

# Well-Being in Post-Sport and Post Military Transitions: Preliminary Results

Karen Gallagher, Ph.D.

## Introduction

- Warriors and athletes represent two unique groups with all-encompassed identities – who they are is fused with what they do (Beamon, 2012; Mobbs & Bonanno, 2018)
- Similarities between these two groups isn't in how they become athletes or military servicemembers, but in the impact of leaving those identities
- Leaving an identity, the bonds, and sense of purpose bring significant struggle (Miron, 2010)
- Are there similarities in the transition experiences of these two groups?

## Objective

Examine self-report of attitudes, beliefs, and well-being in student athletes and military veterans transitioning out of their respective identity-defining professions

## Method

The protocol for this study has been approved by the Arizona State University Institutional Review Board for STUDY00010337.



## Participants

Veterans and Athletes:

- Recruited through the Pat Tillman Veterans Center or Sun Devil Athletics at ASU via Email
- 77 U.S. Military Veterans within 5 years of transition
- 40 U.S. College Student Athletes in last season of sport or already completed last season

	Student Athlete (n=40)	Military Veteran (n=77)	Group Difference
Males (%)	23 (57.5)	60 (77.9)	$\chi^2 = 5.33, p = .021^*$
Mean Age (SD)	21.55 (.90)	26.13 (2.26)	$t = -12.29, p < .001^*$
Mean GPA (SD)	3.62 (.38)	3.54 (.41)	$t = 1.09, p = .28$

Sports played by student athlete participants

Sport	Frequency	Percent
Basketball	1	2.5
Track and Field	10	25
Swimming	3	7.5
Soccer	3	7.5
Lacross	2	5
Volleyball	3	7.5
Hockey	4	10
Softball	1	2.5
Baseball	1	2.5
Diving	1	2.5
Triathlon	2	5
Gymnastics	2	5
Wrestling	1	2.5
Tennis	2	5
Football	3	7.5
Waterpolo	1	2.5



## Procedure

As part of a larger study, online consent was obtained, then an electronic questionnaire sent via email using Google Forms

Questions included:

- Demographics
- Self-Assessments
- Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale – Short Form (IUS-12)
- Ryff Positive Relations with Others subscale

## Results

Correlational analyses were used to examine the relationship demographic variables, athlete vs. Veteran status

**High Inhibitory Anxiety** (“When it is time to act, uncertainty paralyzes me”) as measured by IUS – 12 predicted **lower grade point average for both groups**

Multiple Regression Analysis

**Dependent Variable: GPA**

**Predictor Variables: Inhibitory Anxiety Score, Veteran Status**

The regression model was significant  $F(2,107) = 3.46, p = .035$

**Significant: Inhibitory Anxiety Score**  $\beta = -.226, t = -2.38, p = .019$

Not significant: Veteran Status  $\beta = -.066, t < 1$

**Veteran Status predicted lower scores in self-assessed Positive Relations With Others** as measured by the Ryff subscale

Multiple Regression Analysis

**Dependent Variable: Positive Relations with Others subscale**

**Predictor Variables: Age and Veteran Status**

The model was significant  $F(2,114) = 21.02, p < .001$

**Significant: Veteran Status**  $\beta = -.505, t = -4.15, p < .001$

Not significant: Age  $\beta = -.018, t < 1$

## Discussion

- Preliminary results provide evidence that military Veterans and elite athletes share some similarities in transition that may impact outcomes, such as grade point average
- There are some differences between Veterans and student athletes in terms of self-assessed social relationships
- Future research should explore shared outcomes between these fused-identity groups and examine supports that may benefit both groups
- What is the relationship between a better sense of social relationships and overall wellness or transition success?

## References

- Beamon, K. (2012). “I’m a Baller”: Athletic Identity Foreclosure among African-American Former Student-Athletes. *Journal of African American Studies*, 16(2), 195-208.
- Miron, P. (2010). Role identity and its implications in the athlete's personal development. *Timisoara Physical Education and Rehabilitation Journal*, 3(5), 7-12.
- Mobbs, M., & Bonanno, G. (2018). Beyond war and PTSD: The crucial role of transition stress in the lives of military veterans. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 59, 137–144. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2017.11.007>

Contact Information

Karen Gallagher, Ph.D., CCC-SLP  
Karen.Gallagher@asu.edu Twitter: @skgallager