

A study on professional athlete career transition: an overview of the literature

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Since the 1990's, there have been many research studies that focus on career transitions for professional athletes in Japan. The main reason for this is that during that period, amateur sports teams, such as soccer and basketball, were spun off from divisions of companies to become separate professional teams. Consequently, this changed forced how athletes view the transition to a second career because they can no longer count on being employed by the companies that had previously run teams as part of their corporate operations. Research studies primarily covered top athletes but did not distinguish between the amateur and professional athletes. In reviewing the assumptions and results of such previous research with respect to professional status, this study will present the basic themes of such research. For example, early research investigated the actual reasons why and how athletes decide to change career; whereas later research seek to study how athletes specifically deal with career changes. Finally, in order to determine the effectiveness of actual support programs, the authors of this study proposes that more thorough investigation is needed to scrutinize how the career transitions of ex-professional football players have changed over time by using a "longitudinal" analysis.

Keywords: career transitions, professional athletes

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1. Background of the study

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) considered the need for second career measures due to the limited number of years athletes can actively participate the front line. Since FY 2006, MEXT has conducted surveys on second careers following retirement from athletics, the need to provide assistance for second careers, and the approaches made by sports organizations. In March 2008, MEXT presented proposals for support measures. MEXT initiated the "Second Career Support Project" in FY 2008 and supported JOC-led second career programs in FY 2009. In July 2010, MEXT announced its Strategy for a Sports Nation, with the goal of creating an environment in which top athletes could concentrate on their individual sports. The strategy includes support for career development. MEXT also outsources the development of educational programs to universities with sports-related graduate programs. Such educational programs are intended to support

career advancement through in-service programs for trainers with the goal of increasing participation in international competition and support programs for top athletes wishing to become trainers.

Individual sports organizations are also actively providing assistance for the move into second careers. The J-League established the Career Support Center (CSC) in 2002. In professional baseball, the players' association has been providing support since 2002, which shows increased interest in the second careers of professional athletes not only in the sport circle but also in society in general.

In addition to government and sports associations interest in second careers for athletes, academic interest in career transition for athletes also increased from the 1990s.

Research interest in the career transition of athletes has also become high overseas, where experimental and theoretical studies on the topic started with examinations of career transitions in sports in the context of gerontology (McPherson, 1980; Lerch, 1981; Rosenberg, 1981), and rapidly increased in the

1980s to studies on athlete retirement.

Because retirement is only part of the transition in the life of an athlete, however, the difficulty of applying gerontology and thanatology prompted a shift toward transitional models based on psychological or sociological concepts (Schlossberf, 1981; Coakley, 1983; Charner & Schlossberf, 1986; Person & Petitipas, 1990; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994; Drahotka & Eitzen, 1998). Many transitional models have been segmentalized and applied, such as the focus on identity (Conzelmann & Nagel, 2003; Gerard & McGregor-Bayne, 2008; Joanne & Gyozo, 2009).

The career transition of athletes in Japan became a focus of attention in the 1990s. There are studies examining identity (Toyoda & Nakagome, 1996, 2000; Toyoda, 1999; Ooba & Tokunaga, 1999, 2002), studies applying overseas models (Shigeno, 1999; Jodai, 1999, 2005; Kubota et al., 2002), and comprehensive studies on second careers in sports (Tsukuba University Project, 2006, 2007).

Although previous studies target top athletes, they do not distinguish between amateur and professionals. As Yoshida (1999) pointed out, however, because sports are the work that professional athletes perform, retirement from professional career means the loss of a job. Matsumoto (1990) argued that because work is one of the most significant activities of adulthood, an activity that informs awareness and behavior both internally and externally, it is reasonable to consider the impact of retirement as more significant to professional athletes than amateur players. Therefore, we consider it necessary to classify athletes into professional and amateur status when they retire in future studies.

This paper examines the trends of studies on career transition focusing on research targeting professional athletes to provide a perspective for the further advancement of studies on this important topic.

2. Study trends

2.1. Early studies

Studies on athlete retirement have increased as the mental stress associated with retirement from professional sport career. Research interest have play has attracted ever greater attention in the field of sports science over the past two decades. Many studies focus on adjustment to life following retirement.

According to chronological order, research started with a focus on the loss of role due to aging (sociogerontology) or the concept of retirement as social death (thanatology). Following is an overview of research studies based on sociogerontology and thanatology.

2.1.1. Studies based on sociogerontology

Studies carried out by McPherson (1980), Lerch (1981), and Rosenberg (1981) applied gerontological theories and models used to explain the retirement processes that common workers go through to examine the retirement of athletes. The four theories listed below are considered to be particularly useful in explaining the processes involved in retirement from sports. The four theories are the Activity Theory, which states that individuals attempt to adjust themselves to society following retirement by becoming involved in new activities; the Continuity Theory, which states that individuals adjust naturally to society following retirement through the continual experience of both big and small changes; the Disengagement Theory, which states that young workers entering the labor force as retiring workers leave the labor force maintains a desirable balance in the labor population, which supports the natural retirement of older individuals; and the Social Breakdown Theory, which states that individuals are easily influenced by social attitudes and tend to feel that society sends a negative message to retirees, which causes socially and psychologically adverse effects (Rosenberg, 1981; Lerch, 1981; Baillie & Danish, 1992; Gordon, 1995). In short, early studies tended to consider retirement from sports to be the same as the retirement of the elderly from work.

However, some have pointed out that the retirement from sports should not be considered a general career transition for three reasons (Werthner & Orlick, 1986). The first reason is that most retired athletes are still young; therefore, it is difficult to consider their retirement as being similar to age-based retirement. The second reason is the difficulty in comparing retirement from traditional careers and sports biologically and gerontologically. The third reason is that career transition is considered a negative activity in sports based on the concept that athletes are not terminating their life but rather a role when they retire.

Therefore, the principles of gerontology were considered inappropriate and these theories are almost no longer employed.

2.1.2. Studies based on thanatology

Thanatologic theories have been applied in a wide range of fields. Some applied sports studies on the retirement in the 1980s, thanatology sees the end of a career as having the same meaning as social death even though lives in Medicinal and biological (Lerch, 1984; Rosenberg, 1984; Baillie, 1992).

Although Lerch (1984) and Roesnberg (1984) applied the Kubler-Ross Model, which classifies the psychological process of coping with dying into five stages, to athletes, they also pointed out that not all athletes follow the successive stages or predicted processes in the strict sense. Other researchers also indicated that thanatology does not adequately explain retirement from sports because the process of retirement depend on the individual athlete, because thanatologic theories do not take individual and environmental characteristics into consideration, and because such theories ignore complex processes associated with the retirement of athletes (Blind & Greendorfer, 1985; Curtis & Ennis, 1988; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994; Gordon, 1995).

One critical example of applied research study from thanatologic theories is the comparative study carried out by Curits & Ennis (1988), which focuses on the psychological conditions of former top and non-top hockey players at the junior level, including life satisfaction, employment, marriage, involvement in sports, and awareness of disengagement with ice hockey. Based on the results of a questionnaire, they reported a high degree of satisfaction after retirement among the former athletes. The survey revealed that they preferred to continue their involvement in sports, and that no negative influence was found in retirement from sports such as social death.

Similarly, on the basis of a survey of former professional women tennis players, Allison & Mayer (1988) reported that those surveyed felt a sense of freedom rather than a sense of isolation or loss along with retirement from sports, and that they had positive attitudes toward retirement. Thus, about the reasonableness of considering retirement from sports as social death. The subjects of the surveys experienced smooth transitions to second careers in coaching or private business after retirement from sports, making it difficult to apply these research results to all retired athletes.

There are some experimental studies targeting former high caliber Japanese college athletes in soccer, and track and field on the basis of

thanatological theories. These studies aimed to obtain basic attributes such as employment and income, factors regarding retirement, and living conditions after retirement through questionnaire. It is reported that there is no negative impact on Japanese athletes (Yamamoto et al., 1999a). Similar to Allison & Mayer (1988), Yamamoto et al. noted that many subjects were enjoying stable lives working as coaches or P.E. teachers after retirement. The amateur status of the subjects, however, may have influenced the results.

In general, it is assumed that applying gerontological and thanatological theories and models in studies on retirement from sports is rather inappropriate because such theories and models have not been shown to regarding sufficiently adequate to explain retirement from sports (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994).

2.2. Trends after the 1980s

As findings from gerontological and thanatological studies began showing that retirement from sports was less a special event than a part of the process of life or a transitional point, the Transitional Model widely applied in psychology and sociology began attracting attention. The Transitional Model is based on the idea that retirement is caused by individual and environmental factors, specifically, age, deterioration of athletic skill, failure to be selected, injury, and changes in attitude. The Transitional Model has been employed to apply in a wide range of studies (McPherson, 1980; Schollossberg, 1981; Coakley, 1983; Charner & Schlossberg, 1986; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993; Gordon, 1995; Toyoda & Nakagome, 1996; Ooba & Tokunaga, 1999; Shigeno, 1999; Jodai, 1999, 2005; Kubota et al., 2001).

2.2.1. Studies based on the Transitional Model

In psychology the term “transition” describes a turning point in life (Kanai, 2001). While gerontology and thanatology consider retirement from sports as a special event in life, the Transition Model considers it a less dramatic shift from one stage to another. It also considers the impact of individual and environmental factors on decisions about the timing of retirement, which also distinguishes it from gerontology and thanatology.

While some researchers saw athlete retirement as an individual issue, Coakley (1983) considered it to be a social and structural issue, and pointed out the

importance of taking age, race, gender, education, economic status, and the presence or absence of support into account. Coakley also argued that roles, activities that are not directly related to sports and the people surrounding the individual are factors that facilitate a smooth transition after retirement. This concept became the main stream in studies that followed, expanding consideration in studies from the psychological to the environment surrounding the athlete. While these studies target amateur athletes, professional athletes are generally prepared for retirement to some extent and their lives after retirement are often reasonably secure in spite of any difficulty that may be encountered at retirement. Therefore, they may not experience considerable difficulty compared with amateur athletes.

Schlosserg (1981) and Charner & Schlossberg (1986) suggested a Transitional Model that considered (1) whether the transition in role is beneficial, (2) whether the feeling at the transition is positive or negative, (3) whether the transition is active or passive, and (4) whether the transition is predicable or unpredictable. This Transitional Model was applied in many studies thereafter, including Swain (1991) who carried out a study targeting athletes.

In Japan, Yamamoto et al., (1999a) carried out survey research to clarify issues associated with retirement employing a questionnaire targeting former student athletes. Yamamoto et al., (1999b) also carried out a survey study targeting high-school soccer players to clarify the impact of certain factors on decision making by seeking factors in the process of career formation based on theories of socialization of sports. Their findings clarified that soccer players in Japan concentrate on the sport to the sacrifice of preparation for retirement. Yoshida et al., (1999) conducted a survey study targeting players at the University Games to compare the characteristics of career transition between Japanese athletes and athletes overseas.

2.2.2. Studies focusing on retirement and identity

Retirement from sports is considered to have an impact on the identity of individual athletes, and many studies have focused on this issue (Ball, 1976; McPherson, 1980; Pearson & Pantitpas, 1990; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994; Toyoda & Nakagome, 1996, 2000; Ooba & Tokunaga, 1999, 2002; Lally, 2007; Gerard & Heather, 2008; Joanne, & Gyozo, 2009). These studies employ retirement as an independent variable

and identity as a dependent variable.

Ball (1976) argued in a study on identity that because athletes put maximum effort into achieving their goals, if they fail, they feel isolated, which causes a loss of identity when they retire. Other researchers (McPherson, 1980; Pearson & Patitpas, 1990; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) argued that the adjustive behaviors athletes exhibit when they retire are significantly influenced by developmental factors, and that when career transition does not move forward smoothly, it is mainly because of socio-psychological experiences while engaged in professional sports. Taylor & Ogilvie (1994) also made a detailed examination of the factors that influenced retirement with a focus on identity, and suggested a comprehensive model that enables a clear explanation of retirement processes in place of the Transitional Model. It is suggested that because sports identity is important even after retirement, athletes cannot fully disengage themselves. These results support the studies published by Ballie (1993) and Sinclair & Orlick (1993) who considered that a period of six months to one or two years was necessary for athletes to adjust to life after retirement.

Joanne & Gyozo (2009) focused on retirement of athletes that did not go smoothly. They conducted interviews targeting eight former high school athletes who played at a competitive level. Based on these interviews, they argued that because their athletic identities were significantly influenced by coaches or team mates, it would be reasonable to assume that they were influenced by the others on their teams when they retired as well. The negative impact, it was argued, was significant. If they retire with the experience of failure, they tend to form an identity other than that associated with sports and to make completely new friends.

On the other hand, other researchers argue that retirement from sports does not cause psychological damage or have a negative impact on identity (Coakley, 1983; Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985; Gerard & Heather, 2008). Erpic, Wylleman & Zupanic (2004), for example, carried out a comparative study on the influence of factors associated with sports and non-sports utilizing the Sports Career Termination Questionnaire scale targeting Slovenian athletes at the international competition level. According to the results of correlation analysis between the factors associated with sports in the retirement process, such as competition performance, life planning, identity

derived from competition, and factors that are not associated with sports, such as age, education, reasons for retirement, there was almost no impact on positive retirement, and only a slight impact on identity when the retirement was passive. In addition, Gerard & Heather (2008) used the non-sports career transition scales to clarify the factors that make it difficult to determine new careers targeting Australian athletes at the international competition level. According to the results of correlation analysis on sports experience and decision making associated with identity and career, identity developed through sports activities showed almost no impact on decision making at the time of career transition. Those who sometimes suffered were young athletes, both male and female, with only a few opportunities to experience problems and think sufficiently about retirement.

Athletes in Japan need to shift their perception of themselves from athletes to non-athletes after retirement and during the transition to their new lives. However, this may not be easy and the transition may, in some cases, be a traumatic experience. Toyoda & Nakagome (1996) focused on the reorganization of identity and classified the process of reorganization in their psychological research study.

Ooba & Tokunaga (1999) carried out a survey to evaluate the impact of retirement on identity targeting current and former Japanese athletes. They reported that a negative image of retirement had a negative impact on the athlete's reorganization of identity. According to a study seeking to clarify the characteristics of the image of retirement targeting athletes who competed at Japan's annual National Athletic Meet, a positive attitude toward retirement was associated with interest in matters other than athletic competition, preparation for retirement and their attitude about competition, and with the presence of less inducement to retire.

2.2.3. Studies on support for retirement

Apart from sports circle, Fretz, Kluge, Ossana, and Jones & Merikangas (1989) pointed out that vocational counseling, lifelong education, and social networks have a significant impact on the process of adjustment in areas of most jobs in general. In fact, athletes actively utilize programs for retirement and one third or more of athletes were reported to have consulted with specialists (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993).

In addition, from the perspective of athletes who cannot make a smooth career transition, the

importance of carrying out empirical research regarding support for crises associated with retirement has been emphasized (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Gordon, 1995). Specifically, they suggested the importance of social support structures for athletes suffering from the psychological aspects of retirement and the result of physical injuries (Rosenfeld et al., 1989) as well as the importance of support from friends, family, and team mates (Swain, 1991).

Oglivie & Taylor (1993) argued that advance planning for life after retirement in advance is an effective measure for smooth career transition. Nevertheless, Blann (1985), Zaichkowsky (1994), and Jodai (1999, 2005) reported that many athletes had not given consideration to work after retirement.

Coakely (1983) argued that athletes had difficulty in transitioning to second careers due to a lack of preparation for work in areas other than sports or for life after retirement. Shigeno (1999) and Jodai (1999, 2005) also examined this issue in their studies targeting Japanese professional soccer players. Blinde & Greendorfer (1985) pointed out that insufficient preparation for retirement results from a lack of time and energy for planning due to excessive involvement in practice, which is rather a structural issue in the sports circle.

According to a study targeting three male and three female university students carried out by Lally (2007), it is possible to predict and prevent identity problems by reviewing the retiring individual's identity before retirement.

In response to these findings, interest in studies on programs aimed at helping elite athletes adjust to life after retirement has been increasing. Several countries, for example, have developed programs for adjustment, including the Olympic Job Opportunity Program (U.S.), the Olympic Athlete Career Center (Canada), the Australian Institute of Sport (Australia), and the Olympic Job Opportunities Program (Austria). These programs help athletes understand the importance of considering career after retirement and it fills gaps between these programs and helps them address issues related to their actual situations, such as the coach's thinking and players practice. As stated above, the National Olympic Committees (NOC) in several countries and other sports organizations have promoted the development of programs for post-retirement life with an emphasis on the importance of support provided by sports organizations, and this has resulted in an increase in studies seeking to clarify

the impact of specific assistance on career transition (Petitpas, Champagne, Danish & Murphy, 1992). Currently, researchers are discussing career transition issues with the awareness that the impact of coaches whose priority is on winning games is the most significant factor related to the efficacy of programs preparing athletes for retirement.

Based on these studies, Mochizuki & Yokoyama (2005) examined environmental development by looking at the J-League Career Support Center founded in 2002. The study involved a review of related literature survey and suggested the necessity of a thorough support structure with cooperation among industry, government, and universities. It also suggested that the sports circle needs to be open, communicate the significance of sports to industries and society, and improve the status of athletes.

2.3. Studies Targeting Professional Athletes

This study targeted 70 studies extracted from previous literature; however, only nine, or slightly more than 10% of these targeted professional athletes. The number of early studies is extremely small; namely, one study in the 1970s and two studies in the 1980s.

2.3.1. Early Studies Targeting Professional Athletes

A study by Weinberg & Around (1952) on former professional boxers is the first to aim at professional athletes. Their study examined the adjustment of former professional boxers to society and life after retirement through interviews, and clarified financial conditions and the significant impact of dependence on others regarding finances. In addition, they clarified that regrets about past lifestyle and dependence on staffs were the major causes of the deterioration of social status and decreased income, which contributed to the psychological impact of retirement.

2.3.2. Studies Targeting Professional Athletes in and after the 1980s

As professional sports have gained popularity, studies targeting professional athletes have increased; however, few studies were carried out in the 1980s. This seems to be associated with changes in the environment surrounding professional athletes since they were first allowed to compete in the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles. Since then, professional

sports have become the focus of sports activities.

As mentioned before, Allison & Meyer (1988) conducted interviews targeting former female professional tennis players. They reported that the players interviewed simply felt a slight sense of loss and isolation balanced by a greater sense of freedom from competition, and could quickly find new jobs such as in coaching, facilitating smooth career transitions, which were positive and trouble free.

On the other hand, a study carried out by Gordon (1989) targeting ten former MLB and NHL players through interviews clarified that some individuals could not forget their identity as professional athletes, others developed new identities based on negative feelings about retirement, which led to psychological maladjustment, and suggested that status as a professional athlete had a significant influence on identity and career transition.

Drahota & Eitzen (1998) carried out an experimental study entitled “The Role Exit of Professional Athletes” targeting both current and former professional athletes in a wide range of events utilizing the Role Exit Theory developed by Ebaugh (1988), who identified characteristics of the retirement processes that nurses and nuns experienced.

Role Exit Theory divided the individual processes associated with the transition from employment to retirement into four stages, clarifying the characteristics of each stage based on role theory, which holds that the individual’s role is generated along with the establishment of status. The four stages are as follows:

Stage 1: First doubt, in which the individual first experiences doubt or anxiety about continuing his or her work;

Stage 2: Seeking alternatives, in which the individual seeks an alternative career;

Stage 3: The turning point, in which the individual reaches a turning point and finds a career after physical and psychological changes; and

Stage 4: Creating the ex-role, in which the individual begins the next career, becomes known as “a former xxx,” and creates a new identity. There are some cases in which the individual’s transition to the new career is not smooth and feels regrets about past decisions and dilemmas, and this has an influence not only on the individual, but on the individual’s families and significant others in the individual’s life.

Drahota & Eitzen (1998) conducted interviews targeting professional athletes in the U.S. on the basis

of the Role Exit Theory. According to the results of interviews with a number of former professional athletes, they suggested that professional athletes experience a period in which they feel anxiety about themselves as professionals before Stage 1, which results in some athletes not actually experiencing Stage 1 (first doubts). They created a revised model which included a Pre Stage before the first stage in the Role Exit Theory. This new model has been applied in a wide range of studies.

2.3.3. Studies Targeting Professional Athletes in Japan

There were no studies in Japan on professional athletes until the early 1990s. The first experimental studies targeting professional athletes utilizing the Role-Exit Model created by Drahotka & Eitzen (1998) were conducted by Shigeno (1999) and Jodai (1999), followed by Kubota et al., (2002), Kawamura (2003), Jodai (2005), and Mizuno (2008), and focused on the retirement of Japanese professional soccer players. Kawanishi et al., (2006) applied the Role-Exit Theory to a study focusing on the retirement of Japanese professional soccer players. Shigeno (1999), Jodai (1999, 2005), and Kubota et al., (2002) clarified that Japanese professional soccer players do not go through a pre stage, but rather consider life after the retirement for the first time when they reach their turning point at Stage 3, such as the recommendation

that they retire.

Mizuno (2008) examined the stages suggested by Drahotka & Eitzen (1998) on the basis of the Career Anchor concept advocated by Schein. A career anchor is a self-image about career comprising three aspects, such as ability, desire, and sense of value, which play important roles in determining the basic reasons for selecting a career. The career anchor concept argues that clarifying what in a career is important for the individual enables him or her to form a better career (Schein, 2003). Mizuno (2008) applied this concept and reported that an individual's career anchor changes along with past career experience.

Nihei & Kikuchi (2007) targeted Japanese professional baseball and soccer players and individuals associated with sports clubs in comparative research on athlete awareness of and attitude toward retirement between athletes who received career support and those who did not. According to t-test, J-League players who had received support adjusted themselves to retirement better than professional baseball players who had not received support. The study suggested that J-League players had more anxiety about life after retirement than professional baseball players.

Although there are studies targeting both current and former professional athletes, the greater number focus on amateur athletes, with fewer studies targeting professional athletes only.

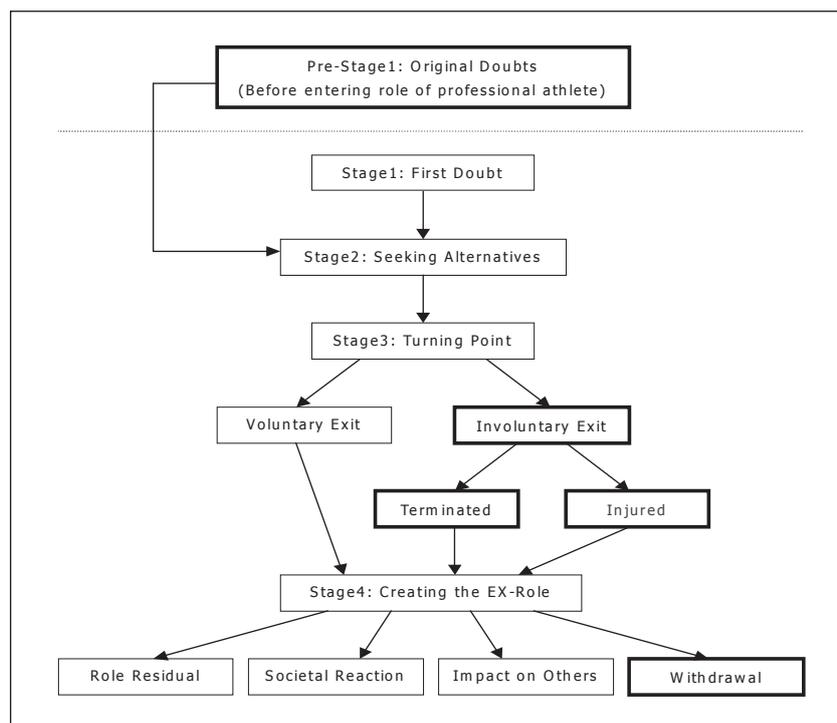


Figure 1 Role Exit Model (Drahotka & Eitzen, 1998)

2.4. Research methods Utilized in the Study of Athlete Career Transition

Research methods employed in the study of career transition are classified into three categories: quantitative analysis, such as questionnaire surveys; qualitative analysis, such as interview and observation surveys; and evaluation of the existing literature. Until now, the majority of studies are quantitative in nature.

The majority of quantitative studies are questionnaire surveys. Mihovilovic (1968) and Haerle (1975) started this type of study, which measured psychological and social influence through cross tabulations. Thereafter, most quantitative studies applied existing scales and questionnaires in the fields of psychology and sociology.

Toyoda (1999) argued that because the process of social adjustment athletes go through following retirement is very dynamic and that examining cases that include a wide range of information regarding the experiences associated with retirement would better reveal the issues that the individual confronts and better identify the psychological aspects of this transition. As a result, qualitative studies are currently considered important because they draw attention to individual differences. Therefore, this study focuses on qualitative studies.

The following qualitative studies are of note: Allison & Mayer (1988), a study targeting 20 former

female professional tennis players; Drahotka & Eitzen (1998), a study targeting former professional athletes; Shigeno (1999), Jodai (1999, 2005), and Kubota et al., (2002), studies targeting 10 or more Japanese professional soccer players; Ooba & Tokunaga (2002), a study targeting 11 amateur adult and university athletes; Toyoda & Matsuda (2004), a study targeting one former professional soccer player; Lally (2007), a study targeting three male and female university athletes; Butt & Molnar (2009), a study targeting high-school athletes playing at a competitive level through interviews. The common thread in these studies is to clarify more detailed psychological aspect of the subjects. They attempted to make clear answers through follow-up questions based on subject responses. Toyoda & Matsuda (2004) clarified the characteristics of the answers through interviews, showing that follow-up questions could draw out detailed psychological changes experienced by the subjects.

Ooba & Tokunaga (2002) conducted both questionnaires and interviews to examine the efficacy of their interviews. They showed that both revealed similar results; therefore, interview surveys were considered to be effective.

It is difficult to standardize the results of all studies that employed qualitative surveys due to the lack of subjects compared with quantitative surveys. The core problem is sampling difficulty. Ooba & Tokunaga (2002) noted that a limitation of the study was that

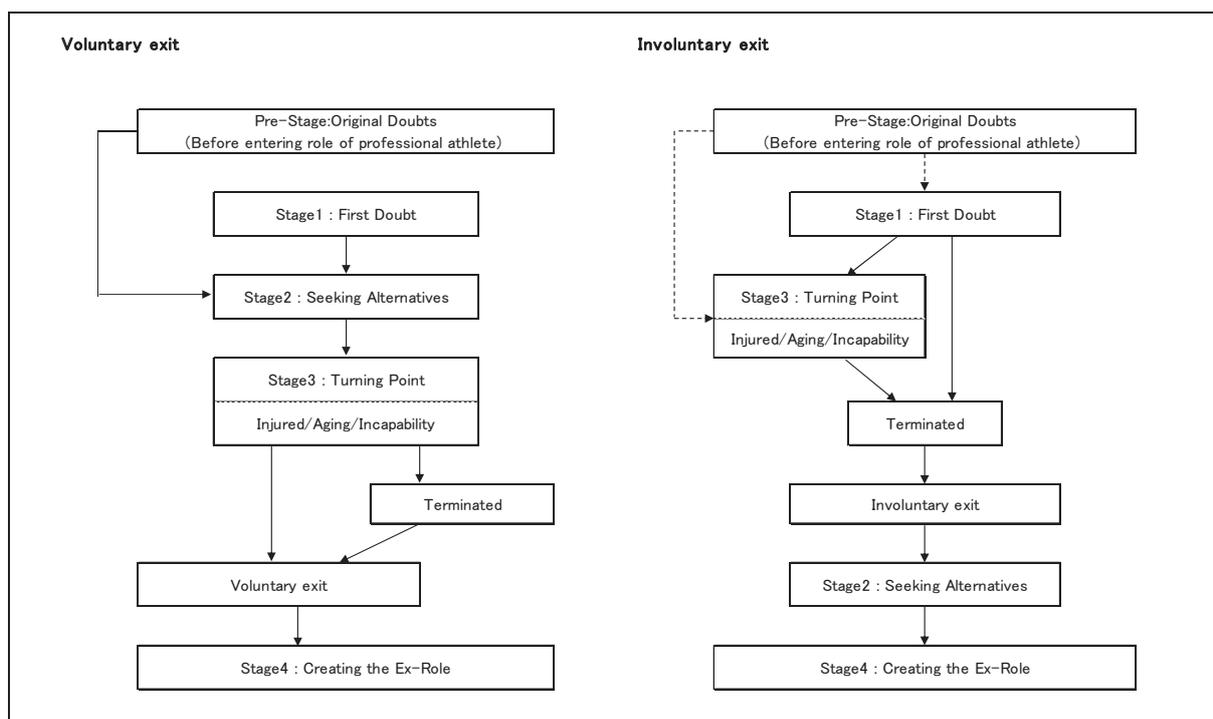


Figure 2 The Modified Role-Exit Model (Jodai, 1999)

because retirement from sports is such a complex theme, potential subjects were uncomfortable with being interviewed. Face-to-face interviews are likely to decrease anonymity compared with questionnaires, which may cause increased resistance. Surveys aiming at professional athletes may have an impact on relationships among athletes on the team and run up against issues of personal information; therefore, it may be difficult to obtain cooperation for studies.

Toyoda & Matsuda (2004) argued, on the other hand, that follow-up in qualitative surveys, which reveal inner facts indicating individual meanings, is an effective way to gain a greater and deeper understanding of individual inner facts, and therefore, that they are effective. For such cases, the snowball sampling method, in which each interviewee introduces the next, would be effective. But, it cannot be denied that the snowball sampling may cause biased sampling. In snowball sampling that the author has carried out in the past, a commonly encountered response from an interviewee when asked to introduce someone else was, "It is difficult to introduce someone because I feel responsibility for any problem that might result." As is shown in this case, the author collected cases of individuals whose financial status was rather stable, but was unable to survey former athletes whose current work is unknown although they were what the author should have focused on. As a result, sampling was biased, which prevented a description of the overall tendency of former professional athletes who retired. Therefore, to gain cooperation from such former athletes who are not satisfied with their lives will be a future issue. Most of the studies carried out overseas do not disclose sampling methods.

3. Conclusion

3.1. Characteristics

The following summarizes the content and discussion up to the previous section.

- 1) The view of retirement as a part of the process and a turning point in the athlete's life rather than as a special event, as it would be from a gerontologic or thanatologic perspective, promoted the utilization of transitional models used in sociology and psychology;
- 2) A number of studies have been published that clarify not only the career transition process and

structural characteristics, but also the impact of specific support for athletes at career transitions. Studies regarding the development of adjustment programs have moved forward;

- 3) There are no longitudinal or chronologic studies examining the career transition of athletes;
- 4) A number of studies target amateur athletes, while few target professional athletes; and
- 5) Retirement means something negative for athletes; therefore, they tend to resist participation in surveys. Survey studies aiming at targeting professional athletes create personal information protection issues and interfere with relationships with other athletes on the team; therefore, sampling remains problematic.

3.2. Future Issues

In studies on career transition, researchers initially focused on actual status, and a number of studies attempted to clarify the processes of retirement, acquiring a second career, and factors that have an impact on athletes at retirement with a focus on roles and identity. Thereafter, interest shifted to adjustment programs for elite athletes after retirement and the role of preparation before retirement for smooth career transition. Therefore, studies shifted to the examination and development of measures for retirement, and proposals for involvement in the process of retirement. Specifically, the NOCs in the U.S. and Europe have taken the initiative in the development and provision of programs to support future planning for athletes. However, while the majority of these studies are practical, they are not research studies in the strictest sense.

Since the 1980s, a number of studies on career transition for athletes have been published, 30 years' worth of studies from overseas and 20 years' worth of work in Japan. However, in spite of the fact that studies on career transitions have increased, no experimental studies carried out chronologically and longitudinally have been undertaken. It is impossible to judge whether the current programs are meaningful or not since support provided at retirement has not been examined.

The selection of subjects is important; nonetheless, the sampling in the previous studies may be problematic because they targeted subjects whose current lifestyle and past status as athletes may cause bias. They also failed to provide data on an important

segment of former athletes, which made it difficult to demonstrate overall tendencies. Therefore, the improvement of sampling methods will become an important issue for the future.

In addition, after professional athletes were allowed to participate in the Olympics in the 1980s, professional sports have become mainstream to deal with the problems of career transition; however, studies tend to focus on amateur athletes, meaning that we have few studies targeting professionals. Retirement for professional athletes means the loss of a job which is directly linked to their financial status. In this sense, retirement has a greater impact on professional athletes than it does on amateur athletes. Therefore, it is necessary to clearly classify athletes into professional and amateur status, and to carry out longitudinal experimental studies targeting professional athletes.

Professional soccer players in Japan live in a different environment from that of other athletes such as baseball players and sumo wrestlers. During the 15 years that have passed since the J-League was established, the league has become a two-division structure. In addition, the lower-division JFL and other regional leagues have been formalized under the J-league. As a result, the opportunity for soccer players has increased and has made it easier for players losing their places on J-League teams to continue their careers in the lower-division leagues. This has increased the number of players whose career transition is put off. There are also cases in which both professionals and amateurs are playing on the same teams. This does not happen in other professional sports in Japan; therefore, it is necessary to carry out studies that specifically target the sport of soccer.

The author suggests that there is a need to carry out (1) studies that clarify changes in the transition to second careers through a longitudinal examination of soccer player's career paths, (2) studies that utilize appropriate sampling methods to obtain an overall picture of the career transitions of soccer player, and (3) studies that provide a longitudinal examination of the career paths of both professional and amateur soccer players.

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