainstream society as informative and representative, serving as an 'othering' mechanism between socially constructed dominant and subordinate groups (Hallinan, Bruce, & Bennie, 2004). In the context of Australian sport, these descriptions sometimes insinuate that Indigenous athletes do not need to work as hard, develop skills, or put in as much effort as non-Indigenous athletes in order to be successful. As Ramsey (1998) described it:

> There remains a school of thought that Aboriginal footballers are not the same as other players, that they process a kind of 'sixth sense' that allows them a greater awareness of what's happening around them, an ability to size up pressure situations more quickly than their fair-skinned opponents and that they have an added athleticism that makes the most difficult physical tasks seem easier (p. 87).

Unfortunately, this disregards the training, skill development, strength and conditioning, and psychological drives that are crucial for all athletes to compete and succeed at elite-levels of sport (Adair & Stronach, 2011; Godwell, 2000).

In the late 20th century, Indigenous Australian scholar Darren Godwell (1997) made the argument that, as Hoberman (1997) also observed about the United States, sport may not be an inherently positive force for improvements to Australian race relations. Godwell (1997) made five telling points. To begin with, his interviews of Indigenous rugby league players uncovered persistent racism, something that had been described as the 'positional segregation' of Aboriginal players in the Australian game (Hallinan, 1991). Like Hoberman (1997), Godwell concluded that professional sport was not a realistic career path for the

overwhelming majority of Indigenous Australians. He condemned beliefs that ascribed to Indigenous people innate, natural or genetically inherited physical abilities that 'predisposed' them, as a group, to be good at sport, and noted that this had been popularised by media superlatives for Aboriginal players—with descriptors like 'black magic'—which in recent times had been supplemented by new rhetoric, such as 'wizardry'. Furthermore, Godwell noted that belief in a genetic advantage for Aboriginal people in sport was held by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike. The inference, therefore, was that Aboriginal people had biologically inherited athletic giftedness, and that this natural advantage over non-Aboriginal people had been internalised and accepted to the point where it had become conventional wisdom. Finally, Godwell argued that beliefs about the collective, biologically-driven predisposition of Indigenous people to athletic prowess "should not be accepted without critical examination" (Godwell, 2000, p. 13), and he made a contentious point: that the 'natural' Aboriginal athlete was a form of "racist social myth" (Godwell, 2000, p. 19) that ought to be critiqued by Indigenous opinion leaders. This is because, he insisted, racial stereotyping had the effect, intended or otherwise, of limiting the range of life and career possibilities thought "available" to Aboriginal people (Godwell, 2000, p. 17). In conclusion, Godwell (Godwell, 2000, p. 16) warned that Aboriginal people "run the risk of being typecast in life as sportspeople". This type of position had been put previously by scholars in other parts of the world (Hoberman, 1997; Hokowhitu, 2004; St. Louis, 2003; Wiggins, 1999), where ethnic minorities or 'people of colour' had ascended great heights in elite-level sport but were significantly less represented, in career terms, within non-sport professional settings. In late 20th century Australia, however, Godwell's perspective about sport and Indigenous people seemed iconoclastic.

Since the turn of the century, the phenomenological approach of Godwell of interviewing professional Indigenous athletes has been pursued by a handful of other scholars (e.g., Campbell, 2008; Gorman, 2004; Hallinan & Judd, 2007), with collected evidence suggesting that hard work and practice, as well as a learned ability to thrive under pressure, are the keys to Indigenous excellence in sport. Gorman's research into the legendary AFL players of the 1980s, brothers Phil and Jimmy Krakouer, is particularly apt in this regard:

> When I talked to Jimmy, I said 'Tell me about the magic, Jimmy' and he said, "What are you talking about, bro' [brother]?" And I said, "Well, you know, how would you be able to find one another? You would have ten blokes around you and you would get the ball out and you'd handball off and plop it in Phillip's hands and he would run off, how would that happen?" He said, "We had the ball from the time we were three years old, when we could walk, and we'd go down to the park, we'd be constantly handballing and kicking, doing all these sorts of things; it was just confidence" (Gorman, S., cited in Cockatoo-Collins Gorman, Harms, & Headon., 2009).

Commentators have been awestruck by some of the athletic feats of Aboriginal footballers, offering plaudits like 'freak goals' and 'eyes in the back of their head' (Tatz, 2009; Coram, 2007; Hallinan et al., 2004). However, this is hardly restricted to non-Indigenous observers. For example, when the *National Indigenous Times* reported on the inaugural rugby league match between the Indigenous All Stars and the NRL All Stars in February 2010, the headline read "Thurston magic clinches victory"[8] (Heming, 2010). While all of this adulation may be well intended, and understandable when viewers are ensconced in the fast-moving drama of sport, an over-emphasis on athletic acumen to the exclusion of other qualities may pose risks beyond the playing field. Hallinan and Judd (2009), when interviewing AFL administrators, posed questions about the lack of Indigenous staff in club administration, coaching, and other off-field roles. Their findings indicated that some respondents reverted to 'racial logic' to explain this disparity: Indigenous players, it was thought, had 'natural' physical prowess but were not suited to decision-making or positions of responsibility outside of sport performance (Hallinan & Judd, 2009). In practice, therefore, this type of stereotyping "reduces people to a few, simple, essential, characteristics, which are represented as fixed by nature" (Hall, 1997, p. 257). The notion of stereotyping or typecasting was described by Garner (2010) as racialisation:

> I understand racialisation, then, to be a process by which 'race' becomes a salient element of social relationships, frequently as a normal part of the actions of the State and its agencies with other social actors. However, the door should be left open to the idea that racialisation may also be a reflexive act initiated toward an emancipatory end—as a form of group solidarity (Garner, 2010, p. 22).

[8] The newspaper was referring to Johnathan Thurston, a professional Indigenous Australian rugby league footballer and current captain of the North Queensland Cowboys team in the NRL. He is considered by some as the "Greatest Origin Half-Back" of all time.

In 2008, a controversy based on the subject of Indigenous athletes' 'natural' prowess raged when Indigenous AFL champion Adam Goodes, a dual Brownlow medallist and premiership player with the Sydney Swans, contributed a chapter to the AFL's official book commemorating the 150 year history of the Australian game—*The Australian Game of Football: Since 1858*. His topic was the Indigenous contribution to football. In the essay Goodes remarked, "I know that when Aboriginal people play Australian football with a clear mind and total focus, [we] were born to play it" (Goodes, 2008). While Goodes may have been referring to a form of 'group solidarity', the publication of his chapter provoked a sensational response from another contributor to the book. (Non-Indigenous) historian Gillian Hibbins publicly attacked Goodes' view-point, suggesting that it was 'racist'. She clarified this label by stating, "If you define racism as believing a race is superior in something, this is basically what he (Goodes) was doing" (Morrissey, 2008). The *National Indigenous Times* reported two weeks later that Hibbins felt that her "comments were taken out of context, but on reflection […] her choice of wording may have been erroneous". She emphasised, "I certainly do not believe that Adam Goodes is a racist […] I think he's a fantastic footballer, and I'm sure he believes what he says: that Aboriginal footballers feel a brotherhood on the field and they feel a connection with the land" (Munro, 2008). At the time, this was more than a clash about Aboriginal self-belief in playing football; it went to the heart of a wider belief in who had invented the game of Australian Rules and whether Indigenous people had a role in that process (Adair & Stronach, 2011).

The work of Godwell (1997), and also Hallinan and Judd (2007), infers a widely-held self-belief that Indigenous athletes are 'naturally' suited to competitive sport and 'naturally' talented as performers. As a result, many Indigenous athletes grow up automatically aspiring to a career in professional sport, believing this to be a 'given' based on an assumed genetic trait, 'racial' predisposition, or familial link—from this mindset many athletes become irretrievably linked to sport (Adair & Stronach, 2011). Such beliefs and behaviours may appear somewhat unconscious, based on what has been described in another professional sport context as 'unreflective routinisation' (McGillivray & McIntosh, 2006). Ritualised cultural attitudes and behaviours in individuals arise, although the resulting conduct and practices tend to be unwittingly absorbed, or at least uncritically (McGillivray

& McIntosh, 2006). One author likens these behaviours to a "non-thetic quasi-organismic commitment to the sport […] operating beneath the level of discourse and consciousness" (Wacquant, 1995p. 88). The idea of the 'natural' athlete and, in the context of non-whites, biological, genetic, and 'racial' explanations for innate sporting acumen are pervasive in popular culture, whether in Australia, the United States, Jamaica, or elsewhere (Adair & Stronach, 2011). Godwell (2000) made the vital observation that even if there is no scientific evidence to sustain folkloric theories that Indigenous people, as a group, have 'natural' ability in sport, the fact of this belief has real world significance. His interviews with Indigenous rugby league players produced a key finding: that there is "a strong link between these men believing in the existence of an innate athletic ability in Aboriginal people and their participation in sport" (Godwell, 2000, p. 18). Godwell (2000) concluded that this shows the importance of believing, but not that there was substance to the belief itself. The circular nature of this problem was astutely observed by one of Godwell's Indigenous respondents:

> I used to believe that all Kooris[9] were good at sport. I don't any more. I just think that Aboriginals believe that Aboriginals are the best sportspeople […] and believing in something makes a difference […] I always say believing is half way to getting somewhere (Godwell, 2000, p. 18).

Self-belief is important for any athlete; it is something that coaches try to promote and psychologists attempt to instil. Sport teams, not just their constituent players, are said to need self-belief. It is no surprise, then, that self-belief is central to Godwell's cohort (Adair & Stronach, 2011).

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[9] The Koori (from Awabakal language *gurri*, as spoken in the area of what is today Newcastle, adopted by Indigenous people of other areas) are the Indigenous Australians who traditionally occupied modern day New South Wales and Victoria. The term is used by the Aboriginal people of Victoria, parts of New South Wales and Tasmania, describing the Indigenous peoples' own word for themselves. It was originally a word from the North-Coast of New South Wales, recorded in English for the first time in 1834.

2.6.5 Managing diversity in sport

Managing diversity in the sport workplace is now considered an essential task of sport managers (Adair, Taylor, & Darcy, 2010). Taylor and Toohey (1999) asserted that ethnic homogeneity in nations should be considered the exception rather than the rule, and therefore sport managers also need to address issues arising from cultural diversity amongst sport participants and consumers (Taylor et al., 2008). Cunningham defined diversity in the workplace as, "*the presence of differences among members of a social unit that lead to perceptions of such differences and that impact work outcomes*" (2007, p. 5, italics in the original). Importantly, this definition refers to a *perception* of diversity, and Cunningham pointed out that "it is the perceptions of being different, more so than the actual differences themselves, that impact subsequent outcomes" (Cunningham, 2007, p. 5). Taylor et al. (2008) explained that perceptions of diversity occur at different levels, including:

1) Surface level differences, such as age, race or physical disability, social categories such as sexual orientation, religion or socioeconomic status, or other personal attributes or characteristics that can be easily discerned by other people, and
2) Deep level differences, found in underlying psychological characteristics such as values, beliefs and attitudes, or cognitive skills and abilities, including knowledge and experience. These attributes are less observable and generally only become known through extended interactions between people.

While there may be links between the two sets of attributes, it would be a harmful and inaccurate form of stereotyping if it were assumed that someone with given surface level characteristics also possessed the underlying values and beliefs of all members of that group (Johns & Saks, 2001). In the sport workplace, one of the basic challenges of diversity is the associated anxiety and fear which sometimes occurs in respect of acknowledging and accommodating difference. Anxiety may be heightened when one or more persons in the group is different from the others, for example, in terms of their ethno-cultural background (Taylor et al., 2008). In a challenge to sport managers, Thomas and Dyall (1999) referred to the growing need to understand the impact of culture and ethnicity on sport management,

pointing out that, depending on their sensitivity to cultural differences, “the policies and practices of sport managers in multi-cultural settings can enhance or worsen inter-ethnic relations, recruitment, turnover, motivation, and involvement” (Thomas & Dyall, 1999, p.115). These cultural considerations should be of high interest within sport management circles, especially in multicultural Australia.

Another area requiring innovative management practices is that of providing appropriate support for athletes from different ethno-cultural backgrounds—both during and after their sport careers. Indeed, one of the four key factors determining the quality of SCT discussed in *Section 2.3.4* was social support (Brown, 1985; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). The nature of the most appropriate social support appears to vary depending on the ethno-cultural backgrounds of the athletes. Culturally-specific support is considered essential for athletes relocating to larger urban centres, or athletes challenged by distance, isolation, and/or acculturation (Campbell, 2008; Schinke, Michel, Gauthier, Pickard, & Danielson, 2006a; Schinke et al., 2006b). In an example of researchers exploring the needs of a specific cultural group, Schinke et al (2006a) explored the types of support accessed by elite Canadian Aboriginal athletes throughout their sport careers. They concluded that people from minority cultural groups are sometimes most comfortable seeking social support from peers of a similar culture, leading to a potential suspicion of assistance provided by others from, for example, the dominant culture. Athletes interviewed by these authors related that, during their elite years, along with parental, sibling, and extended family support, they turned more and more to community elders and councils as unique sources of support. This type of assistance was preferred to guidance provided by sources within the dominant culture (Schinke et al., 2006a). This is, therefore, another important consideration in the management of diverse populations in sport.

Earlier sections of this thesis have argued that issues of racism and discriminatory practices have long been a key part of sport, and still continue in some quarters today (Oliver, 2006). In the early 21st century, racism in elite-level Australian sport is less of a problem than it was in the past. This is in large part owing to initiatives by professional sport organisations to curtail and penalise racial vilification. However, this does not mean that prejudice has

been eliminated (Gardiner, 1997; Hallinan & Judd, 2007; Oliver, 2006; Tatz, 2009; Warren & Tsaousis, 1997). In a major report released in 2007 entitled 'What's the Score? A survey of cultural diversity and racism in Australian sport', National Race Discrimination Commissioner, Tom Calma, commented that:

> Racism in [Australian] sport is a reality. Incidents of discrimination and vilification are prevalent across many sporting codes, involving professional and amateur sportspeople, coaches and spectators. The fear of racism in Australian sport is also a major barrier to participation for Indigenous people and those from various ethnic and cultural groups (Oliver, 2006).

Calma's comments are reflected in the report, which goes on to identify a significant number of barriers faced by Indigenous people with regards to participation in sport, including the experience of, or the potential for, racism and discrimination (Oliver, 2006). Clearly, racism has long been an issue, notwithstanding the reforms within professional sport (Cottle & Keys, 2010; Gardiner, 1997; Warren & Tsaousis, 1997). In Australia, sport has long been regarded as a place in which Indigenous Australians can participate on equal terms and at times perform even better than the wider community. Yet, as argued here, Indigenous athletes still face instances of racism and vilification in sport, despite their high-profile success, and their statistical 'over-representation' in a number of these sports. All of this suggests that sport managers have to date, not given adequate consideration to that which culture and ethnicity warrants.

A key issue for this study is the absence of Australian research into the SCT experiences of Indigenous athletes. This is despite growing numbers of Indigenous athletes participating in elite-level and professional sports. Moreover, as the thesis will argue, Indigenous athletes have group-specific needs and cultural beliefs in respect of SCT.

2.7 ELITE SPORT IN AUSTRALIA

There is a consensus amongst sport stakeholders in Australia that governments have a role in regulating the industry's structures and processes. In Australia it is readily conceded that the country's international sport successes would not have been possible without the financial and political support of the Australian Commonwealth Government (ACG) and its

policy implementation arm, the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) (Bloomfield 2003, Ferguson, 2006; Stewart, et. al., 2004). The ASC is a statutory authority of the ACG, with roles and responsibilities laid out in the *Australian Sports Commission Act 1989,* and governed by a Board of Commissioners appointed by the ACG. The Board determines the ASC's overall direction, decides on actual allocation of resources and/or policy for delegated decisions, and is accountable to the Federal Minister for Sport[10] and Parliament (ASC, 2008). Australian sport is managed nationally as a partnership between the ACG, represented by the ASC, and state Departments of Sport and Recreation, National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) and their affiliated bodies, state and territory government sports agencies, and other professional sport bodies. The ACG recognises sport as an integral part of Australian life, and provides funding for sport as an investment in the community in terms of national pride, improved health, economic activity, and stronger communities (ACG, 2006; ASC, 2008; Stewart, Nicholson, Smith, & Westerbeek, 2004). The ASC's two delivery arms, the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) and the Sport Performance and Development division, work with other sport organisations at all levels to promote the ACG's basic sports philosophy: excellence and participation. The AIS was opened in 1981 to develop elite sport in Australia by providing facilities and funding to sport organisations and potential elite athletes (Eggins, 2002). It also boasts expert coaching and athlete welfare services. Indeed, a major function of the AIS is to provide guidance to athletes through all sport transition phases, including non-selection, retirement, injury, rehabilitation, moving from junior to senior teams, and relocation. The AIS now partners with a number of NSOs in delivering transitional programs for athletes reaching the end of their careers, a subject to be discussed in later sections.

Sport in Australia, influenced by modern technology and communication, and with increased levels of sponsorship and professionalism, has resulted in hyper-commercialised industries, in which Australian Rules football, basketball, cricket, golf, rugby union and rugby league, soccer, and tennis, support a core of professional players and administrators

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[10] As at December 2011, sport is a Ministry in the outer Cabinet of the Australian Government; headed by Minister Mark Arbib.

(Stewart & Smith, 2000). This hyper-commercialism appears to be accompanied by an insatiable need for sporting heroes. Australians embrace and idolise these heroes who emerge from the rank and file of the population. Because they are seen to be extraordinary, many elite-level athletes from high profile sports become symbols of their time and sometimes even seem to embody idealised moral and cultural values (Jobling, 1987). In media markets, sportspeople who perform at elite-levels are more than mere athletes. Many have evolved into celebrities—they exist as "icons, images and brands whose every thought, action, change of style and partner is commodified and consumed" (Hickey & Kelly, 2008, p. 479). As important parts of Australia's cultural landscape, sporting heroes are used to promote their sport and endorse all sorts of consumer products, with athletes drawn on to increase awareness of programs in education, health, safety and welfare. The commoditisation of the Australian sports star has substantial pay-offs for the individual athlete in terms of sponsorship and/or endorsement agreements with local, regional and global brands. Over the last 30 years, 25% of people who won the Australian of the Year award were sportspeople, including the last three Australian cricket captains (Stewart et al., 2004). As well as loving their sporting heroes, as spectators, Australians watch a lot of sport on television. The two most popular television sports are Australian Rules football and rugby league. Each sport is broadcast on free-to-air and pay TV networks over their entire seasons, lasting anywhere from 20 to 25 weeks (Stewart et al., 2004).

2.7.1 Australian Football League (AFL)

Overview

The AFL is Australia's most popular sport league. It draws a seasonal attendance of more than seven million spectators, and has netted the most expensive television rights contract, valued in December, 2011, at $250 million a year (AFL, 2011b, 2011c). It is also recognised as Australia's most socially progressive sport association, recently broadening its player code of conduct to include rules on vilification, xenophobia, homophobia, sexism, sexual violence, discrimination, racism, and harassment (Macdonald & Booth, 2007). Currently a 17 team national competition exists, though the league will expand to 18

clubs by 2012.[11] The AFL is the primary body responsible for managing and administering Australian Rules football and works to actively support all levels of football—from juniors to the elite-level (Oliver, 2006).

History

Australian Rules football has a long and mostly proud history. The game originated in 1858 (AFL, 2010b) when Tom Wills and three other men drew up rules to establish a codified form of football in Melbourne. Wills had returned to Australia after schooling in England where he was football captain of Rugby School and a brilliant cricketer. On his return to Australia, Wills advocated the winter game of football as a way of keeping cricketers fit during off-season. At the time, there were many local versions of 'football' in England, which typically featured a dominance of handling the ball (which later became codified as rugby) and kicking the ball (which later became Association football, now known as soccer). Wills and three fellow Melbourne sport enthusiasts—each of whom had emigrated from England—were familiar with different types of football, so they decided to try to reach consensus on a form of play that suited each of them and, from their point of view, featured the best of all that was available from the 'old country'. Some historians, including Martin Flanagan, Jim Poulter, Col Hutchison and Barry Judd, postulate that Tom Wills could have been inspired by Marngrook. Literally meaning 'Game ball', Marngrook was the collective name given to a number of traditional Indigenous Australian recreational pastimes believed to have been played at gatherings and celebrations of up to 50 players. Generally speaking, Marngrook was a football game that featured punt kicking and catching a 'ball'—possum skins stuffed with grasses. Wills had been raised in Victoria's western districts. As the only white child in the district, he was fluent in the local dialect and frequently played with local Aboriginal children on his father's property. The tribe was one that is believed to have played Marngrook (AFL, 2010a; Judd, 2008). However, this view of the origins of Australian football is disputed by other authors (Blainey, 1990; Hibbins, 2008; Ruddell, 2010), who link the origins of the game in the cult of 'muscular

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[11] The Gold Coast Suns commenced in the roster in 2011, to be followed by Greater Western Sydney in 2012.

Christianity' inculcated through the resurgent English public school system in the mid 19th century (Scully, 2010). To these historians, the Australian game is a migrant amalgam of the 'kicking' and 'handling' modes of football already played in England, which later became codified as Association football (or soccer) in 1863 and Rugby football in 1871 respectively.

Australian Rules football originated as a codified game in Melbourne in 1858. The formation of the Victorian Football Association (VFA), a governing body for football in Victoria in 1877, was preceded by the formation of a similar body, the South Australian Football Association—albeit by only a week or two. By 1885, organised competition in Western Australia was underway. It was not until 1897 that a group of breakaway clubs left the VFA to form the non-amateur Victorian Football League, a body that quickly emerged as the most powerful organisation in the sport (Sayer, 2005). In the following year the League's first games were played among the foundation clubs—Carlton, Collingwood, Essendon, Fitzroy, Geelong, Melbourne, St Kilda and South Melbourne. This line-up of 12 clubs remained basically unchanged until 1987,[12] when the competition expanded to include the West Coast Eagles and the Brisbane Bears. By 1997, the competition comprised of 16 clubs, after Adelaide (1991), Fremantle (1995), and Port Adelaide (1997) joined what is now known as AFL, while foundation club Fitzroy merged with the Brisbane Bears—after the 1996 season—to form the Brisbane Lions (AFL, 2010b).[13]

Workplace conditions

AFL players are well-paid by Australian salary and wage earner standards, but are not remunerated anything like the enormous salaries of marquee footballers abroad, such as those in the American NFL or Premier League Soccer in the UK (Dabscheck, 2010). A major influence over the modest level of AFL players' income is the salary cap on Total Player Payments (TPP) that the AFL enforces as part of its "commitment to a policy of

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[12] In 1981 South Melbourne Swans relocated to Sydney, re- naming the club the Sydney Swans.

[13]The Gold Coast Suns entered the competition in 2011, with the Greater Western Sydney Giants currently preparing to participate in the 2012 season.

equalisation that promotes an even and exciting competition" (AFL, 2004). In 2009, the TPP limit advanced 3.5% with an amount greater than the increase being passed on to players by clubs, with gross player payments rising to 4.1%, equating to $128.8 million in 2008 and to $134.1 million in 2009. The additional services limit for the provision of marketing services by players increased 3.5% in 2009, from $8.3 million in 2008 to $8.8 million, with the money spent on these services by clubs increasing by 3.4%—almost the total increase in the limit—from $7.44 million in 2008 to $7.69 million in 2009. Taking into account the $134.1 million in gross player payments, $7.69 million in additional service agreements, and almost $2 million from employment and marketing arrangements with club associates, the total earned by players in 2009 was $143.79 million. The average payment by clubs for a listed player in 2009 was $221,482. This was an increase of 3.5% on 2008; when employment and marketing agreements with associates are included, the average payment was $224,577 (AFL, 2009a).

The TPP policy limits clubs to 44 players on their lists, and dictates a minimum of four changes to playing lists each year which can occur through natural attrition, (e.g., age, injury, or deselection), but also by market value. Recruitment is regulated by a draft process based on an allocation of selection priorities determined by the finishing position in the competition each year. As part of the AFL's equalisation strategy, clubs who finish lower on the league ladder each year have first pick of talent coming through the youth player draft. The draft of beginning players is complemented by a process of trading established players for other players, or for selection order in the draft. These processes are highly complex and tightly regulated (Hickey & Kelly, 2008).

In December 2011, after months of negotiating with the Australian Football League Players Association (AFLPA), the AFL announced a new retirement benefit scheme for players. In presenting the new scheme, AFL Football Operations Manager, Adrian Anderson, explained that the new pension fund would enable AFL players to earn retirement benefits of up to $350,000 for 10 years' service. Ten-year players would collect a lump sum of $30,000 immediately after retiring and annual payments of about $23,000 a year for 15 years on top of superannuation. Players who had served five years would be paid $19,000

when they leave the game and $17,500 a year for five years, while a one-off payment of $40,000 would be paid to players delisted before they reach a fifth year (Warner, 2011).

Indigenous involvement

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander footballers have starred periodically at the elite-level of Australian Football since before the 1980s, but their presence in the AFL has grown enormously in the past three decades. Oliver (2006, p. 23) described Australian football as "a strange paradox—for a game that is played almost exclusively in one part of the globe it is also able to transcend cultural barriers and ethnic divides and bring communities together". The first known player of Aboriginal descent to play at VFL level was Fitzroy's Joe Johnson, who played 55 games, including premierships in 1904 and 1905.[14] The following table outlines the increase in numbers of Indigenous footballers playing in the AFL since it became a national competition and the italicised numbers refer to the competition when it was the VFL. The years shown in *Table 2.4* have been chosen randomly to show the increase in numbers of Indigenous Australians entering the AFL. Players listed refer to the players who have identified as Indigenous, been named as senior players with the VFL/AFL club, and who played a senior game.

Table 2.4: Number of known Aboriginal players listed between the years of 1904-2010

YEAR										
1949	***1975***	**1990**	**2000**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**
Number										
2	*4*	16	35	36	48	52	71	82	83	78

Note: the word 'Aboriginal' is used in place of 'Indigenous' based on the use of terminology in the source (AFL, 2008b).

[14] However, Johnson denied his Aboriginality; his Aboriginal identity was claimed by family members some 90 years following his retirement from the sport (Judd, 2008).

In 2010, one in nine players on senior AFL club lists had an Indigenous heritage—a total of some 83 players—the most to be listed in a single season in VFL/AFL history. This number makes up almost 11% of the AFL competition. The growth recognises both the ability of players of Aboriginal descent as well as the efforts of the clubs to recruit them (Gardiner, 1997, AFL 2008b). The AFL believes that Australian Rules football is the sport of choice for Indigenous Australians, considering that Indigenous Australians represent:

- 2.5% of the Australian population;
- 4% of all participants in Australian football;
- 10% of the 2008 National Draft;
- 11% of AFL lists (or 83 players), with
- 90,000 Indigenous people engaged in AFL programs around Australia (AFL, 2007a).

The AFL prides itself as a leader in community relations, particularly with the Indigenous community, and has developed many programs and policies to enhance this relationship and provide opportunities for young Indigenous people to participate in the game. Programs for Indigenous players—delivered by the AFL—focus mainly on sport development, personal development and recruitment. The organisation works with the Clontarf Foundation to develop and expand an academy concept for young Indigenous men.[15] This program aims to improve the discipline, lifeskills, and self-esteem of young Indigenous men who are provided with an opportunity to succeed through a combination of education and Australian Rules football. The AFL Rising Stars program provides a pathway for Indigenous youth, with regional carnivals and camps providing links between participation programs and the elite-levels of the sport (Oliver, 2006). The Flying Boomerangs is a program for 15 to 16 year old Indigenous boys, focusing on personal development and leadership. It features a three-match series of games against international youth teams. Participants receive a Certificate II in Indigenous Leadership upon their completion of the

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15 The Clontarf Foundation exists to improve the education, discipline, self esteem, life skills and employment prospects of young Aboriginal men and, by doing so, equip them to participate more meaningfully in society. These outcomes are achieved through various activities, including football. Academies are formed in association with selected schools and colleges and each Academy's football program attracts young Aboriginal men to school and helps to retain them (Clontarf Foundation, 2010).

program.[16] The AFL has also developed a range of events to showcase the skills of Indigenous players at both junior and elite-levels, while also celebrating the importance and influence of Aboriginal culture, which include:

- A regular pre-season match in Darwin between an AFL club and the Indigenous AFL All Stars, preceded by a community camp featuring clinics, club and hospital visits and leadership courses;
- An annual Sydney vs Essendon match for the Marngrook Trophy, and
- The annual Indigenous round, culminating in the 'Dreamtime at the 'G' match (AFL, 2010a).

This last event, the annual Richmond vs Essendon clash, includes a range of activities over one weekend which celebrate and showcase the rich Indigenous culture and heritage of Victoria including:

- Welcome to Country ceremonies at matches over the weekend;
- The Long Walk, from Federation Square to the MCG;[17]
- curtain raiser matches featuring junior Indigenous teams from other states;
- pre-match entertainment featuring Indigenous artists, and
- attendance at the match by elite Indigenous athletes and other important people (AFL, 2010a).

The profile of the AFL and "its heroes" (Oliver, 2006, p. 30) has been used to increase awareness of Indigenous needs in education, health, safety and welfare. Indigenous

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[16] In December 2012, the AFL Flying Boomerangs program won a prestigious international Beyond Sport Award. The program was nominated in the Sport Federation or Governing Body of the Year category and was among 400 entries from more than 125 countries. The award was judged by the Beyond Sport Panel of Ambassadors, which is chaired by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and includes official patron Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Olympic Gold medalists Michael Johnson, Michelle Ford, and Sergey Bubka, chairman and chief executive of the Special Olympics, Timothy Shriver, and chairman of the 2012 London Olympics, Lord Sebastian Coe.

[17] Featuring iconic former AFL player and Indigenous rights advocate, Michael Long.

programs are managed centrally, with a current annual investment of around $3 million. The AFL believes that this significant financial commitment, and holistic approach to address the priorities of Indigenous communities, has the potential to bring about generational change and make a real impact on lives, stating "our aim is to reach communities and leave a legacy resulting in lifetime behavioural change" (*The AFL and Indigenous Australia Booklet*, cited in Oliver, 2006, p. 30). There are, of course, limits to what the AFL or any other sport organisation can achieve with sport-for-development initiatives.

SCT policies and programs

The AFL aims to support players in their transition both into and out of the sport, and to provide opportunities in work and education. This is pursued in partnership with two other organisations, the AFL Players' Association (AFLPA), and the AFL Group Training Company (AFL SportsReady). The AFL and the AFLPA conduct an annual camp for Indigenous players in November, which addresses issues of transition (leaving home), welfare and education, and links to training and personal development programs that assist with planning for life after football. AFL SportsReady is funded by the AFL to increase players' education and training, and provides opportunities for Indigenous youth to undertake vocational traineeships (AFL, 2010b).

In a document entitled 'AFL Indigenous Employment Strategy: Phase One', published in 2007, the AFL projects its intention to increase the number of Indigenous people employed within its ranks. The document stated that:

> to leverage the wealth of experience in our community, our business demographics should be reflective of the community and players we represent […] In the way we have seen exhibited on the football field, Indigenous people bring a different perspective, creativity, ability and skill set to the workplace. Through improved community engagement, non-Indigenous Australia can benefit from Indigenous contribution (AFL, 2007a, pp. 4-5).

Aiming to 'kick the gap'[18], the strategy announced a three year target of 4% Indigenous off-field workforce across AFL clubs and state affiliates, to reflect current participation figures. To achieve this aim the organisation plans to:

1) improve the infrastructure of current Indigenous programs;
2) seek additional partnerships and resources, and
3) design an employment program to ensure that all opportunities for employment across the AFL and state affiliates are made accessible to Indigenous people (AFL, 2007a).

In 2010, about 25 Indigenous people were employed across the AFL, state affiliates and clubs, in roles that were largely 'Indigenous-specific' (Warren, 2010). The most senior was Jason Mifsud,[19] in the position of National Community Engagement Manager, with representation at other middle levels down to trainees. These included positions in areas such as liaison, as well as engagement and implementation of Indigenous football development. There were also a handful of Indigenous people in mainstream football development roles. In 2010, this represented only about 1% of AFL off-field employment. The AFL acknowledges that it has "a lot of work to do" in achieving the target of 4% Indigenous off-field workforce (Warren, 2010).

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[18] Indigenous Australians are at a marked disadvantage compared to non-Indigenous Australians and the gap has not decreased over the past decade, or previously. The 'Closing the Gap' strategy was announced by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in February 2008, as part of the national apology to members of Australia's Stolen Generations. The strategy aims to reduce Indigenous disadvantage with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood education, educational achievement, and employment outcomes.

[19] Mifsud is a Gunditjmara man from the small town of Ellerslie, just outside Warrnambool, and is a prominent member of the Aboriginal community. He was recruited by St Kilda to an Assistant Coaching position in 2006—13 years after being drafted as a player by that club in 1993. Prior to that appointment he was playing coach of Koroit for seven seasons, culminating with a premiership in 2003. Mifsud left his position with St. Kilda at the end of the 2006 season, taking up an appointment with the AFL as Indigenous Programs Manager.

2.7.2 The National Rugby League (NRL)

Overview

The National Rugby League (NRL) is Australia's second most popular sports league after the AFL. In 2011, annual attendances are just over three million, and the League earns television rights fees of around $100 million per year (NRL, 2011; Shoebridge, 2011). While not strongly supported in Australia's southern states, it is the dominant football code in New South Wales and Queensland, and is also strong in the ACT (Macdonald & Booth, 2007).

History

Rugby League came into being when clubs in northern England split from the Rugby Football Union in 1895. A class divide opened up as working-class clubs in the north, consisting mostly of miners, rebelled against the rich 'gentleman clubs' of the south. The code was first played in Australia in 1908. 'League', as it is commonly known, is still often seen as a 'working man's sport' (Fagan, 2006). The Australian Rugby League (ARL) is the sport's governing body in Australia. It is responsible for the administration and management of the national team (the Kangaroos), the annual State of Origin series between Queensland and New South Wales, other representative matches, all international competitions played in Australia, the AIS Rugby League Program, the Arrive Alive Cup (the premier competition in schoolboy rugby league), and junior development (Fagan, 2006).

The NRL was formed in 1998 under a partnership arrangement between the ARL and News Ltd. to administer the National Competition. The NRL markets the Telstra Premiership and Toyota Cup on behalf of the clubs, and organises the competition draw, finals matches and Grand Final. In association with the ARL, NRL staff promote the Country vs City Origin, State of Origin, the Centenary Bundaberg Test, and also promoted the Rugby League World Cup of 2008. The 16 clubs in the Telstra Premiership each have their own CEOs and

organisational structure; however, they are bound to the NRL by club agreements and a common set of rules.

Workplace conditions

NRL players are well-paid by Australian salary and wage earner standards, but remain significantly behind the salaries of AFL players (and indeed many other professional Australian athletes) (Dabscheck, 2010). In March 2010, NRL Chief Executive Officer David Gallop, reported that the NRL received about $150 million per year and the 16 clubs averaged receipts of $13 million to $14 million. Each club had a salary cap of $4.1 million, with all but one club paying the full amount, meaning the wage bill of the clubs in 2010 was about $65 million. Another $2 million was paid in third-party deals with club-associated sponsors and an additional $3.5 million was paid to about 80 players in NRL-sanctioned sponsorship arrangements. A total revenue pool of $374 million, and player payments of $71 million, meant that the NRL players' share of the revenue cake was 19%. However, with 25 players at each of the NRL's 16 clubs, the average salary was lower than the AFL average payment. In 2010, the average NRL salary was $164,000, based on 25 players sharing $4.1 million, although the $5.5 million in sponsorship money across the NRL lifted the average to $177,750. This was still well short of the medium 2008 AFL payment of $233,000 (Masters, 2010).[20] In 2008, the AFL's 2008 annual report lists two players receiving $1 million a year (AFL, 2008a), whereas, according to Masters (2010), the NRL's highest-paid player would probably have earned only half this amount. This situation is blamed by commentators on a weak NRL Players' Association, over-reliance on revenue from Leagues Clubs (particularly income from poker machines), and an overwhelming dependency on broadcasting deals with television companies (Frost, 2004). Furthermore, the NRL pitches its salary cap at the remunerational capacity of its poorest club. The Cronulla Sharks Club, with a turnover of $11 million, spends 37% of income on

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[20] There is a discrepancy of approximately $8000 (including employment and marketing agreements) between this reported figure and the AFL's own reported average annual player salary in 2008.

player salaries, while the Brisbane Broncos Club, with an income of $26 million, outlays only 15% (Masters, 2010).

Indigenous involvement

In 1995, Colin Tatz (1995a, p.10) argued that rugby league had been "kinder to Aboriginal people than any other football code". Indigenous men are certainly well represented in rugby league. Tatz (1995a) calculated that in the senior Sydney premiership competition of 1987, there were between 29 and 32 Aboriginal players, making up 9% of the players in premier and reserve grade sides. By 2005 the number had grown, and a *Sydney Morning Herald* article noted that Indigenous Australians "will make up more than 20% of the players who will run onto the field" in the NRL Grand Final of the same year (Baker, 2005). A Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission report found that in 2006 11% of NRL players were of Aboriginal descent, compared to 7% in the AFL that same year (Oliver, 2006).

The NRL has an obvious interest in luring talent from within Indigenous ranks, but is also gradually recognising that this brings with it wider responsibilities, not only to the recruited athletes but also to the wider Indigenous population. As a result, an integrated Indigenous Development Program has been progressed, with a number of elements. First, the NRL's own Anti-Vilification policy was approved by the Australian Human Rights Commission in 1998 as part of its Rules and Code of Conduct. Explanation of players' rights under the policy is a key part of NRL induction camps and a major part of on-going player education. Furthermore, the NRL has delivered the ASC's cultural awareness workshop to all players, and this remains a core component of the Induction Program. Players are provided with updates on a regular basis during their playing career. Each year, 240 players participate in the program, and since 2005, over 1,000 players have completed it (ARL, 2010). Finally, the NRL broke new ground in 2008, becoming the first national sports body to commit to a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) with Reconciliation Australia—this plan was also approved by the Human Rights Commission. Indeed, Rugby League remains the only sport in Australia with a registered plan of this kind.

The RAP was developed in consultation with senior Indigenous players with aims to promote cultural awareness, reading programs, healthy lifestyles, women in league programs, regional development, and elite athlete development (NRL/ARL, 2008). It formally recognises the support that NRL clubs, players, and various arms of the game, extend to Indigenous communities, and provides direct material assistance to Indigenous communities. As part of the RAP, a Reconciliation Cup match was created as an annual calendar event to celebrate the Indigenous contribution to the game. The inaugural Reconciliation Cup was held in 2007 and marked the anniversary of the 1967 Referendum (NRL, 2009)—when Australians voted to change clauses in the Australian Constitution that discriminated against Indigenous Australians, and allow the Commonwealth Government to assume responsibility for Aboriginal affairs, which had previously been the domain of the states (Gardiner-Garden, 2007). Also in conjunction with the RAP, an Indigenous Player Advisory Group was established to assist in providing strategic advice and mentoring to young players in the game (ARL, 2010). In 2008 an Indigenous Council was formed within the NRL to provide independent advice on Indigenous matters, including cultural protocol and issues requiring mediation (ARL, 2010). Similarly, an advisory group model is also used in other areas of the game, with meetings held as required with players from ethno-culturally diverse migrant backgrounds, namely the Pacific Islands, Māori and Papua New Guinea. In 2009, the NRL became the first national sports code to join the 'Close the Gap' campaign (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010), which is Australia's largest ever mass movement to improve the life expectancy and health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (ARL, 2010).

SCT policies and programs

In 2008, the NRL instigated a 16-team National Youth Competition (NYC) for under 20s players, sponsored as the Toyota Cup. As the program was set up, young players were advised:

> A professional rugby league career has an average lifespan of less than four seasons. Players are realising the need to gain qualifications or experience away from the game to prepare for life after football. Over 65% of current NRL players either have a post-school

> qualification or are currently studying. A further 15% either have additional employment or are gaining experience in the workplace. It is interesting that the majority of these players believe that having something to occupy their minds away from the game actually assists their performance on the field.
>
> As a game we all have a responsibility to ensure that players are given as many opportunities to prepare for a life outside of the game as we have to be realistic, especially in its early years about how many Toyota Cup players will make the direct transition to the full time NRL squads. Therefore it is vital players are not disadvantaged in comparison to their peers in terms of their educational and vocational pursuits whilst still allowing them the chance to chase their dream of playing in the NRL (NRL, 2008).

The philosophy of the NYC is to ensure that players in the competition are not disadvantaged in their ability to develop a career outside of rugby league, as compared to their peers (NRL/RLPA, 2010). The NYC structure thus provides young athletes with opportunities not only on the field but, just as importantly, the chance to pursue further education or vocational careers off the field. Training is designed to ensure players will not lose touch with peers in relation to career development, as mandated non-training hours enable players to fulfill their employment and educational obligations. Some of the key initiatives in the area of education and welfare for Toyota Cup players include:

1) Induction Camp: Players competing in the Toyota Cup attend an Induction Camp that introduces them to the expectations and responsibilities of semi-professional football. Players are required to participate in the Level One Referees Course. In the first year of the program, over 350 players participated in referees courses, with several using this to officiate in games throughout the season. In 2008, 98% of players were either employed or undertaking some form of study at an education institution (school, TAFE, or University).
2) Traineeships: Clubs are permitted to self-fund a maximum of $100,000 in Government approved traineeships, either through the Football Club or an associated Leagues Club, per year for players captured in the Toyota Cup Top 20 Salary Cap Squad. Clubs are able to utilise this $100,000 in numerous ways, however, a maximum of five full-time equivalent traineeships are permitted for salary cap exclusion. Clubs may place players outside the Top 20 Squad into traineeships without affecting the restrictions on the Top 20 Squad.

3) Mandated Non-Training Hours: Mandated non-training hours apply three days a week between the hours of 8.00am and 5.00pm. Clubs must allow for a nine hour block where players will be not be permitted to train as a squad. This will allow clubs to set their own schedules based on the players' requirements for study or work. Players who have yet to commence their tertiary study commitments or have yet to begin employment are not permitted to train during the mandated non-training-hours.
4) Tertiary Education Allowance (TEA): The TEA is capped at $10,000 per player (net) and can be used to cover players' expenses at university or TAFE (Technical and Further Education) College, including HECS (Higher Education Contribution Scheme) fees and any resources such as books, laptops etc. needed to fulfil the course requirements. The remainder can be paid to the player as a study allowance.
5) Club Education and Welfare Officer: Clubs are required to appoint a full-time Education and Welfare contact or shared position, to be responsible for matters relating to the welfare of players for both the NRL and Toyota Cup squads.

The above initiatives apply to all players involved in the TYC, and demonstrate a significant change in policy within the NRL—this is referred to as "No Work, No Study, No Play". Whilst it has only been in operation for three years (since 2008), it is hoped that the structure will ensure that when players reach first grade they already have significant work experience and/or a post school qualification. This ambition already seems to have been realised to some extent. In 2009, the NRL released figures showing that 84% of NRL players had achieved some form of post-secondary qualification during their time in the game; 15% had enrolled in university degree courses, almost double the number from five years previously, as the NRL and Rugby League players' Association (RLPA) continued to fund individual education grants and group courses across the clubs. According to NRL Chief Executive Officer David Gallop, there is strong evidence to support the proposition that players involved in off-field development programs are more likely to achieve better results—both on the field in terms of athletic performance, and off the field in terms of

personal self-confidence. Welfare and Education Officer, Nigel Vagana,[21] also contended that study and on-field success go hand in hand. In a review of the make-up of the previous year's World Cup Final, Vagana claimed "of the 48 players in the last World Cup final, 41 had been involved in some form of education or employment. The players themselves are becoming aware of the opportunities that are there to support them and they are looking for ways to get involved" (Vagana, cited in NRL, 2009). At the time of that press release, the NRL outlined a number of recommendations to further strengthen its education programs in 2010, including the setting of minimum educational qualifications for players, by the time they reach 21 years of age, as an NRL registration requirement (NRL, 2009).

2.7.3 Boxing Australia Inc. (BAI)

Overview

Two forms of boxing exist in Australia—amateur and professional. BAI is the national federation for amateur boxing in Australia, and is recognised as the NSO for boxing by the ASC, the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC), the Australian Commonwealth Games Association (ACGA), and the International Amateur Boxing Association (AIBA). In a foreword to the organisation's Strategic Plan, its President, Ted Tanner, explained that BAI is responsible for "the conduct and direction within Australia of a modern and exciting sport which demands great commitment from highly disciplined, dedicated and talented athletes" (Tanner, cited in BAI, 2010b). He went on to say:

> The sport nationally operates through a national office, with offices also in each state and territory serving the State and Territory Associations as integral partners which, through the operation of programs at the local level, are accountable for the development and operation

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[21] Nigel Vagana was born in Auckland, New Zealand, and is a retired professional rugby league footballer of the 1990s and 2000s. A New Zealand and Samoa international representative centre, he retired as New Zealand's all-time top try-scorer with 19. Vagana played club football in New Zealand for the Warriors, in England for Warrington and in Australia for the Bulldogs, Cronulla-Sutherland and finally South Sydney. Following his retirement from the playing field, Vagana became the National Rugby League Welfare and Education Officer.

> of the sport within their areas, so contributing to a unified direction for the development of boxing nationally (Tanner, cited in BAI, 2010b).

BAI is governed by a Council, consisting of representatives from each state and territory, and a portfolio-based Board of Directors, along with a series of committees. BAI employs a Chief Executive Officer and, like many NSOs, relies heavily on volunteers to run its day to day activities. Today, the organisation has a clear objective:

> For over a century Australian boxers have been representing our nation at the world's premier sporting event, the Olympic Games. In the 1908 London Olympics Snowy Baker won a silver medal in the middleweight division and, in the years since, other Australian boxers have won silver and bronze medals at Olympic Games. But Australia is yet to produce an Olympic boxing gold medallist. This is a major objective for BAI, along with success at the Commonwealth Games and World Championships, and overall development of our sport (Tanner, cited in BAI, 2010b).

Yet in Australia the sport faces some very real challenges. In August 2010, 18 year old Indigenous boxer, Damien Hooper, from Dalby in Queensland, clinched gold at the Youth Olympic Games in Singapore, in the 75 kg middleweight division, thus becoming Australia's first Indigenous boxer to win an amateur world title. Unfortunately, Hooper's stellar achievement could not be matched by the Australian Boxing Team that competed at the 2010 Commonwealth Games held in Delhi, India. In fact, the team recorded its worst result for Commonwealth Games performances since the Christchurch Games in 1974. For the first time in 36 years Australia left the Commonwealth Games without even a single bronze medal, in spite of Head Coach Bodo Andreass' enthusiastic predictions that the team would win four medals. It should be noted, however, that Andreass had earlier expressed concerns about the youth of the team. The lack of medals in Delhi was seen by BAI as a disaster. While current funding to the organisation is guaranteed until the 2012 Olympics, the results-based funding strategy, combined with the current Australian Government's moves to reduce Olympic funding, puts boxing in the front line for cuts (Kent, 2010).

Indigenous involvement

Professional and amateur boxing share a long history of Indigenous involvement. Historically, Indigenous boxers have appeared in large numbers in Australian boxing teams

(ABS, 2004). In 1987, Colin Tatz contended that there were more Indigenous Australian boxers per head of population than among any other ethno-cultural group in the world (Tatz, 1987). Although BAI does not generate membership figures to accurately indicate the numbers of Indigenous boxers within their ranks, the history of boxing in Australia has always had close links with Indigenous communities. For many, it offered the possibility of a way out of poverty and a means of challenging social exclusion which emanated from racist attitudes. BAI has reported that many of its members are from a 'working class background' (Boxing Australia, 2005). Furthermore, BAI has paid tribute to Australia's strong tradition of Aboriginal boxers, fostered early last century by the widely known Jimmy Sharman boxing troupe, which originated in 1910 (Broome, 1995; Broome, 1996). Many Aboriginal boxers commenced their careers in the Sharman tents (Oliver, 2006). However, a history of exploitation and brutality in the Sharman tents has been alleged (Broome, 1980), and is reflected in the words of iconic Australian rock band, Midnight Oil, in their song *Jimmy Sharman's Boxers*:

> Why are we fighting for this?
> Why are you paying for this?
> You pay to see me fall like shrapnel to the floor. (Midnight Oil, cited in Lewis, 2003)

Recognising its multicultural membership, a recently developed policy of BAI voiced opposition to racism in any form. The policy was communicated to members with a strongly-worded post on the organisation's website in March 2010:

> The Council of BAI at its meeting on Sunday 21 March, 2010 unanimously passed the following Resolution to impress upon all who participate in our sport:
>
> *Council hereby affirms its complete and absolute abhorrence of racism in all its forms; including racially discriminating conduct, racist vilification, racist humiliation and the use of racist language in any context. Council further affirms that BAI will not tolerate any form of racism in our sport or in connection with the conduct of our sport. Those in any way associated with BAI and its activities who engage in any form of racism (be that engagement deliberate or simply thoughtless) will be dealt with by BAI in accordance with its Member Protection By-Law irrespective of their position or standing* (BAI, 2010a, italics in original).

SCT policies and programs

BAI's boxing talent identification program, initially entitled *Lords of the Ring*, was originally set up in partnership with the AIS in 2007. The program began by targeting young Indigenous athletes, exclusively using the expertise of the National Talent Identification and Development Program (NTID); six residential scholarships were on offer for athletes based at the AIS in Canberra. That number has now been reduced to four scholarship positions for Indigenous athletes, and in the lower weight categories only (Boxing Australia Inc, 2008). The program provides excellent opportunities for up-and-coming champions within the sport itself, but further, to a wide range of athlete services provided by the AIS, including education and career planning. Like many other Australian NSOs in amateur sport, BAI, as well as its state affiliates and clubs, lack the resources needed to deliver post-sport transition programs (Belbin, 2009). Instead, elite-level athletes on scholarship with the AIS are serviced by in-house programs, such as the ACE program (discussed in *Section 4.3.8)*.

2.7.4 Professional Boxing in Australia

Overview

It is difficult to research professional boxing in Australia, as scholarship is sparse and of poor quality (Hagell, 2000). While amateur boxing sits within the NSO structure as encouraged by the ASC, the professional form of the sport is entirely different with its own set of governing bodies, rules and regulations (Oliver, 2006). A significant contemporary source of information about the sport emanates from medical research papers. This is due to a world-wide concern about the risk in professional boxing of chronic neurological injury (Chronic Traumatic Brain Injury [CTBI]), once known as the 'punch-drunk' syndrome. Indeed, many organisations have called for a total ban of the sport (Australian Medical Association, 2006; British Medical Association, 2009). However, a handful of researchers have provided some information about the position of professional boxing in Australia.

Workplace conditions

An article published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* (Clausen, McCrory, Anderson, 2005) argued that there has been no significant decline in participation rates in professional boxing in Australia from 1931 until 2002. This was in spite of a widely held media perception in the lay press that professional boxing was less popular both as a spectator sport and in participation rates than it had been 50 years earlier (Clausen et al., 2005). In 2002, the total number of boxers who fought professionally in Australia was 277, or 2.77 boxers per 100,000 head of male population. Clausen et al. (2005) struggled to find comparative historical Australian participation figures, but based on a limited data set, suggest that participation rates remained similar to the United Kingdom (also 2.77 boxers per 100,000 per head of male population). However, what these authors demonstrated is that over the last century, the average duration of a professional boxer's career had dropped from 19 to five years, and the mean number of bouts in a career had similarly reduced from 336 to 13. Furthermore, the paper indicated that changes to the number of rounds per match had also dropped the duration of bouts significantly. In the early 1900s to 1929, the number of rounds varied from 20 to 40; however, from the 1930s onwards these numbers dropped further to 15 three-minute rounds. In the early 1980s, many of the world sanctioning bodies, such as the World Boxing Association (WBA), mandated a maximum of 12 three-minute rounds, which remains as the current world-wide benchmark (Clausen et al., 2005). The authors concluded that, due to this reduced exposure, the incidence of boxing related CTBI would diminish in the current era of professional boxers, as their exposure to repetitive head trauma would be less, despite the fact that boxing participation per head of population remains steady. Added to this were increased medical screening procedures that had become mandatory for professional boxers, such as clinical, neuropsychological, radiological, and genetic monitoring (Fallon, cited in Clausen et al., 2005). The paper noted that computerised cognitive screening was already required at initial registration and cognitive retesting required on a three-yearly basis in some Australian states (Clausen et al., 2005).

This reduced number of bouts directly reduces the capacity of professional boxers to earn a living. The earning capacity of the group is also difficult to research, with the best approximation being that boxers do not in fact receive a salary; there is a purse for every fight. In the past, earnings would have to be split among a "retinue of trainers, managers, cut-men, match makers and agents" (Sugden, 1996, p. 189). But this situation, at least for some organisations, has now changed, with fewer managers and agents sharing in the split of prize-money. Some current figures relating to prize money available to the current crop of Australian professional boxers were provided by professional boxing manager, Bill Treacy, of the Grange Old School Boxing Gym.[22] In an event marketed as *Judgment Day* in Sydney in late October 2010, boxers in lower card fights were likely to pocket around $3,000, with headline bout winners earning roughly $50,000 in prize money. Of course, this amount would increase in World Title fights, with a champion earning anything from $150,000 to $800,000 (Treacy, 2010). These earnings could be supplemented with sponsorship deals and other marketing opportunities. But, with only two or three fights per year, most professional fighters now see boxing as a secondary source of revenue, to supplement their income from outside of the ring. However, they "never lose sight of that pot of gold at the end of the rainbow—that's what keeps them going" (Treacy, 2010).

SCT programs and policies

No formal SCT programs could be identified within professional boxing spheres. However, some organisations have given the matter some consideration. For example, the approach of Grange Old School Boxing Gym is to "develop great boxers who will become part of a close team structure, with a high work ethic and balanced attitude to life" (Treacy, 2010). Much of the role of managers within that organisation is to ensure that his charges invest wisely, engage in education or training, and undertake planning for later life (Treacy, 2010). Support for boxers and their families is seen as paramount. Yet Treacy lamented the fact that, in his view, other boxing establishments may not concern themselves sufficiently with preparing their boxers for life after sport.

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[22] A chain of boxing gymnasia in New South Wales, Australia

2.8 THE SPORT CAREER TRANSITION FLOWCHART

To this point, the current chapter has comprised a review of the literature relevant to the area of study. The final section introduces a combined theoretical flowchart that has been derived from the literature and is designed to demonstrate the current conceptualisation of sport career transition. This framework seeks to provide a focus to the study and place boundaries around it (Patton, 2002). It is based initially on Schlossberg's MHAT. To recap, during the late 1990s, research into adult transitions recognised SCT as neither a singular, all-ending event (time or retirement), nor a single state of existence (a former elite athlete) (Smith & McManus, 2008). This perspective enabled research into SCT to progress from an exclusive focus on one transition (the retirement event) to a broader lifespan perspective encompassing non-athletic transitions at psychological, psychosocial, academic, vocational and cultural levels (Anderson & Morris, 2000; Schlossberg, 1981; Wylleman et al., 2004). Furthermore, research has progressed from identifying the causes and consequences of SCT to investigating factors influencing the quality of career transitions, as well as strategies for preparing athletes for life after sport (Anderson & Morris, 2000). The use of Schlossberg's MHAT has contributed to a greater understanding of the SCT process. Schlossberg's MHAT also allows consideration of the individual characteristics, as well as the pre and post retirement environments in determining the quality of the transition experience (Schlossberg, 1981, 1984).

Schlossberg's theory of transition alluded to three phases ('moving in', 'moving through', and 'moving on') within the transition process. Kerr and Dacyshyn dubbed these phases as (a) *Exiting Sport*, (b) *Nowhere Land* and (c) *New Beginnings* (2000). In the current study this nomenclature will be incorporated for the transitional phases. Within the first phase, *Exiting Sport*, athletes are faced with the career transition decision-making process, which is determined by push/anti-push, pull/anti-pull factors (Fernandez et al., 2006). *Nowhere Land* is described by Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000, p. 122) as the phase when athletes seem to "dangle in a time of uncertainty and disorientation", undergoing a shift in identity and eventually achieving a new definition of self. During this phase athletes encounter four sets of interacting factors (self, situation, support, and strategies) (Schlossberg, 1984). As

athletes negotiate their way through *Nowhere Land,* there is potential for a transition crisis, which may even require a therapeutic intervention (Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993b). The third phase, *New Beginnings*, suggests the start of a new life (Coakley, 1983), but athletes may still experience difficulties in coping with their new situation and identity.

The flowchart depicted in *Figure 2.7* combines Schlossberg's (1984) MHAT, the work of Fernandez et al (2006), in terms of transition decision-making factors, as well as the work of Taylor and Ogilvie (1994), in terms of recognising that potential exists for crisis during the transition. There is sufficient flexibility for understanding internal and external factors related to SCT, including a review of policies at the national level, state-level programs, and the practices of sport organisations and individuals. Heeding the suggestions of Stambulova and Alfermann (2009) discussed in *Section 2.3.5,* the combined model allows the exploration of athletic retirement issues within specific ethno-cultural contexts, where the experiences of Indigenous athletes can be located.

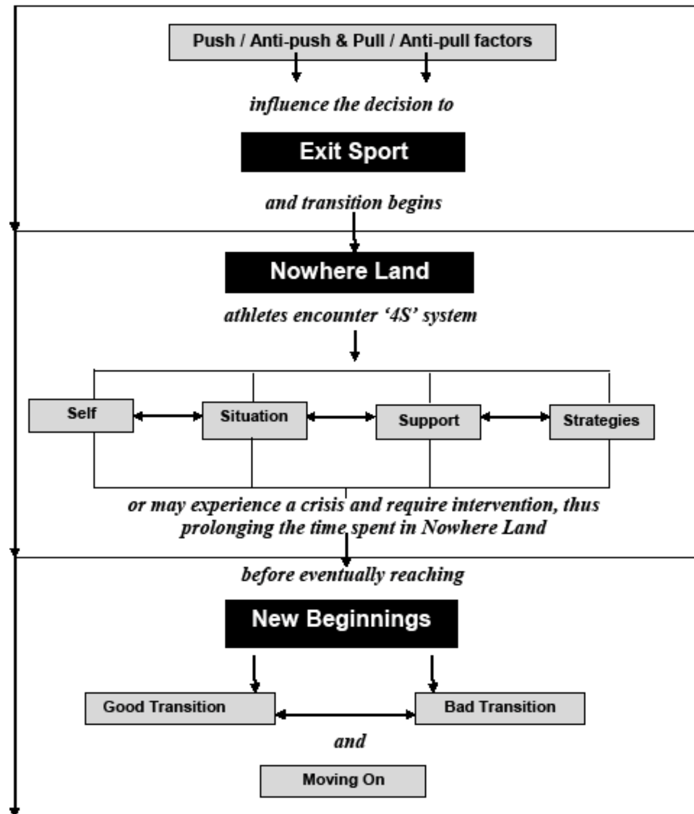

Figure 2.7: Sport career transition flow chart

2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter has highlighted the ways in which research into the two-fold subjects of athletic retirement and sport career transition have traditionally been conducted. It has reviewed a range of previous research, both internationally and from Australian sources. There has also been an discussion of Bourdieu's sociological theory featuring concepts of habitus, capital and the field. The technique proposed for this study extends on this previous scholarship by investigating the SCT situation of an important, but until now under-researched group of athletes—elite Indigenous Australians. *Chapter Three* elaborates on the methodology used in the investigation.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research design corresponds to the context of the research topic and the research question. The study involves a mixed methods approach, but is overwhelmingly qualitative, with a brief survey the sole contribution to quantitative data collection. An examination of the approaches to the research design is followed by an outline of the methods used in the study, which include: interviews featuring open ended questions, document analysis, and the Athlete Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) questionnaire. Descriptions of participants, data collection and analysis, are presented, followed by issues of trustworthiness, ethics, and potential bias. *Chapter Two* provided a discussion of the literature and theoretical background for this study in the areas of athlete career transition, both in Australia and internationally, together with considerations of culture, ethnicity, and sport management. The review of literature determined a gap in the literature. While athlete career transition has been the subject of significant interest and copious study, research addressing ethno-cultural diversity is scarce, notwithstanding the cosmopolitan nature of many sports leagues today. The review of literature also allowed for the determination of a specific research focus and original context: scholarship dealing with the needs and experiences of Indigenous Australian athletes retiring from elite sport is virtually non-existent. *Chapter Three* now moves on to present the research design used to approach that problem, the methods used to collect the data, and the analysis used to interrogate the data to investigate the research question: *What are the retirement experiences of elite Indigenous Australian athletes?*

An introduction to the research design was given in *Section 1.4;* the current chapter aims to build on that introduction and to provide evidence that appropriate procedures were followed. The chapter comprises two interrelated sections: (1) research design, and (2) research methods. The first section provides the theoretical and philosophical concepts that underpin this research, and outlines the research design. This is based on interpretive phenomenology and seeks to understand the experiences of retiring from sport as an

Indigenous Australian athlete. The methods section details three qualitative methods that were used for data collection: (1) interviews featuring open ended questions, (2) key stakeholder interviews, and (3) document analysis. These methods were supported by a short statistical survey, the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS). The chapter further describes the thematic analysis process, acknowledges potential bias, and highlights the ethical considerations upon which the research was conducted. However, before the discussion of the overall approach to the research design, the chapter begins with a discussion of the cultural considerations deemed fundamental to the study.

3.2 CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

At the commencement of this study, it became apparent to me, as a non-Indigenous person, that the ethics of working with Indigenous peoples would encompass far more than merely obtaining approval from the relevant university authorities. Three significant issues needed to be considered when developing the research design:

1) cultural sensitivities involved with conducting research with Indigenous peoples;
2) potential power imbalances between researcher and participants, and
3) the need to develop trust between the researcher and participants.

3.2.1 Cultural sensitivities

The first issue relates to cultural sensitivities. The literature documents evidence of the capacity of research to oppress and marginalise, just as it maintains the potential to emancipate and empower. Research with Indigenous peoples in Australia, as elsewhere, has an inescapable political dimension, with researchers operating in the context of a history of previous research that has at times been “inappropriate, irrelevant, and irreverent” (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2003, p. 437). The effect of European settlement on Australian Indigenous peoples has been described as an “almost unrelieved tragedy”, with Indigenous peoples remaining victims of “entrenched prejudices” (Hallinan, 1991, p. 71). Researchers such as Morton-Robinson (2000), Tuhiwai-Smith (2003), and Rigney (1999), all variously illustrated how the legacy of some research involving Indigenous peoples has been one of

disempowerment. In the past, Indigenous peoples were often treated patronisingly or paternalistically, as subjects to be 'observed'. Within this paradigm, research became a tool and a condition of colonisation, with investigators constructing a power-knowledge nexus that served to marginalise local knowledge by controlling and defining it (Holcombe, 2006). The worst of this practice led non-Indigenous researchers to enter a community and take knowledge out of it, with little long-term reciprocal engagement and knowledge exchange, and little or no consideration of local capability development (Porsanger, 2004). Further, colonising research led to the view that in relation to Indigenous peoples, their entire existence seemed to be a problem or a question for researchers, often formulated as "The … (*insert name of Indigenous group*) problem" or: "The … (*insert name of Indigenous group*) question" (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2003, p. 35). Tuhiwai-Smith argued that "problematising the Indigenous is a Western obsession". Furthermore, from an Aboriginal perspective, Australian scholar, Fejo-King (2006), insisted that, as a result of these processes, Indigenous peoples of the world have become the most researched population groups since the colonisation of their lands:

> In the past most researchers in Australia privileged Western knowledge, research methods and methodologies in undertaking research with Australian Indigenous peoples. The impact of this ideology has rippled out and touched all aspects of the life of Australian Indigenous peoples and continues to have profound implications for individuals, families, communities, and Nations (Fejo-King, 2006, p. 2).

Indeed, Fejo-King maintained that the term 'research' as heard, seen, and experienced by Indigenous peoples, has not just become a dirty word, it has become a major tool by which the disempowerment of Indigenous peoples continues today (examples of such research are discussed in Briskman, 2003; Turnbull, 2003; Porsanger, 2004). Given this background and legacy, it became clear that there are particular sensitivities associated with research into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that would impact the current study.

The decision to conduct research with, according to Fejo-King (2006, p. 4), "one of the most researched populations in the world" concerned me greatly. As a result, I consulted with Indigenous advisors in my home city of Hobart and, by conducting a review of Indigenous research, sought a culturally appropriate pathway into engaging with the world

of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. A philosophical approach known as *Dadirri* became an instrumental part of my learning experience as a researcher.

3.2.2 Dadirri

Researchers and writers (particularly those who come from non-Indigenous backgrounds) have at times, drawn on Indigenous philosophies, images and metaphors, in an effort to better comprehend and clarify Indigenous cultures, values and beliefs. Some of these are listed in *Table 3.1*.[23]

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[23] It is significant to note the similarities that exist between some such concepts, that reflect the diversity found in Australian Indigenous communities. For example, *Deep listening* is a principle of inter-personal relations central to the cultures of Aboriginal nations across the Australian continent, and is found under a variety of names, such as Dadirri, Garma, Winangargurri, Yimbanyiara and Ngara.

Table 3.1: Indigenous philosophies

Theme	People/region	Meaning
Alcheringa	Central Australia	A religious philosophy, embracing mythic ancestral heroes, their pastimes and everything associated with them. In the English language the philosophy is known as 'The Dreaming'.
Totemic groups	Central Australia	Special or sacred places which mark the resting place or activity of the supreme beings. The concept connects Aboriginal people inextricably to the land and all of creation and into a set of obligations and cultural practices. All Aboriginal people are related to the species and to the landscape as kin, through the process of being born from a totemic site. In the English language the closest meaning is the word 'kindredness'.
Ganma	Arnhem Land	A powerful metaphor relating to the meeting and mixing of two streams, a stream of salt water from the sea and a stream of fresh water from the land. The metaphor has meanings at surface and deep levels, and inside and outside meanings.
Yerin	Gurringgai	As Ganma.
Garma	Yolngu	Garma happens when people with different ideas and values come together and negotiate knowledge in a respectful learning environment.
Tjibari	Balgo	A women's healing song, seen in stories, dance and artworks, which points out the responsibility of the women in Aboriginal culture to raise and educate the children, in particular to teach The Dreaming, in the face of commercial culture taking over as 'knowledge' of identity.
Ngara	Eora	The word of the people of the Eora nation for 'listening'.
Kulini or Pulgkara kulin tjugku	Pitjantjatjara	Really deep listening, and wanting to listen.
Gan'na	Bundjalung	Hearing, listening, feeling, thinking, and understanding.
Winangargurri	Gamilaraay	Deep listening (similar to *Dadirri*).
Yimbanyiara	Central Queensland	Listening to elders (similar meanings and responsibilities to *Dadirri*).
Dadirri	Ngangikurungkurr	Deep listening and learning more than just 'listening by the ear', but 'listening from the heart'. Listening that happens in contemplative-reciprocal relationships.

The word *Dadirri* belongs to the language of the Ngangikurungkurr people of the Daly River area of the Northern Territory and means 'listening to one another', but listening in contemplative/reciprocal relationships. *Dadirri* has been called "the Aboriginal gift" (Ungunmerr, 1993, cited in Atkinson, 2003, p. 16). It is described as:

> another special quality of my people that I believe is the most important. It is our most unique gift. It is perhaps the greatest gift we can give to our fellow Australians. In our language, this quality is called *Dadirri*. This is the gift that Australians are thirsting for […] It is inner deep listening and quiet still awareness—something like what you call contemplation (Ungunmerr, 1993, p. 34)

The decision to draw on *Dadirri* for this study follows the work of a group of Indigenous women of Central Queensland. Working in the 1990s with researcher Professor Judy Atkinson, herself an Aboriginal woman, the group was able to define and delineate a philosophical stance and an overarching set of principles for research practice. As such, it was felt that *Dadirri* could also inform this research and act as a pathway during the process to appreciate how and why Indigenous people function in their own cultures and environments. As Atkinson (2000) explained:

> [*Dadirri brings*] a knowledge and consideration of community and the diversity and unique nature that each individual brings to community; ways of relating and acting within community; a non-intrusive observation, or quietly aware watching; a deep listening and hearing with more than the ears; a reflective non-judgmental consideration of what is being seen and heard; and, having learnt from the listening, a purposeful plan to act, with actions informed by learning wisdom and the informed responsibility that comes with knowledge (Atkinson, 2000, p. 16).

In recent years, *Dadirri* has been consulted in research with Indigenous people, particularly where complex cultural and personal issues have needed investigation (for examples, see Atkinson, 2000; Burrows, 2004; Gabb & McDermott, 2007; Tanner, Agius, & Darbyshire, 2004). *Dadirri* is not a research methodology in the Western scientific tradition, yet it proceeds inductively by gathering information through quiet observation and deep listening, building knowledge through sensitivity and awareness, and developing understanding by contemplation and reflection (Atkinson, 2000). *Dadirri* may operate at many levels, including at the deepest of levels, where there may be a search for profound understanding. At that level, *Dadirri* is "more than just listening by the ear, but listening

from the heart" (Atkinson, 2000, p. 19), suggesting a depth of critical thinking and intensity of feeling. *Dadirri's* approach to research has the following associations with Western methods and methodologies:

- Consciousness-raising: where a raised consciousness between the researcher and the researched gives value to community processes.
- Participatory action: recognition of the valuable contribution people make in their activities of relating, defining, and narrating their life experiences.
- Reciprocity: ethical research from within an Indigenous worldview and critical pedagogy must be embedded with reciprocity—receiving something and giving something.
- Phenomenology: utilising a narrative approach enables the understanding between the inner world of an individual and the outer world (Atkinson, 2000).

Embracing the concept of *Dadirri* was a critical step in this research, resulting in a raised awareness of factors that eventually proved vital—reciprocity and participatory action. The influence of *Dadirri* will become clearer in *Section 3.3.2* which outlines the elements of the research design.

3.2.3 Positioning of the researcher: Power relationships and trust

The next issue in the development of the research design was one of a potential power imbalance. To assist in my awareness about this, the work of Bourdieu informed the study, helping to provide an understanding of social and racial inequity using a conceptual frame. According to Bourdieu's definitions, it could be seen that I, a well-educated, highly literate, mature-aged, non-Indigenous woman from a middle-class background, would be rich in cultural capital, and as such, form part of the dominant group within Australian society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). In Bourdieuian terms, cultural capital refers to an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed, inherited, and valued by privileged groups in society. Bourdieu's interpretation depicts white, middle-class culture as the standard, inferring a tendency for all other forms and expressions of culture to be judged as deficient when compared to this 'norm' (Yosso, 2005). On a practical level, it

was anticipated that during the data collection phase of the study, participants would be approached by the researcher replete with written references, letters of introduction, consent forms, electronic gadgetry, and the like. Ostensibly, there was potential for a power imbalance between the researcher and participants, resulting in poor communication, ineffective dialogue, and hapless data collection.

A third issue was the need for me to earn the respect and trust of the Indigenous research participants. In the previous section, some unease on my part was flagged: this was due to my age, gender, and perceived cultural capital as a non-Indigenous woman, compared to those of the Indigenous participants. There was a possibility that these differences could hamper attempts to build trust between myself and the participants. I hoped that some strategies and personal attributes, along with some of my past experiences (I used to work as a nurse in far north-east Queensland, and so was not unfamiliar with chatting to and engaging with Indigenous people), would assist to alleviate these fears, and help to develop trust. To begin with, I anticipated that the initial connection with participants would be made via a key contact, such as another athlete, a respected coach, or an Indigenous program manager. The follow-up would be by telephone conversations, during which the terms of research would be discussed and negotiated in a friendly and transparent manner. Following that, it was hoped that a snowball effect would occur amongst potential participants. (A snowball effect occurs where people encourage each other to be involved: if a few key people contact others, involvement gathers speed and size like a snowball rolling down a hill). Furthermore, working as a qualified sports coach with many years of experience, I have developed communication skills and empathy to be able to work effectively and closely with athletes—often from younger age groups—who had diverse socio-economic backgrounds. As alluded to above, I have spent many years working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in health and sport settings in North Queensland, and have developed a deep appreciation of the cultural diversities of these people, compared to my own situation. Finally, I believed that my ability to cope with any potential barriers to effective interactions would be enhanced by a commitment to the essential practices of *Dadirri*.

3.3 PARADIGM AND METHODOLOGY

3.3.1 The transformative paradigm

This section outlines the genesis and development of the research design, and presents an explication of the research paradigm and the methodology. It is widely agreed that qualitative research should be situated within a philosophical paradigm that informs and guides methodology, design, data collection and analysis, and identifies the role of the researcher (Patton, 1990). A paradigm is typically defined as a philosophical and theoretical framework that underpins scientific inquiry (Kuhn, 1970). Patton (1990) described a paradigm as a world view: a general perspective, and a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world.

In this study I intended to undertake research in culturally complex settings; I therefore needed an approach that could address these complexities, and ultimately provide a basis for seeking to suggest reforms. The transformative paradigm offers this capacity. Transformative research implies change (Field, 1991), and with its associated philosophical assumptions, the transformative paradigm provides a critical framework for addressing inequality and injustice in society. To further clarify and justify the use of the transformative paradigm in this study, a discussion of these philosophical underpinnings is now presented.

As an umbrella term, the transformative paradigm encompasses emancipatory and anti-discriminatory approaches, and is exemplified in the writings of feminists, racial/ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and those who work on behalf of other marginalised groups (for examples, see Fejo-King, 2006; Mertens, 1999; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2003). The transformative paradigm is characterised by placing central importance on the lives and experiences of marginalised groups. A researcher working within this paradigm consciously analyses asymmetric power relationships, seeks ways to link the results of social inquiry into action, and links the results of the inquiry to wider questions of social inequity and social justice (for examples, see Lather, 1995; Mertens, 1999; Reinharz, 1992). Transformative scholars assume that knowledge is not neutral, but is influenced by

human interests, that all knowledge reflects the power and social relationships within society, and that an important purpose of knowledge construction is to help people improve society (Banks, 1993). The transformative paradigm holds that knowledge is socially and historically located within a complex cultural context. To explore realities, it is necessary to have an interactive link between the researcher and participants in the study. Respect for culture and awareness of power relations is vital (Mertens, 2007; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2003). To obtain this depth of understanding, the researcher must be (or become) closely involved in the communities affected by the research.

Other models of research may have provided an adequate way in which to frame the research. The constructivist/interpretive approach, for example, relies on people being studied to provide their own explanations of their situations or behaviour, and certainly the paradigm has enriched our understanding of social situations a great deal (UTas, 2005). However, the main problem with the constructivist/interpretive model is that it does not necessarily focus on areas that may need modification (UTas, 2005). Descriptions are made, but often without any form of judgment or advocacy attached. This is at odds with the attempt to suggest reforms, which is one of the objectives of this research. To enable that function, the transformative approach will support the current research to "challenge mainstream and institutionalised findings, interpretations and paradigms" (Banks, 2006, cited in Mertens, 2008, p. 103).

3.3.2 Research design

Research design involves a clear focus on the purpose of the study, on the research question, and on "what information most appropriately will answer specific research questions, and what strategies are most effective for obtaining it" (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993, p. 30). The design for this research is depicted in *Figure 3.1* below, which indicates linkages, inter-relationships, and theoretical influences between and on the various features.

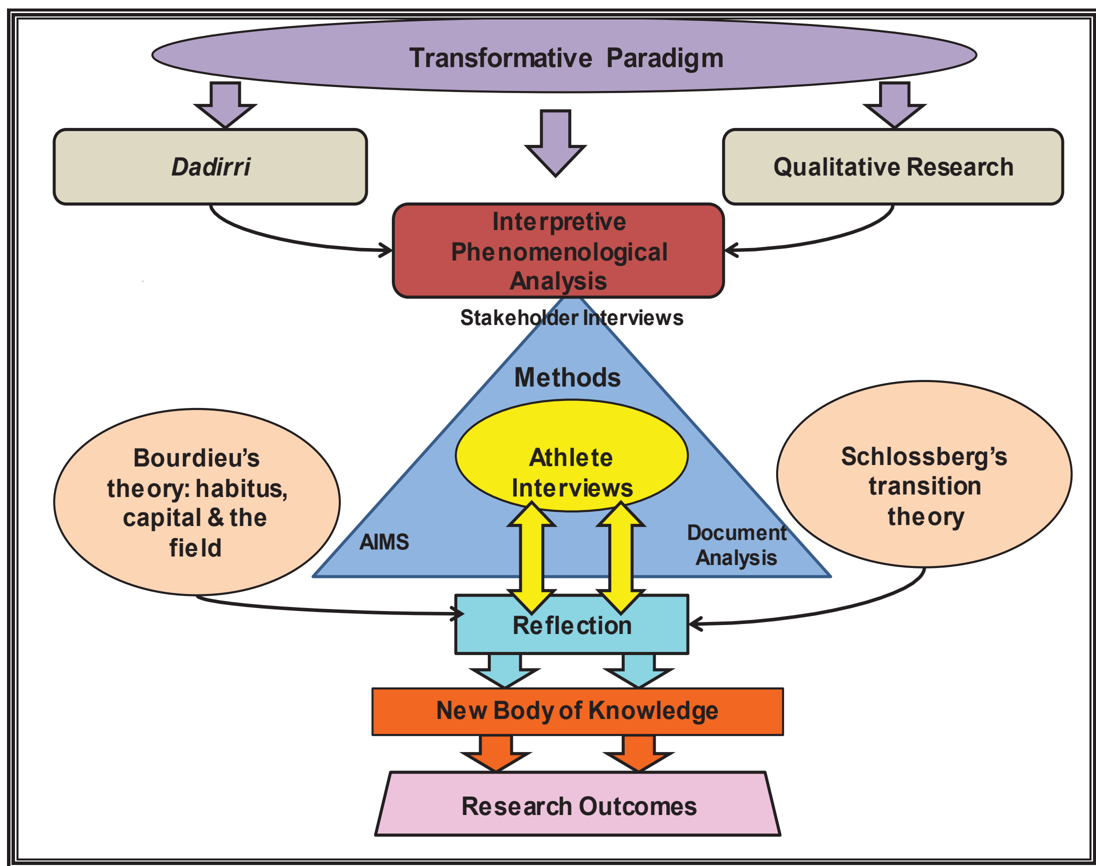

Figure 3.1: Concept map: research design

The research began with my personal interest in the subject of athlete retirement from elite-level sport—the phenomenon to be studied. The next stage was a comprehensive literature review, which identified the lack of empirical or conceptual understanding of the retirement experiences of elite Indigenous Australian athletes. From this, the research question and objectives were developed. Guided by the underpinning transformative paradigm, a hybrid group of methods was identified to allow for the collection of information needed to address the research question. After that, findings were made and presented, followed by a discussion of emerging key themes. Finally, implications were made, contributions outlined, and conclusions drawn.

3.3.3 Qualitative research

Given the extant perspective that transition from sport is an idiosyncratic, intensely personal, and potentially traumatic experience, interpretive qualitative research was most appropriate for this study. According to Patton (2002), qualitative research provides a framework for people to respond in ways that accurately represent their own perspective and experiences of a particular phenomenon. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) contended that interpretive qualitative research is:

> [a] situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p. 4).

Qualitative research aims to portray a world in which reality is a perception, socially constructed, complex and ever changing, and researchers in this milieu therefore assume that they are dealing with multiple realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As expert knowledge is often situated in local cultures and embedded in interactional sites (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), qualitative researchers interact and talk with participants about their perceptions. To understand the nature of constructed realities, the researcher takes an 'inside view' from listening to the participants and interpreting their various inputs. For this research, rich data and deep meaning were sought from the perspective of elite Indigenous athletes. It was expected that the individual participants would have diverse experiences, varying realities, and multiple understandings and ideas about their athletic retirement, and the impacts and outcomes of those experiences. If the study had deployed surveys and statistics in isolation, the complex, individualised human experiences that emanate from qualitative research may have been portrayed wrongly as simple, ordered-sequential, and widely generalisable (McKenna & Thomas, 2007).

Creswell (2003) stated that where minimal research exists, or few theories have been developed, qualitative research is particularly suitable. In a qualitative study, the question often starts with a *how* or *what,* as does the research question of this study: <u>*What*</u> *are the*

retirement experiences of elite Indigenous Australian athletes? The characteristics of qualitative research and their suitability for this research (using the framework provided by Creswell, 2003) are listed in *Table 3.2*. This demonstrates that an interpretive, qualitative approach is, therefore, an appropriate approach for this study.

Table 3.2: Qualitative research characteristics and their applicability for this study

Characteristics	Applicability to this research
Researcher as the key instrument of data collection	Yes
Data collected as words or pictures	Yes, as words
Outcomes as process rather than product	Yes
Analysis of data inductively, attention to particulars	Yes
Focus on participants' perspectives, their meaning	Yes
Use of expressive language	Yes
Persuasion of researcher by reason	Yes
Scientific method approach (inductive-bottom-up). Researcher generates new hypotheses and/or rich and detailed explanation from data collected	Yes
Research objective is description and exploration	Yes
View of human behaviour: Behaviour is fluid, situational and personal	Yes
Behaviour is studied in natural environments, the context in which behaviour occurs	Yes
Data collected is qualitative in nature and includes in-depth interviews, open-ended questions	Yes
Data analysis is a search for patterns, themes and holistic features	Yes
Results present multiple perspectives, particularistic findings	Yes
Final report will be a narrative report with contextual description and direct quotations from research participants	Yes

3.3.4 Interpretive phenomenological analysis

The philosophy of *Dadirri* advocates an interpretive qualitative approach to research that links with traditional phenomenology; this approach allows investigators to understand and describe the ways in which individuals reflect on and experience their *lifeworld* (Langdridge, 2008, emphasis in original). Phenomenology has been adopted by different disciplines as an effective way of exploring research questions that lead to different ways of knowledge being constructed. According to van Manen (1990), phenomenology is an

exploration of ‘the essence of lived experience’. It has also been argued that a research problem involving constructions of meanings that have not previously been explored requires a qualitative approach such as phenomenology (Hassard, 1990). However, despite the strong claims of phenomenologists, in this study I aimed to do more with the data than just “describe things in their appearing” (Langdridge, 2008, p. 1135), as this seems to offer little potential for critique or possibility for re-conceptualising the phenomenon being studied (Habermas, 1971). As already explained, the intention to appraise the *status quo* and suggest reforms was, under a transformative paradigm, a key research objective. Thus a critical ‘lens’ for viewing and interpreting the thoughts and situations of the athletes was adopted. Such an approach is described by Langdridge (2008) as interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). This approach offers the possibility of fundamentally re-interpreting the phenomenon being studied. The methodology has clear synergies with *Dadirri’s* principles of listening, learning and thinking about what people are saying in a given context, and then acting on that knowledge to bring about change.

The use of IPA in this study is ideal as it enables detailed examination of the life-worlds of Indigenous athletes, a significant group of performers in Australian sport, whose retirement experiences have, to date, not been examined. An aim of the research is to explore these very personal experiences from the point of view of Indigenous athletes, by focusing on the individual’s personal perceptions or accounts of their athletic retirement. This is quite different to an attempt to produce a generalised overview about the impact of SCT for Indigenous athletes. At the same time, using IPA as a methodological approach, the research exercise becomes a dynamic process, with an active role for the researcher within that process. The researcher wishes to get close to the participants’ personal world, to take an ‘insider’s perspective’, but can hardly do this directly or completely (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2003). The participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants’ attempts to make sense of this world. Taking this direction, the words of the participants in this study were viewed with both critical empathy and critical inquiry (Langdridge, 2008).

3.4 RESEARCH METHODS

The Research Question in this study is: *What are the retirement experiences of elite Indigenous Australian athletes?*

The associated research objectives are to:

1) explore the experiences of elite Indigenous Australian athletes as they undergo SCT or prepare to do so;
2) identify any ethno-culturally distinctive SCT characteristics of Indigenous Australian athletes;
3) investigate whether racism and racialisation have affected the SCT experiences of Indigenous athletes, and
4) evaluate SCT protocols within Australian Rules football, rugby league, and boxing, to ascertain how (if at all) they cater to the needs of Indigenous Australian athletes, and (where appropriate) to suggest reforms to these protocols.

To answer the research question and to meet the objectives, one primary method of data collection was utilised, supplemented by three subsidiary methods. To allow for the voices of Indigenous Australian athletes to be heard, the primary and most important method was a series of interviews featuring open ended questions with retiring or retired elite Indigenous athletes. Subsidiary methods included document analysis, key stakeholder interviews, and a short questionnaire—the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (Brewer et al., 1993). Each will be detailed in the following sections.

3.4.1 The participant group

Participants in this project were a group of 30 elite Indigenous Australian athletes who (a) had retired from sport within the past 20 years, or (b) were currently participating in elite-level sport. Many elite athletes in this country are on scholarships with the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) or the network of institutes and academies of sport. However, others may fall outside of this cohort. One strategy for identifying elite athletes is that used

by 'athlete-friendly' universities within Australia.[24] To be recognised as 'elite,' athletes must generally be identified and recognised by one of the following organisations:

- Australian Institute of Sport (AIS),
- State Institutes or Academies of Sport,
- AFL Players' Association (AFLPA),
- Australian Cricketers' Association,
- Rugby Union Players' Association,
- Rugby League Professionals' Association (RLPA),
- Australian Professional Footballers' Association, or be
- national senior squad members from ACE supported sports (e.g., Boxing Australia Inc. [BAI]) (ANU, 2008).

In this study, a purposive convenience sampling method was used, in which subjects were selected because of important characteristics. As with other non-probability sampling methods, purposive sampling does not produce a sample that is representative of a larger population, but it can be exactly what is needed—in this case a study of a clearly defined and relatively limited group (Patton, 2002). The participant group was drawn from the following three sports:

- Australian Rules Football: Australian Football League (AFL), (10)
- Boxing: Boxing Australia Inc. (BAI), (14) and
- Rugby League: Australian Rugby League (ARL), (6).

The sports codes and their respective national organisations (including state bodies and/or clubs within the codes) were selected for inclusion in the project on the basis, as indicated in the literature review, that they have relatively large numbers of Indigenous athletes participating at elite professional or amateur levels. Additionally, they are sports that historically have experienced issues of racism; they have taken part in Australian Sports Commission (ASC) cross-cultural awareness training, and have Indigenous Sport Programs

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[24] The Elite Athlete Friendly University (EAFU) Network has been established to identify and promote universities who have responded to the specific needs of elite student athletes by developing new, or promoting existing policies and practices which assist elite student athletes to undertake sporting opportunities whilst pursuing and achieving academic excellence (Australian Sports Commission, 2010).

(Oliver, 2006). All of the athlete participants in this study could be classified as 'elite' according to the above guidelines, with the exception of four boxers, whose retirements occurred prior to the development of AIS boxing programs. In their cases, all had competed at national or international professional levels (e.g., professional Australian Titles, World Championships, or Oceania Championships), Commonwealth and/or Olympic Games. The variance of ages and time out of sport displayed by participants allowed for a wide variety of experiences, both on a personal level, and in response to the types of programs and policies that were/are in effect during their careers. All participants were given pseudonyms to provide an ethically sound yet personal and intimate presentation of the data. *Table 3.3 (over)* provides details of the participant group.

After first gaining approval from the UTS Human Ethics Research Committee to conduct the research, initial contact with the sample group was made with the assistance of key stakeholders, notably personnel from BAI, AFL, AFLPA, NRL, RLPA and the AIS. In addition, some participants were contacted using the social networking utility Facebook. Respondents could choose to respond (or otherwise) to online inquiries about whether they would like to participate in the current research project. On two occasions, the *Koori Mail* (Australia's national Indigenous newspaper) published articles about this research project, inviting readers to make contact with the researcher, if they wished to participate. All of these means were effective in reaching those athletes who subsequently formed the sample group.

Following initial contact, potential participants were sent an explanatory letter inviting them to become involved, as well as an information sheet outlining what would be required of them (see *Appendices 1* and *2*). Wherever possible, interviews were conducted face-to-face at a location chosen by the participant. On most occasions, this was a coffee-shop, although some interviews were conducted in offices, boxing gymnasia, or at sports fields. From time-to-time it was necessary to conduct interviews by telephone; this, and email communications, proved to be convenient methods for conducting follow-up interviews with participants who were comfortable with these approaches. Initial interviews lasted up to 60 minutes, and were recorded with an audio-recording device (Olympus VN-240

Digital Voice Recorder) with appropriate ethical safeguards and the permission of participants. Follow-up interviews were generally shorter. The majority of interviews were conducted by the primary researcher. However, many of the retired athletes live in isolated regions of the country, and the constraints of time and funding made it difficult for the researcher to travel to these areas. Consequently, an application was made to the UTS Human Ethics Research Committee to enlist the assistance of another experienced researcher and PhD candidate, Ms. Fiona Redgrove.[25] She was able to meet and interview several participants whilst visiting remote areas of North Queensland during 2009. A subsequent debrief indicated to me that the interview process had gone well.

Table 3.3: Overview of interview participants

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS						
Alias	**Sport**	**Status**	**Age**	**Age at Retirement**	**Year of Retirement**	**Years at Elite Level**
Steve	AFL	Retired	58	37	1989	16
Robin	AFL	Retired	52	37	1989	12
Kevin	AFL	Retired	31	28	2007	8
Norman	AFL	Retired	36	32	2005	10
Brian	AFL	Retired	44	29	1993	9
David	AFL	Retired	44	32	1997	16
Scott	AFL	Retired	33	32	2007	13
Nathan	AFL	Retired	34	28	2003	10
Johnny	AFL	Retired	32	32	2009	15
Ben	AFL	Retired	29	29	2009	12

[25] Fiona Redgrove is a PhD Candidate in the Faculty of Health Science at Flinders University, Adelaide.

Tom	Boxing (pro)	Retired	31	31	2009	17
Anders	Boxing(amateur)	Retired	27	26	2008	11
Dennis	Boxing (amateur)	Current	22	N/A	N/A	4
Nick	Boxing (amateur)	Retired	36	25	1997	11
Pete	Boxing (pro)	Retired	36	24	2007	16
Kris	Boxing (pro)	Current	29	N/A	N/A	2
Wills	Boxing (amateur)	Retired	24	23	2008	2
George	Boxing (amateur)	Current	25	N/A	N/A	4
Ian	Boxing (pro)	Current	21	N/A	N/A	3
Jerry	Boxing (pro)	Retired	58	34	1989	15
Billy	Boxing (pro)	Retired	55	32	1989	15
Kim	Boxing (pro)	Current	28	N/A	N/A	10
Jack	Boxing (pro)	Current	27	N/A	N/A	4
Josh	Boxing (amateur)	Current	18	N/A	N/A	3
Simon	NRL	Retired	36	30	2003	6
Neville	NRL	Retired	26	25	2008	8
Alex	NRL	Retired	35	33	2007	13
Bradley	NRL	Current	23	N/A	N/A	5
Matthew	NRL	Current	26	N/A	N/A	8
Eric	NRL	Retired	65	37	1989	19

The question of ‘how many interviews is enough?’ is not easily answered. Sample size is mentioned in the literature, with a variety of rationales offered to assist in justifying the selected sample size. These include: expertise of the interviewer(s), opportunity to interview, availability of contacts, and specificity of the sample group (Patton, 2002). Perry (1998) recommended conducting 35 to 45 interviews in a qualitative in-depth study of a specific phenomenon; however, he gave no specific reasoning for this recommendation. In this thesis, all of these factors were taken into account when determining the number of interviews to be undertaken. The initial plan was to continue interviewing until a saturation point was reached, that is, the point at which it was believed that no new informational themes were being observed in the data (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). However, during the time frame available for the project there were difficulties encountered in recruiting additional participants, and eventually the 30 athletes were as many as could be included. Nevertheless, it was believed that there was good depth and breadth of sampling through the inclusion of those 30 participants, along with supporting interviews with key stakeholders.

3.4.2 Interviews

In-depth interviews featuring open ended questions were the primary data collection method for this research because they allowed for two-way communication and the collection of rich data based on the participants’ perspectives of the topic (Veal, 2006). A qualitative interview allows for information and “descriptions of the life-world” (Patton, 2002, p. 275) to be gathered and also for individual opinions, perceptions, attitudes, and experiences to be explored. As already noted, initial and follow-up interviews were conducted for two groups of athletes; the first group had already retired, and the second group comprised of athletes who were currently competing in their sport at elite levels. As initial contact was made with athletes, a snowball effect occurred to a limited extent whereby some athletes encouraged others to be involved. Interview guides were developed for both groups, initially based on issues established by the literature review, and a preliminary analysis of content was undertaken. Transcripts of the interviews were read through several times, initially while listening to the recordings of the interviews. This

allowed an early appreciation of topics deemed relevant to the participants—while also eliciting emerging themes. They encompassed athletic careers, post-sport careers, experiences of racism within sport, social support resources, Indigenous sport programs, athlete career and education programs, and recommendations for future Indigenous sport programs.

As data collection and reflection continued, during which time the researcher 'listened and learned', a greater understanding of the participants' transitions from their sport careers to present situations emerged. Consequently, interview guides were modified to reflect this acquired knowledge. Participants themselves made suggestions as how best to elicit information to develop a clearer picture of their situations. An example of this was when one of the first athletes interviewed (Dennis, current boxer) suggested that questions about the families of the participants should be included. His advice was taken and the first question of the interview guide became: *To start*, c*an you tell me about your early life and family*? Ultimately, participant-friendly interview guides resulted. The interview guides were also informed by suggestions of appropriate methods for questioning Indigenous peoples, developed by Australian Family Law Court counsellor, Stephen Ralph (1997). He recommended that, due to strong oral traditions of Indigenous peoples, allowing individuals to provide information using a narrative style may be more effective than standard question and answer sessions (Ralph, 1997). While the interview process was guided by the researcher to some degree, it was less rigid than relying on a formal questionnaire (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The 'conversation approach' thus became a loose, fluid, and flexible invitation to share information by personal narratives or 'story-telling'. The final interview guides are presented below (*Table 3.4*), with the guide for current athletes mirroring that for retired athletes, with only minor modifications for tense and situation. Interviewers' responses included active listening, empathetic reflection, prompts, and encouragement to elicit further clarification of the words and thoughts of the athletes. In this research, language did not pose any problem, as all participants were fluently English speakers, although at times some chose to 'illustrate' their comments with a few colloquial words or phrases.

Table 3.4: Interview guide for retired (*current) athletes

INTERVIEW GUIDE: RETIRED (*CURRENT) ATHLETES.
1. To start, can you tell me about your early life and family?
2. How important are your Indigenous cultures and traditions in your life?
3. Can you tell me how instances of racist behaviour may have affected your sport career?
4. Can you tell me about how your sport career came to an end? (*When do you imagine your sport career will come to an end?)
5. Who or what were the greatest supports to you during this transition? (*Who or what do you think will be the greatest supports to you during this transition?)
6. How did you prepare for retirement from your sport career? (*How are you preparing for retirement from your sport career?)
7. What do you think a good retirement experience means?
8. How do Indigenous athletes experience their athletic retirement?
9. How does being an elite athlete affect how good your life can be?

3.4.3 Narratives

Dadirri's approach to research practice supports the use of narrative. This enables an understanding between the inner world of an individual and the outer world. In contemporary research, narrative is an interpretive approach in the social sciences involving story-telling methodology. The final interview guides developed in this research encouraged participants to use personal narratives or to tell their own stories. The story can thus become an object of study, focusing on how individuals or groups make sense of events and actions in their lives (Mitchell & Egudo, 2003). Some of the applied benefits of storytelling include how narrative conveys tacit knowledge, how it can enable sense-making, and how it constructs identity. Riessman (2002) portrayed it as follows:

> How individuals recount their histories—what they emphasise and omit, their stance as protagonists or victims, the relationship the story establishes between teller and audience—

> all shape what individuals can claim of their own lives. Personal stories are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one's life; they are the means by which identities may be fashioned (Riessman, 2002, p. 218).

According to Riessman, the narrative approach enables the capture of social representation processes such as feelings, images, and time, and offers the potential to address ambiguity, complexity, and dynamism of individual, group, and organisational phenomena (Riessman, 2002). Narrative lends itself to interpretive phenomenological analysis in order to capture the richness of data within stories. The core of the research becomes the oral medium, and the narrative allows knowledge to emerge as the story does, "unfolding, connecting, and beginning to have a pattern, cumulatively making meaning" (Josephs, 2008, p. 253). Narratives, or stories, are essentially individual constructs of human experience, and have limitations that may affect objectivity in presentation. Acquiring data by personal narratives required some additional considerations. For example, Langdridge (2008, p. 1136) pointed out that, "people may unknowingly re-produce oppressive discourses when reflecting on, and recounting, their own experiences". The analysis of the narratives involved a critical examination of the participant's story, analysis of how it was put together, the linguistic and cultural resources it drew upon, and how persuasive it was in terms of authenticity (Riessman, 1993).

3.4.4 Transcription processes

Interviews were initially transcribed verbatim, ensuring that that data collected through narratives were transcribed as fully as possible. Entries noted prolonged silences, non-lexicals (body language and non-verbal communications), phonemes (small segmental units of sound such as 'um' and 'ah'), as well as signs of researchers' participation. This transcription process was assisted by the employment of an undergraduate student, Lucy Redgrove,[26] and I took care to fully review her transcriptions against the tapes to check for any incorrect words or distortions of what had been said. Both the researcher and student

[26] Lucy Redgrove is an undergraduate student at Deakin University, Melbourne, studying Exercise and Sport Science, and Food Science and Nutrition. She is a former Australian representative and medallist in international open-water swimming competition.

were meticulous in their transcriptions of interviews. Transcriptions were then sent to the participants for review.

However, I experienced a feeling of immense tension regarding how participants might feel when they read the transcriptions. Trying to follow a strict, rigorous procedure meant that participants would be presented with verbatim transcriptions, including all phonemes and grammatical inaccuracies. I worried that this technical approach, while methodologically valid, was unnecessarily precise, and could become problematic in terms of my relationship with interviewees. Indeed, this seemed to be the case, as some feedback from participants suggested that they were overwhelmed and embarrassed because they thought the transcriptions reflected a perceived illiteracy, or at least, poor grammar. A major decision was then taken, in the light of established procedures that have emerged over time from varying qualitative researchers' experiences. According to Moss, (2004) rigor is not a matter of strictly following procedures that have emerged in other researchers' work but more a matter of building solid structures within the context in which one is working. Such solid structures may be characterised by interpersonal communication and intersubjectivity (Moss, 2004). Consequently, the transcription process was amended, and interviews were transcribed for their content rather than strictly word-for-word (Goodrick, 2010). Transcribing was undertaken responsibly, but omitted many of the phonemes, and glaring errors of grammar were corrected. However, both the researcher and the student believe that the 'spirit', or the meanings of the narratives were retained. This was later confirmed by participants as they checked the transcripts.

3.4.5 Reflexivity

The research design also included a period of reflexivity that occurred after the collection of data. Reflexivity is generally thought to be a heightened sense of self-awareness, and has obvious synergies with the consciousness-raising concept of *Dadirri*. Reflexivity in this research occurred at two levels. First, reflexivity became an extension of the data collection process, depicted on the concept map (*refer Section 3.2.2*) in the form of two-way arrows linking the data collection and reflection phases. Irez (2007) urged researchers to employ

techniques and strategies that encourage participants to reflect on their thinking. He argued that any individual is likely to have a series of beliefs that will probably be incoherent and contradictory. Individuals are often not aware of these beliefs until such time as they are overtly challenged—since most of these beliefs usually exist at an implicit or a 'common sense' level. In this study, it was considered that after a period of reflection by both participants and researcher, it would be necessary to conduct supplementary interviews with participants, to clarify and confirm initial impressions, and to further probe into issues and areas requiring elucidation. It was also recognised that the participants themselves may undergo a reflexive response to their initial interviews, and might welcome a further opportunity to contribute to the study. Thus, the process of interview-reflexivity-interview-reflexivity was, for some, quite protracted. Many of the participants did, in fact, engage in on-going conversations, as we mulled over their words, thoughts and experiences. These processes seemed to encourage the participants to feel an 'ownership' of the project, thus enhancing the principles of reciprocity and participatory action, as the participants and researcher worked *together* to produce findings.

The second level of reflexivity involved keeping a journal. Journaling allows researchers to record details of an experience, reflect on and record observations about the experience, integrate the observation into abstract concepts or theories, and use the theories to make decisions or solve problems (Dyment & O'Connell, 2003). Thus, I wrote analytic and self-reflexive memos to document and enrich the analytic process. These consisted of questions, ponderings, and speculations, about the data and emerging themes. After each interview, impressions of the participant were recorded, including the setting, non-verbal interactions, and general feelings about the experience. These subjective musings were examined for biases and assumptions. In this manner, writing a journal helped to construct new knowledge by allowing the researcher to express connections between new information and existing knowledge.

3.4.6 Key stakeholder interviews

Key informants are people who are especially knowledgeable about the inquiry setting, that is, they have insights that can prove particularly useful in helping a researcher understand what is happening and why (Patton, 2002). Given the project scope and time constraints, random sampling of sport organisations was not possible. Key stakeholder interviews were therefore used as a strategic sampling method. These key stakeholders were "individuals who possess[ed] special knowledge and skills [and] who ha[d] access to perspectives or observations [—] information that [was] unavailable except from the key informant" (Gilchrist & Williams, 1999, p. 73, 74). In this study, 25 key stakeholders who were approached for interviews were individuals from the clubs and associations where Indigenous athletes had been located, and who had dealings with Indigenous athlete programs. Generally speaking, these individuals were involved with Indigenous player recruitment and/or welfare (development) programs. Some were current or retired coaches, managers, or club or association (RLPA, AFLPA, BAI) officials. An interview guide (*Table 3.5*) was developed to ensure that comparative material was elicited from the various sources.

Table 3.5: Interview guide for key stakeholders

INTERVIEW GUIDE: KEY STAKEHOLDERS
1. What is your role in your organisation?
2. What do you think are some of the issues associated with retirement for Indigenous athletes?
3. What services/programs are available for Indigenous athletes in your organisation?
4. What role have you played with regard to retirement?
5. How has your organisation tackled issues surrounding the topic of retirement?
6. Do you think there has been a significant change in recent years about retirement issues for Indigenous athletes? In what ways?
7. What do you think needs to continue or change?

3.4.7 Document analysis

Goodrick (2010) believes that the use and analysis of written documentation is under-represented in descriptions of methods in the qualitative research literature. According to Lincoln and Guba, documents and records are “singularly useful sources of information” (1985, p. 276), and may include any written or recorded material that was not prepared specifically in response to a request from the inquirer (such as a set of interview notes) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). They may be materials produced either before the research was conducted (e.g., organisational records, policies, or websites) or during the research (fieldwork notes, letters, or diaries). Lincoln and Guba suggested several reasons why documents should be regularly tapped. First, they are almost always available, and are cheap, particularly in terms of investigator time. They are a stable source of information that can be analysed and re-analysed without undergoing changes. Next, they are a rich source of information, contextually relevant and often appearing in the natural language of their setting. They are also legally unassailable and may satisfy accountability requirements. Finally, they are—unlike human respondents—non-reactive (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, documents may also contain an author bias; therefore, during research it is necessary to consider the author and their purpose in writing.

In this research, organisational documents were viewed as artefacts to inform and help understand the research context more comprehensively. Documents provided information about the background context of the three sports, as well as government and sport organisation policies and programs. Information was sourced from annual reports, strategic plans, organisational policies, codes of conduct, member protection policies, racial vilification policies, brochures, and various forms of the media. Complementing interview data with documentary analysis allowed a more complete picture of an issue to materialise than that which was achieved during the athlete and key stakeholder interviews alone. When reading and analysing documents, four questions were addressed:

1) What important facts are contained in this document?
2) What inferences can be made from this document?

3) Who are the author and intended audience?

4) What is the possibility of author bias? (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000)

The researcher's documentation that was included in the analysis included fieldwork notes, memos, diary entries, and notes of meetings with the Advisory Group.

3.4.8 Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS)

The AIMS (Brewer et al., 1993) was the final data collection method. The AIMS (*Table 3.6*) examines both the strength and exclusivity of identification with the athlete role, and has been used by previous researchers examining topics such as career maturity (Brown & Hartley, 1998), identity foreclosure (Good et al., 1993; Murphy et al., 1996), and sport career transitions (Albion & Fogarty, 2003; Cecic Erpic et al., 2004; Gilmore, 2008; Grove et al., 1997). The AIMS consists of 10 items encompassing social, cognitive, and affective elements of athletic identity (AI), and taps into the thoughts and feelings that derive from an athlete's daily experiences. AI as a concept was initially defined as the degree to which an individual identifies with the athlete role (Brewer, 1993). A more recent contribution expanded on the definition to regard it as "the degree of importance, strength, and exclusivity attached to the athlete role that is maintained by the athletes and influenced by environment" (Li, 2006, p. 22). The athletic role is an important social dimension of self-concept influencing experiences, relationships with others, and pursuit of sport activity. AI that is strong, but not exclusive, may have lasting psychological benefits for the athlete (Brewer, 1993). However, athletes who place too much emphasis on sport may experience psychological and physical drawbacks both throughout their career and upon retirement. Many of the risks for individuals with an exclusive AI occur during transition periods such as being cut from a team, experiencing an injury, or retiring from their athletic careers (Brewer, 1993). It has been shown that many of the issues associated with AI become less of a concern as people get older (Albion & Fogarty, 2003). The use of the AIMS in this study was important because:

1) AI is considered as a major factor influencing adjustment to termination from a sport career;
2) significant relationships between AI and zeteophobia have been described (Albion & Fogarty, 2003), and
3) athletes found to be most likely to have career and adjustment difficulties were young males in high profile and high income sports, notably the football codes, because of their high levels of AI (Albion & Fogarty, 2003).

Table 3.6: Athlete Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS)

ATHLETE IDENTITY MEASUREMENT SCALE ***retrospective version**
1. I consider (*considered) myself an athlete.
2. I have (*had) many goals related to sport.
3. Most of my friends are (*were) athletes.
4. Sport is (*was) the most important part of my life.
5. I spend (*spent) more time thinking about sport than anything else.
6. I need (*needed) to participate in sport to feel good about myself.
7. Other people see (*saw) me mainly as an athlete.
8. I feel (*felt) bad about myself when I do (*did) poorly in sport.
9. Sport is (*was) the only important thing in my life.
10. I would be (*have been) very depressed if I were (*was) injured and could not compete in sport.

In this study, the original 10-item version of the AIMS was used, with the items scored on a five-point Likert scale. Each item is simply a statement that the respondent is asked to evaluate according to any kind of subjective or objective criteria. In this case, the five ordered response levels ranged from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). After the questionnaire was completed, scores were summed. The highest possible score was 50, and the lowest 10. Higher scores indicate a stronger and more exclusive identification with the athlete role.

Scores were recorded as an attribute and stored in the NVivo 8 project system, for later analysis, along with other attributes such as age, employment status, and income. As both current athletes and athletes who had already retired from their sport were studied, it was necessary to use a retrospective version of the AIMS. This enabled an assessment of the retired athletes' level of AI during their sport career (indicated in *Table 3.6)*. Retrospective versions have been successfully used by a number of previous studies, including studies of athletic retirement (Grove et al., 1997; Lavallee et al., 1997). Lavallee and colleagues reported acceptable internal consistency with this version. *Table 3.7* outlines a number of earlier studies that have utilised the AIMS.

Table 3.7: Studies using the AIMS

Author	Year	Sample	Major outcomes
Development of the AIMS			
Brewer et al.	(1993)	a. n=243 b. n=449 c. n=90	Developed tool to reflect both the strength and the exclusivity of identification within the athletic role. Findings: AI is different from physical self-esteem, perceived importance of fitness, body attractiveness, or strength.
Brewer & Cornelius	(2001)	n=2856	Evaluated the fit of different models. Developed norms for males, females, athletes, and non-athletes.
Hale, James, & Stambulova.	(1999)	n=1160, from UK, US & Russia	Re-examined the factor structure of the AIMS.
Brewer et al. Good et al. Murphy et al. Wiechman & Williams	(2000) (1993) (1996) (1997)	various	Tested assumption that males have stronger AIs than females. Findings: No consistent statistical evidence showing any gender differences or gender role differences in AI.
Alfermann et al. Brewer et al. Miller & Kerr	(2004) (2000) (2002)	various	Overwhelming majority of studies exploring AI and its consequences have highlighted the potential risks for people having strong AIs.
Other approaches examining AI			
Sparkes	(1998)	n=1 In depth interview, AIMS not used	Participant believed to have strong AI, because of the extensive involvement in various sports. Findings: Serious injury threatened the integrity of the self. Previous taken-for-granted well-functioning body and the accompanying physical sense of self were shattered.

AI and injury			
Brewer	(1993)	a. n=109 b. n=131 c. n=121 d. n=90	Findings: Positive association between depressed mood and AI in injured athletes. Findings highlighted potential negative influences of strong AI on post-injury period, such as increased risk of depressed mood.
Green &Weinberg	(2001)	n=30	Examined relationships among AI, coping skills, social support, and mood disturbance of injured recreational sport participants. Results inconclusive.
AI and masculinity			
Sparkes & Smith	(2002)	n=4	Explored post-injury life experiences of male rugby players. Findings: Those who had strong and exclusive AIs experienced the loss of primary immediacy, and manifested a strong desire for a restored self. AIs were highly entwined with expressions of hegemonic masculinity. Conclusion: Sports are leading definers of masculinity in society.
AI and change			
Samuel & Tenenbaum	(2011)	n=338	Examined athletes' perceptions of, and reactions to, their change-event experiences, and the related effect of AI. Findings; AI was associated with the perceived significance of change-events. Conclusion: Personal characteristics (e.g., competitive level, AI) may affect athletes' experiences of, and reactions to, change-events.
AI and race			
Harrison Sailesb, Rotich, & Bimper.	(2011)	n=109	Explored the relationship between race and AI. Findings: African American football student–athletes have a stronger AI compared to their Caucasian American counterparts. Conclusion: Racial differences in AI should be considered as a potent influence in participation patterns and performance.

AI and SCT			
Grove et al.	(1997)	n=48	Examined the relationship between AI and adjustment to sport career termination. Findings: Regardless of the reasons for retirement there were positive relationships between AI and emotional adjustment, and time for social adjustment. Coping strategies varied according to the strength of AI. Authors recommended longitudinal studies, rather than retrospective approaches.
Webb et al.	(1998)	n=93 AIMS not used. Four items assessed AI, tapping into (a) public, and (b) private identity	Explored relationships among AI, psychological adjustments to retirement, personality characteristics, and the reasons for retirement. Findings: Only private AI (not public AI) was significantly correlated with the feeling of uncertainty about the future. For injury-related retirements, overall AI was strongly related to the sense of uncertainty about the future and perceived difficulty of retirement. The unexpected nature of injuries may rule out opportunities for athletes to prepare for retirement by re-investing in other identities.
Alfermann et al.	(2004)	n=256	Assessed athletes' reactions to sport career termination in three countries: Germany, Lithuania, and Russia. Findings: Participants from different nations preferred significantly different coping strategies. Athletes from the former Soviet Union (Lithuania and Russia) reported less positive emotions and satisfaction with time of retirement than those from Germany.
Grove, Fish, & Eklund	(2004)	n=47	Examined the associations of self-protection and self-enhancement in team selection processes via a longitudinal study. Findings: For deselected athletes, AIs were weakened at the day of deselection in comparison with AIs measured a week before deselection.
AI and identity foreclosure			
Good et al.	(1993)	n=502	Explored the relationships among AI, sports participation, and identity foreclosure in US college students. Findings: Showed a trend that identity foreclosure scores increased with the athletic involvement in upper-class, but not under-class, participants.
Murphy et al.	(1996)	n=124	Investigated the relationships among identity foreclosure, AI, and career maturity in a sample of US intercollegiate athletes.

			Findings: AI and identity foreclosure may have inhibiting effects on career decision-making and exploration of alternative roles via different mechanisms.
Albion & Fogarty	(2003) (2005)	n=893 AIS athletes	Investigated post-sport decision-making of AIS athletes. Findings: Except for a small group of athletes preparing for careers in highly paid sports, no evidence of identity foreclosure in elite Australian athletes exists. Nor is there evidence of gender differences.
AI and performance			
Brewer et al.	(1999)	n=90 n=105	Investigated the relationship between AI and athletes' satisfaction with their performances. Findings: AI significantly correlated with season satisfaction and satisfaction level of individual performance. Participants who had poor competitive seasons reported decrements in AI, relative to others who had good seasons. The study illustrated the malleability of AI in response to athletic performance.

It is significant to note that, to date, it appears that there has been virtually no literature that has demonstrated studies of AI with elite Australian Indigenous athletes, and indeed, very limited use of the AIMS from within sport management research. While the use of a survey is a little at odds with *Dadirri's* philosophy of 'listening and learning through story-telling', in this research the survey served as an 'ice-breaker'. As such, it was administered early in the interview process as a mechanism to help participants to relax, to start to break down any barriers, and to encourage them to 'think outside the box'. The use of the survey had the effect of encouraging reflexivity, as the athletes considered either their current situations or a situation, which in some instances, had occurred up to 20 years earlier. None of the athletes had any qualms about agreeing to complete the survey. As well as their sport careers, participants considered important relationships with the people in their immediate social sphere. These significant social dimensions will be discussed further in the following chapter.

3.4.9 Organising the data

Data analysis was an on-going iterative process from the initiation of data collection to the completion of the study (Veal, 2006). The aim of data analysis is to make primary data 'readable' for subsequent scrutiny by the researcher. In analysing qualitative research, this is done by coding and categorising patterns in the data, and eventually identifying themes. In this study the individuals' stories, as recorded in the interview transcripts became the primary units of analysis. After the interviews were undertaken by the researcher, they were subsequently transcribed and spot checked for accuracy. The transcripts were then re-read by the researcher and provided to the participants as part of the collaborative process of creating knowledge. This served two purposes: it allowed interviewees to check that what they had said was what they meant and it allowed interviewees to add any further insights they may have gained since their interview had taken place.

Once this preliminary process of checking and analysis was completed, a qualitative software package was sought to assist the research with detailed analysis of the interviews. NVivo 8 software was an appropriate tool for organising the data and thereby assisting with the analysis process. Proponents of computer assisted qualitative data analysis systems (such as NVivo 8) have argued that they "serve to facilitate an accurate and transparent data analysis process whilst also providing a quick and simple way of counting who said what and when, which in turn provides a reliable, general picture of the data" (Welsh, 2002, p. 3). Implicit in this description is a response to the criticism that qualitative research lacks the validity and reliability of quantitative analysis. Yet what this fails to recognise is that there are distinct differences between the two types of research. As the processes soon to be described demonstrate, these packages do allow the researcher to systematically analyse qualitative data with a similar control to that which was once the sole domain of quantitative researchers.

a) ***Coding***

The analytic process was based on immersion in the data, with the words and phrases of the participants guiding the development of codes. To ensure a high level of familiarity with

the data, the transcripts, memos, notes and documents were read and re-read. A constant comparative analysis was undertaken, a method of analysis that was created by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Glaser and Strauss suggested that constant comparison of one piece of data with another helps to identify the relationship between two data sets. The similarities and differences between them can therefore be examined. This information is then used to classify, or code, the data to a category. Incidents of data that are similar can then be grouped together under a category. Although the incidents of data are coded under the same category, it is probable that they will uncover different properties and dimensions of a category, thus bringing out different aspects of the same phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Constant comparison can be undertaken deductively (i.e., codes are identified prior to analysis then looked for in the data), or inductively (i.e., codes emerge from the data) (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). In this study, codes were developed using both methods of analysis. Once codes were identified they were given short descriptors; for example, the code 'depression' was described as any mention of sadness, unhappiness or depression in connection with retirement—before, during or after. Similarly, the code 'denial' was described as a refusal or inability to deal with retirement, or acknowledge that anything was wrong. The researcher took pains to compare each new portion of data with previous codes, so similar topics would be labelled with the same code.

Following this process of open coding was the process of axial coding, or the formation of categories. Axial coding starts to put data "back together in new ways" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 97). Topics were grouped into provisional categories when they seemed to relate to the same or similar content (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Categories became increasingly complex and inclusive. Finally, selective coding ensued: this was the integrative process of "selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships […] and filling in categories that need[ed] further refinement and development" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116). Harwood's diagrammatic representation of the analytic process in *Figure 3.2* captures the process involved during the different coding stages.

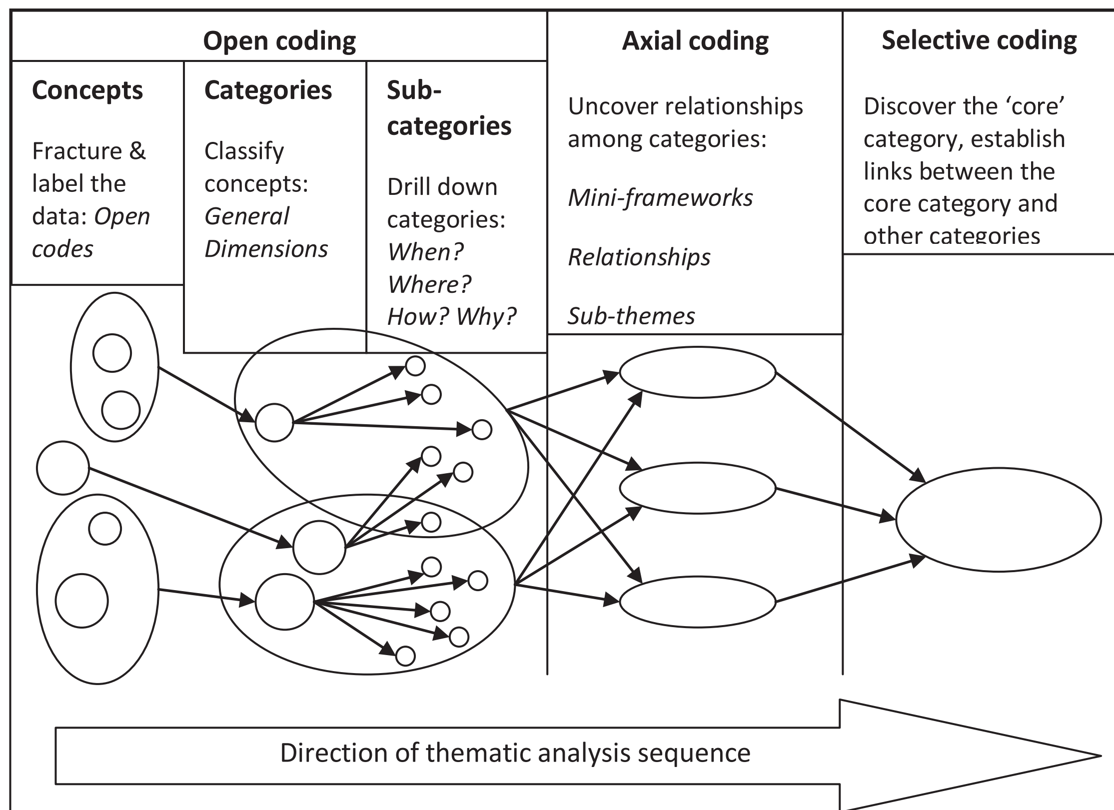

Figure 3.2: The analytic process (adapted from Harwood, 2002, p. 76)

To ensure reliability of the coding process, a strategy recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994) was followed. This involved a meeting between one member of the Advisory Group, the co-interviewer, and the primary researcher. Together the trio re-coded blank copies of the transcripts. Comparisons with the original coded transcripts demonstrated very high levels of code-recode reliabilities.

b) ***Developing a matrix***

As the first step towards better understanding, organising and displaying the data, a matrix was assembled, a process generally regarded as one aspect of the complete analysis (Patton, 2002). The first sweep of the data resulted in 165 different topics that had been mentioned by interviewees. These were listed and grouped together into 14 preliminary categories which seemed to encapsulate a topic group. In the same way that the initial codes had been

identified, these categories were also identified either inductively (e.g., Athlete persona, Acculturation) or deductively (e.g., Planning and Preparing for Retirement, Racism), and verified.

At times there was lack of clarity about where a particular topic would fit, and consequently, some topics were listed in more than one category. Finally, the three major themes were identified and labelled as 'general dimensions'. The first general dimension, *Engaging Indigeneity*, emerged inductively from the data. It was an obvious major theme that was identified by the occurrence and repetition of many relevant topics. On the other hand, the second and third general dimensions, *The Retirement Experience,* and *Racism and Racialisation in Australian Sport*, were determined deductively due to links with the framework discussed in *Section 2.7*. The resulting matrix displays these general dimensions, the associated preliminary categories, and a list of topics, and their links to each individual interviewee. It became useful in communicating the findings as a whole and could now also be used for describing individual experiences. While there is limited research detailing the use of matrices in qualitative research, together with steps that can be undertaken in the categorisation process—such as rules for inclusion (Miles & Huberman, 1994), one clear message is that researchers must be cautious that the data is not artificially altered to fit the categories and fill out the matrix (Patton, 2002). Thus, general dimensions, categories, and codes—other than those that had been deductively pre-determined—were identified to holistically reflect the interview data (Patton, 2002).

c) Refining the matrix

Whilst working with the data, the identification of emerging themes was a 'fundamental but mysterious task' (Patton & Ryan, 2000). The matrix, although initially useful, proved to be a cumbersome and fairly unmanageable document which needed further refinement. Consequently, some initial concepts were renamed or subsumed within other codes, or occasionally deleted if they were considered extraneous or better represented by a related code. Codes that seemed similar were merged to form broader and more manageable sub-themes. Themes can be described as conceptual linking of expressions, and come both from

the data (inductively) and from the researcher's previous theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study (deductively) (Patton & Ryan, 2000) (illustrated in *Figure 3.3* below).

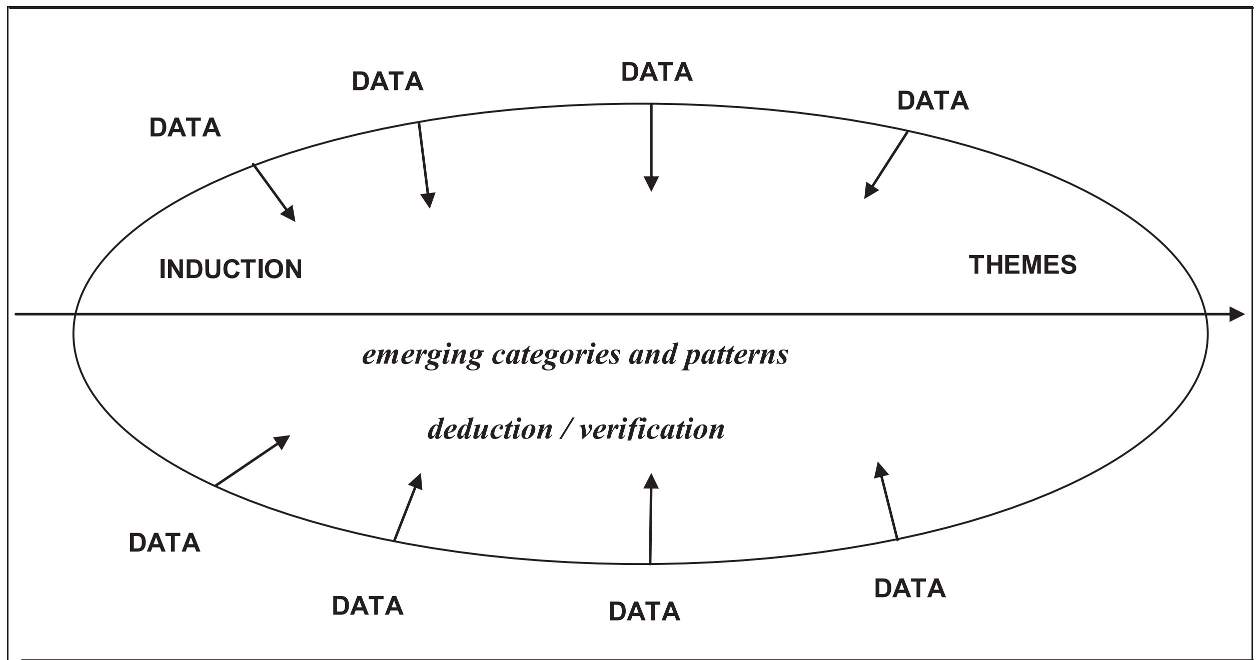

Figure 3.3: Inductive and deductive thematic analysis processes

Identifying themes and sub-themes deductively was done by referring to the literature and the pre-existing theoretical model (*Figure 2.7, Section 2.7)*.

An example of this is shown in the way that the topics listed in the second dimension, *The Retirement Experience,* were organised deductively. That dimension was then divided into four phases: (a) Exiting Sport, (b) Nowhere Land, (c) New Beginnings and (d) Moving On. Topics were re-classified within those phases and the matrix was further refined, as illustrated in the following example. Fernandez et al (2006) described four factors that influence an athlete's decision-making process with regard to leaving sport: pull, anti-pull, push and anti-push. Push factors are said to be "an expression of negative considerations of the athlete's present life" (Fernandez et al., 2006, p. 418). Athletes in this study described

14 different negative factors that influenced their retirement decision-making processes. These were:

- age;
- being exploited;
- bad treatment by club, coach or officials;
- deselection;
- being 'forced' to retire;
- homesickness;
- injuries;
- loss of motivation to train or play;
- cultural issues (e.g., lack of cultural support, needing to be with family, fear of failure, death in family, racism);
- making sacrifices;
- things going wrong;
- financial constraints;
- conflicts with officials; and
- not being able to reduce body weight as desired.

These were all grouped together as the sub-theme 'Pushed towards retirement'. Similarly, other topics mentioned by the athletes were also grouped together as sub-themes, for example, 'Anti-push factors', 'Pulled towards retirement', and 'Anti-pull factors'. Eventually these four sub-themes were organised within the phase 'Exiting Sport'.

In the first dimension, similarities to the theoretical framework (*Figure 2.7, Section 2.7)* did emerge from the analysis. Those similarities were regarded as reinforcing the findings of the study. The new topics that emerged further increased the understanding of the stages and phases of the sport career transition for the sample group. The stages of the retirement process are loosely organised and not necessarily linear, and participants might have easily negotiated through some of the stages or returned to an earlier stage, as well as been influenced by various other life events (Brown et al., 2000). The matrix, refined and transformed as described, is presented in *Table 3.8.*

Table 3.8: Table of general dimensions, phase, elements, and sub-themes

General Dimensions ***(inductive and deductive)***		**Sub-Themes** ***(inductive and deductive)***
Engaging Indigeneity (*inductive*)	***Elements (theory-related)***	
	Habitus	Personal identity
		Indigenous heritage and culture
		The 'natural' athlete
		Family cohesion and connectedness
		Acculturation (Relocation)
	Capital	Valuing the 'physical'
		Athletic identity
	The Field	The athlete persona
		Physical legacy of elite sport
The Retirement Experience (*deductive*)	**Phases (*deductive*)**	
	Exiting Sport	Pulled towards retirement
		Anti-pull factors
		Pushed towards retirement
		Anti-push factors

	Nowhere Land	Situation
		Support
		Adaptive behaviours
	New Beginnings	Coming to terms
		Rural/Urban tensions
		Career choices
		Pathways in sport?
		Agency
		Reflections
Racism and Racialisation in Australian Sport (*deductive*)	***Themes***	
	Racism during sport	
	Racism beyond sport	
	Indigenous invisibility	
	Tokenism	

d) *Member checking*

In line with *Dadirri's* concept of participatory action, participants were engaged as critical members of the research team. They were invited to review the data and the themes that had emerged. This process, known as 'member checking', was described by Lincoln and Guba as "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (1985, p. 314). Member checks involved the distribution of a document *(Appendix 3)* that outlined the major themes relating to athletic retirement (distribution was to people who had been interviewed as well as to other key stakeholders). Participants were asked whether the documented themes captured were what was discussed in their interviews, and whether they felt the components of their own retirement experience were represented by the themes. Because of a human cognitive bias towards confirmation (Mahoney, 1991), an active search for disconfirming evidence was essential to achieving rigor. Data were examined to disconfirm various assertions made as a result of analysis. Participants were consulted to determine reasons for discrepancies. An example of this follows.

A discrepancy appeared in the way in which some of the footballers regarded their relationships with their clubs after retirement. This had to do with the issue of reciprocity, with some players feeling let down by the club to which they had given many years of loyal service and commitment. The two comments below illustrate this issue.

> And it took me quite a while to realise that, that you bleed for that club, I mean you go out and give your heart and soul, and at the end of the day you're a number, you're a piece of meat, and they can move you on as quickly as they got you (Alex r2007 NRL).[27]

> [She] could see the time and effort that I'd put into the club, like that's my family, and then all of a sudden it's the family not giving you anything back, or not caring. And [we] had thought a lot more of the club than that. [I had thought] the coach was one of my mates (Nathan r2003 AFL).

On the other hand, Johnny (r2009 AFL) believed he received good support from his former club:

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[27] Participants have been given a pseudonym to protect their identity. In addition, to give the reader some context, the year of their retirement and their sport is noted.

> I've given good service to (the club). I'm currently their record holder. So they treat me with the red carpet. It's fantastic. I can always go and talk to someone there.

By referring to the participant and stakeholders, two explanations ensued. Key Stakeholder #12 commented:

> The landscape had changed especially with club football and the ability to pay players. Now players are paid for their services there is a more business-like approach to the running of the team. Which means loyalty isn't as important as ability to perform or the success of a team. Success on the field means financial reward for player, coach and management, and the club. There is much more accountability on the coaching and management staff to be successful. So therefore this is transferred to the players as pressure to perform on a consistent basis. So clubs will pursue players that can achieve success, and sometimes loyal players are the casualties of that action. The other situation this creates is political animals: players, coaches and club officials who position themselves so that their position is safe.

Whilst acknowledging this explanation, Nathan (r2003 AFL) was still disillusioned by the treatment he had received:

> There was and still is little care about those who have given a lot because of a couple of reasons. They are not equipped and they don't give it due care. It is still a long way from where it should be.

Participants used their analytic skills to collaborate in these processes. Some responded in writing, while other member checks were established through discussion. Following these checks and suggestions from participants, minor revisions and modifications to the themes were made. Eventually, after analysis, data collected through these different methods were converged to develop a new body of knowledge, which is an understanding of the lived experience of these Indigenous athletes. This process allowed the research to move towards achieving its aim of understanding the nature of athletic retirement as experienced by Indigenous Australian athletes, and ultimately (in respect of a key objective) to suggest reforms to SCT policies, programs, and practices.

3.4.10 Trustworthiness

This section deals with the important question of how the study establishes quality. This is an important discussion because, in the past, qualitative researchers were labelled as undisciplined, "sloppy", "merely subjective", with rigor "not the hallmark of naturalism"

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 289). However, other authors such as Patton (2002) and Denzin and Lincoln (1994) argued against this viewpoint, indicating that qualitative methods are not weaker (or stronger) than quantitative methods, but *different*. Furthermore, as Silverman put it, “we no longer need to regard qualitative research as provisional, because qualitative studies have already assembled a useful, cumulative body of knowledge” (Silverman, 1997, p. 1). According to Eisner (1991), this body of knowledge, can help us to, “understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing” (Eisner, 1991, p 58). General quality criteria, such as how the research design drove data collection, technical competence of the method, and basing the research on sound theoretical explanations have already been addressed in earlier sections of this chapter, and the protection of participants, ethics procedures, and potential bias, will be further addressed in *Sections 3.5* and *3.6*.

Lincoln and Guba posed this important question, “How can the inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?” (1985, p. 290). In response, Healy and Perry (2000) asserted that the quality of a study in each paradigm should be judged according to the terms of its own paradigm. Golafshani (2003), believed that this is due to the difference in purpose of quantitative and qualitative research, and so different criteria are used for evaluation in each paradigm. According to Stenbacka, *quantitative* study has the “purpose of explaining”, while *qualitative* study has the purpose of “generating understanding” (2001, p. 551). Consequently, methods such as interviews and observations are dominant in the naturalist (interpretive) paradigm and supplementary in the positivist paradigm, where the use of surveys and statistics prevail (Golafshani, 2003). In both quantitative and qualitative research, it is essential that researchers are able to demonstrate that their studies are credible. However, if the methods to *collect* qualitative data are different, it stands to reason that the criteria used to *judge* qualitative research will also be different (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In qualitative studies these criteria include credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003). While credibility in quantitative research largely depends on instrument construction, in qualitative research, “the researcher is the instrument” (Patton, 2002, p. 14). Thus, credibility in qualitative

research relates more to the credibility of the findings than to the methodology, and largely depends on the ability and efforts of the researcher (Golafshani, 2003).

Trustworthiness in qualitative research has been delineated by Lincoln and Guba (1985) within four criteria—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Each of these criteria was operationalised in terms of this study. These were vital processes involving trust and integrity, which met the expectations of *Dadirri*, as well as the expectations of good qualitative research techniques. As objective and critical research, it is necessary to address these criteria, not only for the rigor of the research project, but because of the commitments made between the researcher and participants.

a) Credibility

Three activities that increase the probability that credible findings will be produced are member-checking, triangulation, and prolonged engagement. Member-checking, described by Lincoln and Guba as "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (1985, p. 314) has already been discussed in *Section 3.4.9*. Triangulation has been defined as the process of collecting information from different areas and angles, and combining more than one research method in a study (Patton, 1990). It is perceived to aid in understanding phenomena, and offers an "alternative to validation [while adding] rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5). It also helps to "clarify meaning" within and between the different methods, as well as to promote the "repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (Stake, 2005, p. 454). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested additional methods of triangulation, including triangulation by data source (e.g., person, time, or place), by method (e.g., observation or interview document), by researcher (e.g., two or more researchers), and by data type (qualitative text, recordings, quantitative). In the present research, triangulation occurred through each of the three methods suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994).

Prolonged engagement is the investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes, for example, learning the 'culture', testing for misinformation introduced by self or respondents, and building trust (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Building trust has been discussed

in *Section 3.2.10*. Engagement with the 'cultural group' began in April 2008 as I attended the course *Introduction to Indigenous Australia* (subject number NA2689) with Adult Education Tasmania. The class covered the diverse nature of Australian Aboriginal societies, cultures, contact relations and experiences in both historical and contemporary contexts. Then, from July to November 2008, I attended a course entitled *Contemporary Indigenous Australia* (subject number HAB102) at the University of Tasmania. This subject provided a detailed introduction to contemporary Aboriginal socio-economic experience on mainland Australia until the final decades of the 20th century. Issues addressed included the extent of Aboriginal disadvantage, the experience of racism, aspects of contemporary Aboriginal cultures, child welfare, health, and education issues. All issues were examined within the context of Indigenous self-determination. The unit highlighted both Aboriginal disadvantage and Aboriginal achievement.

Contact was made with three respected members of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, who formed an Advisory Group. The group met with the researcher on several occasions, to discuss the structure of this study and methodology used, and eventually to discuss emerging themes from the viewpoint of members of the Indigenous cultural groups. The three members of the group continued to provide support throughout this study. They were:

- Ms Barbara Davis-Smith, Trainer and Assessor, Campbell Page.
- Ms Leonie Dixon, Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Royal Hobart Hospital.
- Mr Colin Lamont, Mersey Leven Aboriginal Corporation.

Finally, the data for this study consists of 45 hours of initial and follow-up interviews with Indigenous athletes, conducted over a period of nine months, from September 2009 until May 2010, and resulting in 180 pages of single-spaced transcripts. The data corpus comprises over 280 pages of athlete and key stakeholder transcripts, memos, field notes, and documents shared by participants.

b) Transferability

Guba and Lincoln (1981) emphasised appreciation of, and attention to, context as a natural limit to qualitative generalisations. They proposed substituting the concept *transferability* for *generalisability* when dealing with qualitative findings, posing the question:

> [W]hat can a generalisation be except an assumption that is context free? [Yet] it is virtually impossible to imagine any human behavior that is not heavily mediated by the context in which it occurs (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 62).

Consequently, the qualitative inquirer can only set out a working hypothesis, together with a description of the time, and context, in which it was found. Whether the hypothesis can hold in some other context at some other time becomes an empirical issue, which can be resolved only if there is a degree of similarity between the earlier and later contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A qualitative inquirer must provide *thick* description (Goodrick, 2010) in order to enable someone to determine whether transferring the analysis to another setting could be achievable. A qualitative inquirer is responsible for providing the widest possible range of information for inclusion in the thick description. It is difficult to find a definitive account of *thick* description although Patton suggested that "good description takes the reader [deeply] into the setting being described" (2002, p. 437). Goodrick (2010) proposed that when good and detailed descriptions are provided, the reader should be able to make connections between the researcher's interpretations and the experiences documented, and be able to draw their own conclusions about the *fit* of the data. Much of this chapter has therefore been occupied with establishing trustworthiness by presenting thick descriptions, and by providing answers to such questions as:

1) what were the goals of the research;
2) what were the primary activities;
3) what was the setting like;
4) how was the research conducted, and
5) what happened to the people in the research?

Another means of constructing thick description, suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), was the use of purposive sampling, as discussed in *Section 3.4.1*. It is important to separate description from interpretation (Patton, 2002)—the interpretation or the 'why' questions will come in *Chapter Five.* Description comes first.

c) Dependability and confirmability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), both dependability and confirmability can be determined through one 'properly managed' audit. To establish dependability, an auditor examines the process by which the various stages of the study, including analytic techniques, were conducted. The auditor determines whether this process was applicable to the research undertaken and whether it was applied consistently (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). To ensure confirmability in the current study, a record of the inquiry process, as well as copies of all taped interviews and discussions, notes from interviews and discussions, and hard copies of all transcriptions have been maintained and are available for audit purposes. Analysis software, NVivo 8, was used to establish an audit trail of memos, project journal, transcripts, and quotations used. Endnote bibliographic software was used to establish a rigorous referencing system for both literature sources and personal communications.

The various tactics discussed in this section are summarised in regard to each of the criteria delineated by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and the three data sources/types used in *Table 3.9*. In addition, Miles and Huberman (1994) discussed a further 13 tactics for testing or confirming findings in qualitative research. *Appendix 6* indicates where certain tactics considered relevant to the study were adopted, in regard to each of the three data sources/types used. These tactics ensured the integrity of the material presented.

Table 3.9: Summary of tactics to ensure trustworthiness of qualitative data

<table>
<tr><th rowspan="2">Trustworthiness Criteria</th><th colspan="3">Data Source</th></tr>
<tr><th>1.
Interview data from athlete participants</th><th>2.
Interview data from key stakeholders</th><th>3.
Document Analysis</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="13">Credibility</td><td colspan="3">Adoption of appropriate, well recognised research methods.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Description of background, qualifications and experience of researcher.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Approval granted by UTS Human Research Ethics Committee.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Consultations with Advisory Group.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Debriefing sessions with supervisors.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Examination of prior research to frame findings.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Peer scrutiny of the project.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Triangulation occurred through different data sources, data types, research methods for data collection, and combined theoretical approach.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Member checking
(i.e., receiving feedback from informants).</td><td>Extensive literature review.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Collaborative development of interview guides and analysis of responses.</td><td>Extensive review of secondary data: annual reports, strategic plans, organisational policies, codes of conduct, member protection policies, racial vilification policies, brochures, and media.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Prolonged engagement with cultural group, incl. preparatory courses and subjects.</td><td rowspan="2">Endnote bibliographic software to establish rigorous referencing system for literature sources.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Taking time to build trust with participants.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Use of reflexivity and journaling.</td></tr>
</table>

	Extensive data corpus.
Transferability	Purposive sampling.
	Provision of background data to establish study context to allow for comparisons.
	Interview guides developed.
	Thick description of phenomena under scrutiny.
Dependability	Analytic techniques rigorously described, followed, and documented.
	In-depth methodological description allows for the study to be repeated
Confirmability	Triangulation to reduce researcher bias.
	Admission of researcher's beliefs and assumptions.
	NVivo 8 software to develop audit trail.
	Memos, project diary, notes, reviews, discussions, documents and quotations used have been maintained and are available for audit.
	Recognition of shortcomings in the methods and their potential effects.
	Recognition of the study's limitations.

3.5 ETHICS CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical concerns of this research were guided first by the axiology of the transformative paradigm, the ethical considerations of *Dadirri*, and the *National Health and Medical Research Council Statement on Human Experimentation and Supplementary Notes*. An application for ethics approval was made to the UTS Human Research Ethics Committee, which was approved on 25 May 2009 (Ref No. 2009-072A). Some specific aspects of ethics are now discussed. The Information letter (*Appendix 1*), Information sheet (*Appendix 2*) and Consent form (*Appendix 4*) were prepared. These forms explained the nature of the

study, the research participants' rights (e.g., rights of anonymity and to withdraw without financial or other penalty) and where the participants' answers resided within the wider research focus. Detailed information about the purpose of the research was provided to all participants. Included with this information were the contact details for the thesis supervisors—Associate Professor Daryl Adair, Associate Professor Simon Darcy and Professor Tracy Taylor—along with the Human Ethics complaint number and the researcher's own contact details. A phone number for an appropriate counselling service (Lifeline) was made available for participants, if any distress or discomfort eventuated from the interviews. In terms of my own well-being, counselling was available through UTS, in the event that stressful circumstances were encountered, or psychological or emotional issues resulted from the research. Interview and survey data has been stored in an alarmed building, in a locked filing cabinet, and on a personalised, password-protected PC hard drive in my private office. Transcripts of in-depth interviews have been coded to ensure participant anonymity.

3.6 RESEARCH DESIGN LIMITATIONS AND POTENTIAL BIAS

The population primarily studied in this thesis was elite Indigenous Australian athletes who had retired from sport within the past 20 years, or who were currently performing at elite levels. The study was limited to those athletes who responded to the researcher's call for people to be interviewed. In seeking an explanation for the experiences of elite Indigenous Australian athletes, other populations were drawn upon. Some key stakeholders were individuals from the clubs and associations where the Indigenous athletes had been located. Generally speaking, these individuals were involved with Indigenous player recruitment and/or welfare (development) programs. Some were current or retired coaches, managers, club or association (RLPA, AFLPA, BAI) officials. No claims for the significance of the current research are made beyond these limitations.

As *Chapters Four* and *Five* will indicate, the findings in this research express an extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences, and cultural identities.

Due to this diversity, as well as the interpretive nature of qualitative research, it is impossible to provide a complete and binding commentary on some facets of the phenomena under investigation. Thus, it is important that the information in this chapter is not simplistically generalised as being relevant to wider populations. However, the nature and scope of this study can be replicated by future research with either Indigenous or non-Indigenous populations, each with its own socio-cultural and experiential nuances. A series of such projects would allow for comparative analysis and, assuming a critical mass of research, the identification of key trends and differences.

Patton astutely remarked that "value-free interpretive research is impossible" (p. 570). Patton, along with Denzin and Lincoln (2000), thus acknowledged that as qualitative research is ideologically driven, every researcher brings pre-conceptions and interpretations to the problems being studied, regardless of methods used. Janesick (2000) suggested that bias in qualitative research is inevitable, yet Strauss and Corbin ventured that that bias is not only inevitable but also desirable (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This assertion stemmed from the premise that in qualitative inquiry the investigator is the primary instrument of research, thus it appears inevitable that the data he or she gathers, regardless of the research methods employed, will be biased. This chapter has delineated several methods for reducing bias and increasing the trustworthiness in this study—member checking, triangulation, journaling, and reference group discussions. In the end, however, it comes down to the ability of the researcher to be sensitive to the data and to be able to make appropriate analytical decisions. Personal bias is acknowledged in this study due to the researcher's previous involvement with athletes struggling with retirement experiences, this suggesting empathy with their situations. Some of the conversations with participants in this study may have also influenced the researcher's personal perspectives. However, the researcher took every effort to ensure that personal views, beliefs, and assumptions were not imposed upon participants during the data collection process, and that themes derived inductively from the analysis of data were not pre-determined.

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined the research design that was used to guide and shape the collection of data used in this study. Particular attention has been given to some initial concerns in undertaking this project, and how a suitable research design consequently evolved by drawing upon the Indigenous philosophy known as *Dadirri.* The various sections in the chapter have demonstrated how this stance has informed all levels of the project. The chapter has also explained the data analysis processes, and comprehensively illustrated the lengths undertaken to achieve trustworthiness. The chapter concluded by acknowledging the potential bias of the researcher as well as ethical considerations. The study now moves a discussion of its findings. *Chapter Four* will present the collected data and patterns of results, moving finally to *Chapter Five* for an analysis of the implications of the findings, and for the relevance of the findings to the research question, as well as a final conclusion.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This study has investigated the sport career transition (SCT) experiences of elite Indigenous Australian athletes as they move out of elite-level sport, by identifying the social, familial, cultural, organisational and psychological factors that influenced these experiences. This was done by conducting interviews with 30 retired, or current, Indigenous Australian athletes, supported by interviews with 25 key stakeholders, document analysis, and the use of the Athlete Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS). Findings from the data collection are now presented. The core research question under investigation was:

What are the retirement experiences of elite Indigenous Australian athletes?

Stories from the interviewees, along with the thoughts and impressions of the key informants, form a large section of the findings. The athletes' stories illustrate the range and diversity of their experiences, the challenges they identified, how the retirement experience changed over time, and the ways in which these variables operated at different levels to both simplify and complicate the retirement experience. The focus is on identifying and describing the nature of retirement for the sample group, and, in particular, how retirement experiences may be influenced by the cultural backgrounds of the Indigenous participants. It can be construed that many of the themes and sub-themes emerging in the present study will also be pertinent for non-Indigenous athletes. That said, understanding the retirement issues from the point of view of Indigenous athletes requires comprehending their experiences in social, cultural and historical contexts, as was argued in *Chapter Two.* In general terms, there are major differences between the life experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Australia (Altman et al., 2008). Thus, it may be posited that there are differences in the way that Indigenous athletes experience SCT.

4.2 SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS

Before presenting the interview data from the key stakeholders, it is important to first describe the structures that provided career transition support for the Indigenous athletes in this study. The key stakeholders were located within the three sports under focus, and were each part of administrative organisations therein.

4.2.1 Australian Football League Players' Association (AFLPA)

The formation of a representative body for Victorian Football League (VFL) players was first attempted in 1955, though the Players' Association in its current form was not established until 1973. Since that time, particularly since the 1990s, the Association has successfully negotiated a series of Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA) between players and the Australian Football League (AFL). It has also developed new objectives, purposes, and the respect of stakeholders within the sport industry. The major initiatives have focused on the need to enhance the game of Australian Rules football by ensuring that players have a strong role in the development of the game, receive fair employment terms and work conditions, and are apportioned an equitable share of revenue. Through player feedback, the association has identified the following key areas as its 'chart for the future':

1) player development;
2) retirement, and
3) education and training.

In 1998, the AFLPA achieved a membership of 100% for the first time in its history. The AFLPA's on-going philosophy is to represent the interests and welfare of all players, while having due regard for the health of the game. The AFLPA also accredits all registered player agents (AFLPA, 2010). Retired Indigenous footballer and AFLPA Indigenous

Programs Manager, Cory McGrath,[28] discussed how the Indigenous support roles of the organisation evolved:

> In the beginning there were no identified positions at either the AFL or the AFLPA. When Michael Long retired from AFL in 2001, he took up a role with the AFL and the AFLPA as a mentor for current players. That in itself was progression for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players. The AFL then appointed a full-time Indigenous Programs Manager, Jason Mifsud, and the AFLPA appointed a person for one day a week to liaise with Indigenous Players. This person, Ralph White,[29] was the Indigenous Mentor at AFL Sports Ready and already had been having some contact with the players—I was approached in 2007 for the Indigenous Programs Manager role to continue to develop the role. [It was a] 50/50 job role where my week was split between Indigenous Programs and [accounting]. Recently we have appointed a full-time person (Nadia Taib) to take on the Indigenous and Multicultural Services Manager role. So it has taken almost ten years for a full-time role to be recognised at the AFLPA but that is mainly due the expansion of players who are now coming into the AFL. (McGrath, 2010, pers. comm.)

While McGrath credited the expansion of Indigenous support roles within the AFL and the AFLPA to the growing number of Indigenous players coming into senior AFL ranks in the past ten years, he contended that other issues also demonstrated the need for such roles. For example, there have been a number of highly publicised episodes of Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) players who have experienced major crises soon after leaving AFL football. Newspaper articles and public reports have detailed maladaptive behaviours, crime, substance abuse, economic difficulties, depression, and even attempted suicide (for examples, see Cox, 2009; Lisa J, 2007; McCalman et al., 2006; McGregor, 2009; Sheahan, 2008). One of these is the story of Ezra Bray, an Indigenous AFL midfielder who was drafted to an AFL club from Darwin in 2000. According to media reports, Bray's case has continued to embarrass, perplex, and sadden the AFL and its stakeholders (McCalman et

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[28] Retired Indigenous footballer Cory McGrath is the son of a Wongi man from Kalgoorlie, and grew up in Nyabing and Katanning in rural WA before moving to Perth in December 1995. He made his debut for Essendon in 2001.In 2002 he spent much of his time on the bench, and an ankle injury mid-season resulted in a frustrating year for him. After only nine games in 2003, McGrath decided it was best to find another club and was subsequently traded to Carlton, where he played until being delisted at the end of 2006 at the age of 27. He was appointed to the position of Indigenous Programs Manager at the AFLPA at the end of 2007, and moved into finance full-time in 2010 after completing his Bachelor of Business/Accounting Degree.

[29] Indigenous man Ralph White was originally from Darwin. Prior his appointment to the AFLPA in 2005 he had undertaken various welfare, mentoring, and Indigenous training, spanning over 30 years. This included 14 years working as Koori consultant at the Indigenous Sports Unit at the Victorian Department of Sport and Recreation.

al., 2006). He left the AFL system in 2002 and has since battled with alcohol and substance abuse—and has even experienced several stints in gaol (McCalman et al., 2006). Indigenous football pioneer and president of Rumbalara Club in the central Victorian Murray League, Paul Briggs, who knew Bray during his time at the AFL commented:

> He (Bray) was fragile personally and his decision-making skills could never cope with the world he was put into. It's just so sad. If he can't get it together he will be dead before he reaches 40. (Briggs, cited in McCalman et al., 2006, p. 7)

Former AFLPA CEO, Brendon Gale, believed that Bray was one who 'slipped through the net':

> There's still a lot of blaming and a lot of finger-pointing going on here. There's a lot of 'he did this and you should have done that'. But having said that, there comes a point where an individual has to take responsibility for his own actions. (Gale, cited in McCalman et al., 2006, p. 7)

Reports and stories like that of Ezra Bray applied significant pressure on the AFL, as a self-proclaimed socially progressive sport association (Macdonald & Booth, 2007), to accept greater responsibility for the welfare of current and transitioning players. Early in the 2000s, this was the domain of Player Development Managers (PDMs) at club level. The PDM role resulted from the CBA negotiated between the AFL and the AFLPA in 2003, which assured a range of outcomes including:

- An annual contribution of $1.5 million by the AFL to the AFLPA, for various education and training activities and grants to support player development and welfare.
- A condition that all AFL clubs must have on their Football Department staff a designated PDM. (AFLPA/AFL, 2003)

Condition 24.7 of the CBA stated that the "AFL Clubs shall advise their Players and the AFLPA of the name of the person within the AFL Club who shall be responsible for Player development" (AFLPA/AFL, 2003, p. 31). The PDM, therefore, had direct responsibility at club level for meeting the diverse development and welfare needs of players. While there

was wide variety in the way clubs used their PDMs, research conducted during 2004/5 reveals that, at that time, clubs held the role of the PDM in very high regard (Hickey & Kelly, 2008). This research indicated that the role of the PDM was becoming increasingly important, even emerging as the first, and possibly most important, point of contact for the on-going management and professional development of AFL footballers. The role included:

- Facilitating professional development for players, often as a de facto careers and education counsellor.
- Developing and implementing induction programs for new players to a club, often including making arrangements for players' families to visit or relocate.
- Working with late career players as they prepared to finish their careers.

However, it was noted by some club officials that exit programs were often not as sophisticated as induction programs (Hickey & Kelly, 2008). As a result, responsibility for player welfare and career transition programs responsibility was taken on by the AFLPA. A key goal of the AFLPA is now to provide real and valuable assistance to current and former players in their transition towards life after AFL football. Cory McGrath, of the AFLPA, explained how transition programs developed at the organisation:

> Player retirement/transition has been something that is relatively new to the AFL. The AFLPA, while relatively small in the early 2000s, subcontracted the services for career development and psychology services. It was during this time of the mid 2000s that the AFLPA saw a need for the services to be brought 'in house' so that services could be monitored and the AFLPA could have more control over what [services] players were using. In 2005, the AFLPA moved all services provided under the Player Development Program in-house, employing experts in the fields of education, player welfare and career transition. Prior to this time, AFL football was deemed semi-professional where players worked full-time and trained at night. Football today has reversed this situation where players train during the day and study at night and/or work during their day off. (McGrath, 2010, pers. comm.)

As a result, there was a significant change in the role of PDMs at club level:

> Welfare managers have been at clubs for quite a while, but their roles are not what they are currently. Welfare managers in the past would relocate a player, find him a home and a job and make sure he turned up to training. These days, the role has expanded, and PDMs take on the transition of the player into the club, find him a home, aid in counselling, assist with the homesickness and pressures of AFL football, mentor players in what are the 'right

> things to do', and develop programs for players. PDMs themselves also receive quarterly Personal Development from the AFLPA in regard to issues in the current environment, e.g., cultural understanding. (McGrath, 2010, pers. comm.)

Today the association aims to help players use the knowledge and skills developed throughout their football career, and combine this with a tailored, comprehensive program. In the words of former AFLPA President, Joel Bowden:

> It's easy to become consumed by the game and forget that there is indeed life after big time footy. The refinement of such support mechanisms means players have access to assistance far better than that offered to players of previous eras. Established for its members, it is important to remember that the AFLPA provides programs, benefits and services that have been designed for you. Making the time to understand just what is available and how to utilise these will be advantageous for all players, past and present. The potential opportunities are vast and can be tailored to individual needs. This is a great time to make personal development a priority and set yourself up for the next stage of your career, in whatever field that may be. (Bowden, cited in Murnane, 2009)

McGrath further described some of the specific services available to players through the AFLPA:

> As already mentioned, programs are pretty recent. At the AFLPA we have a Transition Services Manager who looks after players that retire or have been delisted from their clubs. Their job is to meet with these players to discuss how they have coped with their retirement/delistment and inform the player of the support services that are available. Services include psychology services, career development services, job possibilities, traineeships and apprenticeships, financial health check and if necessary, Indigenous support (via the Indigenous Services Manager). (McGrath, 2010, pers. comm.)

The AFLPA's Transition Services Guide outlines the services provided to retiring players (AFLPA, 2009). These include:

- Career development advice: including education advice and career counselling, education support programs, job preparation skills, education and training grants, and IT and professional development.
- Work: including the Next Goal Program, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities.
- Workshops and short courses: such as coaching courses, investing, property and small business.

- Finance: including a player retirement account, a ‘financial health check’, and superannuation advice.
- The clubs’ obligations to players in the delisting process.

The ‘Trade Apprenticeships for Life-after-Sport’ program is a government-funded joint initiative of Group Training Australia and AFLPA’s partner organisation, AFL SportsReady,[30]—a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), which has delivered employment and training to hundreds of sportspeople. Their programs allow athletes to use their non-sport time to undertake a form of trade training that will meet their needs, as well as that of an employer, by tapping into “innate personal traits such as discipline, commitment and ambition [that] assist the elite athlete in achieving career goals outside of sport, all of which are personal qualities needed to succeed in the area of traditional trades” (AFLPA, 2008). AFLPA services are available to members during their career, and for up to three years following retirement or delisting.

Another important role at club level is that of Indigenous liaison officer. However, currently, the West Coast Eagles is the only AFL club to employ a full-time Indigenous liaison officer; the position is held by ex-player Phil Narkle, an Indigenous man.[31] However, his role does not include responsibility for career transition services. Narkle works closely with members of the player development team, as well as the club's

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[30] AFL SportsReady is a not-for-profit employment and training organisation. The AFLSportsReady program was launched in 1995 and funded by the Australian Football League to provide listed football players an entry into the workforce, primarily in the sports industry. These days, while still a strong logo presence of the AFL, AFL SportsReady traineeships are open to all young people in various industries dedicated to facilitating traineeships and apprenticeships for young people.

[31] Phil Narkle is a former Indigenous Australian Rules footballer who played for the St Kilda Football Club and West Coast Eagles Football Club in the AFL, and the Swan Districts Football Club in the WAFL, during the mid-late 1980s and early 1990s. Unfortunately for West Coast Eagles fans, they never saw the best of the brilliant wingman. After returning from St Kilda as part of the initial West Coast Eagles squad, Narkle was hit by injury and played just nine games in the club’s first season. Those injuries persisted, and Narkle was eventually de-listed. He was then picked up again in the 1990 pre-season draft, and played another nine senior matches with West Coast.

recruiting staff, community staff, and the David Wirrpanda Foundation,[32] which was launched in 2005 with the aim of improving the life outcomes of Indigenous children by promoting appropriate role models and healthy life choices. The focus of the Foundation is to increase the retention of Indigenous students in school, and improve their life choices after leaving school by encouraging further study or entry into the workforce. The West Coast Eagles Club and Supporters' Club are strong supporters of the Foundation.

AFL clubs have funding for past players experiencing financial hardship through the Geoff Pryor Fund. The fund was established in 2007, and supports past players who may be suffering financially as a direct result of injuries sustained throughout their VFL/AFL career. The AFLPA plays a large role in determining if players are eligible for the payment. An annual amount of $5000 is available through the scheme. Additionally, all clubs have past player associations which provide networks and social support.

4.2.2 Rugby League Professionals Association (RLPA)

In its own words, the RLPA aims to be the 'honest broker', overseeing and moderating the 'spheres of influence'—these being the National Rugby League (NRL) Administration, NRL Clubs and registered player agents (RLPA, 2010). It aims to be a relevant, effective and value-adding member-led organisation that supports, promotes and contributes to the professional and personal development of players on and off the field (RLPA, 2010). The RLPA Constitution lists one of their Objectives (Object number 7.7) as "to establish a long term program committed to providing on-going professional support and counselling to rugby league players, coaches and coaching staff in a wide range of matters including but

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[32] David Wirrpanda is a former Australian Rules footballer, who played for the West Coast Eagles Football Club in the AFL between 1996 and 2009. He is seen as a prominent role model for many Indigenous Australians. Wirrpanda's father is a Djapu man who still lives traditionally amongst the Yolngu people (in Arnhem Land, in northern Australia). Wirrpunda senior is a tribal king and David, being the eldest son, has royal blood flowing through his veins. Wirrpunda (junior) was named the ninth most influential Aboriginal Australian by *The Bulletin* magazine in 2007 and 2008. He was recognised amongst Western Australia's Inspirational people of the Year in 2008 in *Scoop Magazine*, and in 2009 received the award for Young Western Australian of the Year. Apart from being a role model, Wirrpanda is also the face of the organisation and receives dozens of requests to speak at, or take part in, events supporting the Foundation.

not limited to, personal development and financial, legal, marital and grief counselling" (RLPA, 2008, p. 3). The Association sees itself as the first point of contact for members, who require advice relating to contracts, welfare, education, player agents, and post-career life (RLPA, 2010). The history of transition programs for NRL players has proceeded along similar lines to those of AFL players, with initiatives initially being at club level. PDM of the South Sydney Rabbitohs, John Hutchinson, explained:

> There certainly has been a more concerted effort over the last ten years at least to assist players with the transition out of their playing careers. The NRL actually looked at the AFL program in the early 2000s and decided to use a decentralised model that had greater flexibility at the club level. Also in reviewing the organisation that was looking after the [AFL] transition program there was some criticism from the AFL clubs and athletes. Although it was a fairly comprehensive program the uptake was small. (Hutchinson, 2010, pers. comm.)

As time went on, the RLPA became involved in the transition programs, albeit to a limited degree. Importantly, this included the development of an Education and Welfare Committee. Hutchinson continued:

> The NRL/RLPA relationship started to forge ahead when the NRL, through Matt Francis, formed an NRL Education and Welfare Committee that included two club reps, NRL reps and RLPA reps. The RLPA takes an interest in the transitioning program, but it is generally the clubs and NRL, through the Education and Welfare Committee, that oversee the program. To this end, the NRL have, or are about to appoint, a retiring player who will look after this important area. The RLPA follow up on specific enquiries from their members (players) and normally follow up with the NRL. I don't think they have the resources currently to look after the transition program. The Education and Welfare Committee has since grown to include an independent chairperson, and education and industry experts as independent advisors from time to time.
>
> Player development/welfare managers have been around for a little over 10 years with Paul Heptonstall the first [at Wests Tigers], which I suppose is a fairly recent innovation, but there has always been someone in club-land who may have looked after aspects of welfare from time to time. Don't know that there are many Indigenous people employed at clubs although this has been considered. At our club we have used ex-player David Peachey[33] as

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[33] David Peachey was born in Dubbo in the Central West of NSW, on 21 February 1974. He made his first grade debut with the Cronulla Sharks Football Club against the Canberra Raiders Football Club, in 1994, and finished with the Sharks in 2005 before an ill-fated stint with the Widnes Vikings Football Club in the UK Super League. Mid-season in 2006, Peachey joined the South Sydney Rabbitohs Football Club and instantly became not only a crowd favourite, but a leader amongst the playing group. Peachey has earned himself legendary status in the game of rugby league since graduating to the 'big time' from the Dubbo Macquarie

> a mentor and he is also an ambassador for our community programs. (Hutchinson, 2010, pers. comm.)

Like the AFL, the development of transition programs reflected the growing professionalism of the sport, and recognition of cultural diversity—with additional pressure coming from media reports yet again detailing instances of players behaving badly (for examples, see Crawley, 2009; Keene, 2009; Ritchie, 2007). Hutchinson commented:

> I suppose it could be said that media attention drove the changes but it was always identified that all clubs would have someone in the positions and that there would be a growing program. The incidents that attracted attention through the media probably hurried things along a bit. When I mention media stories I'm talking more generally about negative press around player behaviour. This has hurried all the Education and Welfare programs along. (Hutchinson, 2010, pers. comm.)

Hutchinson also noted the importance of the NRL's Indigenous leadership group that gives support for Indigenous players, along with the Indigenous Rugby League council. As rugby league has a high numbers of players who have come from Pacific islands, similar structures are to be developed specifically to suit the needs of this particular cultural group as well.

The NRL/RLPA publication, *Welfare and Education Program 2011 & 2012: Success On and Off the Field,* outlines the transition program and services available to players from the two organisations. The key points of the program are:

> *Vision* (the key 'why' to our actions): When our players leave, they are better men for having been part of the League.
>
> *The core* of what we are doing and our desired player attributes: 'We care for and develop our players to help them become men who are:
>
> - Proud of the game.
> - Wise decision makers.

Club as a junior. Not only has he played in over 250 NRL games for both the Cronulla Sharks and the Rabbitohs, he has also represented NSW on four occasions, and played for Australia in 1997. He is highly respected for his on-field achievements, and also for his community work, particularly within Indigenous communities across Australia. Across the nation he is broadly regarded as an Aboriginal leader.

- ‘Balanced’ in life.
- Vocationally prepared.
- Self-aware and self-confident.
- Good teammates’. (NRL/RLPA, 2010, p. 6)

In the publication, the program is introduced by Chairman of the Education and Welfare Committee, Mark Coyne, who stated:

> It is the responsibility of the NRL/RLPA Welfare and Education Committee to ensure the game provides its players with a balanced Welfare and Education program that not only enhances a player’s involvement within the game, but also supports his ability to develop a successful career outside of rugby league. (NRL/RLPA, 2010, p. 2)

The career transition program outlined in this document is aimed at players who have turned the age of at least 26 years and, if desired, can involve their partners or relevant family members. Retiring players who have spent a minimum of seven years in the NRL, or have retired earlier through injury or hardship, are provided further assistance for at least another two years after their final game. This includes:

- Psychological support to deal with change, including counselling support for the player and their family if required.
- Financial assistance with education programs.
- Career assessment.
- Links to rugby league support groups, which can provide on-going support, social connections and networks. These include Men of League,[34] and NRL old boys associations.

While the transition program outlined above is certainly a welcome initiative, the conditions for eligibility are puzzling, in that many players are delisted well before the age of 26, or may not have spent seven years in the game. In addition, it is curious that these

[34] The Men of League Foundation assists Rugby League players, coaches, referees, officials, and administrators, from all levels of the game, as well as members of their families who have fallen on hard times.

services are restricted to only those players who have been injured or have experienced hardship, as it is well accepted that many athletes do experience some difficulties upon retirement, and potentially could benefit from some of these services. Indeed, these facts are acknowledged in the organisation's own publication;

> All NRL players will at one stage of their career be faced with the reality that their life as a professional athlete will come to an end. Hopefully all players will have built some education and career foundations to make this transition easy. Most players that have been professional athletes for a number of years will find some aspect of this retirement very difficult. (NRL/RLPA, 2010, p. 4)

4.2.3 Elite Athlete Friendly University (EAFU) Program

Both the AFLPA and the RLPA have career development and planning programs in place for their players, which link with the EAFU program. This initiative supports Australia's elite athletes to achieve academic excellence while also pursuing a career in football, with the program brochure noting: "The value of combining both sport and higher education to achieve greater life success is well recognised across the university and sporting sectors" (Australian Sports Commission, 2010, p. 2). There are 36 universities across Australia that form the EAFU network. Each of these universities has a contact person to support elite athletes within their university. The EAFU provides:

- advice and guidance on academic planning;
- support in negotiating flexibility to meet academic requirements;
- advocacy within the university environment;
- support in negotiating and/or implementing cross-institutional study or credit transfer arrangements, and
- advice and support to local ACE advisers or related personnel.

4.2.4. Athlete Career and Education (ACE) Program

In Australia, a number of sport organisations have responded to a need for career development amongst elite athletes. A major program offered to athletes from a range of

sports is known as ACE; it is a part of the National Coach and Athlete Career and Education (NCACE) program. Run through the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) and affiliated state institutes and academies, the program focuses on helping athletes to reach their educational, vocational, and personal goals. The main objective of the ACE program is to provide nationally consistent services, designed to assist elite athletes to undertake professional and personal development opportunities while pursuing and achieving excellence in sport (Australian Institute of Sport, 2009). The ACE program, therefore, provides eligible athletes with career transition support. The role of the ACE advisors is to assist athletes to more effectively combine sport and vocational aspirations without compromising their sports objectives, and to assist athletes to develop education and career plans incorporating all aspects of their life. Eligible athletes are those who are scholarship holders from an Institute of Sport, as well as some who are in national squads. The program is thus only available for a small proportion of athletes.

Within three months of becoming eligible for the program, athletes undergo an individual assessment with ACE advisors. This assessment provides a structured process in which to assess the athletes' educational, vocational, financial, and personal development needs, and becomes the basis for developing a career and education action plan with each individual athlete. The ACE program runs a number of seminars, courses, and training evenings throughout the year on a range of topics, designed to assist athletes in achieving their highest potential in and out of the sports arena. Additional assistance is provided in the areas of career counselling, educational guidance, résumé development, employment networks, as well as access to scholarships for professional skill development, access to personal development courses, and assistance with achieving a balance between sport and career development (Australian Institute of Sport, 2009). Support is available to guide AIS athletes through all sport transition phases, including non-selection, retirement, injury, rehabilitation, moving from junior to senior teams, and relocation. This support is available to eligible athletes in transition periods throughout their scholarship, and for 12 months after they leave. During this period ACE personnel provide a follow-up service, which allows both parties an opportunity to discuss and review the athletes' current situation with

regards to their career and/or education plans, and offer further assistance if required (Australian Institute of Sport, 2009).

Although the ACE program is widely regarded as “delivering the most comprehensive athlete lifestyle program in the world” (Anderson & Morris, 2000, p. 67), is has not been without challenges. An early program evaluation demonstrated that only 18% of eligible Australian athletes were aware of the services offered by the program (Gorely et al., 1998), with a later report demonstrating that program services were used by less than 1% (0.7%) of eligible athletes (Lavallee et al., 2001). That report also indicated a low perceived importance from athletes towards retirement issues (Lavallee et al., 2001). A preliminary report on a five-year longitudinal study commissioned by the ASC, to evaluate the ACE program in 2003 described:

1) the need to continue to promote the full range of ACE services;
2) the need for programs to be targeted to meet the specific needs of athletes whose singular focus may cause adjustment difficulties if their plans do not come to fruition;
3) the need for programs to be targeted to different age groups, and
4) the need for services to be provided in a timely and efficient manner in order to overcome the perceived barrier of ACE being a distraction from sport commitment and performance (Albion & Fogarty, 2003).

A later study suggested that earlier concerns regarding the administration of the program may have been largely resolved, thereby reasserting the usefulness of ACE services to athletes, and particularly of the specialist training provided to counsellors within the program (Dagley, 2004).

The preceding sections outlined the development of organisations and programs that exist to provide support to retiring athletes, and their relatively short history. Ostensibly, the relevant policies and programs reflect concerns for athlete welfare during this transition process. How these policies play out will be illustrated as both the key stakeholders, as well as the athletes themselves, discuss their lived experiences of SCT.

4.3 INTERVIEW FINDINGS

4.3.1 Respondent profiles

In this section the background and demographic information of participants assist in understanding the characteristics of the Indigenous athletes as a population. Information includes the athletes' ages, family situations, origins, sport playing years, athletic identities, education, and work status.

Geographical origins: As indicated in *Figure 4.1,*[35] some participants grew up in areas of Australia that were rural and remote, while some grew up in regional and urban areas. All relocated to major cities at some point in order to play elite-level sport.

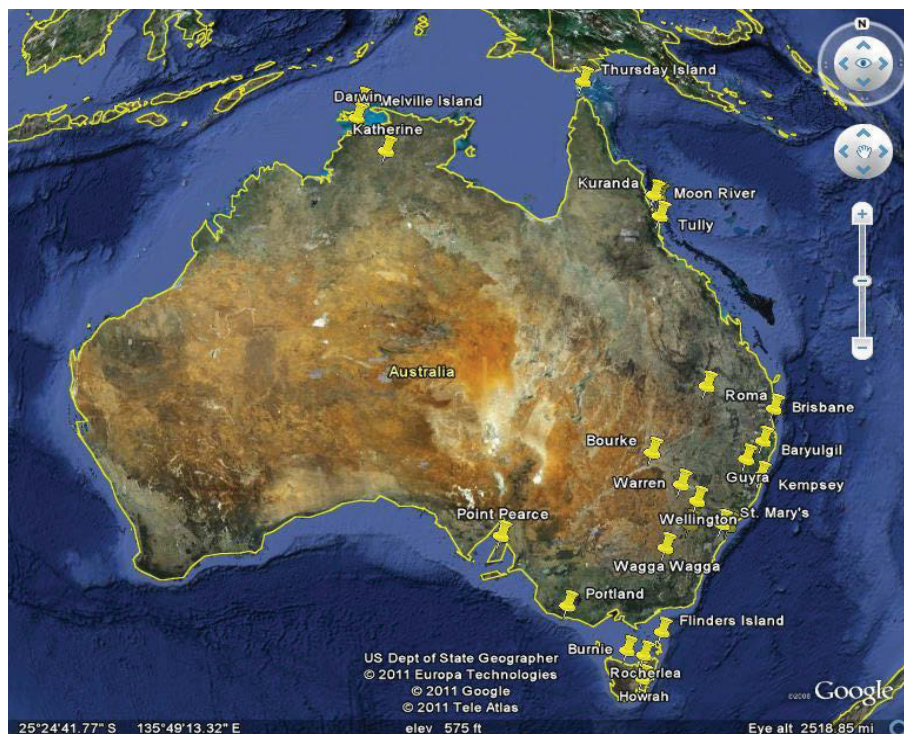

Figure 4.1: Geographical origins

[35] The map in Figure 4.1 shows only one Australian state capital city, Brisbane, in the state of Queensland. Other points on the map are (a) urban areas: Howrah, Rocherlea, Burnie, St. Mary's, (b) rural towns: Kuranda, Moon River, Tully, Roma, Baryulgil, Bourke, Warren, Kempsey, Guyra, Wellington, Wagga Wagga, Point Pearce, Portland, (c) remote areas: Melville Island, Katherine, Thursday Island, Flinders Island, and (d) the regional city of Darwin, in the Northern Territory.

Age details: The age of the athlete participants ranged from 18 to 65 years (mean=34.8, SD=12.01). The number of years that the athletes were involved in their sport at elite levels ranged from two to 19 years (mean=9.4, SD=5.04). Results indicate that professional boxers tend to retire at a slightly older age than amateur boxers, AFL, or NRL players.

Table 4.1: Age details by sport

Age	Ave Age (yrs)	Range (yrs)	Ave Age (yrs) at Retirement	Range (yrs)	Time in Sport (yrs)	Retirement Year Range
Professional Boxers (7)	37.7	27-58	30.2	24-34	11.2	1989–2009
Amateur Boxers (7)	24.7	18-36	24.7	23-25	5.4	1997–2008
AFL Footballers (10)	39.3	29-58	28.4	28-37	12.1	1989–2009
NRL Footballers (6)	35.7	23-65	29.0	25-36	9.0	1989–2008
Average	34.8		28.1		9.5	

Marital and Family Status: Nearly 17% of the athletes were single, 77% were married or co-habiting at the time of the interviews, and 12% were either divorced or separated.

Table 4.2: Family status by sport

Family Status	Married/ Partner %	Single%	Divorced/ Separated	Av. No. of Children
Professional Boxers (7)	85.7	14.3	0.0	1.9
Amateur boxers (7)	71.4	28.6	0.0	0.4
AFL Footballer (10)`	80.0	10.0	10.0	3.0
NRL Footballers (6)	71.4	14.3	14.3	2.6
Average	77.1	16.8	12.2	2.0

Athletic Status: All of the athletes in this study competed in their sport at the very highest levels, and thus, fit the definition of *elite* as provided by the athlete-friendly university group (ANU, 2008) (see *Section 3.4.1*), with the exception of four boxers, whose retirements occurred prior to the development of AIS boxing programs. In their cases, all

had competed at national or international professional levels (e.g., professional Australian Titles, World Championships, and Oceania Championships), including Commonwealth and/or Olympic Games.

Table 4.3: Athletic status by sport

Demographic data	Current	Retired	Total
Professional Boxers	3	4	7
Amateur Boxers	4	3	7
AFL Footballers	0	10	10
NRL Footballers	2	4	6
Total	9	21	30

Athletic Identity (AI): AI was initially defined as the degree to which an individual identifies with the athlete role (Brewer, 1993). The AIMS[36] is a short questionnaire, with ten Likert items encompassing social, cognitive, and affective elements of AI, which tap into the thoughts and feelings from an athlete's daily experiences. Within the group, strong AI numbers appeared. Figures showed that amateur boxers had the highest levels of AI, followed by professional boxers, then AFL footballers, with NRL footballers having the lowest levels. Overall, athletes recorded relatively high measures on this scale (range 33–49, mean=37.39). This was higher than scores reported by Fraser, Albion, & Fogarty (2008) (mean=35.9) when they put the survey to athletes involved in the ACE—the sport career transition program delivered by the AIS and associated institutions (AIS, 2009). In a study of Scottish sportswomen (Gilmore, 2008), scores for the high AI group ranged from 41 to 46 (mean=43.1, SD=1.64), and scores for the low AI group ranged from 20 to 34 (mean=28.8, SD=4.5). Against that sample, the current cohort again reported comparatively high levels.

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[36] For a full discussion on AI and the AIMS, see *Section 3.4.8*

Table 4.4: Athletic identity by sport

ATHLETE IDENTITY MEASUREMENT SCALE (*retrospective version)	Amateur Boxers	Pro. Boxers	AFL	NRL	Mean Scores
1. I consider (*considered) myself an athlete.	4.57	5.00	4.88	4.60	4.76
11. I have (*had) many goals related to sport.	4.86	4.67	4.50	4.20	4.56
12. Most of my friends are (*were) athletes.	3.57	3.50	3.63	3.40	3.53
13. Sport is (*was) the most important part of my life.	3.71	3.00	3.25	2.80	3.19
14. I spend (*spent) more time thinking about sport than anything else.	4.14	3.67	3.38	2.60	3.45
15. I need (*needed) to participate in sport to feel good about myself.	3.86	3.50	3.63	2.60	3.40
16. Other people see (*saw) me mainly as an athlete.	4.00	4.17	4.63	4.20	4.25
17. I feel (*felt) bad about myself when I do (*did) poorly in sport.	3.86	4.33	3.88	4.00	4.02
18. Sport is (*was) the only important thing in my life.	3.00	2.33	2.38	1.60	2.33
19. I would be (*have been) very depressed if I were (*was) injured and could not compete in sport.	4.29	3.83	3.75	3.80	3.92
Totals	**39.86**	**38.00**	**37.91**	**33.80**	**37.39**

It is significant that amateur boxers—those serviced by the ACE program whilst on scholarship at the AIS—scored especially high levels of AI (mean=39.86). This is in contrast to the findings of Albion and Fogarty (2003) in their study of 893 AIS athletes, which reported that the athletes found to be most likely to have career and adjustment difficulties were young males in high profile and high income sports, due to their high levels of AI. Contrary to this logic, findings in the current study suggest that it is the amateur boxers who may be particularly at risk of over-commitment to the athletic role, identity foreclosure, delays in career maturity, and zeteophobia, when compared to their peers in the other sports.

Arguably, Indigenous participants may have scored even higher on the AIMS, but a number of responses were influenced by particular beliefs and values of the group. The AIMS was developed for a typical group of respondents; however, in this study the sample group was different and distinctive. Items 4 and 9 required the participants to rate the importance of sport in their lives. When the participants considered items 4 and 9, many insisted that in their lives, the most important thing was family, not sport. In fact, the mean scores for these two items were the lowest recorded (3.19 and 2.33 respectively). The explanation for this appears to relate specifically to the participants' cultural context. Accordingly, it could be argued that being part of a subjugated 'racial' minority in a white-dominated society necessitates a sense of identity that reflects a lifelong, passionate commitment to Indigeneity and cultural customs—such as kinship links and community values—which foster Indigenous resilience. Thus, an elite *Indigenous* athlete is more than 'just' an athlete, regardless of their physical prowess and sporting acumen. Perhaps, therefore, the responses to items 4 and 9 provide an affirmation of the *hybrid* nature of identity for elite Indigenous athletes.

Education and work status: According to Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures, (ABS, 2008), in 2008 some 21.2% of the Indigenous population, and 53.8 % of the non-Indigenous population completed Year 12 of school.[37] In the present study, 35.5% of interviewees had completed Year 12, and a similar percentage had completed a post-school qualification. These figures are higher than those quoted for Indigenous people in the ABS statistics, but lower than those reported for the non-Indigenous population (ABS, 2008). At the time of interview, 9.7% of interviewees were unemployed, again higher than non-Indigenous people in the ABS statistics, but lower than the general Indigenous population (ABS, 2008).

[37] Year 12 is the final year in the Australian high school system.

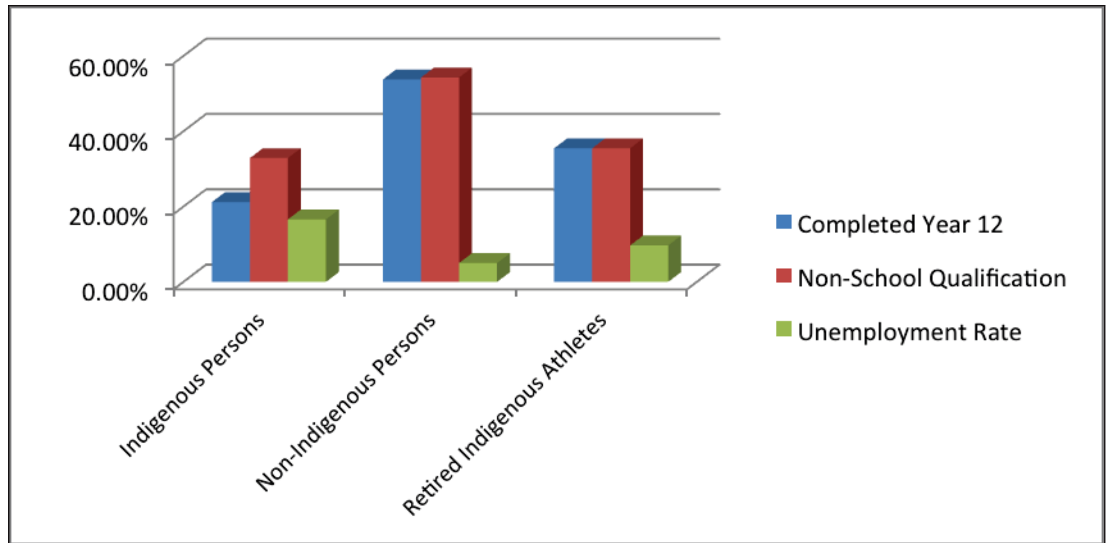

Figure 4.2: Education and work status of Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons, and retired Indigenous athletes (2008)

Academic status and qualifications: At the time of the interviews, 24 of the athletes were employed, two were unemployed, three were employed solely as professional athletes, one was a full-time student, and one received a disability pension. Another was studying part-time for a bachelor degree, while also working full-time. The highest academic qualifications gained by the athletes are shown in *Table 4.5.*

Table 4.5: Education levels of Indigenous athletes by sport

Athletes by sport	Still in high school	Did not complete high school	Completed high school	Certificate or diploma	Degree or attending university
Professional Boxers (7)	0	5	2	2	0
Amateur Boxers (7)	1	5	2	1	0
AFL Footballers (10)	0	8	2	6	1
NRL Footballers (6)	0	1	5	1	1
Total (30)	1	19	11	10	2

Changes to residential status during transition and after sport: As indicated in *Figure 4.1* (also see *Footnote 35*) some participants had grown up in urban, rural and remote areas of Australia,[38] while others had grown up in cities and urban precincts. All had relocated to state capital cities at some point to play elite-level sport. However, during their transition out of elite-level sport, and post-sport, the Indigenous athletes also made changes to their geographical place of residence. As demonstrated in *Table 4.6,* there were 24 athletes out of a total of 30 who originated from rural or remote areas. Of these, 13 had permanently relocated to cities or urban areas after sport (or planned to do so), while 11 returned to rural or remote areas (or planned to do so). The remaining six originated from cities or urban areas, and remained in those areas.

[38] Urban and rural areas are defined as follows. Major urban areas are urban centres with 100,000 or more people, other urban areas are those with between 1,000 and 99,999 people. Rural localities are places with 200-999 people). Remoteness is defined in terms of access along road networks to service centres (a hierarchy of urban centres with populations of 5,000 or more). Localities that are more remote have less access to these service centres whilst those that are less remote have greater access. (ABS. 2000)

Table 4.6: Changes to residential status during sport career

Alias and Age	Family situation	Pre-sport	Sport career	Transition	Post-sport
RETIRED ATHLETES					
Steve 58 AFL	**Married, 2 children**	Rural	City	Urban	Urban
Robin 52 AFL	**Separated, 3 children**	Remote	City	Rural	Remote
Kevin 31 AFL	**Married, 2 children**	Rural	City	Rural	Rural
Norman 32 AFL	**Re-married, 5 children**	Remote	City	Rural	City
Brian 44 AFL	**Divorced, 4 children.**	Rural	City	Rural	Remote
David 44 AFL	**Married, 4 children**	Rural	City	City	Rural
Scott 33 AFL	**Married, 4 children**	Rural	City	City	City
Nathan 34 AFL	**Married, 3 children**	Rural	City	City	City
Johnny 32 SFL	**Married, 2 children**	Rural	City	City	City
Ben 29 AFL	**Married, 1 child**	Rural	City	City	City
Tom 31 P/Boxer	**Single, 0 children**	Urban	City	City	City
Anders 27 A/Boxer	**Partner, 0 children**	Rural	City	Urban	Urban
Nick 36 A/Boxer	**Married, 2 children**	Rural	City	City	City
Pete 36 P/Boxer	**Partner, 1 child (dec'd)**	Rural	City	Rural	Rural
Wills 24 A/Boxer	**Partner, 0 children**	Rural	City	City	City
Jerry 58 P/Boxer	**Partner, 3 children**	Rural	City	City	City

Billy 55 P/Boxer	**Partner, 4 children**	Rural	City	City	City
Simon 36 NRL	**Married, 4 children**	Remote	City	Remote	Remote
Neville 26 NRL	**Married, 2 children**	Rural	City	City	City
Alex 35 NRL	**Married, 3 children**	Rural	City	City	City
Eric 65 NRL	**Separated, 4 children**	Rural	City	City	Rural
CURRENT ATHLETES (PLANNED RESIDENCE POST SPORT)					
Dennis 22 A/Boxer	**Partner, 1 child**	Urban	City	Urban	Urban
Kris 29 P/Boxer	**Partner, 2 children**	Urban	City	Urban	Urban
George 25 A/Boxer	**Partner, 0 children**	Remote	City	City	Remote
Ian 21 P/Boxer	**Single, 0 children**	Remote	City	Urban	Rural
Kim 28 P/Boxer	**Married, 3 children**	Rural	City	Urban	Urban
Jack 27 P/Boxer	**Partner 0 children**	Urban	City	Urban	Urban
Josh 18 A/Boxer	**Single, 0 children**	Rural	City	Rural	Rural
Bradley 23 NRL	**Single, 0 children**	Urban	City	Urban	Urban
Matthew 26 NRL	**Partner, 3 children**	Urban	City	Urban	Urban

4.3.2 Key stakeholder profiles

Key stakeholders were drawn from each of the three sports, including representatives from both professional and amateur boxing organisations, as shown in *Table 4.7*. These respondents held significant positions of responsibility in their sport organisations, with some having done so for many years.

Table 4.7: Overview of key stakeholders

Key Stakeholder	Sport/Organisation	Position
1	Boxing (pro and amateur)	Administrator/Coach
2	Boxing (amateur)	Administrator/Coach
3	Boxing (amateur)	Administrator/Coach
4	Boxing (amateur)	Administrator
5	Boxing (amateur)	Administrator/Coach
6	Boxing (professional)	Manager
7	Boxing	Administrator/Coach
8	NRL	Welfare and Development Manager
9	NRL	Welfare and Development Manager
10	NRL	Welfare and Development Manager
11	NRL	Coach
12	NRL	Manager
13	AFL	Player Services Coordinator
14	AFL	Player Development Manager
15	AFL	Player Development Manager
16	AFL	Player Development Manager
17	AFL	Player Development Manager
18	AFL	Manager
19	AFL	Coach
20	AFL	Development Coach
21	AFL	Program Manager
22	AFL	Program Manager
23	AFL	Program Manager
24	AIS	Program Manager
25	AIS	Program Manager

It is significant to note that there were four Indigenous people within the Key Stakeholder group. The Indigenous members of the key stakeholder group were in a unique position, in

that they were able to provide insight into some of the cultural and core values of Indigenous society that influenced the behaviours and career decision-making of Indigenous athletes nearing the end of their sport careers.

4.3.3 Interview findings

Interview findings are now presented in several interdependent divisions in order to produce a synthesised findings section. The section includes both athlete interview findings and relevant comments from the key 25 stakeholders. These will be interspersed, as appropriate, throughout the following sections. Compelling and powerful quotes are included to effectively illustrate points being discussed, with additional verification statements included in *Appendix 5*. Pseudonyms are used for athletes in order to provide an ethically sound, yet personal and intimate, presentation of the data. To further contextualise the experiences being described, both the athlete's sport and his year of retirement follow the name. It is considered especially important to present a personalised examination of the participants' experiences because much of the previous SCT research has relied heavily on questionnaires and scales, therefore the athletes themselves have at times been given little voice (refer to *Section 3.4*). As a result, it has been difficult for the concerns of those athlete groups to be fully articulated and recognised. In terms of this study, it is important to recognise that Indigenous Australian athletes are not homogenous, and are part of a highly diverse socio-cultural group of first nation peoples. Because of these twin factors, variation is to be expected among the interviewees and in the interview findings. Three general dimensions of data will thus be presented as a way of organising and conceptualising the emergent data.[39] These are:

1) Engaging Indigeneity.
2) The Retirement Experience.
3) Racism and Racialisation in Australian Sport.

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[39] The strategy for organising the data this way has been explained in detail in *Section 3.4.9*.

To give the reader a sense of the personal, vocational, and familial situations of the individual athletes, a thumbnail sketch of each athlete is provided in *Table 4.8*, below.

Table 4.8: Interview participants

Alias and age at interview	Sport	Status	Individual characteristics
Steve 58	AFL	Retired	Married, 2 children, tradesman. Has coached lower level teams. Playing golf to keep fit.
Robin 52	AFL	Retired	Separated, 3 children. Has coached lower level teams. Manages community development programs.
Kevin 31	AFL	Retired	Married, 2 children. Works in an Indigenous mentoring role. Still plays AFL in lower level competition.
Norman 32	AFL	Retired	Divorced and remarried, 5 children. Has coached lower level teams. Youth worker.
Brian 44	AFL	Retired	Divorced, 4 children. Lives with daughter. Has coached and played in lower level teams. Manager.
David 44	AFL	Retired	Married, 4 children, significant coaching positions. Youth worker.
Scott 33	AFL	Retired	Married, 4 children, significant coaching positions. Works in sport development.
Nathan 34	AFL	Retired	Married, 3 children. Works in an Indigenous development role. Studying for Bachelor degree.
Johnny 32	AFL	Retired	Married, 2 children. Works in Indigenous sport development. Uncertain about long-term goals.
Ben 29	AFL	Retired	Recently married, 1 child. Works in Indigenous mentoring role.
Tom 31	Boxing (pro)	Retired	Single. Has coaching and training experience. Works in sport promotions. Struggles with behaviour problems.
Anders 27	Boxing (amateur)	Retired	Engaged. Works as a personal trainer and role model in remote communities. Is considering a comeback.
Dennis 22	Boxing (amateur)	Current	Has 1 child with partner, lives at family home. Hoping for selection in World Boxing Championship team.
Nick 36	Boxing (amateur)	Retired	Married, 2 children. Works as personal trainer. Struggles with memory lapses.
Pete 36	Boxing (pro)	Retired	Lives with partner at family home, 1 child (deceased). Youth worker. Is considering a comeback to sport competition.
Kris 29	Boxing (pro)	Current	Lives with partner and 2 children. Youth worker. Highly motivated individual.
Wills 24	Boxing	Retired	Lives with girlfriend, works part-time as labourer. Battles depression,

	(amateur)		weight and body image problems, gambling.
George 25	Boxing (amateur)	Current	Lives with partner in city, works part-time as labourer. Yearns for peace, likes to go home to the country whenever he can.
Ian 21	Boxing (pro)	Current	Single, works as labourer. About to leave the country with a contract to fight professionally overseas.
Jerry 58	Boxing (pro)	Retired	Separated, 3 children. Lives with partner. Works as trainer, and has a second part-time job. Very fit and active!
Billy 55	Boxing (pro)	Retired	Separated, 4 children. Lives with partner. Battled alcoholism but now does not drink. Respected elder in local Indigenous community.
Kim 28	Boxing (pro)	Current	Married, 3 children. Works as personal trainer, part-time fitness coach. Training for World title bout.
Jack 27	Boxing (pro)	Current	Lives with partner. Has youth work qualifications. Works as teacher's aide. Struggles to get many fights.
Josh 18	Boxing (amateur)	Current	Full-time university student. Plans to be a personal trainer. Is hoping for C/W Games selection.
Simon 36	NRL	Retired	Married, 4 children, traditional land owner. Community development manager, coaches junior teams.
Neville 26	NRL	Retired	Married, 2 children. Has battled alcoholism, now sober. Works in a sport mentoring role. Boxes professionally.
Alex 35	NRL	Retired	Married, 3 children. Various roles in sport consultancy and promotions, but uncertain about long-term goals.
Bradley 23	NRL	Current	Single, no children, doing vocational training. Hopes to buy an apartment at the end of the year.
Matthew 26	NRL	Current	Married, 3 children. Has spent all his money, struggles with finances and motivation to do vocational training.
Eric 65	NRL	Retired	Separated, 4 children. Significant coaching career. Works in a sport development role.

The topics presented are organised according to the table of general dimensions, phase, elements, themes, and sub-themes which emerged from the athlete interviews, shown in *Table 4.9.*

Table 4.9: Table of general dimensions, phases, elements, themes and sub-themes

General Dimensions ***(inductive and deductive)***		**Sub-Themes** ***(inductive and deductive)***
Engaging Indigeneity (*inductive*)	***Elements (theory-related)***	
	Habitus	Personal identity
		Indigenous heritage and culture
		The ‘natural’ athlete
		Family cohesion and connectedness
		Acculturation (Relocation)
	Capital	Valuing the ‘physical’
		Athletic identity
	The Field	The athlete persona
		Physical legacy of elite sport
The Retirement Experience (*deductive*)	**Phases (*deductive*)**	
	Exiting Sport	Pulled towards retirement
		Anti-pull factors

		Pushed towards retirement
		Anti-push factors
	Nowhere Land	Situation
		Support
		Adaptive behaviours
	New Beginnings	Coming to terms
		Rural/Urban tensions
		Career choices
		Pathways in sport?
		Agency
		Reflections
Racism and Racialisation in Australian Sport (*deductive*)	***Themes***	
	Racism during sport	
	Racism beyond sport	
	Indigenous invisibility	
	Tokenism	

Finally, to remind the reader, a summary of workplace conditions relating to the four sports under investigation is provided in *Table 4.10*.

Table 4.10: Workplace conditions

Sport	Average elite career length	Average income (per annum)	SCT program
Professional Boxers (7)	5	Unclear, approximately $15-20,000	Nil, some gym-based programs
Amateur Boxers (7)	3-4	Scholarship only	ACE for those at AIS
AFL Footballers (10)	3-4	$225,000	AFLPA
NRL Footballers (6)	3-4	$177,750	Clubs, NRL, RLPA

4.4 FIRST GENERAL DIMENSION: ENGAGING INDIGENEITY

The first general dimension involves the elements of the Bourdieuian theoretical triad—habitus, capital, and field. Bourdieu's work has proved most useful in theorising how Indigenous athletes come to gain a sense of self as they progress through their careers. This section illustrates how these elements may have influenced the nature of SCT for the Indigenous athletes.

4.4.1 First Element: Habitus

Within a Bourdieuian approach, the habitus is a central construct which aligns closely with identity. The processes by which the athletes constructed their sense of identity and developed values in turn influenced their involvement in their social worlds, and shaped the ways they constructed their social practices. For the athletes, feelings about identity involved what were dubbed in the thesis as sub-themes. These were: personal identity, the importance of their Indigenous heritage and culture, the notion of the 'natural athlete', family cohesion and connectedness, and acculturation and re-location.

Personal identity

Participants' obvious pride in their Indigenous identity and heritage was typified by the words of Alex (r2007 NRL), "I am a strong black man, and I know who I am and where I'm from". That comment was reiterated in various forms by several participants. Neville's (r2008 NRL) self-description was succinct: "I'm just a 'blackfella' from the bush, that's the way I see it you know, and for me, nothing will ever change around that." It was significant that both of these athletes chose to acknowledge their skin colour; and that this was a factor which helped them assert their sense of identity.

Many of the athletes described 'tough' early lives. Nevertheless, they suggested that the love they felt, the values they developed, and the memories they held, more than outweighed any deficiencies. Alex remembered a precious time:

> And he [my grandfather] grew up on the land, so I mean every opportunity we had, that's where we'd go. And I mean, there were many, many of us who'd sit up at all hours of the night and wait for that old bus to go onto the dirt road. And I mean, growing up around the shearing sheds, going shooting, rabbiting, fishing, living on the river. I mean, for me, I wouldn't give that up. You talk to the city kids down this way over the time and they go 'oh, we got the beaches, we got the shopping malls', but we in the bush got everything—we got living on the land! At that time, I didn't know a lot about my culture, but that slowly was inherited as I got older. (Alex r2007 NRL)

A career in sport gave these men a special opportunity to better their own personal situations, and to rise above their self-declared disadvantaged circumstances. At the same time it gave them the opportunity to inspire other Indigenous people. This was an important part of their identity. Jack (current Boxing) explained:

> Nah, it's not the dollars. It's more those other things. It's not the money at all. I've never been motivated by money. And even though I've never really had too much money, it's never really been a factor for me to turn around and saying that I'm doing it for money. The challenge has been a personal chance to say that I can do it, that I've come from nowhere. And it's been a chance for me to say to the other kids of [my economically depressed suburb] and that that they can do something when they put their heads to it. So that's been my whole motivation, in that I can prove that we can all do something.

Sport gave the athletes another opportunity—to publically 'prove' themselves to be as good as anyone else. This may be reflective of the competitive nature of the participants as

athletes, but it was a motivating factor for them to engage in an elite sport career and important in developing identity. Anders explained:

> [I like] proving people wrong—so all my life I've been proving people wrong, which I love doing, but when people say you won't be able to beat this guy, then I end up beating him by about 20 points, just by proving people wrong. So if people say you can't do it, I love jumping in there and showing them. (Anders r2008 Boxing)

As discussed earlier, Indigenous disadvantage is evident in Australia across virtually every socio-economic indicator. The interviewees asserted that when an Indigenous person triumphs, typically against the odds, it is surely worthy of celebration:

> It was always good to see a young brother succeed because we know how hard it is, we know the circumstances that surround a lot of us. And it comes back from domestic violence, alcoholism, broken homes. And not saying that other cultures or identities don't go through it, but we seem to be the hardest hit by it, and when a young brother succeeds, it is a real good success story. (Alex r2007 NRL)

Indigenous heritage and culture

Indigenous identity is entwined with a staunch pride in cultural heritage, along with an acceptance of kinship and community obligations (Adair & Stronach, 2011; Hallinan & Judd, 2009; Tatz, 1995). Many athletes described how they negotiated relations between traditional cultural practices and modernity. While they were not necessarily trying to cling to ways of the past, their living culture was of utmost importance. Current NRL footballer Bradley explained:

> I may not look like the darkest guy, but my family is very culture orientated, especially my Nan—my Nan's full Indigenous female from mid north coast, Kempsey, and up there our culture is still very strong. We still try to continue to teach as much as we can, things like fishing, obviously playing football, my uncle's an artist—stuff like that. We all try to keep that as strong as we can and my family tries to drive that into us, to be proud of our Indigenous heritage and to do as much as we can to help other Indigenous people.

Maintaining culture was challenging for some Indigenous athletes as they became caught up in the intensity of their sport. However, the struggle for these athletes to retain a sense of their own personal authenticity and cultural integrity was on-going. Some participants discussed how they planned to explore their culture and Indigenous heritage further, once they retired from sport. This was not just a case of learning more about traditional

Aboriginal customs, but a complex process of (re)discovering and embracing an identity. This process was intended to ensure that Indigenous heritage would be handed on to the next generation. Anders' (r2008 Boxing) words illustrate this; in so doing, he also alludes to the important Indigenous tradition of story-telling:

> We hear stories from my aunties, and you know I never really sat down with her and asked her about it—you know with her being from the Stolen Generation, and they are the ones to bring back memories for us. I hear stories from my cousins. I wish I'd learnt a bit more about it, and I wish I still can—I just need to find some time to sit down with the right people—my Nan and my uncles, and learn a little bit more.

Some athletes had already embarked on a quest for personal historical and cultural knowledge to establish their Indigenous heritage. Sometimes these processes had been disrupted due to the effects of the Stolen Generations era, where government policies served to conceal or obscure Indigenous genealogical information:

> I think I know where I come from, I know my grandfather's heritage and where he's come from, the sad thing is I don't know too much about my grandmother's heritage because she was part of the Stolen Gen, eerr, but we support her, we've been a good support for her. Yeah, I do know my culture and I do support it. (Anders r2008 Boxing)

Billy (r1989 Boxing), now in his late fifties, pondered that he may have become a member of the Stolen Generations himself, when, at the age of four, his mother was deemed unfit to care for him and 'the welfare' removed him from her custody. However, relatives were able to take him in. Nonetheless, he continued to face significant challenges during childhood:

> Me mum couldn't aarr, couldn't aarr … couldn't really survive or handle … so my relatives, my relatives brought me up … I got shifted from town to town, school to school over about … ah, until I was teens, until my early teens and then I finished up with me father's sister. I always thought I was the black sheep, you know Megan, I thought I was an 'indrance [a hindrance], you know a whatsername?—An extra load on the different families 'cos I was ah, 'cos I was always hungry, I was always hungry and I still remember …

Maintaining his Indigenous culture was paramount for Simon (r2003 NRL). He described himself as a 'traditional owner of tribal lands', and his move to the city and eventual career in elite sport were designed to enable him, ultimately, to return home and assume a leadership position in his remote community. Therefore, it was with a sense of pragmatism that Simon described a "detachment [from home and culture] that had to occur; I made a decision that I was going to go and pursue a university degree, and the rugby league was

actually second". Kevin (r2007 AFL) contemplated his Indigeneity and the sub-conscious level where actions are formulated, and illustrated an awareness of an old culture that had been instilled since an early age:

> I'm not sure what you actually call 'traditional' but from my point of view we still hunt, things like that, so yeah, some of the ceremonial stuff. There's not a helluva lot of the language, we do speak some of the lingo. I think it's pretty important, your culture, especially when everyone around you has culture as well. So growing up, even if you haven't got it, you've got it anyway; you're just around people who've got strong culture as well. I think it's there in some way, some things you do you realise it's Aboriginal.

Participants attempted to explain the collective nature of their own society. For Johnny (r2009 AFL), a distinctive Indigenous worldview emerged; he described strong feelings of connection with other Indigenous people and declared that 'non-Indigenous people don't get it!'

> We had people coming through our house all the time. It was an amazing place to grow up. It's something—I could walk in the backyard of people's houses and knock on the back door, and walk in and say—'how ya going' and they'd make me a feed. Make me something to eat. Ask if I was OK. And sit down and chew the fat. And that's the bond, and I know non-Indigenous people don't get that. But we seem to get it. (Johnny r2009 AFL)

In this study, a strong affiliation with family was expected, with the literature suggesting that in Indigenous cultures, family responsibilities tend to take priority over individual interests (Hanrahan, 2004). Athletes reminisced about aspects of their close family ties, with Nathan (r2003 AFL) demonstrating an intimacy between three generations of his family unit:

> Football was a family outing, so grandparents, mother, brother, dad, my cousins, we all played together. We were all in the football club, it was a day out, a picnic; the kids were tired afterwards, so we'd go to sleep early.

Jerry (r1989 Boxing) enjoyed being part of a 'concertina household', in which there had been a continually fluctuating number of residents:

> Brothers and sisters, cousins, and a couple of my relations had a flat down here, and we all came and stayed in the one house—I think there was 16 or 20 of us, all in the one house.

Simon (r2003 NRL) gained a sense of comfort and stability from his extended family:

> I grew up in a single parent family, in terms of my mother being the only key identifiable parent there. Um, saying that, we lived with the rest of the family—her parents, six of her sisters, two brothers and their kids. So it was a very extended family unit, so while I didn't have a father figure per se, biologically, I had my grandfather and my uncles there for that role.

Pete (r2007 Boxing) summed up these feelings when he said, "it's family first always, sharing, care for your people and respect". Johnny revealed values and notions of sharing, caring, and family first, and how he was able to put these into practice:

> For most Indigenous people, we don't treat things as our possessions—if it's mine it's yours, if it's yours it's ours … um … y'know there's obviously—well you've got your house, but if someone needed a bed , you'd give 'em a bed, if someone needed a feed you'd give 'em a feed. But I didn't want to see my younger brothers and sisters living in a room like we were, where there was five of us living in a small room, with bunk beds sleeping within a foot of each other. So I bought a house, where they had a room each (Johnny r2009 AFL).

In a very poignant account, current boxer Ian told how his parents had made significant sacrifices to further his boxing career. In his mind, what his parents had given him most of all was love and security. Following the death of his father, there was no doubt in Ian's mind that he would now assume the mantle of responsibility for his family:

> It was a five hour round trip and then we lived a further half an hour out of town, so we had to drive an hour each night—half an hour in, then train, then half an hour out, five nights a week. And tell me, when you have no money, how can you do that? And they never let me know, they never let me know—I bet there were times they had no money in the bank, absolutely none, but we always had food on the table, and I always felt safe. I always thought we were rich, I thought. I always had the best gloves, and never missed a tournament. So now it's more of a payback thing, my father passed away, so I'm the man of the house now, and I've got to provide for my mother and my little sister.

'Natural' athletes

For many athletes, identity is developed and confirmed through their participation in sport. A dominant form of masculinity for Indigenous Australians is expressed in sport. The interview respondents expressed a self-belief in the notion of Aboriginal people as 'natural' athletes. This reflected a widely held assumption that Indigenous people are 'naturally' suited to competitive sport and 'naturally' talented as athletic performers (Adair & Stronach, 2010; Coram, 2011). In almost every case, and without prompting, interviewees claimed that, in sport, Indigenous people are naturally and genetically gifted, and are

therefore both ‘different’ and athletically ‘superior’ to their non-Indigenous counterparts. This unconscious value is explained by the respondents’ habitus. It is also indicative of self-stereotyping, or racialisation (Garner, 2010; Godwell, 1997). A typical example of such strong self-belief in ‘innate’ Indigenous physical abilities was provided by Jerry:

> You know yourself, you can go anywhere in Australia, any school in Australia, the best athlete is what? The best sportsman is what? Indigenous people. They’re gifted, high fighters, running, speed, more balance, rhythm, timing—they’re gifted. (Jerry r1989 Boxing)

Steve (r1989), a former AFL footballer and coach, shared the idea of the ‘naturally gifted’ player, but went further. Without realising it, Steve perpetuated a stereotype by unwittingly typecasting Indigenous footballers as susceptible to stress. His words suggested biological strength but cultural vulnerability**,** which he believed was a common trait of Indigenous athletes:

> The only ones that are really allowed to do their own things are the Indigenous players**—**that’s because they are natural players; they’ve just got a gift. Oh yeah, the Indigenous players are the natural players, they are, but you shouldn’t really put pressure on them because all of a sudden they realise they’re a long way from where they live and where they would like to be. You just need to get the best out of them, that’s all you need to do.

For Billy (r1989 Boxing), who like Jerry (r1989 Boxing) and Steve (r1989 AFL) was in his fifties, Aboriginal talent for boxing was innate. “Yeah” he said, “it’s in blackfellas’ blood, to fight, all blackfellas are good fighters; they just need someone to bring it out of ’em”. Current athletes Bradley (NRL) and Ian (Boxing) are both much younger than Jerry, Billy and Steve. Yet their words also indicated that the myth of the Indigenous ‘natural athlete’ is perpetuated by the younger generation. These athletes entered sport with an assumed physical ascendency (in spite of a lack of scientific evidence of this supposed attribute), and unthinkingly accepted all of the hardships and challenges that it would entail (Godwell, 1997; Wacquant, 1995):

> Indigenous people can do so many special things, like they’re just—some of the hand-eye coordination of some Indigenous people, the speed some of the kids have got, the way that they can move, balance, step—you just don’t see that in any other race. You see little bits of it in Americans, or in Pacific Islanders, but when it comes to just freakish stuff, most of it comes from Indigenous people. (Bradley current NRL)

> If they want to kick a football, they've already got the upper hand, because they're Aboriginal. Aboriginal people are naturally good at sport. It's just a known thing—they are naturally good at it—they've got the upper hand, they've just got to put their mind to it and they can do whatever they want. (Ian current Boxing)

Thirty-three-year-old Alex (r2007 NRL) also expressed his conviction about Indigenous people as 'natural' athletes. However, he also hinted at the importance of culture and the strength of familial example:

> I think it's been passed on. And I mean when you look at a lot of the top athletes, they do have that look and physique of a natural-born warrior. And it's something I think when you look at a lot of the sports that we do are hand-eye, speed, co-ordination, and that comes down I think to our ancestors and our fore-fathers.

Alex was acknowledging the importance of skills handed down from parents and the challenges of growing up in a remote environment, which in its own way necessitated athleticism if food was going to reach the camp fire. "Well", he said, "the kangaroos didn't jump in our laps!" However, this on-going belief in the supposed 'innate' abilities of Indigenous athletes fails to acknowledge other motivations at work, such as the incredible will and desire of Indigenous athletes to excel in an ultra-competitive physical environment where sport provides some opportunity for success. Nathan (r2003 AFL) expressed his exasperation:

> So you'll get people, you'll get commentators using language like, 'Oh, this is magic.' So almost in a mythical sense. Which really irritates us [Indigenous] players, because what it does is saying to everyone else that somehow this is done a lot easier, and so we don't work as hard.

In order to amend this misconception, Nathan suggested that a change of idiom was needed, if only to enhance the career stability and aspirations of Indigenous players:

> So you have to reframe language around it so it does suggest that Aboriginal players work hard. Cos what it does is that it has a rippling effect, so when you go into negotiations with your next club and you're trying to secure your work people say 'oh you're a sporadic player', or 'you're good—*at times'*. People don't actually see the hard work.

Of course, sometimes there were other factors that generated this strong self-belief. When asked if his life had been better due to his involvement in the sport, Pete (r2007 Boxing) was somewhat scathing in his response:

> I don't think that needs an answer. I'm sorry, but I am a fighter. I was two-and-a-half months premature, so I've been a fighter from day one, so you know—I love boxing.

Family cohesion and connectedness

The importance of family was obvious as participants described their close ties. Mothers held a special place in the lives of their sons, with key stakeholder #23 (an Indigenous person) alluding to a strong matriarchal influence. In some families, the mother was the sole parent, while other participants talked about the importance of their mother in what they revealed to be dysfunctional family units:

> Mum and I were extremely close. And, eerr, I didn't have to kick a hundred goals to have Mum proud or put her arm around me. (Brian r1993 AFL)

> It was my mum, I got into boxing from my mum, she started training me from a young age. (Wills r2008 Boxing)

Fathers also provided love and support, but some required a little extra consideration:

> I'll tell Mum a different thing to Dad so Dad will stop worrying, but Mum—I tell Mum the truth. (Anders r2008 Boxing)

> Yes, Dad was in and out of our lives—he wasn't really—he'd stay for a year or two then go walkabout[40] *(laughs)* for about three months. So he'd be in and out. (Johnny r2009 AFL)

Brian had felt the pressure of having to comply with what he saw as his father's overly high expectations, as had Kevin—a third generation player from a footballing dynasty:

> Dad came and watched all my games, as a junior, and it was quite dreadful. It was almost as if, well—if you played well then that's what should have happened. If you played poorly it was 'why you didn't do this and that—rah rah rah!' (Brian r1993 AFL)

> I've always sort of had pressure from Dad. There were times early in my career when I wanted to go home and dad would say 'no no no, don't be silly, stick it out'. (Kevin r2007 AFL)

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[40] 'Walkabout' refers to a commonly held belief that Australian male Aborigines would undergo a rite of passage during adolescence by living in the wilderness for six months. To white employers, this urge to depart without notice (and reappear just as suddenly) was, in the past, seen as something inherent in the Aboriginal nature, but the reasons may be more mundane: workers who wanted or needed to attend a ceremony or visit relatives did not accept employers' control over such matters (especially since permission was generally hard to get). Nowadays, the expression 'to go walkabout' has lost much of its original racist or disparaging overtones, and is now applied to anyone who wanders the country in a leisurely manner, or indeed to anything that has been mislaid (Tourism Australia, 2009).

Many of the athletes were married and had started families of their own at a relatively young age. Scott, a 33-year-old father of four, spoke about the support he had received from his family and how that had benefited his career:

> That's when my career started taking off, when I got married and settled down and started moving towards family-orientated sort of life, rather than being the single sort of man thinking there was something better around the corner, but um, you know, just knuckling down and committing to a family. When I went home and I'd had a bad performance, they didn't care who I was, they still looked at me as Dad. So that was a pleasing thing. It makes it a lot easier and it certainly helped my career. (Scott r2007 AFL)

Kris described an early life without direction. He had never held a job until after the birth of his first child. This was the catalyst that Kris needed to turn his life around, giving him an incentive to find a job and also to take up the sport of boxing:

> I had never worked and grew up experimenting and getting into trouble as a young person, making some silly choices and whatever, I came to that stage in my life we had our first child, and I thought I've got to snap out of this, get my act together, so at that stage that's when I started to want to turn my life around a bit. I was playing up a bit, drinking a bit of alcohol and smoking cigarettes, and, you know, the rest of it. And I thought no, I've got to do something for myself. (Kris current Boxing)

Acculturation (Relocation)

As shown in *Table 4.6*, to play elite-level sport, all participants, at one time or another, were required to relocate from their known home culture—often a rural or remote area (24 participants had originated from rural and remote areas of the country)—to a different culture in major cities (city-based sports clubs or teams). While this was typically embraced as a great opportunity, athletes described the difficulties they encountered when moving away from kith and kin. This process, they suggested, was particularly difficult for Indigenous athletes because of leaving close family structures and communities which were often now far away. Many had struggled with their own sense of self and grappled with significant challenges as they learned to survive in a very new environment. Current boxer Ian described how difficult it could be to move away from home. "It's hard, like, because Indigenous people are very family oriented and very close, so to move away is a really big thing, so it was hard." Homesickness was mentioned frequently as respondents discussed their relocation experiences, and was a major factor in making life difficult for young

Indigenous athletes. But families (particularly mothers) could see the benefits of moving away from home, and the opportunities offered by an elite sport career. Consequently, mothers tended to encourage their sons to persevere with what was a significant change of life-style:

> I spoke to my mother nearly every night on the phone, half the time crying, wanting to come home. And the comment I got was 'you get on the train and I'll break your legs if you get off. You're staying there!' (Brian r1993 AFL)

While difficult, there were factors that eased the re-location process. Josh noted that when an Indigenous Australian moves away from traditional land, he moves into another group's country as a stranger. He described how a welcome from the 'locals' could make all the difference:

> At the start of the camp last year when I went to get selected we went to the local Oval, and the elders and all the Aboriginal people cooked us a big meal. They welcomed us; it was a real good day. It made me feel great—welcome, and part of the community. (Josh current Boxing)

Developing an extended family also helped athletes cope with relocating. If there was no family close by, participants described how they would simply develop their own family unit. At other times, a special friend was a source of great support:

> It's a hard thing to do, you know. Aboriginal people get on—you find any other Aboriginal person, another Aboriginal person, and you have a connection from the start. Like, when I moved down to the AIS, they started the Aboriginal boxing thing, and they were bringing Indigenous boxers in, and they were, like, a family group for me. I wasn't part of that [development squad], but they were there with us, and like, Aboriginal people just connect straight away, so it's like having a family away from your family. So, having more Aboriginal people around you going through the same stuff probably helps. They are going through the same stuff and they have the same kind of values and cultural stuff—it would be good having more Aboriginal people around (Ian current Boxing).

As participants described issues relating to their identity, a number of common characteristics were noticeable, such as, pride in Indigenous identity, leadership, commitment, competitiveness, independence, and conscientiousness. Above all, four major qualities stood out: a steadfast sense of resilience, strong self-belief, high levels of motivation and great mental toughness. Current boxer Ian summarised these observations:

> I feel like I'm very strong inside. You know, it's body, mind and soul. That may be the driving force behind it—I'm just a strong person.

4.4.2 Second Element: Capital

This section examines the types of capital accumulated and valued by Indigenous athletes. It is important to differentiate between habitus and capital, as well as to recognise the inherent connections between the two, illustrated in the formula summary "(Habitus x Capital) + Field = Practice" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 101). This indicates that interactions between the two elements influence actions or decisions, but also that they come under the influence of the particular field in which the elements are located. Capital includes primarily knowledge and expertise—things 'actors' *have*, as opposed to habitus, which primarily includes preferences and practices—things 'actors' *do* or that they *are*. In the lives of this group of Indigenous athletes, physical capital was highly valued, arguably manifesting in the relatively high levels of AI recorded by athletes in this study (outlined in *Section 4.3.1*).

Athletic identity

The levels of AI exhibited by these athletes were enhanced by the strong attraction of the field and their love of sport. Several participants explained that the allure of elite-level sport remained in its potential to make money, thus providing a way out of poverty, low socio-economic situations, or broken families. Indeed, it was significant to note that only two of the seven amateur boxers interviewed stated they had not planned to turn professional. For those two, medals, honour, and glory were the motivating forces. Many of the boxers interviewed stated their goal of becoming the first Australian to win the elusive Olympic gold medal, while others believed a world championship was not beyond their ability. Current boxer Dennis explained a combination of motivating factors:

> If I could be the first person to win a gold medal for Australia, I could only imagine how much money I would get. You'd make history, you know, you'd be famous overnight, so that's my aim, that's my goal … at the end of the day it all comes back to money. You know, if you're good at your sport and you get good money for it—why wouldn't you?

Both Nick and Billy's motivations to succeed in the sport of boxing were quite different. They recounted very deprived childhoods and frequent episodes of taunts and bullying from schoolmates. Learning to fight was therefore essential for the self-defense of these two little boys:

> I did it because I had red hair, and my Mum moved about a fair bit so I was always the new kid at school, got picked on all the time and had to learn how to defend myself. I didn't have a father to teach me how to fight. I had to learn how to fight to stick up for myself. (Nick r 1997 Boxing)

> I never fought amacha, [amateur] cos I got bashed most every day at school so I learned to fight early. (Billy r1989 Boxing)

Footballers described other motivating factors, such as being part of a premiership-winning team, or All-Australian or Indigenous All-Star team. Above all, the Indigenous athletes linked sport with a burning desire to enhance the status of Indigenous people in general, to make their families proud and happy, but overwhelmingly, for financial security, as Nathan (r2003 AFL) emphasised:

> What it is, is a way out of poverty, for most Aboriginal people, if they can get the opportunity to pay their parents' bills—oh! I wanted my mother to feel proud of herself, so when I went to [AFL club] it was fantastic for my mother. We'd get paid every Wednesday night, and so we'd go down to the ATM [Automatic Teller Machine] and go and have a feed. And for a lot of people who play AFL or NRL, it's oh, what a terrific feeling to make the people around you happier.

Valuing the physical

To say that elite-level sport is a body-centred world is an understatement. Boxers in particular demonstrated enormous pride in their embodied competence, as exemplified by Jerry:

> I'm a very, very exciting fighter. I'm a guy that whenever I was in the ring, there'd be something happening. (Jerry r1989 Boxing)

Similar responses by the boxers were not meant to boast and brag, but rather appeared as personal truisms. Such comments were evidence of a high valuation of physical capital. Similarly, footballers spoke about the time and commitment they invested to reach the top. Their words showed that the practical labour involved with professional football continued

to be an integral part of their social identity:

> And the thing with rugby league you've got to put your whole mind and body into rugby league to keep your spot every week. It depends on how your body is feeling. I don't think people understand the amount of mental and physical toll the game takes, that elite sport takes out of you, week by week. (Bradley current NRL)

4.4.3 Third Element: The Field

The third element of Bourdieu's formula is the field, which has been described by Johnson as "a structured social place with its own rules, schemes of domination, and legitimate opinions" (Johnson, 2006)**.** Within any field, such as the fields of boxing and football, certain forms of capital are valued more highly than others. The following extract from my research journal illustrates the attraction and excitement, as well as the supportive environment of the field of boxing, at one particular gymnasium that I visited:

> 'Just get off the train, you won't miss it'. No, I didn't, one entire exterior wall is a giant Aboriginal Flag! And the gym's name, Elouera, a 'peaceful place', initially seems wrong. It's certainly seen better days, paint peeling from the walls, tiles hanging from the ceiling at bizarre angles. I can't help but be struck by the colours, sounds, shapes, and smells as I walk up the rickety staircase. The reds and yellows of the flag are in abundance; on gloves, boots, bandaged hands, the floors. The walls may once have been painted, but it's now cracked and faded, and years of dust, sweat and tears are now more evident. A sign displaying the gym's code of conduct: '*No Individual shall: Use trash talk; profane; obscene; or vulgar language, under any circumstances, with in these premises*' (amongst others). Images of yesterday's heroes adorn the upper walls, Elvis look-alikes, yellowed and faded with age, stark reminders of a proud Aboriginal boxing heritage. Silent figures, trim and taut, their 'dukes' clenched, hunched and hardened. And lower down, posters of the current crop, sneering down their opponents like the pugilists of old. 'Megan, come and talk to [George]' calls Alex, the coach. So I do, and we conduct the interview in the middle of the gym, while all around us the work goes on. Feet squealing on rubber mats, shadow boxing in front of a cracked and greying mirror, a rhythmical thumping of gloves on heavy punching bags, and rapid fire 'rat-tat-tats' of speed bags. Skipping, crunching, running, all punctuated by a regular electronic 'ping'**—**the signal to move on to the next station. Buffed and burnished bodies, skin gleaming with sweat and oil, rippling eight-packs, cut quads and thighs, tight butts. There's a square ring in the next room with two antagonists slowly circling each other. But mostly there's pairs of young boys with their trainers, who are quietly sustaining and encouraging their charges. No 'trash talk' here, heads are bent together, like fathers and sons, almost touching, a study of concentration. A peaceful place? Well, yes, peaceful as in not warlike, but otherwise exciting, vibrant, irresistible. What a contrast from [the training camp] I visited yesterday—those boys reminded me of well-fed Tomcats purring in the sun. These boxers are hungry.

The nature of the field is also very noticeable in the world of professional AFL and NRL players. Professional football is in some respects an autonomous field detached from the 'real world' of nine-to-five conventional employment. In a football club, anything up to 50 individuals experience semi-enclosed, formally managed lives. This lifestyle constitutes a peculiar reality, both connected to, yet separate from, the outside world. Activities (training sessions, meetings) are carried out in the company of the others, who are treated more or less alike, and subject to official rules and sanctions from officials and administrators. Clubs are keen to present a disciplined and organised group of players in regard to image, punctuality, match day dress, and regular on- and off-field behaviour. Along with these restrictions on autonomy and individuality, footballers are nurtured and protected, often with housing, travel, and accommodation, as well as education and training, handled by their club (Hickey & Kelly, 2008; Shogun, 1999). It is rare, however, for competent adults to be treated this way in society, and the controlling factors like those outlined have the potential to cause friction and even problems later in the player's career. Some of the respondents spoke of a level of 'over-protection' by their football clubs, likening this to 'life in a bubble'. The bubble, or indeed the field, tended to create a powerful force reacting against the external influences of other fields, such as education, and some participants felt that this created a culture of dependency. That could have significant effects on these individuals as they left the protection afforded by the football club field:

> But no, I had no guidance in how you should budget, tax forms, all of that stuff. (Brian r1993 AFL)

> I didn't know what I wanted to be, I didn't know how to operate a computer, and a fax or a form, I didn't know how to pay a bill, 'cause everything was done for me through the club. (Norman r2005 AFL)

Despite a considerable difference in their ages and the time of their retirements, these two footballers recommended a greater emphasis on basic life-skills and awareness during development programs conducted by clubs and associations:

> I'd put more emphasis on life than sport. I thought one of the greatest thing about sport, football, is that footy was life under a microscope—but I think you can pack the microscope away because I think footballers today they get too much done for them to the point where some of them struggle to post a letter. I'd be inclined to talk more about life and the

> greatness that it brings … they're mothered, they live in bubbles, and to a large extent that [well-known AFL footballer] issue that happened the other night is a classic example of that living in a bubble. You know, all the bloke wanted to do was go out and have a beer with his mates, and his family, and some bloke's had a crack at him. So now he doesn't go out here, now he's lucky to go out, when he goes home. It's a bit sad, but I understand why that bubble happens. But I think the individuals who surround those people need to express life more. (Brian r1993 AFL)

> There's no life. You're there because you've got rare talent to play the sport. Think about life, that's what I say. Yeah, you're in that bubble all the time, you've got your friends, but really, think about life. While you're at the top level, think about life. (Norman r2005 AFL)

The athlete persona

When any sportsperson reaches the highest level of their profession, the field of sport requires a significant shift in identity. The sportsman is transformed into an elite athlete, a new role that is defined and determined by the field (Coram, 2007). This new identity, the athlete persona, assumes further responsibilities. Becoming a leader or a role model is a very large part of this new identity. For AFL footballers, this process of transformation may start very early in their careers, as explained by Key Stakeholder #20, who works with the AFL in recruitment and development portfolios in very remote areas of northern Australia:

> We identify leadership, not talent. If a kid's going to school consistently, mate, it's about leadership, making smart choices. If they can decide to get away from the troubles in [their] community, that's leadership. These guys are good citizens. If they have leadership and can play footy, then we look at what we can do [for them].

As the footballer's career starts to develop, so do the expectations of those around him. Key Stakeholder #11 (NRL) described it as follows:

> Whether you like it or not, when you are successful there are responsibilities that are unfortunately out of your control. People want to endorse you or expose you; it makes you a much more high-profile person. It's just the nature of the beast.

The transformation occurs, whether the athlete recognises it or not, whether he wants it or not, accidentally or by design. Just making the break from his isolated township made Alex (r2007 NRL) different, and gave him special status within that community. He remarked, "you don't realise how much of a role model you are [just] because you've taken that step and left [your hometown]". This was a significant development for some of the Indigenous sportsmen, with many of them relishing the opportunity to work as role models. Indeed,

several were already undertaking activities that complemented that role, with or without any formal training or support. For example, Anders (r2008 Boxing) said:

> I want to give something back to it, like, I used to fly up to [a remote community] and talk to Aboriginal kids about drugs and alcohol, and to give them a dream to carry on with something. I love doing that sort of stuff.

The aspirations of Indigenous players to assume a leadership role in their communities was encouraged by the field (Coram, 2007), that is, individuals within the sport organisations, as well as the Australian media. For example, one (non-Indigenous) AFL PDM remarked:

> I think the players now realise that they can play an important role in the Indigenous community post football. They have the opportunity to make a significant difference with the profiles they have gained through sport through being strong positive role models. Whether that be in sport or other community programs.

This attitude appeared in popular media, with newspaper articles frequently indicating the expectation that Indigenous athletes would 'naturally' continue working as role models after sport, with the aim of improving the lives of under-privileged Indigenous youth and communities. As a result, athletes were under even further pressure to conform, and the attitudes expressed by the media drew on the habitus and notions of obligation to family and society already expressed by the group. Some examples were:

> 'Peach is an inspiration, simple as that', Rabbitohs CEO Shane Richardson said. 'I'm now looking forward to watching Peach [retired NRL fullback David Peachey] finish his career in style this season, and then working with him in the administration side of the Club next year. His role will be to work with our indigenous (sic) players, help develop our aboriginal community programs through Souths Cares'." (SportsAustralia.com, 2007)

> [AFL veteran player] Andrew McLeod, a role model to all youth, will return to his cultural roots, accepting a role with the AFL in its community football programs, particularly with the indigenous (sic). (Rucci, 2010)

Retired NRL player, Neville, had noticed the media's attitude towards retiring Indigenous athletes. He believed it was different from attitudes towards non-Indigenous athletes, and thus, he believed it was evidence of a deeper issue:

> I think it's society putting Indigenous youth down, to say that they need role models. That's my perspective on it. When a non-Indigenous rugby league player retires, why can't he role model non-Indigenous youth? I don't think that's ever raised. There's obviously trouble issues in all sorts of communities, whether it be in Redfern, out in the middle of the desert,

> in the Northern Territory, or in Mt Druitt with the Islander populations, or in Cronulla with the race-riots, there's issues everywhere with youth. That's my take on it anyway. (Neville r2008 NRL)

Neville's point was that some media reports perpetuated yet another stereotypical belief—that Indigenous youth are *inherently* troubled and troublesome. Statistics such as those discussed in *Section 2.6.2* suggest that social conflict is, in fact, apparent, but it is hardly universal. Against such a complex backdrop, some respondents felt a struggle with the responsibilities that the Indigenous athlete persona entailed. Retired AFL player Johnny described the unrelenting pressure from an all-pervasive media. For him, the athlete persona, combined with the pressure to be continually under the public spotlight, was sometimes unsustainable:

> I get the shits when people bag footy players as a role model cos he's messed up. But you show me one person in the world hasn't messed up in some stage of his life. (Johnny r2009 AFL)

One retired footballer had established a charitable foundation, and works regularly with underprivileged Indigenous youth, not only within the realm of sport but beyond that. The foundation was established to:

1) offer scholarships and exchanges to schools and colleges;
2) allocate sporting grants to talented Indigenous youth;
3) support the personal development of Indigenous youth through mentoring and cultural immersion camps;
4) deliver education, health and sports programs in regional and remote Indigenous communities throughout Australia, and
5) engage in the ongoing reconciliation process

Others were motivated by, and drew inspiration from, their own troubled experiences earlier in life. They believed that dealing with their own problems had helped them to develop particular insights that, as they saw it, would give them the ability to work with others from disadvantaged or troubled situations. For example, following his sport career, Neville participated in formal mentoring training with the National Aboriginal Sporting

Chance Academy (NASCA),[41] and embraced opportunities to visit remote communities. His story is related below, though several of the athletes had similar stories to tell:

> Sport taught me how to be a bad person; the bright lights got me, the pats on the back got me. I do drug and alcohol education with Indigenous youth and non-Indigenous youth, because I was one who fell victim to that. I'm not afraid to admit that I'm a recovering alcoholic and drug addict. I went down that path. For me, that's why I see myself as such a strong role model now. (Neville r2008 NRL)

These activities are praiseworthy, and for some of the athletes, even life-changing, yet several respondents expressed reservations about their public role. When asked about a future for athletes as role models, Key Stakeholder #1 (boxing administrator) was scathing:

> A lot of it's garbage. A lot of it's ego. I've seen various ex AFL and rugby players. Managers and trainers on a trip of their own—self-proclaimed superstars! I don't have a lot of time for them!

Physical legacy of sport

The field influences the practices of elite athletes in a number of ways. One of these is by encouraging behaviours related to the intense training demands of sport, and indeed the competition environment itself. The risks involved with playing sport can lead to a number of untoward outcomes, including a reduction of physical capital as the athlete leaves sport. For boxers, typical sport-related injuries include fractures of the carpus, metacarpus and thumb, nose and jaws, acute osteo-articulatory stress, scratched or detached retina, and brain damage (Wacquant, 1995). The common practice in boxing of 'making weight' (with Anders reporting a need to shed *seven kilos* in the 24 hours prior to one particular weigh-in) exposes boxers to "adverse cardiovascular function electrical activity, thermal regulation, renal function and electrolyte balance" (Johns, 2002, p. 122). Another serious consequence for boxers is known as *dementia pugilistica* (commonly known as the 'punch-drunk' syndrome), a condition that may result in cognitive impairment, unsteady gait, slurred speech, foot-dragging, and memory loss. The problem is that the deterioration may not

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[41] NASCA is a not-for-profit organisation operating to encourage the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, by using sport as a vehicle for the influence of health and education.

become obvious immediately, and the capacity to assess one's physical state also declines at a similar rate, so that the more damage a boxer sustains, the less he may be able and willing to perceive and acknowledge it (Wacquant, 1995).[42] The boxers were very aware of the possibility of this serious condition:

> But my wife, my girl at the time, she thought it was all true, like she started to look at me different. Well that's the way I thought she was, my mind was doing some awful things, like—am I dumb? Can I remember? So I'd try and remember things: my mind was doing some awful things. (Nick r1997 Boxing)

Footballers also rely on the durability of their bodies. Both AFL and rugby league are full contact sports, where players wear no protective gear except for a mouth guard. Bone-crunching contact can come from any direction. Soft tissue injuries are the most frequent, including injuries to the thighs and calf muscles. Osteitis pubis is a condition that particularly affects AFL players. Injuries to the knee, ankle, and shoulders, are also common. Hospital treatment is required for 40% of all injuries (AFL, 2010). Full contact play with the potential to be tackled or bumped from any angle means that the risk of a knee being twisted or caught on a dangerous angle is high. Knee reconstructions are potentially career-ending episodes for AFL players. Footballers also occasionally suffer head injury resulting in loss of consciousness and concussion (AFL, 2010). Rugby league is known for heavy body contact and tackling; bruising and musculoskeletal injuries are common, along with minor concussions. The 2009 NRL Injury Surveillance Report revealed that for every 1,000 hours of rugby league played in that season, 241 injuries were reported. Approximately 30% of these injuries were severe, and could result in limitations for long-term employment, high medical costs, loss of income and disturbed study patterns. Almost 57% of all injuries in rugby are from the tackle, with collision or impact injuries accounting for almost a further 10%. Indeed, some 23% of injuries from a tackle are to the knee (Phelps, 2010). Like AFL footballers, the threat of knee reconstruction surgery looms large in the futures of NRL players. Footballers in this study mentioned injuries sustained

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[42] Some of the boxers interviewed in this study, particularly those who had a high number of fights, or whose careers were particularly lengthy, appeared to display one or more of the symptoms of the 'punch-drunk' syndrome. However, the researcher is not qualified to medically diagnose such a condition.

during their sport careers, and how these had become a legacy that affected the quality of their lives after sport:

> One was the pain of my back, and I just couldn't stand waking up in the morning, after a game, not being able to walk for two days. Yeah, look, I can't stand for a long time now—not that I ever wanted to, but [today] I couldn't play a round of golf. (Nathan r2003 AFL)

> I played for eight years and I've still got all my injuries through the AFL. See my finger [*shows a forefinger bent at a peculiar angle*]—I'd love to have it fixed. Like, it doesn't hurt much, but occasionally I get it caught on something. It would be nice to be able to get it done now. (Kevin r2007 AFL)

4.4.4 Summary

The preceding sections have analysed the salience of the Bourdieuian theoretical concepts of habitus, capital, and the field in terms of interpreting the identity of participants, initially as Indigenous men, but ultimately as Indigenous athletes. The use of the Bourdieuian concept of habitus, in conjunction with the AIMS, has revealed fascinating insights into the self-identity of Indigenous athletes. According to their own perceptions, as well as the AIMS (refer to *Table 4.4*), the Indigenous participants overwhelmingly saw themselves principally as athletes. This was also how they believed others saw them. Habitus influenced the way that the athletes had developed a particular set of dispositions and values that endured throughout their sport careers and into their post-sport lives. They also valued their physical capital, and demonstrated a unique self-belief of being 'natural athletes'. An understanding of these factors will now be helpful in appreciating how the athletes experienced SCT.

45 SECOND GENERAL DIMENSION: THE RETIREMENT EXPERIENCE

This section illustrates the lived experience of SCT, by drawing on the words of the participating athletes, as well as the viewpoints of the key stakeholders. Within this general dimension the four phases (*Exiting Sport, Nowhere Land, New Beginnings*, and *Moving*

On[43]) depicted in the Sport Career Transition Flow Chart (see *Figure 2.7, Section 2.8*) are examined.

4.5.1 First Phase: Exiting Sport

This section consists of a discussion based on four themes: (a) Pulled towards retirement, (b) Anti-pull factors, (c) Pushed towards retirement, and (d) Anti-push factors. These factors are said to influence the decision-making related to one's exit from elite sport (Fernandez et al., 2006). Interviews demonstrated that some athletes were pulled to retirement (e.g., by wanting to spend more time with family), whereas others were pushed towards retirement (e.g., by injury). Similarly, anti-push factors could be conceptualised as the desire to pursue the sport career because of still feeling able to perform, or the attachment to the team, while anti-pull factors could refer to the uncertainty or anxiety about a post-sport life (Fernandez et al., 2006). Frequently, a combination of factors was evident, for example, where an athlete may be pulled towards retirement due to a desire to spend more time with family, but at the same time being afraid of feeling lost without the security of the team (anti-pull). Conversely, even though an athlete may be deselected, he may continue to go on 'living the dream' (anti-push).

Pulled towards retirement

Pull factors are an expression of positive aspects of post-sport life. Results in this study provided general support for pull factors discussed in the literature, such as (a) a desire to spend more time with family, (b) the opportunity to travel outside of sport, and (c) seeking peace and serenity—for example:

> I'm looking forward to spending more time with my kids and not flying around so much … so more time with those guys. (Johnny r2009 AFL)

However, other responses fell outside these conventional push-pull categories, and instead

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[43] In this section the names of phases will be italicised.

linked with Indigenous cultural mores. Robin's decision to retire from sport was influenced by his connection to tribal lands:

> In my heart I wanted to go back home ... yeah, back to the top end … I had things that I wanted to do—yeah, the top end was just calling me. (Robin r1989 AFL)

Many participants wanted to move back to their communities to help their people. As he discussed this, Johnny described an innate belief in his role as an Indigenous man:

> I believe I'm put here [on earth] to help more Indigenous people. In what role and capacity, that's where it comes in the next five or ten years, and that's what I'm working on at the moment. There's another side of me that wants to do some other stuff in communities, and basically use my profile to get things done, I suppose. But in the end—put it down—I'm here to help. (Johnny r2009 AFL)

Anti-pull factors

Anti-pull factors are believed to express perceived difficulties and feelings of insecurity associated with a post sport career. Several athletes had delayed leaving sport due to these concerns. For example, Anders did not want to let down the people who were close to him:

> I don't want to let people down, and probably that's why I keep going—because I don't want to let Mum and Dad down, for some reason, and I don't want to let myself down. (Anders r2008 Boxing)

Norman described a difficult time in his sport career, when he would have preferred to retire, but had no idea what life had in store for him after sport. At that time, football meant security:

> In my last four years I wanted to walk away from it and hang up the boots, but I just stuck at it. I sat down and had a talk about it—I've had people say don't step away. So I had my doubts for the last four years. So when I did retire—I mean my body couldn't handle it, the level of the game—it was a very scary moment, a very very scary moment, because, um, my whole life was football. I didn't know what to do. (Norman r2005 AFL)

Pushed towards retirement

Push factors are generally regarded as an expression of negative concerns in the athlete's present life. These will eventually influence the decision to exit sport. Many of the athletes described decisions to leave sport that broadly fitted within the general classifications of (a) injury, (b) deselection, or (c) chronological age, as described in the literature (Taylor &

Ogilvie, 1994). Ben's response suggests that his decision to leave sport was due to a combination of push factors:

> When you're an old fellow, you're the first to go, the new coach wants to come in and clean us old fellows out, stamp his authority. I hadn't been playing much footy due to injuries, so that didn't help my cause. Then half way through a game this year, I got injured in the warm-up actually, so I thought I would not play anymore, I can't do it. And before I had a chance to go in and talk to the coaches they called me in and said they weren't going to offer another contract. (Ben r2009 AFL)

Footballers generally described an accumulation of small and recurrent injuries, rather than one massive career-ending (or even life-threatening) injury. Injuries or illnesses suffered by boxers were more serious. For example, battling with weight control is a way of life for most boxers, and Anders (r2008 Boxing) explained that he retired from sport when his body could no longer handle the stress of making weight. He said, "I was losing too much weight, overtraining, dehydration, so I inflamed the right side of my heart and my kidneys collapsed on me".

Nick is a boxer for whom retirement was particularly painful; he believed this was because he was 'forced' out of the sport he loved:

> I had to go and see some neuro-psychiatrists and they set me up all these tests which I failed badly. So because the test was so bad they had the proof I was brain-damaged and they couldn't let me keep fighting. I had to retire due to that reason. (Nick r1997 Boxing)

In Nick's case, the sport authority wanted to minimise risk to combatants, but being in conflict with governing bodies (such as coaches, managers, and promoters) and dissatisfaction with the sport structures were factors mentioned by several athletes as push factors, either alone or in combination with other aspects. Brian (r1993 AFL) explained:

> I got talked into it, by a coach; I was really disappointed, I'd had a really bad injury, a really bad ankle injury, and that year coming back from it, all the things that I suppose I was known for, I was struggling to do. I lost pace, I couldn't jump, I couldn't run, so I got talked into retiring, and then the following year after that, it was like there was nothing wrong with me. So I was a little bit disappointed, but there's probably some history there too, with the coach.

Athletes mentioned other push factors, such as loss of motivation to continue their competitive careers, loss of enjoyment they once gained from their sport, or a realisation

that the sacrifices required by elite-level sport—especially when this meant that they needed to be away from home—were just too great:

> It became a bit of like a ground hog day—you wake up every morning at the same time, it was the same routine every day, y'know for me, for the ten years, you eat the same food, you get up at the same time, you do exactly the same thing for ten years and in the end I think there comes a time when players do get sick of it. (Norman r2005 AFL)

> I went through a lot of sacrifice when I was living in Sydney by myself and didn't have anyone. Sitting down, crying because I wanted to go home every night. You know, so there's sacrifice on different levels. (Neville r2008 NRL)

Even though elite-level footballers are considered by the general public as being highly paid, financial pressures forced some into an early departure from sport:

> I was probably forced to retire because, for me, I've got a family that I've got to put bread and water for on the table every night, and smacking my head up against a wall, playing for not a great deal of money for all the work that you put in, for me I just couldn't do that, I couldn't do that to my family. $50,000 isn't a lot of money at all if you've got a family trying to survive in the world. My family was my priority. I've got to feed them before I chase my dream. (Neville r2008 NRL)

Both the AFL and the NRL pride themselves on their cultural awareness, policies and programs, but athletes described times when there was a lack of appreciation of the cultural obligations of Indigenous players. Footballers Kevin, Alex, and Nathan, as well as Wills, a boxer, all suffered a death in their family during their sport careers. When these deaths ('passings') occurred, these men needed to be at home for an extended period, not merely for a few days for the funeral. However, that proved difficult for sport organisations to understand and accommodate:

> There were a few deaths in my family, early in my career, and they really didn't give me enough time to stay home, and so I wasn't happy about that. And that affected the way I felt about the coach. So yeah, it was difficult. (Kevin r2007 AFL)

> I had a death in the family. So then for that, they let me come back for that [for a short time]. [When I went back to the AIS] I just sort of went downhill and everything started building up. So it was like I wanted to be at the AIS but I didn't want to be there, I wanted to be home comforting family, I wanted to see my girlfriend at the time and that sort of stuff. (Wills r2008 Boxing)

Kris (current Boxing) pointed to a lack of consideration in the structure of the National Talent Identification and Development (NTID) boxing program at the AIS to meet the cultural needs of young Indigenous athletes:

> I think they tried to put in some supports there, but a lot of the mainstream coaches, they had no idea y'know. They didn't have the support that was really needed in my eyes—they did that for a bit and that was only a welcome, but then we were sort of … we would have liked to be involved with the local community there. I sort of knew the positive outcome that that would have for the team, being around our own people. Like they had house-parents there—they were there to be there for the kids—to be their parents away from home, but I think for a full Indigenous squad, they needed an Indigenous liaison person. For problems, passings in the family and stuff, that was the part they lacked, they lacked support. If they want the Indigenous athletes in there, and have that Indigenous program, then they have to have that support.

In fact, Kris was so concerned about this lack of support for his younger team members that he and another senior athlete eventually took matters into their own hands:

> There was a lack of support, because the boys were homesick you know. And every time the boys were homesick we'd know what to do from a cultural aspect, us boys, the older guys, and we'd sort of comfort 'em, and put that support in for them.

Both boxers and footballers expressed frustration at what they perceived as being exploited by the sport bureaucracy, and this appeared as another push factor:

> It took me quite a while to realise that, that you bleed for that club, I mean you go out and give your heart and soul, and at the end of the day you're a number, you're a piece of meat, and they can move you on as quickly as they got you. (Alex r2007 NRL)

> In the end I thought I was, I was bein' ah…sort of… you see I started to think they didn't have the same interest in me as I thought they did, they wasn't as genuine. (Billy r1989 Boxing)

Key stakeholder #4 (boxing administrator and coach) agreed with Billy that Indigenous boxers were sometimes at risk of exploitation by those around them, commenting, "we were getting sick and tired of ... promoters treating them like 'cannon fodder'. They don't look after them".

Anti-push factors

Anti-push factors correspond to an attachment with a sports career, with some participants explaining that the strong affinity they felt to sport meant that making the decision to end their sport career was more difficult. One of those factors was the camaraderie between members of the team. In the context of male team sport, camaraderie involves a sense of brotherhood (Lawrence, 2005), with meetings, training sessions, banter and joking in the dressing room and socialising in cafés or at the 'pub'. These gradually become part of the players' existence and identity:

> It's twenty people melded together as a team, winning premierships or whatever, it's about character, creating character. The thing about a team, it's not just one personality; it's about the whole group. Oh yeah, it's just like extended family. You train all week, and then at the weekend you play on the Saturday, you'd celebrate on the Saturday, go to training on the Sunday and have a few more [drinks] after that. It's a good life. (Steve r1989 AFL)

The athletes' love of sport was a strong anti-push factor. Athletes were immersed in an occupational world of intense emotionality and drama. Elite-level sport involves courage, risk-taking, uncertainty, and tension, along with an overriding preoccupation with winning and success. Typically, elite-level sport takes place in a public arena before excited and intensely partisan crowds, and is frequently shown on television. The sheer excitement and intensity can lift players out of the everyday world into a kind of 'high octane' existence, even experiencing an adrenalin rush that Dennis likened to drug addiction:

> There's been times when I've thought 'bugger it I've had enough, I don't want to do this anymore!'And then you go walking down the street and then you start shadow-boxing, you're shadow boxing in the middle of the street, you're looking in a window—and then it's like 'nah, I don't want to go back to it but it's hard to keep away from it'. I've been doing it for so long, it's an addiction. An addiction. An addiction. (Dennis current Boxing)

Being able to live their dreams and play the sport they loved was a huge honour and pleasure for these athletes. The sense of pride in being able to perform as an elite athlete made the retirement decision difficult. Furthermore, the fame and fortune that came with their career were things that they could easily imagine, but were much harder to realise:

> The great thing is that you get to come to work every day and do something you really love. It's something that you've always dreamed of doing, something you've lived your life for. (Bradley current NRL)

> Going out and playing in front of a crowd—you feel like you own the world when you're out on the field. There's no better feeling than being out there on the field. Playing for [your team]—you have the whole crowd watching. (Matthew current NRL)

Kris recognised the fascination that boxing held for him—he feared that this anti-push factor might eventually compromise a commitment he had made to himself and his family, to exit sport at a pre-planned moment:

> I've given myself like a three-year time span to achieve what I can now in national boxing, because I want to dedicate the rest of my time to my family, my kids, and I've sort of made that promise to my partner, cos I know it's very time-consuming. But I'm sort of like, if I can—like if I won an Australian title then I'm looking at—well, all I'd have to do is win a regional title, like the Asia-Pacific title, then I could have a shot at a World title, you know what I mean? *(laughs)* It's gone from here, like, oh, if I could reach that pinnacle then I'd think, why not have a shot, if I could, at a major title? (Kris current Boxing)

Summary

During the *Exiting Sport* phase, it was clear that the decision to leave sport was rarely at the sole discretion of the athlete, and also rarely due to a single factor. Findings in this study confirmed that the retirement decision-making process is multifaceted, complex, and unique for each individual. Literature broadly demonstrates that athletes who are 'pushed' to retire have the most difficulty in adapting to a post-sport career (Fernandez et al., 2006). That notion will be explored further as the next section examines the athletes' experiences in *Nowhere Land*.

4.5.2 Second Phase: Nowhere Land

The use of the term *Nowhere Land* was conceived by Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000), and was intended to describe a phase in which athletes seem to "dangle in a time of uncertainty and disorientation undergoing a shift in identity and eventually achieving a new definition of self" (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000, p. 122). During this phase, athletes are said typically to

encounter four sets of interacting factors: self, situation, support, and strategies, that influence the nature of the transitional phase (Schlossberg, 1984). The 'self' was discussed in *Section 4.4.1* in terms of identity and the notion of habitus. The other three factors—situation, support, and coping strategies—are now presented as themes. The evocative imagery of the phrase *Nowhere Land* turned out to be quite apt in this study, as several athletes described a time of confusion and uncertainty, often lasting for extended periods.

Situation

This first section revolves around the situations, reactions and emotions, including role change, affect, source, onset, duration, and degree of stress experienced by athletes, as they faced the reality of retirement and encountered *Nowhere Land*. Some athletes found themselves in a difficult situation where the prospect of no longer being able to compete was painful and distressing. For example, Nick (r1997 Boxing) expressed very real grief:

> [Retirement] was tragic, it broke my heart, it was the worst thing that happened to me in my life, or that I'd ever done, ever done. And I still feel emotional about it now; still do a bit of crying. I could have turned professional, but to me professional is nothing, I'd never set myself for professional boxing. I wanted to be the first Australian to win an Olympic gold medal—I'd had that dream since I was a 14-year-old kid.

On the other hand, some athletes experienced a form of re-birth, finding positive options rather than negativity. Nathan (r2003 AFL) expressed this succinctly: "After I finished it was starting from scratch again … it is like you're born again; you're a child again in a different world". The following extracts describe fairly prosaic situations, as two recently retired footballers embraced a different way of living and working, albeit with some regrets:

> Retirement? I think I battled with it for three days! And not even—it's like—oh, I'm not used to wearing a suit all day, I'm not used to hacking away on a computer all day, but I haven't thought about footy once since I finished. My office is down the road from the footy ground and I saw the boys training. And I slowed down for a little bit and thought: 'I don't think I'd like to be running laps at the moment'. So I drove straight on, got a coffee and went to the desk. (Johnny r2009 AFL)

> It's a bit weird. It's a bit difficult, sitting behind a desk, staring at a screen nine to five, type of thing. Footy's a different life; you train hard for two or three hours, you have a break, then you go back and train or you have the rest of the day off. So pretty much sitting in

> cafés every day for lunch is gone, this sitting behind a desk and a lunch room is a bit different. (Ben r2009 AFL)

Ben was wistful and missed his former life, but others felt stronger emotions, and poignant stories emerged that validated the imagery of *Nowhere Land*. One is presented below. It reveals a complex experience during which Norman struggled to cope with the changes in his life, and his efforts in working towards a new post-sport identity:

> I went through a transition after football. Eerr, a lot of people don't realise how I felt, this is a very scary time, I didn't know where I wanted to go in life at the age of 32 I think it was. A lot of people of that age or even 30 are set up—I was set up comfortable financially. But I just didn't know what I wanted to do. I ended up going up to [my remote community] to play football and to be with family. I said I'd do it for six months and for me after the first four months I still wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do. I went through a funny phase where I grew my hair long, I went into a hermit-crab shell, where you see some of the AFL players, or sportspeople at the highest level do go into. A lot of my family and friends asked me questions—why are you doing this, why are you starting to change your image? I just went through a funny phase for a year ... I knew I was [name] the footballer, but I didn't know who I was gunna be after football. And that was the confusion (Norman r2005 AFL).

Language is much more than verbal and, during the interview, Norman's non-verbal communication was almost more powerful than his words. He sank back into his seat, hunched his shoulders, and crossed his arms over his chest. From time to time he rubbed one hand over his cheek, and averted his eyes downwards. The tone of his voice was measured and deep and he appeared to be immersed in thought; brooding, dreaming, and wistful. Clearly his story was intricate, intensely personal, and still difficult for him to share. Nevertheless, he was keen to communicate something he felt to be of great significance both to him and to the research project. This required a huge mental effort and, at times, the 'telling' was draining. Another AFL retiree who struggled as he navigated his way through *Nowhere Land* was David (r1997 AFL):

> There's hundreds of footballers that go through depression, and I did that. I lived that, I went into Centrelink and I couldn't find a job, went to Centrelink 'cos I had nothing left in the bank, went on the dole, [44] you know, I had the sunglasses on, a newspaper and the hat on—incognito, you know, I would hide, it was highly embarrassing … that went on for 12 months.

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[44] Centrelink is an Australian government agency that delivers a range of services to the Australian community including income support ('the dole') for job seekers.

Those who believed that the decision-making to leave sport had been imposed upon them described some complicated emotions. For example, both Nick and Alex revealed how they had 'bargained' for more time in sport. Bargaining is one of the stages described by Kübler-Ross (1969) in her five stage theory of death and dying, a theoretical framing that has, in the past, been drawn on to illustrate SCT:

> Well, I asked for a chance. I said 'just give me one little chance, just let me go to the Australian Titles'. I wanted to win just one more title. I just wanted that completion, you know. And perhaps I wouldn't have won that gold medal, but I just wanted to end it on my terms. My life ended—I cried for days, my emotions were just hopeless, and I didn't know what my future was, because I'd been in a place that gave me security. (Nick r1997 Boxing)

> I said 'mate, give me one more year to get myself back on track', because I knew I could still get good dollars—in terms of good dollars, well over $100,000. So, a pat on the back and a handshake, I felt as though was good enough for me. And unfortunately the CEO at the time reneged. (Alex r2007 NRL)

Ben explained that although the decision to retire imposed on him was hurtful, he soon recognised that post-sport life was offering him some new opportunities:

> When you hear you're not wanted it's a bit of a kick in the guts. That lasted probably just for the first day I reckon *(laughs),* it's just, oh shit, you know … it just makes you feel like you're worthless, you're not wanted, you're not good enough anymore. Then when you sit down … I have no grudges. I had ten years, and made the most of what I had, you know, I did it for a long time, I enjoyed what I did and I have no regrets. That's when I got an approach to do mentoring. I said yeah, I'd love to. So after about three or four weeks off I started working. (Ben r2009 AFL)

For some, SCT was tougher than expected, for both the athletic mind and body processes took longer to fade than anticipated:

> You know, cos when you've done it for so long like I have, 14 years or whatever it was, just to go cold turkey straight away, it's a massive shock to the system, you know, like anything else. Like if you're a heroin addict and you take it for 14 years and then go bang, your body's going to react a different way. (Scott r2007 AFL)

> And when I did come back (home), it was good for a week, then that was probably it, then I just sort of went downhill. And now I have heaps of energy, I miss it. When I walk around I walk on my toes. If I'm walking in a crowd I'm walking little boxing moves, just to walk through the crowd, like footwork you know? That's how I feel, the worst boxer around, sort of thing, I have nothing. I feel bad, bored all the time, just slack, fat. I see myself as a fat person; really slack, yeah. Just low and fat. (Wills r2008 Boxing)

Evidence suggests that individuals with higher AI levels risk more difficulties after sport career termination (Werthner & Orlick, 1986), and they may experience a longer duration of emotional and social adjustment to post-sport life (Grove et al., 1997). These factors can be observed in the present study in comments from some of the athletes who scored particularly high on the AIMS. David (r1997 AFL, AI=40) said, "I lost a lot of confidence, I went into a state of depression—you're going to go from hero to zero". Similarly, Billy (r1989 Boxing, AI=41) lamented, "it wasn't easy to say goodbye because boxin' … was everything". Brian (r1993 AFL, AI=42) mourned, "the loss of that whole environment, your mates, your footy club, the culture … the enthusiasm of the fans—you crave the relationship".

A number of the earlier retirees recounted that they had felt unprepared for the transition and struggled with economic difficulties, feelings of isolation, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, decreased life satisfaction, and problems with partners, with a small number exhibiting maladaptive or unlawful behaviours, such as crime and substance abuse. Several had experienced what psychologists have labelled zeteophobia, and were concerned about how the trauma of retirement could affect other members of their family. Nathan explained:

> I mentioned all the trauma—how does one deal with it? And if you don't have vision, well then, there's no way forward. Who bears the impact? That's the partners. And the people surrounding you—it's usually the ones that you care about the most. I wouldn't be surprised if there were marriage breakups or different things that would happen to other players. (Nathan r2003 AFL)

There were variations in the way some of the footballers forged post-sport relationships with former clubs. In some cases this was connected with the issue of reciprocity, with players feeling 'let down' by the club to which they had given many years of loyal service and commitment. Some of the players also expressed feeling abandoned and isolated:

> [We] could see the time and effort that I'd put into the club, like that's my family, and then all of a sudden it's the family not giving you anything back, or not caring. And we had thought a lot more of the club than that—[I had thought] the coach was one of my mates. (Nathan r2003 AFL)

Conversely, Johnny enjoyed an on-going relationship with his former club:

> I've given good service to (the club). I'm currently their … record holder. So they treat me with the red carpet. It's fantastic. I can always go and talk to someone there. (Johnny r2009 AFL)

Brian (r1993 AFL) believed that he was welcome in his club, but he also felt that limits had been imposed. He explained, "[I'm welcome] absolutely, but not to get in the way". Key Stakeholder #12 (manager) tried to explain why differences in club attitudes might have occurred:

> The landscape had changed especially with club football and the ability to pay players. Now players [are paid] for their services [and] there is a more business-like approach to the running of the team. Which means loyalty isn't as important as ability to perform or the success of a team. Success on the field means financial reward for player, coach and management, and the club. There is much more accountability on the coaching and management staff to be successful. So therefore this is transferred to the players as pressure to perform on a consistent basis. So clubs will pursue players that can achieve success, and sometimes loyal players are the casualties of that action.

Yet even after reading this explanation, Nathan was still disappointed by the treatment he had received:

> There was and still is little care about those who have given a lot because of a couple of reasons. They are not equipped and they don't give it due care. It is still a long way from where it should be. (Nathan r2003 AFL)

Support

This section examines where participants received their support during SCT. The need for appropriate social support for athletes during SCT is well-documented, and many programs and services were mentioned by key stakeholders from the two football codes, including traineeships, the AFL Next Goal program, formal and informal mentoring programs, past player associations, the roles of Indigenous Program Managers and Liaison Officers (at some clubs), exit interviews, career profiling, VET and, of course, the services offered by the AFLPA, RLPA and individual clubs (including counselling and financial management).

Earlier retirees (those who had retired prior to the introduction of SCT programs in the mid 2000s) pointed out the lack of support programs back in their day; this had left them vulnerable and unprepared for life after sport:

> The other thing I had no understanding of was gambling; that was probably the biggest problem amongst the footballers. (Robin r1989 AFL)

> Nothing from the club, no nothing from the club whatsoever, which is what my wife was very upset about. Look, there's options with the system but they don't go out of their way and say, now look you're recently retired, this is what's open to you, nothing like that. (Nathan r2003 AFL)

More recent retirees, Simon and Scott, paid tribute to their clubs, pointing out the role played by clubs for supporting retirees undergoing SCT in recent years:

> Mind you the club itself was a really, really good organisation to be associated with. As part of their induction process—it went over about 24 months—we were exposed to life skills, coaching, quite a number of leadership and team building activities. I was able to do the leadership training that they provided. And it helped me with some of the learning I was undertaking. And on the way, too, I developed—whether it's indirect mentors? Maybe not to their knowledge, but they were helping me to not only achieve my objectives but help me shape myself for life-after-sport. (Simon r2003 NRL)

> At [the club] our welfare manager is very good in making the young kids do courses and getting them skilled up in all sorts of areas, rather than waiting, you know, six months of their contracts left and then trying to get them to do something. (Scott r2007 AFL)

Johnny agreed, but also pointed out that, in his opinion, clubs do have a moral responsibility to provide this support, including VET and tertiary education for players:

> [My club] does it better than anyone, because all of our players are from interstate. Well they have to, otherwise they'll get a bad rap, and why would you come and play for a team that doesn't look after its players? (Johnny r2009 AFL)

KS#8 (NRL administrator) pointed out that, "support is available to players through the club, as much or as little as they wish to use, it's up to them to access it". Recent retirees and current footballers agreed that, for today's athletes, there are plenty of resources available:

> We're one of the best organisations in looking after our talent and our product when they retire. With the AFLPA, it's outstanding, the way the information is there, if you want to go. It doesn't matter what field of work you want to go to set yourself up for after footy, there's people there to help you achieve that. (Johnny r2009 AFL)

There were also less structured programs featuring input from other Indigenous people that provided important support. For example:

> We have a local Indigenous guy who we have just started using as a resource for the boys. He will be taking on the activities i.e., fishing, hunting and anything else they may be interested in and also there as someone to talk to. (KS#16 AFL)

Compared to the footballers, boxers received limited support. In fact, for this group, few services or programs were available. Boxing administrator KS#5 bluntly stated that, "Boxing Australia hasn't done anything to tackle issues surrounding retirement for boxers". Yet amateur boxers who had been on scholarship at the AIS believed they had been well-served by the ACE program and personnel involved in boxing programs:

> If I wasn't at the institute—nuh! I'd get nothing from the sport, but being at the institute you get 'what do you want to do, what do you want to be, what are you studying?' (Dennis current Boxing)

Professional boxers stated that they did not receive any support from their sport towards their retirement. Tom (current Boxing) put it succinctly: "From boxing?—No, nothing mate! They don't give us nothing!" In spite of this, one gym system was mentioned as exemplar in terms of providing post-career support to professional boxers:

> 'Grange' (Grange Gymnasium) trainers are quite good and professional. They have some amateurs too … They're probably the best of the lot. They care about their boys. Good gym, good disciplines about cleanliness and punctuality. (KS#1 Boxing)

Boxers described how the culture of the sport itself had given them important values and life skills, as well as some protection along the way. Current boxer Kris stated, "I think, because it gives you discipline, it gives you life things and you know you earn respect in there." Another boxer, Jack, remarked:

> I was fortunate enough to always find refuge in sport. I think if it wasn't for boxing and sport and getting back into that sport and my divine direction and motivation for doing something positive, I don't think, well, definitely I wouldn't have gotten out of [my economically depressed suburb]. (Jack current Boxing)

Several key stakeholders had specific roles with regard to providing support to Indigenous athletes through the SCT process. Individuals mentioned initiatives that were above and beyond their role descriptions, for example, KS#19 had been instrumental in setting up the AFLSportsReady Registered Training Organisation (RTO), while KS#1 had worked to

establish a superannuation fund for boxers. KS#8 (NRL) discussed how some life and work skills were learnt by athletes participating in his club's community service programs:

> All programs are purely voluntary at this time. We are not in a position to pay players and also it is part of their community service [obligations]. They do get an education through our programs and some intrinsic value. The Polynesian and Indigenous players tend to be more focused on community and easier to involve in these programs. (KS#8)

Families and communities had provided plenty of support throughout the sport careers of Indigenous athletes, and, as they reached the end of their time in elite sport, they were confident that the support would continue. Wives, mothers, and partners, played important roles:

> Hopefully I'm married by then and have a wife, and she'll help me. Yeah, and mum. Mum will always be there, and my family back here. Your family always helps you so much. (Ian current Boxing).

> My wife—she's helped me heaps in that sense in terms of teaching me how to study and teaching me how to get on with life. I'm very grateful that I had her. (Nick r1997 Boxing)

Billy (r1989 Boxing), who had almost lost his mother many years earlier made a touching observation, "it was funny y'know, cos me mum, even though she couldn't cope with everything, she was always there for support, me old mum, she's still there today".

The ability to manage money was a big challenge. David (r1997 AFL) struggled financially, describing his situation after sport as "ordinary, pretty ordinary, the money, mate, I didn't play for big money". Learning to manage money was described as the biggest trial faced by the athletes both during and after their careers:

> I couldn't save money for a long period of time. I was going out, spending money like it was never going to stop coming through. I've now sat down with my manager and worked out ways in which I'm going to save. At the end of the year I'm going to buy a unit, hopefully. (Bradley current NRL)

> I've been playing for years and everything I got paid I've just blown. (Matthew current NRL)

Professional boxer, Tom, expressed his frustration about his situation, at the same time touting a view that other sportspeople, notably footballers, are grossly overpaid:

> We won't make a real lot. Not like footballers—they get a lot, they get heaps, they get too …. much! But we don't get much, not with all the training we do. We have to make things happen.

Bradley argued against this belief about the scale of professional footballers' salaries in Australia:

> People on the outside look in and think you earn a great deal of money. Whereas a guy that owns a chicken shop out there might earn more than we do. So if you're gonna play football for financial reasons then you're probably in the wrong sport. We're getting good wages, but the risk that we're putting on our bodies, the amount of time you're away from your families, and the amount of pressure you're under from the media—it doesn't really work out to be a great deal, especially when the guy down the road in the chicken shop earns just as much. And he's under no pressure. (Bradley current NRL)

Trying to support a family with a greatly reduced income after sport was tricky, as Nathan and Ben explained:

> We experienced the normal pressures of poor people; they fight over little things but all of a sudden you become tight as a family. The restrictions of sometimes not being able to choose what you'd like to do. (Nathan r2003 AFL)

> But the hardest thing is using your money properly—you have an endless supply when you're a footy player. Now the wallet's dried up, you certainly have to prioritise what you need and what you don't. And you can't go out and have lunch every day at cafés like we used to, money's really … we're living in the real world as well. I'm finding that a bit difficult. (Ben r2009 AFL)

As other participants echoed these concerns, a widely-held self belief emerged: that Indigenous people typically have greater difficulties dealing with money than their non-Indigenous peers. Neville explained:

> Coming from a family that, which is a lot of Indigenous trends, not a good socio-economic background or educated in how to look after their own money and those sorts of issues. So, you know, give a young Koori or Murray boy a hundred bucks, it'll burn a hole in his pocket, you know, nice and quick. (Neville r2008 NRL)

In some cases, this appears to have been exacerbated by pressures imposed by family and friends, namely notions of reciprocity (Hanrahan, 2004; Coram, 1999), sharing and caring for a wider group, and the concomitant view that "if it's mine it's yours, if it's yours it's ours": Ben's words illustrate this dilemma:

> Probably finances, it's the biggest thing, I reckon. I mean a lot of blackfellas struggle with their finances. I was pretty lucky, I didn't have my family ringing me up, asking me for money all the time, 'cause I know a lot of them do. And most of them will just give them as much as they can, so that's just the biggest thing, just setting up. What some of the older players do is set up an account at the start of the year, and if the family rings up asking for money then they have that money put aside. (Ben r2009 NRL)

While the current and former athletes displayed some reluctance to discuss this sensitive issue, the Indigenous key stakeholders were able to throw some light on the subject—the obligation of Indigenous athletes to support their extended family as the primary breadwinner during their playing careers. In some cases, the need for such financial support may have been due to broken families, or situations in which the father figure was missing (KS#21). However, the Indigenous key stakeholders indicated that the expectation to provide for the extended family was widespread, and as a result, athletes were under significant pressure. Coping with these expectations "once the gravy train dried up" (KS#22) could be additionally challenging. "Managing the No" (KS#21), that is, developing the ability to resist, or manage, family demands, was described by both Indigenous key stakeholders and the athletes as daunting. According to KS#21, the pressure to conform to the expectations of people around them had the potential to "inhibit the players' ability to go and discover new [path]ways" that could be valuable later in their careers. In spite of these challenges, KS#21 firmly believed that, with appropriate support, Indigenous footballers were "extraordinarily well-equipped to adapt and cope".

Many of the athletes felt that they needed more assistance in planning their life-after-sport career pathways. As David (r1997 AFL) pointed out, "you have to know what you want to be and what you want to do before you retire—that's the toughest thing". Yet they also described their need for a specific type of support. In particular, they wanted culturally appropriate support, and firmly believed that this should be sourced from within their own culture. Typically, they considered sport clubs and organisations to be ill-equipped in this area. Nathan (r2003 AFL) explained:

> You'll find at [club] there's a welfare officer. Now this officer's not even Aboriginal, it's sort of like how can one person know what's in another person's mind if they're not Aboriginal. It's not, it's just not … People don't think about that, people think, well they might be a different background but that worked with Aboriginal kids or people—but that

> doesn't … unfortunately it just doesn't. Unless you are [Indigenous], you're unable to help, really. When an Indigenous person walks into an organisation, whether it be in a sport or anything else, what they bring with them is who they are, everything about family first, and caring and nurturing, and they understand issues, that really nobody else can, no matter how good, or how much goodwill someone may mean. How can one person know what's in another person's mind if they're not Indigenous? (Nathan r2003 AFL)

Some stakeholders were unaware of the athletes' need for this type of support, evincing a belief that retirement is a typical process for all athletes. This is illustrated by an AFL official, who asserted, "if they've been processed properly into the club, there should be no difference when they leave" (KS#17). Both AFL and NRL administrators interviewed agreed that while their organisations had transition programs, none had been specifically tailored to meet the needs of Indigenous athletes. There were a few Indigenous program managers in both the AFLPA and AFLSportsready whose roles were to work directly with Indigenous athletes, although at the AFLPA this was limited to one person only, Cory McGrath. However, his role was divided between Indigenous services and Accountancy, which compromised his capacity to focus on support mechanisms for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players. There were even fewer Indigenous personnel in support roles at the NRL, or for boxers at the AIS. In fact, stakeholders linked with boxing noted the same lack of culturally-appropriate support associated with AIS programs, a point also strongly made by the boxers. Nevertheless, informal support links were in place, with KS#5 (who lives in a remote area of Australia) pointing out that, "if there is no support for the boys there [at the AIS], they will ring me anyway!" Key stakeholders suggested that a change in attitude was evident, as KS#9 indicated that sport organisations are developing "a greater awareness of cultural diversity and the different needs". This was summed up by an Indigenous stakeholder, who said:

> We need to educate coaches about cultural needs of the Indigenous players, and get more Indigenous liaison people around the clubs. We need to recognise that issues of colour and racism still exist in sport and teach our players how to confront this after sport. (KS#21)

Adaptive behaviours

This section examines the adaptive behaviours and strategies that athletes utilised in order to cope with their new situations. For some, this meant changing the situation or managing

stress and crisis reactions. Some, like Nathan (r2003 AFL), experienced a crisis, and sought professional advice. “The next day I was ‘well what do I do?’ And then I saw the psychologist—and she was great”. However, others turned to illicit drugs and alcohol abuse, factors that are frequently mentioned in the literature as maladaptive behaviours exhibited by some athletes at retirement (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1998, Mihovilovic, 1968). Alcohol abuse resulted in crisis situations for some of the participants. For example, two athletes battled to deal with their alcohol dependency:

> I missed it cos well, I wasn’t there no more, not in the limelight, see, and what I done, I always had problems, like in me ‘ead [head] and everything, so I thought, like, alcohol got rid of the problems. See, when I was drunk, I never had a problem, it was only when I woke up, in the morning; I had a problem, yeah. So I was never sober—for, say twenty years, yeah. (Billy r1989 Boxing)

> They give you support, but they go about it the wrong way. Um, for me, I had a bit of a slip-up, went out on the drink, um, when I was actually playing in the NRL, and the coach said to me—I said ‘mate, I can’t go to this function we’ve got, I don’t trust myself around the drink’. Mentally, I couldn’t trust myself. And he goes ‘mate, I rather you just come and have a couple of white ones [white wine] or a couple of lights [light beers] and then go home’. And I said ‘well, I can’t do that’. You know, I couldn’t do that. So for that to come from him, just proves that he’s completely unaware of the disease that I have. And still battle. Still battle. Could have a beer now. But I know for me the better person I am. My life has gone from strength to strength since I haven’t touched alcohol. Personally I’m stronger. Personally I’m free, in my own mind. (Neville r2008 NRL)

The academic literature has demonstrated that life skills are important factors in explaining why one athlete thrives in life after sport, while another struggles (Coakley, 1983). In the present study some of these life skills were ‘generic’, while others were culturally-specific. Nathan and David felt that their life skills and mental toughness had helped during SCT:

> I thought that my mental strength could get me through anything, really, for all of the things that had happened to me. Well, what could have been tougher than your mother passing away, so you should be able to cope quite easily. That belief got me through and still does. But working with personalities, different personalities, a team, and being able to execute a plan, with people around you is how teamwork, and how public and private sectors operate. So that helped me—being able to negotiate and get on with people. (Nathan r2003 AFL)

> I didn’t realise but along the way I picked up all these life skills: communication skills, people skill, management skills, and time management stuff. That’s what kept me in good stead, even now. Yeah, I just had to think on my feet, I guess, when I finished up. You get

> through it, you tap into all the knowledge you've built up over the years. I'm a survivor—it taught me how to survive—well, I taught myself how to survive, I reckon. (David r1997 AFL)

Brian (r1993 AFL) drew on a personality trait, "I reckon I'm a half glass full sort of guy anyway, and I'm probably the biggest ego-maniac I know, so I wanted to succeed. That was probably a coping mechanism". Others used different strategies:

> I get sad about stuff. The thing is, my girlfriend doesn't like it. I miss boxing but there is something I sort of use as a substitute. But it's not good. It's playing poker [a card game involving betting]. So that's sort of my substitute for boxing so I don't have to think about it. It's very strategic, as boxing is very strategic as well. Mentally it's been like boxing. (Wills r2008 Boxing)

> I actually approached a guy and I actually rang him. He's a bit like a godfather to us footballers, he's been around for a long time, he's like a godfather to Indigenous footballers. So I rang him. (Norman r2005 AFL)

Summary

What emerged from the athletes' stories during *Nowhere Land* was reflection upon their SCT experiences and what they had learned through their socialisation as athletes. Those who left sport prematurely (or involuntarily) demonstrated unresolved conflict, feelings of loss, bitterness, anger, and/or body image problems. In general, they described longer, more difficult transitions. A variety of support systems had been available to the athletes, although athletes believed that these were not always optimal.

4.5.3 Third Phase: New Beginnings

A number of athletes had successfully navigated through the disorientation of *Nowhere Land*, and were well on their way into *New Beginnings*. In this phase, some athletes experienced difficulties in coping with their new situations and identities, while others seemed to be in control.

Coming to terms

Eventually, most of the athletes had been able to come to terms with their changed circumstances, which entailed recognising and accepting that somehow they had

metamorphosed into a new person in a changed world. But first, some soul-searching had been necessary.

> Once the decision's made, it's like: what now? What do I want to do? It's like, it's life after footy now. It's time to get your finances and all that stuff, your life in order, work out what you wanna do, what you're trying to do. (Kevin r2007 AFL)

The strong commitment to give back to family and community gave many of the athletes a purpose and a direction for life after sport.

> My family never had any money when I was growing up, they always made sure I was happy and had the best of everything and that, so it's more of a payback thing. My father died, so I'm the man of the house now, and I've got to provide for my mother. She straightened me out and made me a better person and now my payback is that I have to be her provider, which I will gladly do because I love her to death. (Ian current Boxing)

For Scott, family soon became his top priority, providing him with a driving force:

> I have had a good retirement. There's been, obviously it hasn't all been easy sailing. There have been times where you think, ah this is tough, this is tough, but you sort of just get on with it. And I guess with having four kids I just have to move on and be able to be their supporter and make sure I'm giving every chance they can to have a good life as what I did. So yeah, that was good, but very happy with my life at the moment; four kids, my wife, just looking forward to the next chapter of my life, you know, knuckling down, getting a good job. (Scott r2007 AFL)

Alex was pragmatic about life after sport, and passed on some advice to future generations of athletes:

> You've hung the jersey up, got to put the business suit on now and go out and walk in there confident about what it is you're selling. (Alex r2007 NRL)

Rural/Urban tensions

As discussed earlier, all of the Indigenous athletes had left home to pursue their sports careers, and had therefore experienced acculturation in a new environment. Put simply, this is the process of change one undergoes when coming into direct contact with another culture. Athletes, who had earlier relocated to play sport, sometimes found their return to rural and remote communities to be a significant challenge, as once again they experienced acculturation, or culture shock, as they found that, unbeknownst to them, they were now

seen to have changed. David and Josh described negative situations they encountered as they returned home—David to a remote area of the country and Josh to a small country town:

> It's a rude awakening. People need to know that it's not good. People think you're flying but you're not ... you've got responsibilities, mate, mouths to feed; you need to be in the workforce. I assumed back in [my hometown] I would be accepted with open arms and there'd be work there for me, and people were going to employ me and things like that but it wasn't—you become a bit of a threat to 'em, people become very protective of their own positions. (David r1997 AFL)

> A lot of people in the town seem interested and supportive, but I dunno—it seems like they might be a bit jealous. Bitter or something. Ya get that feeling from some people that—oh he thinks he's better than us or whatever. (Josh current Boxing)

When Simon returned to his remote community, he soon recognised that he was now regarded as a different person. He found it took considerable time and effort to become accepted, even though he had gone back to do what he regarded as important work:

> The general feeling was that I was someone special. I did carry with me a sense of 'here's someone who's been and done that'. I tried not to be too different but people had a different mental construct. So I demonstrated that I was a community person, I was into lots of activities, I didn't mind making fun of myself, not at the expense of anybody else, and more importantly just showing to be that even if you have got to the high level, you're there for a short time. You know if you can pass on some knowledge, then that's what it's all about, the renewal aspect. For myself it was also about using contacts—ah, some of the prestige that I had—to try and leverage some other benefits for [my community]. (Simon r2003 NRL)

As indicated in *Table 4.6*, a number of Indigenous athletes made changes to their geographical place of residence during transition and after sport. Of the 24 athletes who originated from rural or remote areas, 13 relocated permanently to cities or urban areas after sport (or planned to do so), while 11 returned to rural or remote areas (or planned to do so). During their sport careers, the athletes' personal situations had changed, with several forming permanent relationships and starting (relatively) large families at fairly young ages. However, it was common for the Indigenous athletes to return to their former

homes temporarily during their transition, and this was due to a number of reasons. For example, Johnny wanted to share his success with family and friends:

> They're very, very proud of what I've been able to achieve [my football career], and I get a buzz going back there because it's something that they can hang their hats on a little bit as well. (Johnny r2009 AFL)

As Norman struggled to develop a post-sport identity, he wanted to be with family who would give him the support he needed during this period:

> I went back to [my remote community]—that was probably the best for me, now, when I think back now, probably the best move I ever made. I knew where I wanted to be and I knew in [my remote community] I just needed the time to think about things. That's why I probably went on those long walks—sometimes I'd walk 25 kms, you know, with my bottle of water. I think especially my mum, and my dad, and I think those people around me knew that that was what I had to do. And my partner. But I had some great support and some great family, great friends and a great partner that gave me that space to find out what I wanted to do. (Norman, r2005 AFL)

Ben also enjoyed the opportunity to go home, but for him the big city lights were calling him back:

> My family's pretty cruisy. It's weird when you go back home, I get a bit bored at home. [Home town's] a bit boring, it's weird in that respect and I usually do the touristy thing, go out to the waterfalls, go and see a bit of the territory when everyone's working. I last about two weeks, then I'm ready to get back to [the city]. (Ben r2009 AFL)

Wills and Robin found that nothing at home had changed:

> The same, it's just me, same bare bum in the shower. (Wills r2008 Boxing)

> They treated me just like normal, they didn't treat me differently … you know up here in the territory you're just family, there's none of that you know, you're not up on top or anything, there's not that glory like down south … yeah, so they didn't treat me any different. (Robin r1989 AFL)

And Kevin's homecoming was a happy day for the whole extended family:

> By the end of my career I'm ringing dad and I'm saying I'm coming home today, I'm just going to tell the players, not tell the club and in the end he was 'yeah come home'. He wasn't happy with the club as well. When I got home, I think dad and mum were happy to have us home, and the grandkids so yeah, they were rapt. (Kevin r2007AFL)

Career choices

After the end of the athletic retirement process, athletes had reached a new stage in life. Some were well adjusted to life after sport, busy with new endeavours, and happy with their new lives. Bradley described his aim for retirement:

> My number one thing would be my health: to come out of the game, without things like arthritis, back pain, things like that. Dislocated fingers. If I get out of the game healthy and happy with the career I've had that would be the main thing. And financially—if you come out of the game and you're in a position where you've got a bit of money, to open your own business or to have some options to do what you want to do with your life—that's probably the second goal. And you'd start a new journey, a new challenge in life. (Bradley current NRL)

There were several career pathways mentioned by key stakeholders as being popular amongst retiring athletes, such as real estate, property development, personal training, and small business management. However, for the Indigenous athletes, these pathways were underpinned by their desire to give back to their own community and other Indigenous people. What emerged from the interviews was a narrow range of career selections. The most common choices were:

1) Indigenous sport programs/mentoring (7).
2) Coach/Personal trainer (11).
3) Youth work (5).

Critically, the figures indicate that 17 (or 58.1%) of the athletes did not see a career outside of sport at all, while eight (or 25.8%) of the athletes saw their futures fully engaged with Indigenous community programs. These figures are illustrated in the pie chart in *Figure 4.3*:

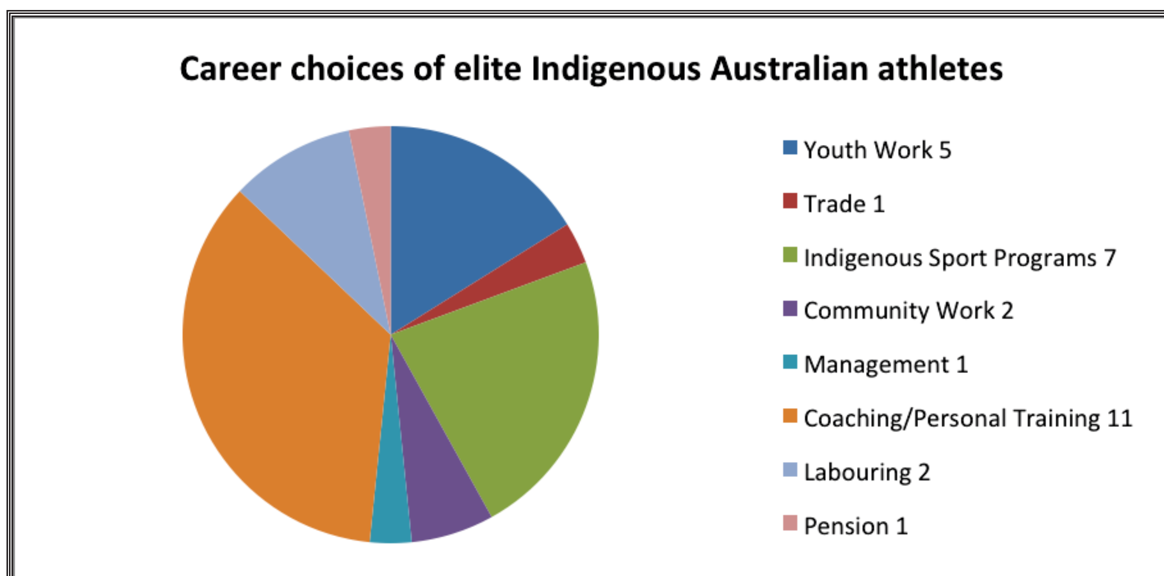

Figure 4.3: Career choices of elite Indigenous Australian athletes

Athletes in this study had made significant sacrifices to pursue their dreams of a career within sport, hoping that it would translate into financial security and success at the highest levels. While under-achievement at school was viewed with a degree of disappointment, most concluded that it was a sacrifice they had been prepared to make:

> The Commonwealth Games fell in my [Higher School Certificate] year and I put all my efforts into the Commonwealth Games so school got missed out. I didn't care about the school marks and results and now I wish I had good marks because then I would have something to fall back on. As I said I've been boxing since I was ten, and that's all I know, I don't know anything else. (Dennis current Boxing)

The relatively autonomous fields of football and boxing represent self-contained territories, each with its own set of rules, language, logic, and behaviours. Boxers, in particular, found it difficult to function without the logic, language, and aspirations of the sport. For them, formal education went out the door—boxing itself was their education, notwithstanding its limitations:

> I've had to lose weight every fight I've had, so much, so I'd know how to make your body lose weight. I know the right food you should be eating, I would be able to tell you if you were low on iron, if you were low on this or that, vitamins—a lot goes into this. I know a lot about the body, I could tell you my body weight before I even get on a set of scales, that's how much I know my body. I could tell you about the science, it's definitely a lot of knowledge. (Dennis current Boxing)

Boxers are encouraged to participate in VET and further education through the ACE program, whilst on scholarship at the AIS. Similarly, both AFL and NRL footballers are encouraged to engage in education and training as soon as they arrive in their new environment. Yet, while many of the athletes commenced vocational training, few actually completed these qualifications. The following comments illustrate the ongoing lure of sport and the subsequent downgrading of educational or vocational pursuits in favour of committing to the demands of sport:

> [At the AIS] I started to do some fitness courses, some different courses like that. I never actually got to finish one I was … I really wanted to finish. It was Certificate III in Fitness, yeah, I started that down in Canberra but because of training commitments and travelling and stuff like that I didn't get to finish it. (Kim current Boxing)

> I got 3 and three-quarter years through a four-year course when the club put a decision into me, going 'are you going to be a rugby league player or work?' And it was simple, it was 'nah, I want to be a rugby league player'. I'm pretty fortunate that I did have an HSC [Higher School Certificate]. (Alex r2007 NRL)

Kevin's comment also indicates a lack of engagement with the training on offer to him—although he managed to complete his traineeship, he did not see any relevance for the qualification in his future pursuits:

> I did a traineeship when I was playing AFL. That was through AFL SportsReady. It was sort of the thing to do, and they find you work as soon as you arrive. Not that I'll ever follow it, I won't continue it. But if I hadn't done it I would have come out with nothing. (Kevin r2007 AFL)

KS #9 remarked that, in his experience, the players needing most encouragement to commit to vocational education and training courses were "the Indigenous boys. Their attitude seems to be 'I'm sweet', so they're living in the moment, not the future". Key Stakeholder #21 had also noticed this lack of engagement by Indigenous athletes in education and training programs, but felt that this was an indication of something more important that the young footballers needed to address:

> Footy comes first, they will unpack the other stuff later when they can; there is cultural conflict in the support structures that they have to try and deal with first.

Pathways in sport?

In the marriage of sport and identity formation, it is little wonder that some athletes are

unable to detach themselves from sport once their careers come to an end. An obvious way to remain connected with sport is to take on a career in this field, such as coaching. For several participants, coaching had provided them with a realistic avenue to stay connected to sport (albeit, generally only for a short time), as well as a means to earn an income. Key Stakeholder #19 suggested that coaching could provide a long-term career opportunity:

> With coaching there's the opportunity for longevity. You could be coaching well into your 50s or early 60s and hopefully by that time you would be able to retire. There's the opportunity to make an impact, with grass-roots coaching and also high-level. (KS#19)

However, Robin, who returned to a remote community, was rather more circumspect:

> I'm just an old man who talks too much. They don't want someone that looks old and thinks they know what's best for them. They know what's best for themselves, so they do what they want to do and don't want a coach. They think they can get away with not turning up for training, or coming late, and that's the disappointing thing about football here. The young players they just lack any respect for me. Look, the younger ones, the generation here, there's just no respect for themselves. So I walk away—just leave it to the younger ones. (Robin r1989 AFL)

Simon saw coaching as an opportunity to give back to the sport that had supported him, while at the same time helping to develop his community. He had developed his own coaching style and philosophy:

> I had to repay the game because it actually did a lot for myself, so I immediately started to pursue opportunities to do coaching. I'm actually a Level Two Rugby League coach. I also then pursued opportunities for refereeing. So for me for the really young kids it's all about fun, it's all about the camaraderie and the team and some skills development. At the older level, I did Under 16s this year, we didn't perform too well. But it's more about, OK you guys are developing into young men, the other teams we had coming up against us had many advantages over us, so acknowledging what our weaknesses were, focusing more on our strengths. For me personally as a coach it's watching those boys at the start of the season come together as a unit and more importantly go out there and play as a team, even though we haven't won as many as we would have liked. But them actually putting in for their mates, and demonstrating to their peers that, OK when they go in there, they are professional, they carry themselves well, they play fair and at the end of the game they can walk off knowing that they've contributed and not just gone out there as a passenger. (Simon r2003 NRL)

Several of the early retirees had become disheartened with coaching and had turned their backs on the vocation. Jerry expressed his disenchantment with today's youth, suggesting some inter-generational conflict:

> I paid for all his accommodation, I gave him money and got him a hire car, I picked him up and took him home from the gym, but he wanted to go home. His spirit was back home. That's the attitude of a lot of them. You know, I give him my love, I treated that boy like my own son, I looked after him like a son. I pick him up; I drive him here, there. I say to myself—'I stick my neck out to help somebody and I get a kick in the backside'. Ya try and help and they kick you in the backside. I did everything for the kid, but no. I said 'I'm wasting my time'. So I drop him down the gutter and a big hole in it and never pick him up again—that's my attitude! (Jerry r1989 Boxing)

In addition, some of the footballers had become disillusioned with their former sport since their retirement:

> I couldn't be in that environment again—where they get two, three, five hundred thousand [dollars], the players. I had to get over it, but I couldn't handle it. (David r1997 AFL)

> I don't watch the footy. I'd rather be a participant than a spectator. People ask me if I go and watch the AFL. The last time I went I left at three-quarter time and I would have left earlier, but I was just being polite so I wouldn't go and walk in front of people. But it was the worst game I've seen. The AFL has changed but I honestly don't like it. (Steve r1989 AFL)

There were others, however, who remained involved in sport, in a variety of roles, such as mentoring younger athletes and continuing to play in lower-level competitions. Indeed, Tom (current Boxing) explained that boxers never really leave their sport:

> Well in boxing, when you leave the sport, you never really leave it. So I'd just say, hang around the sport, be around the sport, do your stuff.

Reflecting on these discussions, some other insights emerged. Key Stakeholder #1, a boxing administrator, was worried that the future after sport for many boxers is by no means secure:

> After they finish boxing, that's generally it. Very few go and get a job. The problem is that they don't have the will to go and work. It's part of their culture. It's a western world—[but] they want to be free-spirits.

However, KS#1 believed that, for those professional boxers at the very highest levels, the future was bright. "For [Boxer 1] it is—he could do the talking circuit. [Boxer 2] will do alright—very articulate, a gentleman. He'll be a personal trainer or own his own gym". However, when asked about the likelihood of making a living from a career in boxing, for those boxers who had only achieved at modest levels, Key Stakeholder #1 was less

optimistic, stating “no, not a lot. [Boxer 3] works, does a bit of everything. [What he does in boxing], he does it from the heart. [But he] won't make money out of it”.

Agency

The notion of agency refers to the capacity of individuals to take control of their own lives. Athletes in the present study acknowledged the role of sport, in providing opportunities and opening doors for them. However, it was up to the athletes themselves to take control and seize the opportunities that came their way:

> What it’s done for me, for any young boy, black or white, to be able to walk through a door, to walk into a foreign environment, from coming from that position to—like I’m an introvert—but it’s allowed me to want to do different things in my life. (Nathan r2003 AFL)

> [NRL player] pulled me aside and said 'well, when you come to these corporate events, it's not about you sitting in the corner'. And that's what we did as kids, I mean, we saw the senior players going out and shaking hands. So that bit of advice I carried and kept with me, so it was about going out and … I'll give you a for instance. I gave two minutes of my time to a lady who loved the way I played rugby league, her daughter was a fan, and got talking to her and she said 'I'll introduce you to my husband'. I shook his hand and sat there and spoke for about five or ten minutes. He happened to be one of the CEOs of [car company]. He said 'well, we'd like you to drive our [brand of] cars around in these communities'. So that just happened to come about by me playing good rugby league. (Alex r2007 NRL)

As noted previously, athletes who did not complete schooling expressed some regret. But agency involves taking advantage of opportunities that arise, as demonstrated by Kris:

> I wanted to make a change in my life, so I saw the opportunity, the opportunity to study, when I was down in Canberra at the AIS, the AIS scholarship came along, I jumped on it. And then I saw all the opportunities when I went there and I was training, working during the day and studying at night. (Kris current Boxing)

Even Norman, who experienced a prolonged and difficult transition period, was offered an opportunity, which eventually opened up new pathways for him:

> And what really gave me the vision of where I wanted to work was working up in [my remote community] with the youth. And so my transition, and my duty in life is the reason why I’m doing this work at the moment, and I enjoy it. (Norman r2005 AFL)

However, the proactive experiences of these athletes cannot be viewed as typical, for other interviewees did not engage in career planning during their sport careers. Matthew (current

NRL) was struggling with his preparations for life after sport, saying, “I’m trying but I haven’t really thought too much. I’ve been thinking, and hopefully I can figure something out in the next year”.

Reflections

At the end of the interviews, the athletes were asked to reflect on whether elite-level sport had made their life better or worse, and whether they would rather have done things differently. Even with all the problems he encountered at the end of his career, Nick (r1997 Boxing) concluded that he would do it all again: “I wouldn’t change anything—no way in the world!” A range of thoughts and opinions came from the athletes. Most shared a general feeling of privilege and good fortune at having established their sport careers, with the overall feeling that sport had provided them with great opportunities, experiences and memories:

> Definitely! It’s been the camaraderie, the exposure, the ability to step up to the plate, to understand the amount of work that is required to achieving higher level expectations. Particularly the mateship. Life now is—well, I’ve kept my feet on the ground, I didn’t get too carried away, life now is really good, really focusing on other tasks, other priorities. (Simon r2003 NRL)

> Oh, gees, that’s a good question. I’d say yes and no. I’d say football’s been good for me, it gave me a pathway and opportunities, much more than it would have been. There’s opportunities, and it does open a lot of doors for you, it has for me. In a negative way, I’ve lost a family, when I say lost, I had two sons in a previous marriage. It was the time, the limelight—I suppose it affected my ego, a lot of confidence, and it affected my first relationship. Sometimes wish I could have managed that a bit better. (Norman r2005 AFL)

> Yes! For sure. As I said this was my one opportunity, my one chance, you know. Lots of my friends grew up to do some naughty, naughty things, breaking and entering and all that kind of thing, and I had my boxing. They were drinking and smoking from a young age, but I had my boxing, and I just loved it, absolutely loved it—still do. (Ian current Boxing)

And even Billy (r1989 Boxing), whose transition to retirement was perhaps the longest and most traumatic, finally found happiness:

> Now I’m in paradise! I play golf all the time, I’ve got the most loveliest woman, an’ … aahh … I don’t get upset or angry. I do cooking; I do painting, first time I’ve ever done it since I was 14 years of age. What I do I eerr, it’s me … I visualise from when I was a kid, and I can still see those visions, like landscapes, like I used to go out pickin’ up emu eggs,

> and I used to walk for miles in the paddocks on me own, y'know, just on me own, miles on me own in the paddocks.

4.6 THIRD GENERAL DIMENSION: RACISM AND RACIALISATION IN AUSTRALIAN SPORT

The third general dimension in the study is a focus on racism in sport, and whether the athletes had experienced racist behaviour during their sport careers. In particular, the aim was to understand if any such incidents had a lasting effect on the SCT experience, and the athletes' life after sport. Again the section draws on the words of participants and allows their voices to be heard and recognised as they discussed episodes of racism both during, and since, their athletic careers. The analysis of data relating to the subject required some additional considerations and sensitivity, due primarily to the hurtful and complex nature of such occurrences. Furthermore, it was recognised that, "people may unknowingly re-produce oppressive discourses when reflecting on and recounting their own experiences" (Langdridge, 2008, p. 1136). Thus the analysis of the narratives in this section involved an especially close examination of the stories being told, in particular the linguistic and cultural resources that participants drew upon, and hence how persuasive their stories were. What emerged from the interviews is very enlightening, as experiences with racism featured in the lives of virtually all of these Indigenous athletes. It is significant to note that a small number of participants later chose to withdraw the section of their interview transcripts dealing with racism, from the study, feeling uncomfortable that these reflections may be perused by strangers.

In its most patent form, racism refers to discrimination between people on the assumption of biological differences and social hierarchies underpinning them (Cowlishaw, 1987). Variations in skin colour are thought to constitute categories of 'race', notwithstanding a lack of scientific validity for this concept (Adair & Rowe, 2010). Sport is naïvely assumed by many to be free of injustice and full of opportunity for all population groups (Tatz, 2011). This is due to a widespread belief that racism in Australian sport has been eradicated by a number of measures, including rule changes, anti-vilification policies, member

protection policies, and cultural awareness training. In fact, in Australia, sport is seen as a place where Indigenous Australians can be on equal terms—and even perform better than—the wider community. Yet the findings outlined below, along with incidents that occurred during 2010 and 2011 (to be discussed presently), suggest otherwise.

4.6.1 Racism during sport

Both the AFL and the NRL have enacted anti-vilification laws in recent years. As a result, the footballers were generally well-versed and keenly aware of the nature of racism in sport. The 1990s was an era in which footballers from both codes took the anti-racism initiative, that is, pursued instances of gross abuse, and won reforms. Indigenous AFL player, Brian (r1993 AFL), explained:

> It was there. Look, it was just starting to change towards the end of what I was doing. Initially you just took it, because you got it in the playground, you got it in the shops, you got it on the footy field. It was just something you lived with. But then, it wasn't as if I had an Aboriginal flag stuck up my arse, it was more about, this is what I'm prepared to tolerate and at the end of the line I'm not going to tolerate it. (Brian r1993 AFL)

By following legal pathways, footballers confronted the racism that many people saw as simply part of the game. Much of this came from people in the crowd:

> You hear it a lot from supporters. I mean I've sat in the crowd some days and you hear comments: 'you black boong' or whatever the names are they used. It still happens in the crowd. (Ben r2009 AFL)

> In the AFL you get some idiots in the crowd when you're walking on and off the ground. You might hear someone say 'you black such-and-such'. I've seen one of our players, a good friend of mine, be racially vilified by people watching the game, um, obviously because he was playing well, you know, it was 'black this, black that' sort of thing. And ah, it's still there. There's still people out there who are ignorant and don't understand the way of living now. But the only time I've seen it is when people are at the footy, especially at the local footy, and they've over-drank and are carrying on like imbeciles. (Scott r2007 AFL)

The reactions of participants to racist episodes varied, with several expressing their hurt, sadness, confusion, indignation, and anger:

> Whether you are Muslim, Indigenous, Maori, whatever, it really tugs at the heart strings. (Alex r2007 NRL)

> There's lots of places where you could be so you don't need to be subjected to it, you know,

> especially when it's your work, 'cos it's your job and it's like workplace bullying. You don't cop that, people get sacked for that sort of stuff. (David r1997 AFL)

In contrast to the footballers, boxers often seemed oblivious to episodes of racism, even when these had occurred in their own workplaces or training environments. Perceptions varied amongst the younger boxers. For example, Ian did not perceive the presence of racism in his boxing world, whereas George had confronted it often:

> Not really, I think because Aboriginal boxers are so highly regarded. So it's like if you're a good Aboriginal boxer, you're really put up there, you know. No, I haven't really had the racist thing, which is a good thing. (Ian current Boxing)

> We get that all the time. I ignore it because I'm at a level where they try and bring me down—but I won't go to that level where they're trying to be racist. They won't bring me down. I ignore it. I see it but I ignore it, because I'm too strong for that, too strong. (George current Boxing)

Like Ian, the youngest of the boxers, Josh (current Boxing), also painted a positive picture, believing that:

> People are more educated at the AIS about Aboriginality an' that, and there's a lot of people from different nationalities there. A lot of different cultures there, everyone seems to get along pretty well.

Yet a claim of a racial slur by a senior AIS boxing official, which occurred in 2009 (Anderson, 2009) was discussed by two boxers who were residents at the AIS at the time. The incident made them feel sad and confused. Current boxer Jack recalled:

> We went into their office, and we seen in their office, inside their cupboard, a, what do you call it, like a creed to whiteness of the athlete. No lies. Me and him were just like 'what the hell's going on in here?' It was quite disheartening because it was on the premises of the AIS, in our training quarters.

An episode like this suggests that more work may be needed in terms of the cultural awareness training of coaches and administrators working with Indigenous athletes, and that this work needs to be on-going. Alex (r2007 NRL) believed in the power of education to change the situation, maintaining, "everyone can be educated in terms of what it is you're fighting for. If you're proud of who you are and where you're from, I mean it's about standing up for yourself". Nathan (r2003 AFL) suggested another way forward, by advocating simple changes to language when discussing Indigenous athletes, "Instead of

the system saying how good football has been for Aboriginal people, what my mob sees is how Aboriginal people have enriched football!"

Beyond the blatant racist behaviour on the sports grounds, were the less obvious and sometimes unintended, forms of racism. One example is what Nathan called 'selective perceptions'. He believed this was a type of 'positional segregation', and therefore, a form of racialisation:

> There's an indirect or what would you say, eerr, perceived or selective perceptions … you'll see most [Indigenous] players on the forward pocket, or half-forward flank, nowhere near a vital role, and where you can get away with not being accountable. That's the perception that coaches have or the system has. That's a proof that it [segregation] still exists. (Nathan r2003 AFL)

Positional segregation has been the subject of research in both rugby league and Australian Rules football. It has been suggested that traditionally, Indigenous players have been overrepresented in positions defined by coaches as requiring speed and quickness, but generally absent from positions defined as requiring leadership and intellectual abilities (Coram, 2011; Hallinan et al., 1999). Furthermore, Indigenous players have historically been typecast as being unreliable, lacking discipline, unable to handle success and unsuitable for positions of responsibility (Cashman, 1995; Coram, 2007), again indicative of racialisation. While again referring to the supposed 'natural' abilities of Indigenous athletes, KS#11 refuted Nathan's assertion that positional selections were based on racialist beliefs. He pointed out that as the sizes and shapes of Indigenous bodies change and develop, so there have been, and will continue to be, changes to positional selections:

> The Aboriginal shape has changed immensely. It's probably more about 'posh breeding'; there's been a generational shift. Yeah, there's been a change and Aboriginals have traditionally been great sportspeople, great athleticism, the ability to run. And now those natural traits are being exposed to European cultures and stuff and you can see the change in Aboriginal shape. You can see it through the school systems. I'd say over the last four or five years you can see the change in school kids, they're much more well-proportioned over their whole bodies. (KS#11)

This position is evidenced by Indigenous AFL players, like Buddy Franklin[45] and Adam Goodes,[46] both currently playing in key forward positions, which have traditionally required tall, strong athletes.

Neville referred to a clear inequality in his sport of rugby league. He believed that Indigenous athletes were expected to work twice as hard for the same outcomes, regardless of their size, shape or ability:

> I tell you now, coming from an Indigenous man who played sport at that level, a little black boy's got to work harder than the next to prove himself. It's disgusting that we're all tarred with the same brush. (Neville r2008 NRL)

As well as commenting on what he believed to be additional pressures on Indigenous athletes to perform, Neville's comment also reflected his despondency at what he perceived to be continued negative typecasting of Indigenous athletes in sport.

Football organisations are now proactive in providing players with strategies to deal with racism they encounter in sport. Simon (r2003 NRL) explained:

> We were taught sport psychology. The main message there was that if something or someone resorts back to your skin colour, it was a sign of weakness and that's something you have to exploit, rather than become a victim, and then to succumb to whatever nonsense is carried on. And that's become recognised now that it's just not tolerated. The tool that was given to us was to target this person and to keep going at 'em 'cause they're not focused on the game.

Unfortunately, strong talking was sometimes the only way to deal with ill-informed officials:

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[45] Lance 'Buddy' Franklin, Jr. (born 30 January 1987) is a professional Australian Rules footballer currently playing for the Hawthorn Football Club in the AFL. Franklin has Indigenous Australian heritage, which he continues to acknowledge with a tattoo of a tribal elder who gave him the name 'Buddy' (to differentiate him from Lance Franklin, Sr., his father). He features Aboriginal artwork in the form of a kangaroo on his arm and participates in Indigenous youth programs.

[46] Adam Goodes is a professional Australian Rules footballer, with the Sydney Swans, in the AFL. He was born on 8 January 1980, in Wallaroo, South Australia, to Lisa May (a Narungga child with Adnyamathanha ancestry) and Graham Goodes, Goodes holds an elite place in AFL/VFL history as a dual Brownlow Medallist, premiership player, three-time All-Australian, and member of the Indigenous Team of the Century. He has represented Australia in the International Rules Series. Goodes is well known for his Indigenous Australian heritage, and is prominently involved, and associated, with several Indigenous sport and community programs.

> I mean we had a coach who believed that if I couldn't take it from him, calling me names, then I wouldn't be able to take it out on the ground. That was his theory. We sat down and discussed things, and he was told quite quickly: 'you talk about my culture, you talk about my mother, you talk about anything else other than football, or if you put your hand out of line I'm going to knock you out'. (Brian r1993 AFL)

It is significant to note that Brian's career spanned the 1980s and the early 1990s. At that time anti-vilification programs had not yet been incorporated into either the Rules or Policies of the AFL or its clubs.

Ben (r2009 AFL), discussed the solidarity that exists between Indigenous players, and how matters of racism were sometimes sorted out by informal means. However, bearing in mind that Ben retired in 2009, after 12 years of elite AFL football, his words reflect that, as Brian had found many years earlier, it is sometimes up to the players themselves to ensure that inappropriate behaviour within their sport is appropriately managed.

> Generally footy players at the elite level, they won't accept it. There are Indigenous players at every club, and if an Indigenous player hears that another player is a bit of a racist, they won't have nothing to do with him, or they'll go bash him or something like that. Word gets around very quickly. One guy I played with for a number of years he was vilified by another team, and actually we didn't go to arbitration or whatever it is. When he told me what happened I said 'go tell the General Manager'. So we approached the other team, and said 'this player said this, we want to know why he said it'. And they didn't even get back to us, they didn't have the guts to get back to us. So it was very disappointing when we did the right thing. Like we won't bring it up in the open, in public, or make a big deal of it. We just want him, if he's got something to say, or apologise if he didn't mean it. So it was very disappointing, and this player is one of the best players in the AFL. And he had vilified one of our players, one of my mates. So it's very disappointing, and so I call him a racist, I call him that ever after on the field. I still haven't forgotten that. So we spread the word very quickly to the other Indigenous boys around the AFL, and they certainly all know about that now.

What Ben's words illustrate is that footballers of the 2000s are not only well-versed in what constitutes racist behaviour, but, fortunately, are equipped with a suite of strategies to deal with challenging situations.

4.6.2 Racism beyond sport

One of the worst forms of overt racism in Australia's history relates to actions taken by government authorities in removing Indigenous children from their families. As official Australian government policy from 1909 to 1969, governments, churches and welfare

bodies all took part. Removal of children from their families did not depend on evidence of neglect (Kurongkurl Katitjin, 2010); rather the policy was imposed largely on the basis of colour. At the age four, Billy was forcibly removed from his mother's care by government authorities. However, other family members were able to care of him, and he avoided becoming one of the thousands who make up the Stolen Generations. However, as far as Billy was concerned, racism is still present in Australian society:

> It's a common thing … see, what it is, it's like it's hidden, it's hidden y'know, well they try to make it hidden but y'know it's there, like blackfellas can see it on the surface. When you walk up the street, you're always reminded that you're black, it doesn't matter where you are, people are always reminding you that you're black and I can't understand their stupidity and ignorance … (Billy r1989 Boxing)

Kris related a story of an incident that had occurred recently in his local community. A tall, strong, and fit boxer, Kris managed to resolve the situation with his own distinctive style of persuasiveness:

> Racism's running rife in Australia, it's just everywhere. I'll tell ya a funny one. Last—one week ago, my family were in the shopping centre, me, my fiancée and my son, we were walking along and there's another family behind us. And they were about five metres away from us and I just heard it in the side of my ear: 'where we come from we call them coons'. This is like a week ago, dead set, in the shopping centre. I swung around; I had to pull the bloke up. I was really really angry, but y'know like but … I had a good word. Like I had him really worried, y'know. I didn't do anything silly, but I just let him know … I spoke with him and I had some stern words, and he sort of got the drift.

Racism is used to hurt, to gain an advantage at the expense of another, and to exclude. Wills related a distressing episode:

> When I was younger I didn't used to be able to get a lot of things because … I remember one time there was a camp, and they wouldn't let me go to the camp because my mum didn't have any money, and so she tried to get it through the Indigenous path. And the lady was like: 'oh he's not Aboriginal, he's not even dark'. So! (Wills r2008 Boxing)

In the eyes of the female official, Wills failed to meet the standards that proved his Aboriginality. He found his identity under attack, a form of racism that was, for him, hurtful, as implicit in this attack was the suggestion that he was merely trying to benefit financially by claiming Aboriginality. While this was disappointing for Wills, he recalled other episodes that were even more harrowing:

> I'm light-skinned as well. So sometimes I get blackfellas not acknowledging me. So like people think that I'm wog or Lebanese, and my own people think that. I've even heard that a lot of other times from my own people. They were tough years. (Wills r2008 Boxing)

As he related this story, Wills' expression and body language indicated his deep feeling of hurt that his own people doubted his identity as an Indigenous person, a decision based solely on their determination of his skin colour and physical appearance.

4.6.3 Indigenous invisibility

Jerry (r1989) and Nathan (r2003) referred to what they perceived to be the 'invisibility' of Indigenous people in team, club, and organisation management positions. This is arguably a consequence of racialisation and stereotyping (Coram, 2007; Godwell, 1997). They pointed out that few former players made the career transition to administrative and leadership roles within the multi-million dollar businesses of the AFL or the NRL, or even boxing organisations:

> Every sport in Australia you got a committee, and I'll tell you what, there's hardly no Aborigines on them. No Aborigines, all white people. (Jerry r1989 Boxing)

> And how you know that occurs is when you see no AFL Aboriginal coaches, managers, board members and all that, so that the perception is that they're not accountable. You won't see any … well, we've had a few captains, so that helps. (Nathan r2003 AFL)

Nathan was correct when he mentioned that there have been relatively few Indigenous captains in the AFL. There have also been few Indigenous men in senior management roles in either football code. To date there has not been an Indigenous Director of the AFL Board of Management, although former Indigenous player, Gorden Tallis, recently became the first Indigenous NRL Board Member. The most senior Indigenous person in the AFL is Jason Mifsud, currently National Community Engagement Manager. Gavin Wanganeen captained Port Adelaide Football Club from 1997-2001, and Michael Long co-captained Essendon Football Club in 1999. Michael McLean captained the AFL Indigenous All Stars team in 1995 and in that year became an assistant coach for Brisbane Lions Football Club. In 2005 and 2007, McLean coached the Indigenous All Stars before returning to the Northern Territory, where he became the inaugural coach of the NT Thunder Football Club. More recently, Chris Johnson co-captained the Brisbane Lions in 2007, and then went on to

become the club's development coach. There are currently no Indigenous men coaching senior AFL teams. Adam Goodes is co-captain of the Sydney Swans Football Club, a position he has held since 2009.

In 1973, in rugby league, Arthur Beetson (who died in December 2011) became the first Aboriginal person to captain Australia in any major sport; he also captained NSWRL team Eastern Suburbs football Club, as well as Queensland State of Origin teams. Beetson then had an extensive coaching career, spanning the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, coaching national, state, and club teams. Tallis (mentioned above) was previously a member of the Board of Directors for the North Queensland Cowboys Football Club. He played from 1992 to 2004 and captained Australia, Queensland and the Brisbane Broncos Football Club, and is now a forwards coach for the South Sydney Rabbitohs Football Cub. In 1997, in boxing, former junior Australian Welterweight champion, Boyd Scully, became the first Indigenous person elected to the board of Boxing Australia Inc. At present he holds a position on the Australian Boxing Council, the governing body of Boxing Australia, is president of Boxing Northern Territory, and is the NTID State Centre of Excellence Coach.

A deeper issue relating to Indigenous invisibility was discussed by Alex (r2007 NRL). He claimed that Indigenous people are frequently and deliberately overlooked by media and marketing companies, and therefore denied opportunities that are more likely to be offered to non-Indigenous athletes:

> There's only a small window of opportunity for elite athletes to be able to use their image, and you've got a good manager or company behind you that feel as if they can use your image. I mean you look at a lot of our Olympians that are branded with the multi-vitamins, your sports telecasts—they do have long careers along those paths. A little bit harder for, I think, for Indigenous people. I often think about that, why couldn't I be a multi-vitamin person there where I've still got a good health and I lasted 14 years on the elite level?[47] I always get my wife saying 'you could be a model for those jeans' or 'you've got the image to be able to do that for you'. So I mean it's always sort of crossed my mind, 'why isn't it our

[47] Evonne Gooloagong-Cawley is an Indigenous woman of the Wiradjuri people in rural New South Wales. Goolagong-Cawley is a dual Wimbledon Tennis Champion, winning the women's title in 1972 and 1980. Ironically, in January 2012, Goolagong-Cawley featured in a series of advertisements on Australian television for Suisse, a company marketing vitamins and arthritis treatments.

people up there representing', even though we are 2% of the nation here as a whole, but I mean when you look at a lot of our top elite athletes, I mean, your Nicky Winmars, your Michael Longs, what is it they do now? Where do we see their image?

A picture emerged of chronic under-representation of Indigenous people in coaching, management and media that was more significant in the football codes. A normal progression is often from player to coach or manager, but this pathway seems not to be pursued by Indigenous football players, and it must be said, neither do the younger boxers pursue coaching careers. In terms of careers after sport, this Indigenous invisibility has the effect of reducing the post-sport career opportunities available to Indigenous athletes. While the underlying reasons for this are complex and not easily fully understood, there were suggestions of a belief (and even an ingrained self-belief), that while Indigenous players may perform well on the ground, they are not suitable to lead or manage. This situation highlights the complex way in which racialisation manifests. Arguably a double standard emerges, one that asserts that Indigenous players are acceptable but Indigenous managers are not, and that an absence of Indigenous personalities in the media, or in the conference rooms of the football leagues is acceptable. The situation has been summarised by retired Indigenous AFL player Andrew McLeod,[48] who in a speech made at the UN's Geneva headquarters—Palais des Nations—on Australia Day 2011, called for greater Indigenous representation both in the AFL and the wider society:

> The next step for Indigenous people in the AFL is to look for other ways to be involved. We have no representations at a board level in any of the 17 clubs, no representation on the executive committees, and we don't hold any current coaching positions, this is another agenda we must address. (AFL, 2011)

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[48] Andrew McLeod (born 4 August 1976) is a former AFL player for the Adelaide Football Club. McLeod was born in Darwin, Northern Territory. His mother is Indigenous, while his father is of Scottish descent. He is the games record holder for Adelaide, having played 340 matches. He is considered one of the greatest Indigenous footballers of all time—one of the greatest of the modern era—and is considered by many as the greatest player of the Adelaide Football Club. McLeod won two premierships with the Adelaide Football Club in 1997 and 1998. He was also awarded the Norm Smith Medal for best on ground in the 1997 and 1998 AFL Premiership matches. In January 2012, McLeod joined Norwood Football Club as an assistant coach for the 2012 season in the SANFL, the second tier Australian Rules competition in South Australia.

4.6.4 Tokenism

Indigenous athletic talent is in more demand than ever before. Talent scouts roam the country looking for the next champion boxer or footballer. The Australian Government, via funding to the AIS, has helped to resource this process, providing $8.8M (2006-2010) specifically to seek the recruitment of Indigenous sports talent (Magnay, 2006). While such national interest and support is widely welcomed amongst Indigenous sport communities, it cannot be assumed that sufficient consideration has been given towards the structure of such programs to meet the needs of young Indigenous athletes. For example, the NTID boxing program, a joint initiative between BAI and the AIS, set up in 2007, has attracted criticism from those whom it was meant to help. Jack (current Boxing) explained that amongst some of the athletes, the program is regarded merely as tokenism:

> In terms of Indigenous athletes, I don't think a lot of the support structures were well thought out and planned before we got there. It wasn't a welcoming, warm, more inclusive place for young people being pulled from communities and that kind of stuff. Over the period of time that I was there, they ended up losing a lot of the athletes prematurely. If they had consulted at all with the Aboriginal community they might have been able to retain or have a closer link with family, which I don't think they fully understood was quite important. So they ended up wasting a lot of funding as well. It's about not knowing where you fit. Not knowing if you're welcome here really or whether you're just sort of here as a token.

Nathan (r2003 AFL) also expressed his concern that what is rapidly becoming an iconic football match is also in danger of being regarded as tokenistic:

> You've got your Indigenous round, and the All Stars match that's played every second year and they're there to display the contribution of Aboriginal people in the sport. But it goes no further than that. So it soon will be just tokenism.

In this area, the NRL seem to have taken a leadership role. During the course of this research, the NRL staged the first ever match between an NRL Indigenous All Stars team and the NRL All Stars team. This was promoted as celebrating rugby league's cultural diversity and its role in the community. Then Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, entered into the spirit of the game, contending that it was a perfect way to capture the spirit of his apology to the Stolen Generations, declaring that, "the match reflects the way we can all work together to provide inspiration and opportunity in the years ahead. It is a

celebration that should engage not only every Rugby League fan but the entire community" (Rudd, cited in ARL, 2010). For players who either witnessed the game or participated in the Indigenous team, this event was much more. It became a symbolic occasion, which showcased the varied identities but overall unity of Indigenous players. Additionally, it brought immense recognition and pride to Indigenous communities. Two Indigenous All Stars team members, Bradley and Matthew, reflected on what it meant for them to have participated in the game:

> That's how football brings our culture together. That game was very significant, the result didn't even matter. It was just that we could get a team together to play the best players in the NRL. And not just play, we actually won that game. (Bradley current NRL)
>
> You could see there was a lot of passion there, happiness; it just went round the country. And there was a great vibe in the stadium, everyone was just happy; there was a lot of emotion out there as well. It wasn't just a game—it was all around Australia, everyone was talking about that game. (Matthew current NRL)

In spite of the success of this game, and indeed the AFL Indigenous round of 2010, both the NRL and the AFL were rocked yet again by racist incidents involving key officials and two former players during June 2010 (Walsh, 2010; Webster, 2010). At the time it seemed significant that the individuals involved in these incidents were from earlier (pre-1990s) eras in the histories of the games. Yet once again, even more incidences of racial vilification occurred in 2011—this time from spectators. Verbal abuse was directed at Indigenous AFL star Lance Franklin (Cowley, 2011) and Sudanese-born Majak Daw in the VFL (Langmaid & Flower, 2011). Both incidents received wide publicity and scorn in the Australian media. While these episodes evoke anger and disgust, the fact that they continue to occur suggests that racist behaviour might be something that will never be eradicated from sport, or indeed, from society.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the data gathered through participant and key stakeholder interviews, document analysis and use of the AIMS to interrogate the objectives of this thesis and the overall research questions. The analysis of interviews suggested that, for this

group, the experience of retirement from sport is a unique, multifaceted, and complex experience that has been fundamentally influenced by the participants' Indigeneity. The athletes demonstrated a distinctive cultural identity that was heavily invested in sport, family, and community. They revealed a strong belief in self and an innate sense of athletic capacity. This did not always transfer to their post sport lives, with a number of participants describing difficult transitions out of sport, with no clear direction or tangible entry into an occupation or vocation at the end of their sport career. On the other hand, the proactive programs of player associations seem to have improved the SCT experiences of the later retirees. While participants were aware of racism and racialisation in sport, and indeed, many had personally experienced racist episodes, few perceived a direct link between these episodes and their lives after sport. Nonetheless, athletes did provide evidence of subtle and sometimes less-than-subtle, unequal treatment of Indigenous athletes, both within and after sport, and noted the chronic and on-going lack of Indigenous people in key management positions. *Chapter Five* will now discuss these findings in relation to the academic literature, provide implications for theory and praxis, and outline the contributions and conclusions of this research.

CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

> *[Dadirri brings] a knowledge and consideration of community and the diversity and unique nature that each individual brings to community; ways of relating and acting within community; a non-intrusive observation, or quietly aware watching; a deep listening and hearing with more than the ears; a reflective non-judgmental consideration of what is being seen and heard; and, having learnt from the listening, a purposeful plan to act, with actions informed by learning wisdom and the informed responsibility that comes with knowledge (Atkinson, 2000, p. 16).*

Guided by *Dadirri*, this thesis explored the sport career transition (SCT) experiences of elite Indigenous Australian athletes. While *Dadirri* is not a research methodology in the Western scientific tradition, as an Indigenous philosophy it played an essential role throughout the study. Initially, *Dadirri* pointed to culturally appropriate ways for me to connect with, relate to, and engage with, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sportsmen. It then provided a pathway to learning, through which I hoped to connect with Indigenous participants in order to understand their experiences and perspectives. Then, by advocating processes of non-intrusive observation—watching, listening and hearing with more than the ears—and by reflective non-judgemental consideration, *Dadirri* helped me to understand what I was seeing and hearing. This thesis is the documentation of my interactions with the 30 Indigenous Australian male athletes who participated in the study, along with my interpretation of the significance of their words. It records important knowledge gained from a unique and diverse participant group, enabling an awareness of the distinctive, and sometimes challenging, situations in which Indigenous Australian athletes are located. The 30 participants were prepared to share profoundly personal and insightful thoughts and perceptions, and have continued to work to piece together their stories. These men have not only been an integral part of the story-telling process, they have also contributed to their overall evaluation; this thesis is an overview of *their* collective experiences.

The following sections provide a summary of the thesis, an interpretation of the findings, along with methodological and practical implications thereof. Theoretical contributions

made by the thesis are discussed, along with suggestions for further inquiry and an overarching conclusion. The research was designed to address one research question and four allied objectives. The research question asked:

What are the retirement experiences of elite Indigenous Australian athletes?

The four objectives were:

1) to explore the experiences of elite Indigenous Australian athletes as they undergo SCT or prepare to do so;
2) to identify any ethno-culturally distinctive SCT characteristics of Indigenous Australian athletes;
3) to investigate whether racism and racialisation have affected the SCT experiences of Indigenous athletes, and
4) to evaluate SCT protocols within Australian Rules football, rugby league and boxing, to ascertain how (if at all) they cater to the needs of Indigenous Australian athletes, and (where appropriate) to suggest improvements to these protocols.

In order to answer the research question, a review of the SCT literature was undertaken to understand the phenomenon of athletic retirement. That exercise discovered that various studies have consistently indicated that athletic retirement is potentially problematic, with investigators demonstrating emotional and psychological difficulties for some athletes, including severe stress, lowered self-perceptions, feelings of lack of direction or purpose, as well as loss of personal identity and social networks (Stephan et al., 2003; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982; Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001). Scholarship has now evolved to a point where, notwithstanding the identification of key phases and typical responses, there is also an awareness of the idiosyncratic nature of adjustment to post-sport life and the consequent unique needs of individuals. Despite the general consensus that athletic retirement has the potential to be complex and difficult, it continues too often to be experienced as problematic.

The review of the literature found a significant research gap; namely the lack of empirical or conceptual understanding of the SCT experiences of elite Indigenous Australian athletes. This stems from a call for research to consider the social and cultural factors that underlie and influence SCT experiences (Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009). There is, in short, a pressing need to investigate and interpret the SCT experiences and needs of elite Indigenous Australian athletes, and to identify their particular circumstances during the transitional period—together with any distinctive ethno-cultural influences.

A theoretical framework was developed to provide analytical coherence to an investigation of SCT. This was underpinned by Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, and the field (Bourdieu, 1984; Webb et al., 2002). The theoretical triad forms a foundation for the study, as it is the adaption of these concepts that allows a critical examination of SCT processes, and thus an understanding of what Bourdieu described as "people's [social] practices" (Webb et al., 2002, p. 21). The particular social practices became apparent in the way the athletes in the study performed within sport, prepared for life after sport, and eventually moved on to their new situation. To fully understand the SCT experiences of the participants, it was important to examine the socio-economic, political, and geographical circumstances of Indigenous people in Australia, the historical and contemporary involvement of Indigenous athletes in sport in this country, and to situate the research in the context of the elite Australian sport environment. Thus, the background and context for this thesis included historical and contemporary perspectives of the social and cultural environments where Indigenous Australian athletes are located, as well as current elite sport structures and policies.

This thesis was also influenced by a research paradigm that could guide research in culturally complex settings, and ultimately provide a basis for addressing inequality and injustice in society. The 'transformative paradigm' offers this capacity. The paradigm is frequently exemplified in the writings of feminists, and/or those who work on behalf of other marginalised groups, such as racial/ethnic minorities, or people with disabilities. *Dadirri's* philosophy also implies the need for social change, and the critical framework provided by the transformative paradigm is aligned with aspirations of Indigenous social

justice. Taking into account both *Dadirri* and the transformative paradigm, the most appropriate approach for this research to use qualitative methods, with interviews featuring open-ended questions and face-to-face discussions. Given the strong oral and story-telling traditions of Indigenous peoples, a strategy to allow the athletes to provide information using a narrative style and face-to-face engagement was considered most appropriate—and certainly more effective—than standard question and answer sessions (Ralph, 1997).

Overall, the study involved interviews with (a) 30 retired and current elite Australian Indigenous athletes, and (b) 25 key stakeholders from related organisations. Additionally, relevant Australian player welfare documentation was examined. Complementing interview data with document analysis allowed a more complete picture of the issue to materialise, that added richness and nuances to the athlete and key stakeholder interviews. While the thesis was overwhelmingly qualitative in approach, there was a limited opportunity to explore a mixed methods approach via the deployment of a short survey instrument—the purpose of which was to elicit information about the participants' self-perceptions. The Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) (Brewer et al., 1993) was offered to the athletes, with the goal of measuring the degree to which they identified with the athlete role. The combination of data collection methods allowed for an investigation of individual experiences and perceptions of SCT, an understanding of how the athletes prepared for life after sport, and also enabled participants to offer their own suggestions which were intended to improve the nature of SCT experiences for other Indigenous sportspeople.

An evaluation of these findings is now presented. It addresses the overall research question and objectives, their implications for elite Indigenous athletes—as well as the sport environments in which they operate.

5.2 SCT EXPERIENCES OF ELITE INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN ATHLETES: AN OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

Factors influencing the nature and quality of SCT for Indigenous athletes were diverse and operated at various levels. They included the personal situations of athletes at the time of retirement, such as age, family situation, level of education and training. Others were the

nature of the sport itself, the available support, the era in which the retirement occurred, and also whether the athlete had been:

1) part of a team (i.e., Australian Football League [AFL] or National Rugby League [NRL]) or an individual (i.e., a boxer),
2) professional (i.e., NRL, AFL, or boxer) or amateur (i.e., boxer), and/or
3) current or retired at the time of the interviews.

For some Indigenous athletes, athletic retirement from sport allowed personal growth and development, providing a time to return to communities, re-engage in family commitments, or extend social networks. For a significant number of others, particularly the retirees from earlier eras, a move out of sport was a stressful period characterised by limited employment opportunities, financial hardship, poor physical health, and/or emotional distress. Typically, they also struggled with identity confusion. While these challenges were eventually overcome by most athletes, some continued to struggle in life, long into mature age. This result is perhaps not surprising given that retirement for many of the athletes who participated in the study was sudden and unplanned, and often occurred because of injuries, weight control problems, or deselection; though, more likely, a combination of these and other issues. An important issue mentioned by a number of athletes was that they had retired—in their words, prematurely—due to cultural misunderstandings or owing to a lack of appropriate support at critical times during their careers. According to the previous SCT research, an athlete who retires involuntarily is more likely to experience difficulties than one who retires voluntarily, in a planned and organised manner (Lavallee et al., 1997), and at the appropriate time (Alfermann, 2000). This was the case with several of the athletes who had left sport involuntarily or prematurely. It also became apparent that few athletes, particularly those who retired prior to the mid 2000s, had a retirement plan in place at the time they left sport. Indeed, before their career had ended, very few of that group had even contemplated life beyond sport. However, there was also evidence to demonstrate that those who retired in recent years, as well as the current athletes, had started to consider their future directions and begun to prepare accordingly. That said, a very narrow range of career

choices was apparent, which is likely to have the effect of funnelling employment prospects beyond sport. From the research findings, three features emerged:

1) a significant majority of athletes saw their lives inextricably linked with sport;
2) athletes have a 'taken-for-granted' sense of obligation to family and their communities, and
3) there is a low number of former Indigenous athletes with paid employment in sport leadership roles.

In summary, the thesis has demonstrated that SCT experiences of elite Indigenous athletes are, in some ways, similar to those described in the research literature, namely, that athletic retirement has the potential to be a joyful release from toil, a huge relief, the start of a new life, or alternatively, to be problematic and very challenging. For all of the athletes, the end of their sport careers inevitably brought to the fore a need to create a new life and identity. Some welcomed this opportunity and were well-prepared, yet it was apparent that others had, as Denzin (1989, p. 135) put it, "no script to follow to make sense of the experience". Nevertheless, it was apparent that there was an additional layer of complexity in the Indigenous athletes' experiences due to ethno-cultural factors, such as their distinctive aspirations, kinship obligations, and a unique sense of self-identity. These are significant points of distinction that arguably require additional considerations and sensitivity amongst those who are charged with the responsibility of managing the transition out of sport, or of providing advice during the process. The most important feature was the lack of recognition of the cultural situations and obligations of the group, along with a paucity of ethno-culturally appropriate support provided within the sport industries, both during the elite careers of the participants, as well as during SCT.

5.3 SCT EXPERIENCES OF ELITE INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN ATHLETES: DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS

As discussed above, findings about the experiences of SCT for Indigenous athletes generally echoed those described in the generic literature, yet there were also indicators of difference. By and large, these were related to ethno-cultural considerations. As will be

discussed below, these issues had the potential to influence the nature of SCT experiences, both positively and negatively. A conceptualisation of the retirement process of elite Indigenous Australian athletes is presented in *Figure 5.1*. This has been developed from the empirical data presented in *Chapter Four,* and demonstrates the exploration of Indigenous athletic retirement issues within a specific ethno-cultural context. The implications of these characteristics are then presented.

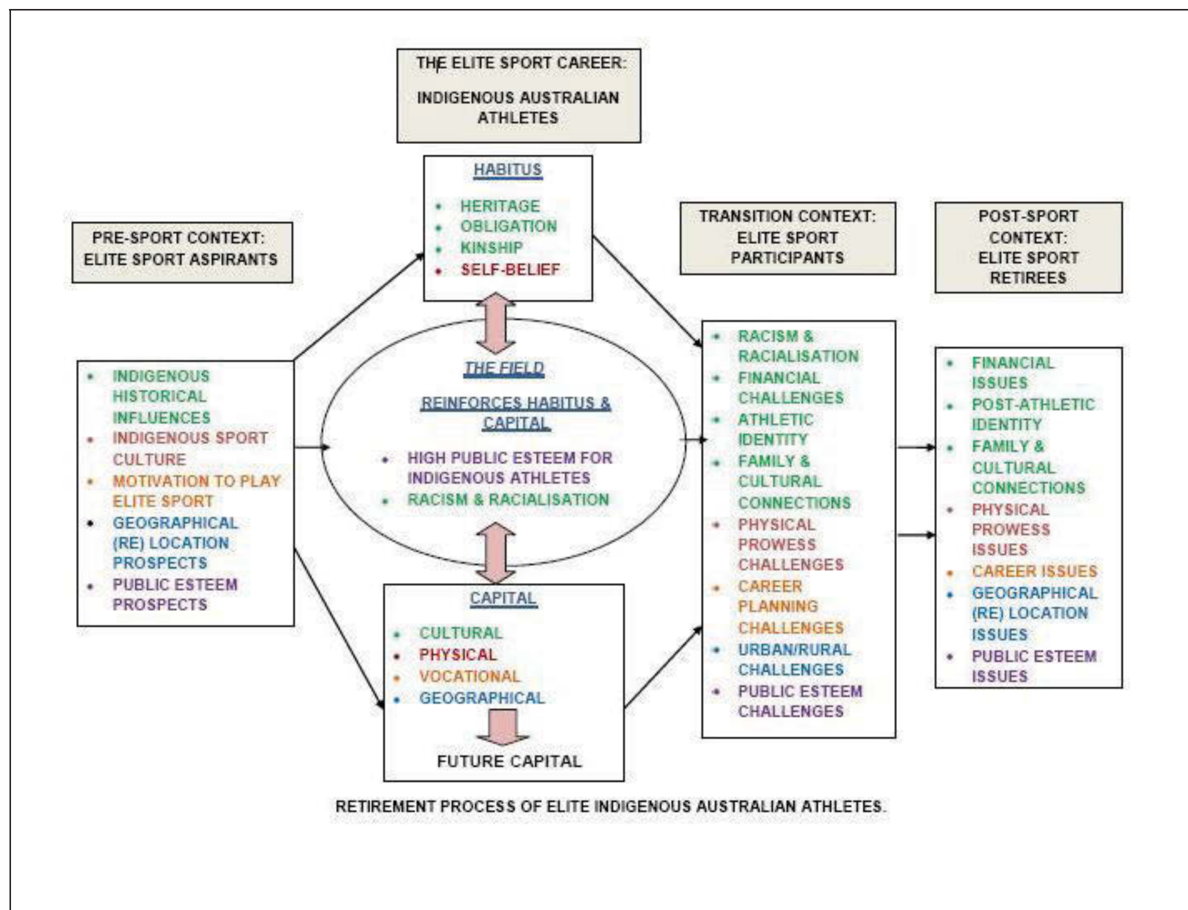

Figure 5.1: Retirement process of elite Indigenous Australian athletes

Pre-sport context

The findings demonstrate several important characteristics in the pre-sport context.

Indigenous historical influences: Indigenous people have a particularly bleak social history and continue to have a multitude of reasons to feel disenchanted by, and disengaged from,

Australian society—past and present—with Indigenous disadvantage evident across virtually every socio-economic indicator in the country (Cowlishaw, 1986; Judd, 2008; Sansom, 1981). In addition, there continue to be cultural differences and barriers that Indigenous people face, with regards to equal participation in some sports. Such a discrepancy is a reflection of ongoing racism and class-based differences of opportunity for Indigenous people within Australian society and sport (Coram, 2007; Tatz, 1996). That said, the sports under focus in this thesis—Australian Rules football, rugby league football and boxing—have each attracted Indigenous Australians in significant numbers, both at community and elite levels of competition.

Indigenous sport culture: By contrast, some key areas of elite and professional sport appear to be good news stories for Indigenous athletes (Adair, 2006, Adair & Stronach, 2011), and their sporting acumen has long been a source of great pride to the wider and diverse Indigenous community—noticeable in Johnny's words:

> They're [my community] very, very proud of what I've been able to achieve [my elite career as a footballer], and I get a buzz going back there because it's something that they can hang their hats on a little bit as well. (Johnny r2009 AFL)

Motivation to play elite sport: Interviewees, such as Dennis, described the ability to make money, improve living standards, and bring pride and joy to family and communities, as strong motivating factors for young Indigenous athletes to contemplate a career in elite or professional sport.

> If I could be the first person to win a gold medal for Australia, I could only imagine how much money I would get. You'd make history, you know, you'd be famous overnight. (Dennis current Boxing)

Geographical (re)location prospects: An elite sport career meant that the athletes were forced to re-locate from rural or remote communities to play and train with city-based clubs and teams. Re-location brought with it a form of 'culture shock', including some unique difficulties and challenges as the Indigenous athletes learned to survive in a new environment. However, for the participants, their families and communities, the transition to elite-sport status was widely welcomed and supported. All acknowledged it as a great

opportunity, but still relied on their families for considerable emotional and financial support. In Ian's words:

> I always thought we were rich, I thought. I always had the best gloves, and never missed a tournament. (Ian current Boxing)

Public esteem prospects: There is now widespread public esteem for Indigenous sport prowess, and Indigenous talent is keenly sought out by sport organisations. Participants described this as another strong motivating factor for Indigenous athletes to seek a career in sport.

i) Elite sport career

The findings demonstrate several important characteristics in the elite sport context.

Habitus: When embarking on an elite sport career, the Indigenous athletes bring with them their habitus, evidenced by a special set of dispositions and identity. According to their own perceptions, the Indigenous participants overwhelmingly self-identified as 'natural athletes'. Like Jerry (below), they also believed this was how others saw them:

> The best sportsman is what? Indigenous people. They're gifted, high fighters, running, speed, more balance, rhythm, timing—they're gifted. (Jerry r1989 Boxing)

Yet this can be regarded as a form of self-racialisation, or self-stereotyping; that is, the athletes believed that they possessed particular skills and traits simply because of their Indigeneity. However, a hybrid nature of self-identity was also described in interviews, and can be interpreted as something necessitated through being part of a historically subjugated 'racial' minority in a white-dominated society. The hybrid sense of identity was reflected as participants discussed their lifelong, passionate commitment, to Indigeneity and cultural customs, such as heritage, obligations, kinship links, and community values, that over the years have fostered Indigenous resilience.

Capital: Indigenous athletes also possessed specific values, or capital. Predominantly, they placed a high value on their Indigeneity and heritage (drawing on the idiom of Bourdieu, I refer to this as *cultural* capital), and their physical prowess (i.e., *physical* capital). Physical capital bestowed the athletes with the means to earn their living, and provide for (often an

extended) family. The athletes hoped that eventually their physical capital would provide a means to fulfil the obligations associated with their cultural capital, that is to ‘give back’ to the families and communities who had supported them. Johnny’s words demonstrated this:

> I believe I’m put here to help more Indigenous people. There’s another side of me that wants to do some other stuff in communities, and basically use my profile to get things done, I suppose. But in the end—put it down—I’m here to help. (Johnny r2009 AFL)

Accordingly, many of the Indigenous athletes played down what they perceived as the value of intellectual pursuits or education (termed *vocational* capital). A further consideration was that, at some stage, all of the athletes had relocated to urban areas as a consequence of their sport careers, and had eventually been forced to choose a location where they believed they could thrive after their sport careers. Again drawing on Bourdieu’s idiom, this sense of place and the value thereof is dubbed *geographical* capital. Regardless of which space the athletes chose to occupy after sport, they believed a lack of vocational capital made it difficult to garner employment in those geographical settings.

The field: Once the Indigenous athletes became subsumed within a particular sporting institution, the rules, rituals, and conventions encountered therein, produced and authorised certain discourses and activities. In fact, once within the sporting field, the identity and many of the dispositions and values of Indigenous athletes were reinforced by officials, managers, media and others with whom they came into contact. Those features were further boosted by the media, and the general public who, by and large, hold Indigenous Australian athletes in very high esteem. Ironically, despite this high public esteem the Indigenous athletes provided examples of racism during their sport careers. This is evidence that overt racism, once an omnipresent feature of Indigenous sport participation—and believed by many Australians to be in decline—still exists within sport. Most of the participants, even those currently competing, had experienced invidious incidents of racist behaviours throughout their careers, both on and off the playing field.

ii) Transition context

The findings demonstrate several important characteristics in the transition context.

Racism and racialisation: During the transition phase, other discriminatory and prejudiced attitudes came into play; these were more covert factors, including racialisation, homogenisation and stereotyping. Earlier sections of this thesis present a discussion on significant research carried out by Aboriginal Australian scholar, Darren Godwell, in the late 1990s. In his work, Godwell suggested that racist social myths and racial stereotyping in sport could have the effect, intended or otherwise, of limiting the range of life and career possibilities thought 'available' to Indigenous people, with Indigenous athletes at risk of being typecast in life as sportspeople (Godwell, 1997). The current research demonstrates the perspicacity of Godwell's apprehensions in a number of ways.

As discussed, the Indigenous athletes interviewed came into sport with a firm self-belief in what they presumed to be their 'natural' physical prowess. At the same time, they, along with some of the key officials within sport, also believed they were not suited to decision making or positions of responsibility outside of sport performance. *Chapter Four* illustrated the lack of Indigenous people currently holding leadership positions in the three sports under discussion. It also illustrated that few of the participants had chosen leadership roles in sport as future career pathways. This appears to be a form of racialisation of the 'other' by sport officials, while also being accentuated by self-racialisation amongst Indigenous athletes. The research participants noted, and indeed resented, the lack of Indigenous personnel in administration, coaching, management, and other off-field leadership roles—a situation that highlights the complex and subtle ways in which racialisation is manifested. A picture emerged of a legacy of racialised stereotyping in sport, illustrated by an abundance of on-field Indigenous performers, compared to an invisibility of Indigenous people in off-field leadership roles. This was much more significant in the football codes, whereas in boxing there are some Indigenous people in coaching and management roles. Indeed, Godwell's apprehensions have ongoing currency.

A further area that reflects Godwell's critique is the notion of homogenisation. Clearly, not all athletes experienced SCT in the same way, and their experiences were influenced by a range of individual factors, including identity, beliefs, and values, as well as ethno-cultural aspirations and obligations. Yet findings show that some officials perceived little or no

difference between the impact of SCT for Indigenous and non-Indigenous athletes. Indeed, some exhibited a tendency to treat all athletes as part of a homogenous 'norm', without an understanding that transition programs could be customised to suit individual or cultural situations. Homogenisation was also apparent when these officials reinforced the role model persona, who would 'naturally' go back and work in disadvantaged Indigenous communities (Coram, 2007). Yet in the complex social situations of some remote Indigenous communities—with problems such as alcohol and drug abuse, health and dietary issues, and sexual and domestic violence—few of the athletes had gained the specialist skills needed to be effective in these communities,

*Family and cultural connections/Financial challenges:*A complex issue stemming from the cultural context of Indigenous athletes regarding money is explained by the notion of, "if it's mine it's yours, if it's yours it's ours", and by the natural acceptance of the athletes that they would use their earnings to provide financial support to family members—even extended family members. Due to strong family obligations within Indigenous cultures, it was very hard for athletes to refuse requests for such support, but, as a result, some were financially compromised at the end of their sport careers, as alluded to by Ben:

> I was pretty lucky, I didn't have my family ringing me up, asking me for money all the time, cause I know a lot of them do. And most of them will just give them as much as they can. (Ben r2009 AFL)

Indeed, learning to effectively manage the appeals from family members was also mentioned by key stakeholders as challenging for Indigenous athletes. This is another particularly sensitive area, as it is an issue that may not be well understood by non-Indigenous people. The situation was compounded for a number of the participants who married fairly young and had relatively large families. To their disappointment, those individuals found the financial rewards offered by professional sport were insufficient for their day to day family necessities.

> I couldn't do that to my family. $50,000 isn't a lot of money at all if you've got a family trying to survive in the world. My family was my priority. I've got to feed them before I chase my dream. (Neville r2008 NRL)

In spite of these financial constraints, the one constant during sport transition was the knowledge that the family support provided to the athletes as they entered sport would still be available afterwards, either temporarily, or on a long-term basis.

Athletic Identity: Sport is, from an early age, the only life that many professional and elite Indigenous athletes know. While conventional wisdom indicates that education is the door to economic opportunity, many of the Indigenous athletes had embraced the idea that sport, not education, was the most viable means of attaining financial security. Generally, the Indigenous athletes scored high on the AIMS scale, with the result that educational or vocational interests which were in conflict with the athletic role were often sacrificed, or put on hold, until athletic pursuits were settled. With the intense focus on the demands of sport, the athletes also sacrificed other sources of identity and self-fulfillment. Indeed, many athletes' sense of who they were—that is, their self-identity—was closely linked with their sport careers. Consequently, over one third of the participants in this study had not completed secondary education; others lacked vocational qualifications, and several of them had few social contacts outside of sport. Critically, over half of the athletes (17) regarded sport as the only viable career pathway available to them, while a further eight of the 30 athletes saw their futures fully engaged with Indigenous community programs. The outcome was a very small range of career choices, a situation that is suggestive of what has been called identity foreclosure (Good et al., 1993), where individuals make commitments to roles without considering alternatives. In the case of Indigenous athletes, this career funnelling is perhaps understandable, as it may have been due to a lack of awareness of available career pathways, perhaps through limited education.

Physical prowess challenges: All of the athletes had relocated to pursue their sport careers. Many married during that time—started families at a relatively young age and set up homes for themselves and their families in the cities. To remain in this geographical space they needed to develop suitable vocational capital to gain employment in urban settings. This proved to be challenging. There was a marked reliance on physical capital as a way to continue to make a living, for example, in pursuits of becoming fitness instructors or

boxing trainers, but few seemed to have taken into account their declining physical prowess. Nathan explained:

> I can't stand for a long time now—not that I ever wanted to, but [today] I couldn't play a round of golf (Nathan r2003 AFL).

Urban/rural challenges: Several of the athletes who came from rural and remote settings returned to those areas, but only temporarily, as if trying to re-establish cultural and family links in traditional spaces, before moving back to live in urban or city environments. Those who permanently returned to remote communities certainly displayed a desire to 'give back' to traditional homelands, but had no clear idea on how to do this, nor the requisite skills—other than assuming the mantle of a 'role model'. In this respect they seemed to be as poorly placed, with respect to vocational capital, as those in urban settings. A further complication was the difficult and unexpected task of trying to re-connect with traditional communities, as Josh commented:

> A lot of people in the town seem interested and supportive, but I dunno—it seems like they might be a bit jealous. Bitter or something. Ya get that feeling from some people that—oh he thinks he's better than us or whatever. (Josh current Boxing)

Public esteem challenges: Interviewees described a waning of public interest as they moved on from their sport careers. One important consequence for some, as awareness of their public image dimmed over time, was an increasing difficulty to continue managing charitable foundations.

iii) Post-sport context

The findings demonstrate several important characteristics in the post-sport context.

Post Athletic Identity: In their post-sport life, the athletes had eventually developed a new identity, yet their core values of Indigenous heritage, obligation and kinship remained. Levels of athletic identity (AI) dropped over time. Like Steve, several of the participants even found it hard, upon reflection, to understand the attraction of their former athletic lifestyle.

> I don't watch the footy. The last time I went I left at three-quarter time and I would have left earlier, but I was just being polite. The AFL has changed but I honestly don't like it. (Steve r1989 AFL)

Physical prowess issues: There is unequivocal evidence that many of the participants struggled with health issues during their sport careers; and indeed, many declared that injuries or illnesses were the significant factors in their decision to leave sport. For some boxers, the struggle with weight control had caused significant ill-health—continuing well into their retirement years. In addition to this, other athletes had experienced back problems, arthritis, and various joint problems. A small number of boxers commented that they suffered memory lapses and cognitive problems. Given the physical demands of football and boxing, it is perhaps not surprising that physical and cognitive problems continued to pose issues for athletes once their sport careers ended. The athletes also identified a range of mental health issues related to their retirements. These included depression, low self-esteem, feelings of loss and grief, denial, anger, and disappointment and disillusionment. Although most athletes were, overall, satisfied with their life since retiring from sport, for others, retirement had been a stressful period associated with lowered self-perceptions, feelings of lack of direction or purpose, loss of personal identity and social networks, and/or a sense of being disconnected from, or forgotten by, their sport.

Financial and Career issues: Most retired athletes in this study eventually secured employment following athletic retirement, but many had found that their limited education and employment history, as well as their focus on vocations requiring on-going physical prowess, severely restricted their employment options and challenged their financial stability. While some had engaged in further education or job skills training, either during their sport careers or upon retirement, a few felt that these competencies were of no further use in their lives after sport. The move within the AFL to employ Indigenous people to make up 4% of their total workforce is welcome, although current levels remain low at approximately 1% of the total workforce. Moreover, positions held by Indigenous people in that organisation remain largely limited to Indigenous development or Indigenous traineeship support programs, with few Indigenous people working in off-field leadership

or management positions. It is also significant to note that there is no Indigenous person currently working in a coaching role with a senior AFL team.

Family/Cultural connections and geographical (re)location issues: The majority of interviewees chose *not* to return to their hometowns in rural or remote areas, although they insisted they would continue to 'go back' and visit, to help disadvantaged Indigenous communities. In other words, their geographical capital had been transformed, as a response to their new post-sport and family situations. However, those who did return to remote areas described significant challenges in trying to re-kindle an identity and a new vocation. David explained:

> I assumed back in [my home town] I would be accepted with open arms and there'd be work there for me, and people were going to employ me and things like that but it wasn't—you become a bit of a threat to 'em, people become very protective of their own positions (David r1997 AFL).

Public esteem issues: While Indigenous athletes are generally held in very high esteem by the Australian sporting public, this wanes once the athlete retires from sport and disappears from media circles. It is rare for Indigenous athletes to be offered opportunities by media and marketing companies, such opportunities are more likely to be offered to non-Indigenous athletes. One notable exception is the Marngrook Footy Show, a weekly national television show that features Indigenous commentators. The show provides news and analysis of AFL issues, and detailed match previews, with an emphasis on Indigenous footballers. Retired Indigenous athletes are rarely seen in 'mainstream' media promotions, a situation which disappoints and frustrates the athletes, and also reduces their range of post-sport vocational opportunities.

5.4 SCT PROTOCOLS FOR ELITE INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN ATHLETES

Organisational protocols: The AFL Players' Association (AFLPA), as well as the NRL and Rugby League Players' Association (RLPA), provide comprehensive programs to support retiring athletes. The AIS has adopted the Athlete Career Education (ACE) program as a framework within which to develop welfare and training services for athletes. Currently the ACE program is viewed, both nationally and internationally, as the industry

standard for the management of athlete career and education matters. These player welfare programs provide athletes with a range of education and job skill training programs. There are also structured transition programs for retiring athletes, including access to professional services such as dieticians, sports psychologists, counsellors, and social workers. However, while these programs are welcome, they have a weakness in that they demonstrate little understanding of ethno-cultural diversity for participants, and therefore, the potentially varied needs of individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. This includes, of course, Indigenous athletes.

For professional boxers there is little, if any, SCT support available; however, there is some assistance for amateur boxers—notably those on scholarship with the AIS. Naturally, these amateur boxers are at risk of losing their place at the AIS if their competitive performances are not good enough, and, as a result, their access to the ACE program is contingent upon retaining their scholarship-holder status. A further 12 months of support is, it must be said, available following cessation of scholarship. In addition, their national sport organisation—Boxing Australia Inc. (BAI)—like most Australian National Sports Organisations (NSO), is in a very modest financial position and not well resourced in terms of providing SCT support. A core aim of BAI is to improve the sport performances of their athletes and deliver medals on the world stage. Given the intensity of this focus, committing resources to athletes who are no longer able to assist with these targets is likely to remain low. A further complicating factor for the amateur boxers in this study was that they were found to have particularly high levels of AI. This suggests that the group may be especially at risk of over-commitment to the athletic role, identity foreclosure, delays in career maturity, and zeteophobia.

Athlete perceptions: Of the interviewees in the current study, most acknowledged that job skills training, education, financial advice, and career planning—either during or after their sport career—would help them prepare for, and cope with, athletic retirement. However, a limiting factor was that the athletes themselves conceded that they needed to be sufficiently motivated to avail themselves, and thus take full advantage, of the range of transitional programs and services. That state of mind or 'readiness' to engage in pre-retirement

planning, is something that, for many of the Indigenous athletes, only came about late in their career. That may not be an unusual situation amongst elite sportspeople in general. However, evidence from this thesis suggests that the Indigenous athletes may be overwhelmed with the enormity of challenges related to cultural differences and conflicts, especially during the early stages of their sport careers.

It was most significant to note that the Indigenous athletes firmly believed that support throughout their entire careers should emanate from staff within their own culture. Unfortunately, very few of the Indigenous interviewees had actually accessed this type of support, at least not through the formal structures provided by their sport. In many cases, the Indigenous athletes turned to each other for the support that was not forthcoming from elsewhere. Senior athletes adopted 'mentoring' roles without any form of training, families continued to provide an essential support network, and, in some cases, athletes turned to community elders for advice and support. The AFLPA was frequently mentioned as an important source of support, and it is notable that, of the three sports, only the AFLPA provides Indigenous personnel in specialised roles to provide support to retiring Indigenous footballers. Yet this resource was needed throughout the athletes' careers—not merely during the transition phase. The lack of enduring support and the resulting cultural misunderstandings were factors that, in some cases, had actually resulted in premature and involuntary retirement. A need for Indigenous support staff at club level was frequently mentioned, and seen as essential for the well-being of Indigenous athletes. This reflects the importance that the athletes placed on people with whom they had a cultural connection, and also reflects the dissatisfaction they felt with existing support providers within clubs.

5.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

There are a number of implications for sport management that have emerged from this study, which ultimately lead to recommendations for future practice. The final phrase in *Dadirri* advises that, having 'learnt from the listening', one should then construct:

> *[...] a purposeful plan to act, with actions informed by learning wisdom and the informed responsibility that comes with knowledge (Atkinson, 2000, p. 16)*

There is an important caveat to this study. It has been undertaken by a mature-aged, non-Indigenous woman who worked collaboratively with 30 Indigenous male athletes. It is important to note that the following reflections, suggestions, and recommendations have all been contributed by the participant group. *They* believe that a process is needed whereby Indigenous athletes can negotiate an *improved SCT experience*, and *they* suggested the following tactics, some or all of which may assist to achieve such an outcome:

1) Recognising and accepting the deep variations that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people's beliefs and values.
2) Providing culturally-appropriate support during sport careers and during SCT from other Indigenous people, with a minimum of one full-time Indigenous staff member employed at club level (or similar, depending on the sport).
3) Mapping the retirement environment in advance, including pre-empting the specific potential difficulties and challenges relevant to Indigenous athletes.
4) Empowering Indigenous athletes to take on leadership and decision-making opportunities.
5) Providing vocational training that takes into consideration the cultural needs, aspirations, and obligations of Indigenous people that is relevant to their unique situations.
6) Recognising that issues of racist behaviour still exists in and around sport in Australia.
7) Providing on-going cultural awareness training for sport officials, managers, and coaches.

In producing this list of tactics, the athletes are calling for Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing (Martin, 2003; Yunkaporta, 2009), both during sport and beyond. As such, the tactics reflect many of the challenges that are present in Australia, both within sport and in society more generally. These tactics are not intended to diminish the role and contributions of transition programs already available for retiring athletes. Rather, the athletes recognise that in addition to mainstream transition programs, they need learning and support that complements their Indigenous world views.

The ensuing question relates to who is in a position to make this happen. The athletes believed that, ultimately, the only people who could do this are former Indigenous athletes who have navigated and survived SCT, and who could work within their clubs or organisations as mentors, liaison officers, or welfare officers. These individuals have a unique perspective on SCT**.** The process of developing an effective support or mentoring program would require putting value on Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing (Martin, 2003; Yunkaporta, 2009), and ensuring that these values are taken into account in day to day practices. A support or mentoring program would allow current and retired Indigenous athletes to make significant contributions, and, in return, may provide social opportunities for them by allowing them to maintain continued involvement in their sport in a useful and respected role. The challenges of establishing such a program should not be taken lightly, and without careful training of individuals there is a risk that such a program could fail. However, if managed sensitively, a support or mentoring program could fulfil the needs of Indigenous athletes to both provide and receive culturally-appropriate support. The professional footballers believed that, ideally, each football club required the full-time services of one Indigenous staff member, while the boxers believed that there should be an Indigenous support staff member closely linked with all programs set up to foster Indigenous boxers.

Employment for retired athletes within sport organisations may enhance the retirement experiences in many ways, including providing financial resources and social opportunities. There are also other, less visible, but equally important ways. These revolve around avoiding the sudden identity crisis experienced by many athletes upon retirement. Indeed, evidence suggests that for some individuals, continued involvement in sport as a coach or in a similar role might help ease the transition from sport as an athlete by allowing the individual's sport-related identity (his athletic identity) and social support systems to remain intact for a period of time after athletic retirement (Lavallee, 2006). However, this is another situation that may be linked with identity foreclosure, resulting only in an artificial and temporary outcome, with these individuals eventually having to disassociate themselves from sport to negotiate a changed life beyond that domain. This situation requires extremely sensitive policies and interventions to ensure that Indigenous athletes

are encouraged to consider a wide range of post-sport vocations, but also to ensure that such post-sport roles fit within the boundaries of the distinctive self-identity demonstrated by the Indigenous athletes in this study.

What this thesis has done is to allow the *voices of the athletes* to be heard, and the way forward, indeed, the "purposeful plan to act", has come from the athletes themselves. It is imperative that the voices of Indigenous athletes continue to be heard, and thus it is incumbent on the group and their colleagues to develop the confidence and skills to assume off-field leadership and management positions, where they will be better placed to wield influence over their own futures and well-being.

5.6 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

Listening to the stories of Indigenous athletes has provided new ways of understanding their experiences as they come to the inevitable end of their elite sport careers. This study has provided new knowledge about the nature of these experiences, and thus contributes a deeper level of understanding into the ways that Indigenous athletes perceive their lives as elite sportspeople, and beyond. From a practical point of view, such knowledge can be used by sport managers, coaches, and administrators, to understand where their athletes are heading, and may be utilised to further develop transition programs for a specific population group.

The theoretical contribution of the work has featured the use of a Bourdieuian framework, and an adaptation of this to provide a new conceptual framework of SCT, in a particular cultural context. The theoretical triad of habitus, capital, and the field, provided a substantially different cultural 'lens' for viewing the data, from which rich explanations of SCT experiences—relating to the cultural backgrounds of the group—could be gleaned. The Bourdieuian concept of *capital* has been particularly informative. In this study, *physical* capital retains the same nuances of meaning as indicated by Bourdieu, but his notion of *cultural* capital has been redefined to signify the value placed by participants on their Indigenous culture. In addition, two new concepts of capital have been conceived: *vocational* and *geographical* capital. *Vocational* capital signifies the value of vocational

education and training that provide the potential to find gainful employment, while *geographical* capital signifies the value of location, or geographical space, chosen as the most likely position in which to thrive. Once again linking with the vernacular of Bourdieu, it is argued that physical, vocational, cultural and geographical capital combine to produce another form of capital, referred to as *future capital* (Stronach & Adair, 2010). The connotations of this ultimate form of value include skills and connections that may not provide immediate benefits, but instead facilitate the capacity to prosper in the future. Further, the concept embraces a striving for self-actualisation and independence in later life by amassing a diverse range of resources. These may include (a) vocational qualifications or an academic degree, which provides the potential to find gainful employment; (b) competencies in life skills (such as financial or time management); (c) emotional intelligence, gained from life experiences, and (d) financial security.

Arguably 'future capital' is both a pathway and process towards an athlete having greater choice of lifestyle, employment, and mobility, once his sport career has ended. It is expected that the concept of future capital can be adopted by future researchers and, as a consequence, assist in explaining and predicting trends and events—acting as a guide to action in the preparation of other elite athletes for their lives after sport.

From a methodological point of view, this study has provided new ways of theorising SCT. It has responded to a call by Stambulova and Alfermann (2009) for theory development by:

1) Modifying internationally recognised career models to cater for the cultural needs of the sample group, and developing a culturally-specific framework;
2) Using narrative and semi-structured interviews to assess self-identity and perceptions of athletic retirement and career development in Indigenous Australian athletes' mindset, as imbued by their culture, and
3) Studying not only athletes, but also the career development environment within the Australian cultural context.

The study's use of the AIMS questionnaire is another important contribution to the SCT literature, as it appears that the survey has rarely been utilised in a sport management

context. A complex, holistic picture was developed by careful analysis of the words of the participants, the key stakeholder group, the content of a large array of relevant documents, and the results of the AIMS.

5.7 DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

All studies contain delimitations and, therefore, have limitations. To begin, the underlying emphasis of the research was the retirement, and near retirement, experiences and challenges of one specific population group—male, elite Indigenous Australian athletes. One objective was to delineate the participant group's unique experiences and shared needs. Furthermore, the research was built from the experiences of a purposively selected sample of elite Indigenous Australian athletes from three sports: boxing, rugby league, and Australian Rules football. The three sports that featured in the research were professional codes (the one exception being elite amateur boxing) and had the potential to offer full-time careers to male athletes. As a consequence, they did not necessarily represent common retirement experiences of all Indigenous Australian athletes, or indeed Australian athlete populations in general. Neither did this selection of sports allow investigation of the retirement experiences of female elite Indigenous Australian athletes. At present, female Indigenous Australian athletes have a notably lower sport participation rate, and this would have prevented identifying a critical mass of participants for academic investigation.

Further delimitations emerged due to the limited time frame in which the retirement experiences of participants occurred. The participant group comprised athletes who were still currently competing, or those who retired from sport within the last 20 years. The rationale for this time frame was that within the last two decades there have been several retirement and life-skill programs developed for elite athletes, and one of the research aims was to understand how Indigenous athletes may have benefited from these programs. However, it is recognised that this time frame may have resulted in some inaccuracies, due to what have been described as memory decay and recall bias (Stephan et al., 2003). The design feature of questioning participants who had been retired for up to 20 years was an additional delimitation, as these athletes were asked to rate their athletic identities during their careers retrospectively, along with the support and exit strategies they had utilised

during their retirement process. With this approach was an assumption that participants had completed the retirement process at the time of data collection, which may not necessarily have been the case.

A recognition that data in this research emerged from personal narratives brought about delimitations related to the data collection method and analysis processes. One was the reliability of the narrative, and it is conceded that there may also have been strains in the data collection process because of differences in age, gender, and ethnicity between the researcher (a non-Indigenous, mature-aged woman) and the, mostly younger, Indigenous male participants. Moreover, representing the experiences of the participants may also have been limited because of differences in the language and culture between participants and researcher. Finally, the interpretation of experiences may have been influenced by the values and viewpoint of the researcher, with a possibility that biases may appear due to a lack of understanding of other key viewpoints.

5.8 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

While the mainly qualitative method and appropriate sample of participants added strength to this research, some of the limitations described above point the way for further research. One issue was the difficulty of getting access to appropriate participants through official organisations. While the sample was sufficient for a qualitative study, a broader sampling mechanism may have led to a more representative cohort, making more likely the prospect of generalising the findings to other populations. In order to enable comparisons, further research would benefit from a wider representation of athletes. A broader sample may include women, athletes from other ethno-cultural backgrounds, a wider range of sports, both team and individual sports, and include more Australian states and territories. Further research may also include questions that delineate any potential differences in retirement experiences as a result of the inter-individual differences noted above.

Limitations of the retrospective approach described earlier include the possibility that memory decay or events occurring post-retirement may have influenced the participants' responses. Even if athletes had retired within the last ten years, memory selection could

still play a role in the findings obtained. Participants' recall of events and emotions could have been influenced by the length of their overall career, their psychological state at the time of the interview, and their current level of life satisfaction. However, within this area of research, retrospective designs are often relied on extensively because of the difficulties related to obtaining a viable sample of former athletes retiring at the same time. To overcome this limitation, follow-up longitudinal studies are needed. This research has shown that recent changes to SCT programs are very promising for players, but it would be valuable to re-visit some of the more recent retirees in another five to ten years to track their experiences over time.

At times during interviews, athletes intimated that their mothers held significant roles in their early lives, and had been particularly influential in many of the important decisions that needed to be taken during their careers. This may merely have been due to the fact that a father-figure was absent in some of the athletes' family groups. However, the role of the mother in the lives of Indigenous sportsmen or women appears to warrant further investigation.

Another area for future inquiry is that of perceptions of masculinity associated with the athletes. For example, in 'traditional' Indigenous cultures, the notion of the male as bread winner is profound. It is unclear how this expectation might impact (if at all) the SCT experiences of the athletes. Further, there is the question of how the athletes' sense of physical capital (and its subsequent decline) may be associated with a sense of manliness and its post-sport reformation. These are areas of interest that would be worthy of additional focus, and research in this area may benefit from consulting the work of Sparkes and Smith (2002). Their study featured the use of the Athlete Identity Measurement Scale (Brewer et al, 1993), and found that sports are leading definers of masculinity in society.

Nearly all of the participants in the study talked about eventually becoming satisfied with their post-sport situation, indicating few long lasting negative effects of the retirement process. Over time, the majority had gradually moved away from their AI; some even alluded to the fact that they could no longer understand the intense and all-consuming involvement that they once had for high performance sport. Indeed, some were no longer

able to enjoy the spectacle of their former sport. These are multifaceted perceptions, and future studies employing a longitudinal approach might clarify these findings.

The strong belief in the idea of the 'natural athlete' has been discussed at length throughout the thesis. It would take a brave person to try to counter this belief, as strong self-belief is a vital asset for any athlete. However, for Indigenous athletes who had left home believing that they were destined for glory, but who had not quite achieved these exalted levels of success, the disappointment—for both the athlete and the extended family group and community—must be huge. This is an issue worthy of further research. It would be valuable to repeat the study with Indigenous athletes who were not as successful, such as reserve grade players, or those who just missed out on Olympic or Commonwealth Games selection. For Indigenous athletes who entered sport with extremely high expectations of themselves as natural athletes, 'just missing out' is likely generate strong feelings of failure, resulting in a need for specific support programs. Research in this area may benefit from consulting the work of Harrison et al. (2011), which featured the use of the AIMS, to explore the relationship between 'race' and AI. These authors recommended that 'racial' differences in AI should be considered as a potent influence in participation and performance patterns in sport, issues of salience in the current study.

5.9 FINAL WORDS

The main task of this thesis was to explore and understand the SCT experiences of elite Indigenous athletes. To do this it was critical for the study to give a voice to Indigenous men involved in three elite Australian sports, and understand those individuals within their ethno-cultural context. This thesis has shown that although elite sport provides Indigenous Australian athletes with many opportunities for security, these athletes remain vulnerable and at risk due to:

1) the primacy of a unique athletic identity;
2) assumptions about their 'natural' acumen as athletes;
3) the perpetuation of racialised beliefs and behaviours;

4) the sense of Indigenous responsibility for, and commitment to, extended families and traditional community networks, and
5) a perceived Indigenous invisibility that tends to reduce the range of career choices thought available to Indigenous athletes after sport.

Sport in Australia has evolved since the early 1900s, in terms of professional administration, but it is imperative that sport managers understand that AFL footballers, rugby league players, and boxers, have needs that will continue to evolve over time. Sport managers need to recognise this new environment, their responsibilities to their athletes, and the perspectives and positions of ever-increasing numbers of elite Indigenous sportsmen. It is hoped that this study goes some way to providing an understanding of this, as what has been demonstrated by this thesis is that Indigenous athletes experience SCT in their own uniquely complex way.

APPENDIX ONE

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INFORMATION LETTER:

Retirement Experiences of Elite Indigenous Australian Athletes:

Policies, Programs and Practices.

Approval no. UTS HREC REF NO. 2009-072A

Dear

My name is Megan Stronach and I am a student at the University of Technology, Sydney.

I am conducting research into Retirement Experiences of Elite Indigenous Australian Athletes: Policies, Programs and Practices, and would welcome your assistance. The research would involve an interview and should take no more than 30-60 minutes of your time. You are under no obligation to participate in this research.

If you are interested in participating, I would be glad if you would contact me by phone on , or email to the address below.

Some of the questions to be asked during the interviews may include:

- I would like to hear about your transition out of sport. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself, such as your family, your interests and how you became involved in sport?
- What was the retirement experience like for you?
- Did you experience any bad treatment or racism during your career?
- What was the role of family, friends and your community before and after your sport career?
- What sort of support did you receive from your sport organisation?
- What or who do you believe was the most help to you as you left sport?

- What programs did your sport provide to help you with life after sport?
- How effective were these programs?
- How did you cope with the changes in your life after you finished sport?
- Looking back, is there anything that would have made you retirement from sport easier?

Yours sincerely,

Megan Stronach

School of Leisure, Sport and Tourism, University of Technology Sydney.

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APPENDIX TWO

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INFORMATION LETTER

Retirement Experiences of Elite Indigenous Australian Athletes:

Policies, Programs and Practices.

Approval no. UTS HREC REF NO. 2009-072A

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

My name is Megan Stronach and I am a student at UTS. My supervisor is Daryl Adair.

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

This research is to find out about retirement experiences and needs of elite Indigenous Australian athletes. It will examine means by which sport organisations and stakeholders currently manage the retirement process for these athletes, and finally it intends to identify ways in which the policies, programs and practices within the sport industry which influence athletes' retirement may be adapted or modified to better suit the unique circumstances of these individuals.

IF I SAY YES, WHAT WILL IT INVOLVE?

I will ask you to participate in an interview which will last for about 60 – 90 minutes.

WHY HAVE I BEEN ASKED?

You are an Indigenous athlete who competed at elite levels in your sport, so you are able to give me the information I need to find out about retirement from sport.

DO I HAVE TO SAY YES?

You don't have to say yes.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I SAY NO?

Nothing. I will thank you for your time so far and won't contact you about this research again.

IF I SAY YES, CAN I CHANGE MY MIND LATER?

You can change your mind at any time and you don't have to say why. I will thank you for your time so far and won't contact you about this research again.

WHAT IF I HAVE CONCERNS OR A COMPLAINT?

If you have concerns about the research that you think I or my supervisor can help you with, please feel free to contact me on 0417 338 113, or him on 02 9514 5498.

If you would like to talk to someone who is not connected with the research, you may contact the Research Ethics Officer on 02 9514 9772, and quote this number UTS HREC REF NO. 2009-072A

APPENDIX THREE

TABLE OF THEMES

Superordinate Theme 1: The lives and identities of Indigenous athletes

- ***Sub theme 1: Identity***

"I am a strong black man, and I know who I am and where I'm from".

"When an aboriginal person walks into an organization whether it be it a sport or anything else – what they bring with them is who they are, everything about family first, and caring and nurturing, and they understand issues, that really nobody else can, no matter how good, or how much goodwill someone may mean".

"They will go back to where they can help most".

"And it's family first always, sharing, care for your people and respect".

- ***Sub theme 2: Natural athletes?***

"*If they want to kick a football, they've already got the upper hand, because they're aboriginal. Aboriginal people are naturally good at sport. It's just a known thing"* (NB: many comments similar to this).

BUT: "What you'll find is that people have a romantic notion of aboriginal athletes and by using that language it's saying that aboriginal athletes don't have to work as hard. So you have to reframe from language around it so it does suggest that aboriginal players work hard".

- ***Sub theme 3: Leaving home***

"being a young blackfella from the bush, you know… there's not enough support base … they give these kids money to come down to [city] and just expect them to survive".

"It's hard, like, because Indigenous people are very family oriented and very close, so to move away is a really big thing, so it was hard".

- ***Sub theme 4: Mothers and fathers***

"I'll tell Mum a different thing to Dad so Dad will stop worrying, but Mum – I tell Mum the truth".

"Mum and I were extremely close. And, eerr, I didn't have to kick a hundred goals to have Mum proud or put her arm around me".

"I spoke to my mother nearly every night on the phone, half the time crying, wanting to come home. And the comment I got was "you get on the train and I'll break your legs if you get off. You're staying there!"

"Mum was captain of the ship".

"My Dad was really my role model – he was a good man, my dad".

"It was my mum, I got into boxing from my mum, she started training me from a young age".

"she straightened me out and made me a better person and now my payback is that I have to be her provider, which I will gladly do because I love her to death".

- ***Sub theme 5: Tough love***

"we lived in such a poor state - when I say poor state I mean poor state financially".

"I wasn't a special kid, I didn't have a silver spoon hanging out my mouth, I didn't have all the opportunities of other white people. I lived out the back of nowhere".

"I bet there were times they had no money in the bank, absolutely none, but we always had food on the table, and I always felt safe".

"Good upbringing -we didn't have much but there was plenty of love".

"I went through a lot of stuff, growing up, all through my life, getting in trouble, you know, and going through sort of the law system".

"it was just dysfunction. All the family, the family unit. Like we had all the love and stuff'.

Superordinate Theme 2: To be an elite athlete

- ***Sub theme 1: Leaving school early***

"the C/W games fell in my HSC year and I put all my efforts into C/W games so school got missed out".

"Like if I'd gave enough effort into school work, maybe in studies and an relationships it would have been great, but boxing has been my only thing that I've ever give all to".

"I deferred university to focus on football, cos at that time I had ambitions to do well in football"

"I actually went to [city] with the priority of getting educated, I had this construct in my mind that I wasn't there for anything else".

- ***Sub theme 2: Money matters***

“the public demands that they want to see football, and they’re willing to pay, and the corporate world are willing to pay”.

“I’ve been playing for years, and everything I got paid I’ve just blown. But I’ve started to realise that you’ve got to save your money”.

- ***Sub theme 3: Role Models***

“as soon as you get drafted you get thrust into this role model thing”

“You don't realise how much of a role model you are because you’ve taken that step and left (city)”.

“Whether you like it or not when you are successful there are responsibilities that are unfortunately out of your control. People want to endorse you or expose you, it makes you a much more high-profile person – it’s just the nature of the beast”.

“When a non-indigenous rugby league player retires, why can’t he role model non-indigenous youth?”

“I get the shits when people bag footy players as a role model cos he’s messed up. But you show me one person in the world hasn’t messed up in some stage of his life”.

- ***Sub theme 4: Happiness***

“they paid me well, big money, and laughing, smiling, always a smile on my face”.

“I didn’t want to see my younger brothers and sisters living in a room like we were, where there was five of us living in a small room, with bunkbeds sleeping in foot of each other. So I bought a house, where they had a room each”.

“*We’d get paid every Wednesday night, and so we'd go down to the ATM and go and have a feed. And for a lot of people who play AFL or NRL- what a terrific feeling to make the people around you happier”.*

- ***Sub theme 5: Respect***

“You form those bonds, and you show those people the respect. Certainly they show the respect back”.

“The young players they just lack any respect for me. Look, the younger ones, the generation here, there’s just no respect for themselves”.

- ***Sub-theme 6: Having to prove ourselves***

“I tell you now, coming from an Indigenous man who played sport at that level, a little black boy’s got to work harder than the next to prove himself”.

"If there's people around me who are better I try really really hard to be better than them. And try to do things better than them".

"[they said] I couldn't go to the Olympics … and win the World title – and I proved them all wrong".

"We don't see you as winning medals for us at C/W games and Olympics. And I thought oh f—k I'm going to prove yous wrong".

Superordinate Theme 3: The subjective experience of retirement from sport

- ***Sub theme 1: Exiting sport*** *(decision to retire is usually a combination a several factors)*

i) ***Pull factors*** (positive aspects of post-sport life)

"the top end was calling me back".

"When I retire I can't wait to go out and enjoy the world – to travel and do things other people are doing right now".

"I'm looking forward to spending more time with my kids and not flying around so much … So more time with those guys".

ii) Anti-pull factors (difficulties or insecurity post sport)

Feeling insecure; not knowing what to do after sport; not knowing 'who' I was.

iii) Push factors (negative issues of current life)

Age; injuries; deselection; 'forced' to retire; homesickness; bad treatment by club/coach/officials; loss of motivation; sacrifices; life out of control; too tough to make weight; no cultural support; sick of being a commodity; needed to be back with family; financial pressures.

"And it took me quite a while to realise that, that you bleed for that club, I mean you go out and give your heart and soul, and at the end of the day you're a number, you're a piece of meat, and they can move you on as quickly as they got you…"

iv) Anti-push factors (attachment to sport career)

living the dream/loving the sport; *"I would do it all again";* fame and fortune; being part of the team/close friends; pride; "*nobody had done it before*"; opportunities; discipline of the sport.

- ***Sub-theme 2: No Man's Land*** *(where athletes may "dangle in a time of uncertainty and disorientation undergoing a shift in identity and eventually achieving a new definition of self")*

i) **Emotions and reactions**

"you're going to go from hero to zero".

"it wasn't easy to say goodbye because boxin' … was everything".

"*when you hear you're not wanted it's a bit of a kick in the guts*".

"the loss is that whole environment, your mates, your footy club, the culture…the enthusiasm of the fans- you crave the relationship".

"I lost a lot of confidence, I went into a state of depression".

"I'm scared, and I don't know, I just hope that it all goes well".

"I guess there'll be a little bit of relief there as well".

"For myself, if I could, I'd do it forever".

"My life ended … I cried for days, my emotions were just hopeless, and I didn't know what my future was".

"That's how I feel, the worst boxer around, sort of thing, I have nothing. Just low and fat!"

"Retirement? I think I battled with it for 3 days!"

ii) Situation

"you have to know what you want to be and what you want to do before you retire – that's the toughest thing"

"I think the earlier you hit it on the head the better it is for you".

"I didn't know what I wanted to be, I didn't know how to operate a computer, and a fax or a form, - I didn't know how to pay a bill, 'cause everything was done for me through the club".

"But no, I had no guidance in how you should budget, tax forms, all of that stuff".

"The other thing I had no understanding of was gambling, that was probably the biggest problem amongst the footballers".

"I assumed back in [city] I would be accepted with open arms and there'd be work there for me, and people were going to employ me and things like that but it wasn't".

iii) Support

a special friend or mentor (often mentioned), coach, partner, mother, father, family, the psychologist or counsellor.

iv) Coping and strategies

"I went through a funny phase and went into a hermit crab shell - it wasn't healing; it was

just searching, to find out who I am".

"the next day I was 'well what do I do?" And then after … I saw the psychologist … and she was great".

"I was alone, and like I said alcohol was me best mate …"

"I made a decision not to pursue alcohol, I knew I couldn't drink, I was a one glass screamer, after one glass I was useless".

"I'm probably the biggest ego-maniac I know, so I wanted to succeed - that was probably a coping mechanism".

"The big bright lights might blind me, but you've got to have your head screwed on".

"I'm not coping with not running- with no-one barking orders at me to run. I think I need a kick in the bum – I'm putting on too much weight".

"I've given good service to (the club). I'm currently the … record holder. So they treat me with the red carpet. It's fantastic. I can always go and talk to someone there …"

- ***Sub theme 3: New Beginnings (****the start of a new life, but athletes may still experience difficulties in coping with their new situation and identity)*

i) A new world

"it is like you're born again – you're a child again in a different world".

"you've hung the jersey up, got to put the business suit on now and go out and walk in there confident about what it is you're selling".

ii) Back home.

"you become a bit of a threat to 'em, people become very protective of their own positions"

"A lot of people in the town seem interested and supportive, but I dunno … it seems like they might be a bit jealous. Bitter or something".

"I've got a different stature and the like, I've got a fair bit of confidence about me. But apart from that I feel as if – like everybody else".

"The same, it's just me, same bare bum in the shower".

"The general feeling was that I was someone special – I did carry with me a sense of here's someone who's been and done that - I tried not to be too different but people had a different mental construct".

iii) A rude awakening

"*People need to know that it's not good. People think you're flying but you're not...you've got responsibilities mate, mouths to feed, you need to be in the workforce*".

iv) What sport gave me

A better life; inspirational people; new friends; success; an image; transferable skills (professionalism, how to 'carry yourself', goal setting, time management, discipline, confidence, leadership; sport knowledge, communication skills, people skills, management skills), opportunities; especially opportunities to help family and inspire young people

v) Families and fatherhood

"When I went home and I'd had a bad performance, they didn't care who I was, they still looked at me as dad ... it certainly helped my career".

"[If] you can't get on the football field to feed your family, you've actually got to get into the corporate".

"I've got a family that I've got to put bread and water for on the table every night, and smacking my head up against a wall, playing for not a great deal of money for all the work that you put in, for me I just couldn't do that, I couldn't do that to my family".

"I'm basically the man of the house, so I've got to provide and help Mum out as much as I can, so it's not only for me, it's for my mum and my little sister - the whole family".

"I'm trying to set things up for my family, and make it as easy as possible for my family".

"with having four kids I just have to move on and be able to be their supporter and make sure I'm giving them every chance they can to have a good life as what I did".

Superordinate Theme 4: The new life

- ***Sub theme 1: The good life***

Things have fallen into place; I'm studying now, I've had a good retirement, I would do it all again; life is OK now; I'm loving life after sport; I've found peace and happiness; I'm still involved in sport.

- ***Sub theme 2: Tough times***

"[We experienced the] normal pressures of poor people – they fight over little things but all of a sudden you become tight as a family. The restrictions of sometimes not being able to choose what you'd like to do".

"Now the wallet's dried up, you certainly have to prioritise what you need and what you don't. And you can't go out and have lunch every day at cafes like we used to …. I'm finding that a bit difficult".

- ***Sub theme 3: Jobs for the boys***

I'm working with Indigenous people; working with the sport; youth work; personal training; helping others; being a Role Model.

Superordinate Theme 5: The veiled face of racism in Australian sport

- ***Sub-theme 1: It's everywhere***

"what it is it's like it's hidden, it's hidden y'know, well they try to make it hidden but y'know it's there, like blackfellas can see it on the surface".

"*it doesn't make too much difference in Darwin, it's when you come down south, people seem to stereotype you a lot more"*.

"I'm light-skinned as well. So sometimes I get blackfellas not acknowledging me ... So like people think that I'm wog or Lebanese … and my own people think that".

"Me and him were just like, 'what the hell's going on in here?' It was quite disheartening because it was on the premises of the AIS, in our training quarters".

- ***Sub theme 2: Sometimes we don't see it…('inferential' racism)***

"that occurs when you see no AFL aboriginal coaches , managers, board members and all that, so that the perception is that they're not accountable".

"every sport in Australia you got a committee, and I'll tell you what, there's hardly no aborigines on them. No aborigines, all white people".

"when you're an aboriginal player you'll be put in a forward pocket or half-forward flank where you can get away with not being accountable. That's the perception that coaches have".

"how many clubs have got captains, aboriginal captains?"

- ***Sub theme 3: The moral judgement***

"whether you are Muslim, Indigenous, Maori, whatever, it really tugs at the heart strings".

"there's lots of places where you could be so you don't need to be subjected to it, you know, especially when it's your work – cos it's your job and it's like workplace bullying – you don't cop that, people get sacked for that sort of stuff".

"It was kinda another incident that made me not want to be there at the [club], and I felt sort of alone".

"I think you treat people – you treat people how you'd want to be treated. When you play footy – would that person still treat me the same if I didn't [play footy]? – I dunno".

"You wouldn't put up with it at work, and for all of these young men, this is their work".

"*I feel stung, and hurt, but that's just the – I think that's just the sort of person I am*".

"And it's ignorant, y'know what I mean, I don't comprehend".

"Not knowing if you're welcome here really or whether you're just sort of here as a token".

- ***Sub theme 4: How to deal with it***

"It wasn't as if I had an aboriginal flag stuck up my arse – it was more about - this is what I'm prepared to tolerate and at the end of the line I'm not going to tolerate it".

"the way I cope with it, I just bite back and say something racial back, y'know, and it turns out into a joke".

"if something or someone resorts back to your skin colour, it was a sign of weakness and that's something you have to exploit, rather than become a victim … the tool that was given to us was to target this person and to keep going at 'em 'cause they're not focused on the game".

"I think in some cases boxing is a whole different category to what AFL and rugby league is … I think in boxing you have the opportunity to go out and punch the shit out of the bloke!"

"Sometimes I spoke up, said 'you're a bit out of line there mate', other times I'd just let it go past".

"They won't bring me down – I ignore it. I see it but I ignore it – because I'm too strong for that, too strong".

"it happened, but well I used it to spur me on…"

"*I just heard it in the side of my ear – "where we come from we call them coons". This is like a week ago – dead set - in the shopping centre. I swung around; I had to pull the bloke up. I was really really angry … I had a good word – like I had him really worried, y'know. I didn't do anything silly, but I just let him know – I spoke with him and I had some stern words, and he sort got the drift".*

APPENDIX FOUR

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Consent form.

I ____________________ agree to participate in the research project: Retirement Experiences of Elite Australian Indigenous Athletes: Policies, Programs and Practices, UTS HREC approval reference number: **2009-072A**, being conducted by Megan Stronach, of the University of Technology, Sydney, for her degree Doctor of Philosophy.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to examine the retirement experiences and needs of elite Indigenous Australian athletes. The study will also examine means by which sport organisations and stakeholders currently manage the retirement process for this group of athletes. Finally the study intends to identify ways in which the policies, programs and practices within the sport industry which impact on athletes' retirement may be adapted or modified to better suit the unique circumstances of these athletes.

I understand that my participation in this research will involve participation in one or two face-to-face interviews, and that audio recordings of these interviews will be made. The interview process should take between 30-60 minutes. Interview findings will be sent to respondents for verification, and it is anticipated that clarification or follow-up questions may be needed following the initial interview.

I acknowledge that some participants in this study may have experienced discomfort when they retired from sport, and that those individuals may experience some uneasiness when participating in the study.

I am aware that I can contact Megan Stronach on [redacted], her supervisors, or the UTS Ethics Committee Officer if I have any concerns about the research. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my participation from this research project at any time I wish, without consequences, and without giving a reason.

I agree that Megan Stronach has answered all my questions fully and clearly.

I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way. This may include a thesis, media articles, conference papers and/or book. Further, should any publication be sought, a copy of documents will be sent to participants prior to publication. I understand that data will be archived for five years and then destroyed.

____ ____/____/____

Signature (participant)

____ ____/____/____

Signature (researcher or delegate)

NOTE:

This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (ph: +61 2 9514 9772 Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au) and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome. Alternatively, you can contact any member of the Supervisory panel:

- Associate Professor Daryl Adair: 02 9514 5498
- Associate Professor Simon Darcy: 02 9514 5100
- Professor Tracy Taylor: 02 9514 3664

APPENDIX FIVE

VERIFICATION STATEMENTS.			
General Dimension			
1 Engaging Indigeneity	***Elements***	**Sub-Themes**	
	Habitus	Personal identity	*Good upbringing—we didn't have much but there was plenty of love (Jerry, retired boxing)* *I went through a lot of stuff, growing up, all through my life, getting in trouble, you know, and going through sort of the law system (Kris current boxing)* *.. it was just dysfunction. All the family, the family unit. Like we had all the love and stuff (Kris current boxing).* *[They said] I couldn't go to the Olympics … and win the World title—and I proved them all wrong (Pete r2007 boxing).* *[They said] 'we don't see you as winning medals for us at Commonwealth Games and Olympics'. And I thought 'oh f--k I'm going to prove yous wrong' (Wills r2008 boxing).*
		Indigenous heritage	*I started work at 13½—ring barking. From five in the morning till five at night. Every day, seven days a week, I went to work. It was a little town—nearest shop was eighty kilometres away—we lived off the land, we lived off the land. We got a beautiful river there, calm. We got fish, turtles, kangaroos, possums, rabbits, all that stuff, ducks—we used to live off the land. It was a good life (Jerry r1989 boxing).* *I wasn't a special kid, I didn't have a silver spoon hanging out my mouth, I didn't have all the opportunities of other white people. I lived out the back of nowhere (Ian, current boxing).* *My grandparents were part of the Stolen Generation, they got shifted around and you know we sort of lost our identity there, but we can trace it back, part of the family, stuff like that. So yeah that's good to try and find out (Alex r2007 NRL)*

		The 'natural' athlete	*I think we are good at rugby league—a lot of aboriginal people are just naturally gifted, y'know, but there are only certain some that that gifted. You have to be dedicated as well. There's a lot of hard work to d, talent will only get you so far. We are natural at running. The hardest thing for Indigenous people is to be dedicated, do the hard work, and to stay on track (Matthew current NRL).* *I went to the show and it was an easy way of picking up money, and you was fighting and it was always in blackfellas' blood (Billy r1989 boxing).* *Look, it's no secret, the most gifted athletes that we have in the NRL today, AFL, are all of Aboriginal descent. I just think we're a gifted race (Neville r2008 NRL).* *We have family—one side is aboriginal, the other side is Irish and Scottish—so good fighting breeds! (Wills r2008 boxing).*
		Family cohesion and connectedness	*Whether it is boxing, AFL or rugby league, I mean when you look at the elite level, we've all got something in common, and I mean we all back one another up. You could be walking down the street; you know who that young brother is from AFL or rugby league, just a head nod or a hand shake and going 'you're doing well, keep it up' (Alex r2007 NRL).* *Extended families—it's just they don't get enough tough love. It's more in the Indigenous side of things—probably because there's a lot more single parents (Eric r1981 NRL).* *They're really proud of me, my mum, my dad and my grandfather—they give me a lot of support, all my family and friends. Family—that's the most important thing (Tom current boxing).*
		Acculturation	*In that five year bracket in Perth I went back to [community] twice, battled homesickness at a young age, being a long way from home, but obviously money comes into it as well and I found it very difficult (Norman r2005 AFL).* *We told them at the footy club he's real traditional, he's a real traditional man. You're going to have a few teething problems because his community's going to want to call him back, that sort of thing (Ben r2009 AFL).* *I get real homesick. so even though I've been home with my parents, I call the AIS home, it takes me about 2 or 3 weeks to get used to going from one place to the other, yeah, it takes be a long time to adjust (Dennis current boxing).* *I had a very good friend that came down with me—he was a fantastic footballer, and if not for him I'd have probably gone home. I'd have been one of those typical Darwin footballers who didn't make it. [He] was the one, and I think it was quite more good luck than good management at [the club] that he was there, another Indigenous fella (Brian r1993 AFL).* *Perhaps a little bit more valuing of the individual and understanding their needs and behaviours and almost to a micro management level in the early period cos it is like you're born again (Nathan r2003 AFL)* *I'm hell-bent at the moment trying to re-introduce myself back into the community. Instead of just coming back in and trying to change everything (Alex r 2007 NRL).*

	Capital	Valuing the 'physical'	*I'm good on my feet—so it's technical—I'm very good technically, I don't use a lot of energy in the ring (Anders r2008 boxing).* *I made the Australian team, cause I was the best for my weight in Australia (Ian current boxing)* *I always knew that I wanted to achieve... my goals are really high. So, I've always believed that if you aim for mediocre, that's all you're going to achieve. My goals have always been high; I've always strived to do my best. I think that's why I've excelled (Jack current boxing).* *I like business, I like the chase. I have the determination to get stuff. I'm always going to be the best. And it's the same with this course I've started now—I plan to be the best mind boxing coach around (Nick r1997 boxing)*
		Athletic identity	*The lifestyle as an elite sportsperson isn't really—you feel a lot of glory but it's a lot of toil, trouble and having to do training most of the time and you don't have much of a life to do other things. You know, doing your training, recovering, you know what I mean? (Simon r2003 NRL).* *I wanted to make her proud. Some guys come to play to be recognised and some guys play for money, but I came to play to help my family live a better life and hopefully I've done that (Johnny r2009 AFL).* *I've got nothing to fall back on because I've just been boxing for so long, I don't know nothing but boxing (Dennis current boxing).* *Your reputation is everything and when you don't have good representation or management you're not getting a true reflection of what the player goes through (Nathan r2003 AFL)* *Well I don't like it when I don't win (Wills r200 boxing8).* *I'm a very strong person, and I love having people around me now, but I was a very solo person, living out in the bush. Comparing what I was when I was little to how I am now, I'm a completely different person now (Ian currant boxing).*
	The Field	The athlete persona	*As soon as you get drafted you get thrust into this role model thing I didn't know what a role model was when I was 17, 18. I had no idea. So you know, I think it's gotta be earnt, you've got to show people why you are, you can't just call yourself one (Johnny r2009 AFL).* *Whether you like it or not when you are successful there are responsibilities that are unfortunately out of your control. People want to endorse you or expose you, it makes you a much more high-profile person —it's just the nature of the beast (Key stakeholder #18).* *You don't realise how much of a role model you are because you've taken that step and left (city) (Alex r2007 NRL)* *I think it depends on the lifestyle they lead. At the end of the day, they've got to look at themselves in the mirror and say 'are they a good role model?' I don't drink, I don't take drugs, I don't smoke. For me, I see myself as a good role model (Neville r2008 NRL)*

			So I knew how important community was for me and with other organisations and knowing they could use my image and me go out and spread the message, whether it was for domestic violence, alcohol, drugs, all the things that affect our Indigenous communities (Alex r2007 NRL).
		Physical legacy of elite sport	*You know, boxing is a sport where there is a chance of brain damage, and all that stuff, so I don't want to be in there longer than I should be (Ian current boxing).* *Our club doctor used to say to me 'the longer you play, the sooner you'll bring on your arthritis'. And as soon as I finished, I would just sit there, and the old knees would just throb—he was bloody right, that bugger! So I went to play golf, and it wasn't as easy as I thought it would be, that transition … it took my body two years to settle back down (Steve r1989 AFL).*
2 The Retirement Experience	**Phases**	**Sub-themes**	
	Exiting Sport	Pulled towards retirement	*When I retire I can't wait to go out and enjoy the world; to travel and do things other people are doing right now (Bradley current NRL).* *I reckon it will be peaceful, because every day you get up and work, we train every day and at the weekend. Then when you go out there's all these supporters, they're saying: 'how are you?' You can't just go out, you've got people ringing you up all the time, you know, 'when's the next fight'. So I reckon it will be peaceful, 'cause it'll all be over, it will all be over and I can just relax (George current boxing).*
		Anti-pull factors	*It started off as me, then it went to we, and now it's a little bit coming back to me a little bit—I don't know why. So the problem is its heading towards me again, and what I can do, you know (David r199 AFL)* *I wasn't quite sure if I had the right stuff to get there because had only had five fights at the time. I'd only started quite late (Jack current boxing).*
		Pushed towards retirement	*Everyone thinks I've got it easy, living the life of being an athlete, but all we do is train. And now my body is stuffed up from training, and I've put my body through some tough times—I don't know what it's going to be like in another twenty years (Anders r2008 boxing)* *When my mother passed away, and I came to a point where—it changed my life, I started to think what else is out there (Nathan r2003 AFL).* *It's just that as you get older playing gets to be a bit of a struggle, you get to the end of the season, I just thought I've had the opportunity to do what I wanted to do—why push yourself—I just felt my heart wasn't in it, I didn't enjoy it, I didn't enjoy doing the hard work that I had to do—it was a struggle (Robin r1989 AFL)* *It was getting told you can't win medals, you can't do that. And when they pick other people that you beat and they pick them over you, you're like woo—you said I wouldn't be able to beat this person, I wouldn't be able to do that, and then they pick that person over you, you know? And then they say about age—24 is not old (Wills r2008 boxing)*

			I had a lot of weight problems, I was a middle weight but a big middle weight but I had to lose about 10 pounds, 11 pounds to make weight (Jerry r1989 boxing). *One was the pain of my back, and I just couldn't stand waking up in the morning, after a game, not being able to walk for 2 days. That happened for 3 or 4 years and I just got sick of it. I woke up and said I don't want to do this anymore. Or, I wasn't prepared to do the hard work anymore to prepare me for the next season (Nathan r2003 AFL).*
		Anti-push factors	*Some of those guys are my best mates. Godfathers to my kids. And that's as close as it can get, I think (Johnny r2009 AFL).* *Mother, granny and grand-dad took me to my games every Sunday morning—I even remember playing four games in one day, I loved football that much. For me there was nothing else—nothing else existed in the world except the [name] football club, and the football (Nathan r2003 AFL).*
	Nowhere Land	Situation	*It's a bit weird. It's a bit difficult, sitting behind a desk, staring at a screen nine to five, type of thing. Footy's a different life; you train hard for two or three hours, you have a break, then you go back and train or you have the rest of the day off. So pretty much sitting in cafés every day for lunch is gone, this sitting behind a desk and a lunch room is a bit different (Ben r2009 AFL).* *… you're going to go from hero to zero (David r1997 AFL)* *The transition possibly is not going to be very easy. I think I'll find it quite difficult because it's such a routine for me, and such a part of my life, that once I did stop that I'd go into depression because I'm not doing that kind of stuff I'm so accustomed to (Jack current boxing).* *Sometimes I just yearned, but I was 36, I'd had a fair go (Steve r 1989 AFL).* *I'm scared, and I don't know, I just hope that it all goes well (Matthew current NRL).* *I guess there'll be a little bit of relief there as well (George current boxing).*
		Support	*That's where you need an Indigenous person. Like you can't have a mainstream person from my point of view, trying to teach Indigenous people—not that any of the coaches there did, you know they sort of stayed away from the Indigenous thing, but you can't have someone to be a support culturally to Indigenous athletes or Indigenous kids or whatever, you know, if they're not Indigenous themselves, because they don't know the right protocols you know, or processes that you need to go through, but you know that it needs to be specific (Kris current Boxing).* *At [the club] our welfare manager is very good in making the young kids do courses and getting them skilled up in all sorts of areas, rather than waiting, you know, six months of their contracts left and then trying to get them to do something (Scott r2007 AFL).* *The NRL do a good job in trying to set you up—they pay for courses, put you in the right direction as much as possible (Bradley current NRL).*

			… through the players' association. But I don't know how often that resource is utilised, because you're dealing with young males who again think that they know a lot, and in a lot of cases would be too proud—which I was, you know, but I just felt really good after talking (Nathan r2003 AFL). *But I had some great support and some great family, great friends and a great partner that gave me that space to find out what I wanted to do (Norman r2005 AFL).* *Like most families, they'll pick you up, give you that confidence to keep going. And like most kids I needed a kick in the bum at a couple of stages, and that was their role (Johnny r2009 AFL).* *I think it would be a little bit better [to see an Indigenous counsellor], I've seen Indigenous counsellors before and they just seem to care a lot more … they look after my family as well. They would talk to them to make sure they were not getting stressed (Anders r2008 Boxing).*
		Adaptive behaviours	*And when I did come back (home), it was good for a week, then that was probably it, then I just sort of went downhill. And now I have heaps of energy, I miss it. When I walk around I walk on my toes. If I'm walking in a crowd I'm walking little boxing moves, just to walk through the crowd, like footwork you know? That's how I feel, the worst boxer around, sort of thing, I have nothing. I feel bad, bored all the time, just slack, fat. I see myself as a fat person, really slack, yeah … Just low and fat (Wills r2008 boxing).* *I'm not coping with not running, with no-one barking orders at me to run. I think I need a kick in the bum, I'm putting on too much weight! (Johnny r2009 AFL)* *Because I have a drink now, now and again and I know I have a tendency to keep on drinking if I didn't have anyone there to tell me not to—and it's in my family—my dad died at the age of forty with cirrhosis of the liver—he was an alcoholic from the age of eighteen (Nick r1997 Boxing).* *The big bright lights might blind me, but you've got to have your head screwed on (Ian current boxing)*
	New Beginnings	Coming to terms	*I've got a family that I've got to put bread and water for on the table every night, and smacking my head up against a wall, playing for not a great deal of money for all the work that you put in, for me I just couldn't do that, I couldn't do that to my family (Neville r2008 NRL).* *I do drug and alcohol education with Indigenous youth and non-Indigenous youth, because I was one who fell victim to that. I'm not afraid to admit that I'm a recovering alcoholic drug addict. I went down that path. For me, that's why I see myself as such a strong role model now (Neville r2008 NRL).* *But once it's over they just want to go home and enjoy life. I know a lot of other players will choose big careers in the media, or work hard in some other area, but I think the Indigenous guys just want to give back (Bradley current NRL).*
		Rural/urban tensions	*A lot of people in the town seem interested and supportive, but I dunno … it seems like they might be a bit jealous. Bitter or something. Ya get that feeling from some people that—oh he thinks he's better than us or whatever (Josh, current boxing)* *I assumed back in [city] I would be accepted with open arms and there'd be work there for me, and people were*

			going to employ me and things like that but it wasn't (David r1997 AFL) *People need to know that it's not good. People think you're flying but you're not...you've got responsibilities mate, mouths to feed, you need to be in the workforce (David r1997 AFL)*
		Career choices	*Like if I'd gave enough effort into school work, maybe in studies and relationships it would have been great, but boxing has been my only thing that I've ever give all to (Tom current boxing).* *I deferred university to focus on football, cos at that time I had ambitions to do well in football (Norman r2005 AFL).* *it wasn't those sort of pen-pushing sort of desk jobs, it was more people sort of skills, talking to people, enjoying people's company, helping people out, making them realise that they can set goals, that can achieve things, and it was all basically based around Indigenous youth (Scott r2007 AFL).* *Like working in the Aboriginal centre, it would be a good job; I could guarantee you that, working with the kids (Steve r1989 AFL).*
		Pathways in sport ?	*The young players they just lack any respect for me. Look, the younger ones, the generation here, there's just no respect for themselves (Robin r1989 AFL).* *I'll be able to start my own gym, and still be part of the sport as well. I'd like to be part of the sport, not in a boxing, fighting sense, but if I could stay part of it for a few years afterwards, I'd be happy with that (Kim current boxing).* *I think if you just go straight out of football and go cold turkey, I think that's the time where people struggle a fair bit, but ah, they're all happy to get out but they don't want to get back into football. But I think football's a great medicine, if you can say that, to soothe it all, to make it a lot easier (Scott r2007 AFL).* *They had the expectation also, and so you witness them doing the same thing. So there was an obligation—a moral one and another one there too, to effectively continue that trend (Simon r200 NRL).*
		Agency	*When you have the opportunity to meet people, in the business world—or we do a helluva lot of functions—don't stand in the corner, like I used to. Get out and meet these people, get their business cards—you never know. It's been beneficial for me at times (Johnny r2009 AFL).* *[If] you can't get on the football field to feed your family, you've actually got to get into the corporate (Alex r2007 NRL).*
		Reflections	*That's a good question. I don't know. I don't know what —I know one way now, I know what it was like—I grew up playing footy. And personally for me now, I'm thinking I'm certainly better off, my family's better off from playing football for sure. Growing up I thought surely there's a better way to live. I didn't really know how or what, and I was fortunate enough to be drafted, get some money. Because surely there's a better way than just struggling. So yeah, footy's given that to me (Johnnyr2009 AFL).* *If I hadn't been boxing, I would probably been in trouble, boxing is the thing that kept me straight, cos the boys strive to fight, like to get as good as I can, to get to the top. Just so that I could be a leader and a role model for*

			young people and Indigenous people (Wills r2008 boxing).
3 Racism in Australian Sport		**Sub-themes**	
		Racism during sport	*I feel stung, and hurt, but that's just the—I think that's just the sort of person I am (Kris current boxing).* *It was kinda another incident that made me not want to be there at the [club], and I felt sort of alone (Kevin r2007 AFL).* *When you're an aboriginal player you'll be put in a forward pocket or half-forward flank where you can get away with not being accountable. That's the perception that coaches have (Nathan r2003 AFL)*
		Racism beyond sport	*But you go around any country town in Australia and they're racist. Really racist. It's bad, really bad, very bad. Our culture is oldest culture in the world, oldest culture in the world, but these Australian people they don't see that (Jerry r1989 boxing).* *What it is it's like it's hidden, it's hidden y'know, well they try to make it hidden but y'know it's there, like blackfellas can see it on the surface (Billy r1989 boxing)*
		Tokenism	*I think you treat people—you treat people how you'd want to be treated. When you play footy— would that person still treat me the same if I didn't [play footy]? I dunno (Brian r1993 AFL)*

APPENDIX SIX

Miles and Huberman (1994): Tactics for testing or confirming findings in qualitative research:

Miles and Huberman Tactics		Data Sources		
		1 **Semi structured interview data from athlete participants**	**2** **Semi structured interview data from key stakeholders**	**3** **Document Analysis**
1.	Checking for representativeness	Qualitative data drawn from athletes showing wide range of ages, era, clubs, and states from three different sports according to the limitations defined in the research design	Qualitative data drawn from range of different key stakeholders from three different sports under scrutiny and associated organisations	Annual reports, strategic plans, organisational policies, and various forms of the media all available for analysis to complement interview data
2a	Researcher > subject effects	Principles of *Dadirri* obligated a collaborative approach to developing interview guides and analysing responses		Possibility of author bias was given due consideration
2b	Subject > researcher effects	Acknowledged that researcher had already worked with athletes experiencing SCT which may result in bias		
3.	Triangulation	Occurred through different data sources, data types, research methods for data collection, and combined theoretical approach.		
4.	Weighting evidence	High weighting for all data sources		
5.	Checking the meaning of outliers	Not pursued		
6.	Using extreme cases	Not pursued		

<table>
<tr><td>7.</td><td>Following up surprises</td><td colspan="3">Not pursued</td></tr>
<tr><td>8.</td><td>Checking for negative evidence</td><td colspan="3">Followed up for all sources</td></tr>
<tr><td>9.</td><td>Making 'if-then' tests</td><td colspan="3">Not pursued</td></tr>
<tr><td>10.</td><td>Ruling out spurious relationships</td><td colspan="3">Multiple data sources and methods to guard against this</td></tr>
<tr><td>11.</td><td>Replicating a finding</td><td colspan="3">Not possible due to resource constraints</td></tr>
<tr><td>12.</td><td>Checking out rival explanations</td><td colspan="3">Theoretical/conceptual framework draws on a variety of theoretical traditions</td></tr>
<tr><td>13.</td><td>Getting feedback from informants</td><td>Undertaken</td><td>Undertaken</td><td>N/A</td></tr>
</table>

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