

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF ESSENTIAL LIFE SKILLS FOR ADOLESCENT  
ELITE ATHLETES IN SOUTH AFRICA**

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**DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that “*An exploratory study of essential life skills for adolescent elite athletes in South Africa*” is my own work, that it has not been submitted, or part of it, for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

**Roger J. Woodruff**

22 March 2016

Signature.....

**Witness**



Signature..... UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

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## ABSTRACT

Pursuing a career as a professional athlete has become a viable option for talented athletes to pursue. However, in their pursuit of athletic excellence many athletes neglect their academic, work and post sport career planning. To help athletes with participation, educational, development and lifestyle issues many countries have developed athlete assistance programs. To achieve the objective of a Winning Nation and help talented South African athletes develop and perform at a higher level the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC) plans to establish a national academy system. The role of the academy system is to assist in addressing the demographics of the national teams by accelerating the development of talented athletes particularly those from the disadvantaged groups. To ensure that a holistic approach is taken towards athlete development one of the services that will be provided is life skills training. To develop a successful life skills program, it is essential to identify the important life skills to include.

### *Aim*

The aim of the study was to explore and identify the life skills necessary for inclusion in Life Skills programs in South African elite sport focusing on the development of adolescent athletes to enable them to grow up competent, healthy and reach their full potential.

### *Design*

A pure qualitative research design was employed using thematic analysis. Data was analysed through the lens of Positive Youth Development (PYD) theory. Moreover, a semi-structured interview guide, consisting of open ended questions, was developed utilizing the 5 C's of PYD as themes to facilitate the interview process. Nine current adolescent elite South African athletes, on the MacSteel Maestro's program, participated in the study. A purposive sampling procedure informed the sampling process and a thematic coding framework was developed to

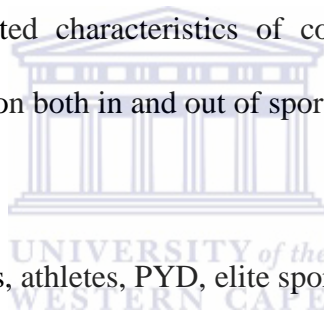
analyse the interview data.

### *Results*

Findings of the research provided a contribution to the literature in two ways. First, it provided a South African perspective of the life skills needed by elite adolescent athletes. Secondly, it identified the life skills elite adolescent South African athletes deemed important for their holistic development to include in life skills programs in South African elite sport. Time management and self - esteem / self – confidence skills were identified as the crucial life skills to be developed.

### *Conclusion*

In general it can be concluded that the participants have benefitted from being on the MMP, and that the participants exhibited characteristics of competence, confidence, character, connection and caring / compassion both in and out of sport.



**Keywords:** life skills, adolescents, athletes, PYD, elite sport, South Africa

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM STATEMENT, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

#### 1.1 Introduction

Athletes who possess effective life-skills are better able to cope with the challenges of a career outside of sport than athletes who lack life-skills (Price, 2007). The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) defines life skills as "psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (Life skills, 2003). Life skills are loosely grouped into three broad categories: cognitive skills, for analysing and using information; personal skills, for developing personal agency and managing oneself; and inter-personal skills, for communicating and interacting effectively with others" (Life skills, 2003). It is thought that participation in career development and planning programs provides athletes with an environment in which to develop a range of life skills which can be applied in situations in and outside of professional sport (Price, 2007).

The rise of professional sport has made being an athlete a viable career option for talented young athletes to pursue. However, the pressure placed on Olympic and professional athletes to achieve sporting success is such that they need to dedicate most of their time and energy to practice and competition (Aquilina, 2013). For the majority of athletes, this dedication to achieving athletic excellence is to the detriment of their education, work and career planning (Hawkins, Blann, Zaichkowsky, & Kane, 1994). Moreover, not all elite athletes earn enough money to make a living out of sport or are able rely on established support structures to assist them with career termination issues. For instance Stambulova, Stephan and Jäphag (2007) indicated that very few elite French athletes are paid enough to

make a living out of their sport. They further state that there are no support measures in place to assist the athletes after their sport career termination. Athletes also appear unwilling to develop concrete future career plans because they feel that they have enough time to do so before they have to retire (North & Lavalley, 2004). All of these factors make disengagement from elite sport difficult, especially if the athlete is not prepared or has not planned for it. Developing transferable skills in athletes is seen as one way of addressing these challenges (Aquilina, 2013).

According to Petitpas, Danish, McKelvain and Murphy (1992) assisting young athletes to understand and identify transferable skills may increase their feelings of personal competence and enable them to cope with their future transitions. Furthermore the authors assert that the reduction of anxiety over future career concerns may enable young athletes to concentrate exclusively on reaching current performance goals. It is in response to these issues and based on the view that athletes with a balanced lifestyle are more likely to achieve their sporting goals, cope better with problems and have more confidence in their future after sport, that athlete assistance programs were established (North & Lavalley, 2004). Elite athlete career assistance programs targeting junior, student, senior and retiring or retired elite athletes have been developed by sport organizations in a number of countries (Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler & Côté, 2009). The programs assist the athletes with their participation, educational development and development and lifestyle issues during and after they have left sport. In general these career assistance programs are made up of workshops, seminars or modules and presented to participants in either individual or group sessions or as a combination of the two. Examples of elite athlete assistance programs include the Challenging Athletes' Minds for Personal Success (CHAMPS)/Life Skills program for student athletes in America, the Athlete Career Education (ACE)

program in Australia and the High Performance Sport New Zealand (HPSNZ) Athlete Life Programme in New Zealand. In South Africa the MacSteel Maestro's Program (MMP) is currently the only elite athlete assistance program offering accredited life skills training modules for elite athletes.

In summary, for many athletes the dedication it takes to become an elite athlete is often to the detriment of their education, work and career planning. Research suggests that career development and planning programs, which includes life skills training, can assist athletes in coping with challenges in their professional and personal lives as well as prepare them for life after sport.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

To develop a successful life skills program, it is essential to decide which life skills are important to include. In general there is insufficient research data on the content requirements of life skills programs to support elite adolescent athletes. According to Jones and Lavalley (2009) research has yet to uncover the life skills needs of adolescents who are participating in sport. Furthermore, as most of the research studies regarding life skills and life skills programs (Jones & Lavalley, 2009; Price, 2007; Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1993) have been conducted outside South African borders, the findings may not accurately reflect the views of our elite adolescent athletes. Research is therefore needed which explores and identifies the life skills that elite adolescent athletes deem to be important to enable them to fulfil their potential. The results could be used to inform the various role players in South African elite sport of the life skills that should be included in a life skills program for elite adolescent athletes. This, in turn, could assist them in the development of

life skills policy guidelines and the standardisation of protocols and services for elite adolescent athletes.

Athletes suddenly start to earn large salaries and because they have not been taught how to manage their financial affairs by either their clubs or business managers they spend their money recklessly without any thought of the future (Landheer & Rashavha, 2007). Current and ex-players, sport scientists and team officials including former Bafana Bafana striker Shaun Bartlett and Dr. Mamasilo Lichaba, who has worked with Banyana Banyana and Supersport United, are of the opinion that life skills programs are needed (Landheer & Rashavha, 2007). Furthermore, the thesis study by Manzini (2012) found that South African football players felt that life skills training programs are a need. The players felt that life skills training would improve their performance on the field; help them handle fame and the media; teach them new skills like motivational speaking and encourage players to get an education which, in turn, would benefit their clubs. Their views are supported by the findings of the evaluation of a life skills program developed and implemented in 2008 to uplift professional soccer players in South Africa, Project Ithuseng. According to Draper, Forbes, Taylor and Lambert (2012) the participants found the program to be beneficial because they could apply what they had learnt to other areas of their lives. Significantly, the authors strongly recommended that life skill training should be offered to academy teams and younger players (under 24 years old).

Moreover, the thesis study by Marthinus (2007) found that South African athletes do not think about their retirement from sport and are taken by surprise when the reality of retirement is imminent. In addition, the author asserted that there are no career termination programs in place and that athletes lacked support from their sports' national association

and South Africa's national Olympic committee to facilitate their transition out of elite sport. Similarly, the thesis study by Groenewald (2015) found that the national swimming federation also did not provide nationally co-ordinated sport and academic support services for swimmers.

Sport and Recreation South Africa (SRSA) through the National Sports and Recreation Plan (NSRP) is focused on increasing participation in sport and recreation (Active Nation) and improving the national and international performances of South African athletes (Winning Nation). To achieve these objectives and help talented South African athletes develop and perform at a higher level a range of enablers need to be in place, one of them being an academy system. The academy system will be comprised of provincial, regional as well as mobile satellite academies. These academies will be tasked with developing sporting talent from schools and sport clubs. The objective of the academy system is to assist in addressing the demographics of the national teams by accelerating the development of talented athletes particularly those from the disadvantaged groups. To ensure that a holistic approach is taken towards athlete development one of the services that will be provided is life skills training (SRSA, 2012).

In South Africa the academy system is run the by South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC). It was established in 2004 to coordinate high performance sport in South Africa (DSR, 2012). It's key responsibilities are the development, implementation and monitoring of the high performance programme for our national athletes and the selection and preparation of all South African teams taking part in multi-sports events (SRSA, 2012). The SASCOC document on the strategic framework and policy guidelines for South African sports academies states that SASCOC has the



mandate and responsibility to provide strategic direction and guidelines on various matters including life-skills and career opportunities required by athletes and officials (SASCOC, 2012). However, at present, there is no clarity regarding the existence of a national plan, policy guidelines or standardised policy for the provision of elite athlete life skills programs. This was established through personal correspondence via e-mail with the National Academy Systems Manager at SASCOC, Ms. Yoliswa Lumka. In response to questions regarding life skills training to be provided to athletes as part of the proposed academy system Ms. Lumka only stated that “the provinces govern their own life skills programmes depending on the need of their athletes. The athletes spend most of their time at their home base, and that is where the majority of their support services are presented” (Lumka, 2014). This was corroborated by The Western Cape Sports Academy (WECSA) manager who, in a personal interview, indicated that the provincial sport academies are responsible for providing their own life skills program for elite athletes (Weitz, 2014). He added that WECSA makes use of the life skills program offered by the Education, Training and Development department at SSISA as they are accredited by the Culture, Art, Tourism, Hospitality, Sports Sector Education & Training Authority (CATHSSETA).

The purpose of this study therefore was to identify the important life skills necessary for inclusion in a life skills program for elite adolescent South African athletes to enable them to fulfil their potential. Furthermore, the findings could be used to inform role players in the development of life skills policy guidelines and the standardisation of protocols and services for elite adolescent athletes.

### **1.3 Research Question**

What are the important life skills deemed necessary to include in a life skills program for adolescent elite athletes in South Africa?

### **1.4 Aim of Study**

The aim of the study is to explore and identify the important life skills necessary for inclusion in life skills programs in South African elite sport, focusing on the development of adolescent athletes to enable them to grow up competent, healthy and reach their full potential.

### **1.5 Objectives of Study**

The study objectives sets the scene and identifies the key tasks that needs to be undertaken (Gratton & Jones, 2004). The objectives of the research are to:

1. To explore how elite adolescent South African athletes perceive their development whilst participating in a current life skills program.
2. To explore the perspectives of elite adolescent South African athletes on the successful aspects of the current life skills program.
3. To explore the perspectives of elite adolescent South African athletes on the limitations of the current life skills program.
4. To explore and identify the life skills current elite adolescent South African athletes deem important for their holistic development to include in life skills programs.
5. To inform role players in South African elite sport of the life skills that should be included in a life skills program for elite adolescent athletes.

## 1.6 Summary of Research Design

The following is a brief summary of the study research design. It provides the reader with an overview of the relationship between the purpose of this study and the research approach and methods adopted. A more detailed discussion of the research methods used in this study is presented in Chapter 3.

To effectively explore and identify the life skills needs of elite adolescent athletes a research method was employed which would best allow the participants to describe their experiences in their own words. Accordingly, a qualitative approach has been adopted. The findings of this study has been interpreted through the lens of Positive Youth Development (PYD) theory utilizing the 5C's model advocated by Lerner et al., 2005. The 5Cs model of PYD emphasizes the strength of adolescents and sees youth as resources to be developed (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). The model suggests that positive development occurs when the strengths of youth are allied with positive resources (Lerner et al, 2005). The positive development that results can be operationalized by the 5Cs namely Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). The 5C's model was used to identify the life skills elite adolescent athletes deem to be important and necessary to include in a life skills program for adolescent athletes in elite South African sport.

In this study, nine elite adolescent South African athletes were interviewed to identify the important life skills necessary for inclusion in a life skills program for elite adolescent athletes. A purposive sampling procedure informed the sampling process. Face-to-face interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide to facilitate data collection. Data was analysed using a thematic analysis.

## **1.7 Definition of Terms**

### **1.7.1 Academy System**

The academy system refers to a range of institutions in South Africa that will be part of a national unified, integrated approach with the aim of developing sporting talent at different levels (NSRP, 2012).

### **1.7.2 Adolescence**

Adolescence is the developmental period of transition from childhood to adulthood involving biological, cognitive and socioemotional changes beginning at around 10 years of age and ending in the late teens (Santrock, 2010).

### **1.7.3 Athlete Career Assistance Program**

According to Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee (2004) athlete career assistance programs are developed by governing bodies and sport institutions to assist athletes to achieve their sport related goals and develop a professional career outside of sport. They are primarily managed national sport bodies, national Olympic Committees, sport federations, academic institutions and independent organizations linked to sport settings.

### **1.7.4 Elite Athlete**

According to Myburg (cited in MacArthur & North, 2005) elite athletes are athletes who compete at national or international level in their chosen sport (MacArthur & North, 2005).

### **1.7.5 Life Skills**

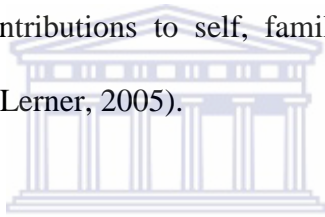
Essential skills that makes life easier and increases the prospect of individuals realising their potential (Rooth, 2000).

### **1.7.6 National Sport and Recreation Plan**

The National Sport and Recreation Plan (NSRP) is a roadmap outlining how the sport and recreation policy framework, as set out in the White Paper, will be implemented (NSRP, 2012).

### **1.7.7 Positive Youth Development**

Positive youth development (PYD) is a strength-based conception of adolescence and is conceptualized through the Five Cs (competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring). PYD suggests that young people will thrive if they have mutually beneficial relations with people and institutions of their social world and be on the way to a hopeful future marked by positive contributions to self, family, community, and civil society (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2005).



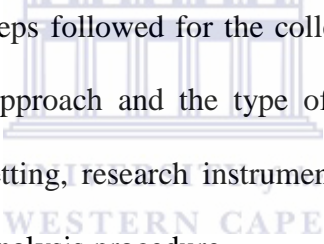
### **1.7.8 White Paper on Sport and Recreation**

The White Paper is the Government's policy document regarding sport and recreation in the Republic of South Africa. It sets out the vision, strategic objectives, policy directives, outcomes and outputs for promoting and providing sport and recreation (SRSA, 2012).

## **1.8 Outline of Research Report**

Chapter One outlines the rationale and background for the research study. A statement of the problem, purpose statement, research question, aims, objectives, summary of the research design and definition of terms are provided followed by the outline of the research report. The chapter concludes with a summary and layout of the next chapter.

Chapter Two reviews the literature focusing on athlete assistance programs, the use of sport to develop life skills in adolescents and looks at three athlete lifestyle or career development programs. In this chapter literature pertaining to life skills for athletes and its development will be examined. The literature is divided into three themes: a) athlete transitions/retirement b) athlete assistance programs and c) sport for development will be provided. Athlete transition literature highlights the evolution of life skills programs for athletes. The athlete assistance program segment provides an overview of programs that have been developed to help athletes off the field. The section on sport for development outlines how social development projects use sport to address a range of social issues. It also describes the theoretical framework of the study.



Chapter Three describes the steps followed for the collection and analysis of the data. It explains the methodological approach and the type of research design employed. The chapter details the research setting, research instrument, population and sampling, data collection procedure and data analysis procedure.

Chapter Four presents the results of the study. The participant responses to the semi-structured questionnaire is analysed relative to the predetermined as well as new emerging themes. Data pertaining to the research findings regarding life skills for elite adolescent athletes are detailed. The findings are then discussed and reflected on in relation to the literature and stated research objectives.

Chapter Five is the final chapter and provides the concluding arguments and recommendations arising from the study. Here, the key findings of the study will be highlighted are discussed to establish whether the aims and objectives of the study were

met. The chapter concludes by offering recommendations to role players, in South African, on a way forward with regards to the development and implementation of life skills programs for elite adolescent South African athletes.

## **1.9 Chapter Conclusion**

The chapter introduced the research topic to be investigated namely the life skills necessary for inclusion in life skills programs for elite adolescent athletes in South African to enable them to grow up competent, healthy and reach their full potential. The objective was to present the background to the study, an overview of the literature, a statement of the problem, the aims and objectives, the delimitations, clarification of concepts and a summary of the research design and methodology before concluding with a content summary of the rest of the thesis. The following chapter focuses on reviews of literature apropos athlete assistance programs, the use of sport to develop life skills in adolescents and provides an overview of three athlete lifestyle or career development programs. It also describes the theoretical framework used in the research study.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides the literature related to life skills needs of elite adolescent athletes. However there is a limited amount of literature that explores which life skills elite adolescent athletes need and which life skills are the most important for them to learn. The majority of the articles focussed on retired elite athletes, using life skills to curb anti-social adolescent behaviour, using sport to develop the life skills of adolescents and teaching life skills to athletes to help them cope with challenges on and off the field. Athlete termination and transition research, which can be seen as the precursor to career assistance programs and of which life skills training is a component, has only gained the attention of researchers over the last thirty years (Price, 2007). In addition, athlete termination and transition studies initially began with research into athlete retirement before the phenomenon underwent a variety of shifts culminating in its current focus (Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler, & Cote, 2009). Consequently this section concentrates on two sectors that have relevance to the research topic namely; a) sport-in-development and b) athlete assistance. The sport-in-development sector operates at grassroots level while athlete assistance programs are aimed at athletes participating in elite sport. Both sectors provide life skills training to its participants. Furthermore, a large percentage of the articles referenced in this thesis is older than ten years. The dated articles were included as the information they possess is still valuable, the articles provide context and because there are a limited number of current articles.



The chapter begins by defining life skills. This is followed by a discussion of the sport-in-development and athlete assistance sectors. The section on sport-in-development begins with a brief explanation of the sector which includes an outline of the most common life skill intervention programs used around the world to teach life skills. It then provides a summary of three sport-in-development programs operating in South Africa. Literature on athlete assistance programs chronicles its development over the past six decades while the overview of the selected programs outlines program content and provides a comparative overview. Finally, the theoretical framework adopted for the study is explained.

## 2.2 Definition of Life Skills

‘Life Skills’ is a general term and its significance to the individual depends on their life circumstances, culture, beliefs, age and geographic location (Skills You Need, 2014). There are a variety of definitions of the term life skills. According to Rooth (2000) life skills are crucial skills that make our lives easier and increase the possibility that we realise our potential and become productively involved in the community. The Skills You Need website defines life skills as skills that we need which allows us to better manage our lives and achieve our full potential (Life Skills, 2011). Moreover Cronin (1996) defines life skills as “those skills or tasks that contribute to the successful, independent functioning of an individual in adulthood” (p. 54).

According to Dlst (1993) the World Health Organization suggests that there are a core set of life skills, relevant across cultures, at the heart of initiatives that promotes health and wellbeing in children and adolescents. These core set of skills are: **decision making** – helps us deal constructively with decisions about our lives, **problem solving** – helps us deal constructively with problems in our lives, **creative thinking** – contributes to decision

making and problem solving enabling us to explore the available alternatives and consequences of our actions or non-action, **critical thinking** – the ability to analyze information and experiences in objectively, **effective communication** – enables us to express ourselves verbally and non-verbally appropriate to the culture and situation, **interpersonal relationship skills** – enables us to relate positively with people we interact with, **self-awareness** – includes our recognition of ourselves, our character, strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes, **empathy** – the ability to imagine what life is like for somebody else even in an unfamiliar situation, **coping with emotions** - being able to recognize emotions in ourselves and others, being aware of how emotions influences behaviour and being able to respond appropriately, **coping with stress** – recognising the sources of stress in our lives, recognising how it affects us and acting in ways that helps to control our levels of stress. Specific life skills that have been identified include: AIDS prevention, budgeting skills, communication, conflict management, decision making skills, goal-setting, leadership skills, planning, problem solving, resiliency, study skills, stress management, substance abuse awareness, time management, job search skills, parenting skills, presentation skills, teamwork and writing and numeracy skills. These skills can be learned through experience and practice or developed through life skills education. According to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1997) life skills education enhances coping resources by promoting personal and social competence and confidence. However research still has to uncover the life skills needs of adolescent athletes who are participating in sport (Jones & Lavalley, 2009).

### **2.3 Sport-in-development**

Sport-in-development programs have been used by government and community organizations around the world to address a range of social issues including drug and

alcohol abuse, crime prevention, combating HIV/AIDS, the empowerment of women and to develop life skills. According to Coalter (2007) sport-in-development programs can be divided into two broad approaches, **sport plus** which emphasizes increased participation and the development of sporting skills and **plus sport** which gives primacy to social, educational and health programmes above the development of sport. Examples of sport-in-development programs include initiatives such as Project ALERT and Midnight Basketball in the United States of America, Mathare Youth Sport Association in Kenya and Go Sisters in Zambia.

### **2.3.1 Plus Sport Programs**

The focus of plus sport programs is on non-sport outcomes such as HIV/AIDS education or behaviour change (Biermann, 2011). Plus sport programmes aim to increase participation in social and health programs using sport as a means to an end (Coalter, 2013). The sport environment is seen as a training ground for adolescent development primarily due to its potential to act as a vehicle for enhancing development (Brunelle, Danish & Forneris, 2007). Sport provides the hook to entice the target audience, youth, into a program. As a result, sport-based intervention programs have been developed based on the belief that sport participation provides fertile ground for youth to develop life skills and attitudes that have value in adult life (Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte, & Jones, 2005).

Two of the most commonly used life skill intervention programs found in the literature are the Going for the Goal (GOAL) and Sport United to Promote Education and Recreation (SUPER) programs. They have been applied to an array of sports including football, golf, rugby and volleyball by various organizations around the world to develop or enhance the life skills of adolescents. Studies evaluating the effectiveness of plus sport programs in

developing life skills in adolescents have been conducted by various researchers (Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish & Theodorakis, 2005; Goudas, Dermitzaki, Leondari & Danish, 2006; Brunelle, Danish & Forneris, 2007; Goudas & Giannoudis, 2008). These studies concluded that it is possible to use plus sport programs to develop life skills like problem solving, communication skills, and goal setting to promote positive youth development.

The following section provides an overview of two life skill intervention programs used internationally as well as three **plus sport** programs operating in South Africa. These programs aim to develop or enhance the life skills of young people or adolescents through sport. The two life skills intervention programs to be described are the GOAL and Super programs. The GOAL program utilizes high school students, who are seen to be role models for younger students, as student leaders to teach life skills to younger at-risk students (O'Hearn & Gatz, 2002). While the SUPER program, which is based on the GOAL program, is a peer-led series of 18 modules taught like a sports clinic (Danish, Forneris, & Wallace, 2005). The three South African **plus sport** programs referred to are Kicking for Peace, Amandla EduFootball and Girls & Football SA. Kicking for Peace is a grassroots initiative using sport to develop skills to help build a peaceful society (Keim, 2012). Similarly, Amandla EduFootball provides educational football programs to at risk children and youth in residential care and disadvantaged communities in Cape Town. While The Girls and Football South Africa (GFSA) initiative works exclusively with girls and young women to empower them through sport (Lemmen, 2014).

### 2.4.1 Going for the Goal (GOAL)

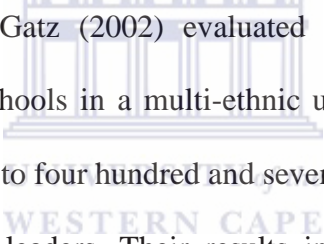
The Going for the Goal (GOAL) life skills program was developed by the Life Skills Centre at Virginia Commonwealth University. According to Danish (1997) the program is comprised of ten one - hour workshop sessions taught to high school students by their peers, high school aged adolescents, who are seen to be role models for the younger students. The workshops are delivered as follows:

- 1) **Dare to Dream** – The program and leaders are first introduced. Participants then learn to dream about their future and identify the goal keepers (people who are role models for them) and goal busters (people who impede them from a positive future) in their lives;
- 2) **Setting Goals** - They learn the importance of setting reachable goals and how to distinguish between goals that are attainable and those which are not;
- 3) **Making Your Goal Reachable** – Applying what was learned in the previous workshop participants write down a reachable goal to be attained within two months;
- 4) **Making a Goal Ladder** – They learn how to plan to reach their goal. The steps required to complete their goals as well as target dates by which time each step will be completed are identified;
- 5) **Roadblocks to Reaching Goals** – They are taught how various roadblocks (e.g. drug abuse, violence and lack of self-confidence) can prevent them from reaching their goals;
- 6) **Overcoming Roadblocks** – Participants learn a problem solving strategy called STAR (Stop and chill out; Think of all your choices; Anticipate consequences of each choice; and Respond with the best choice);
- 7) **Seeking Help From Others** – They learn the importance of asking for help from family members, very close friends, good or older friends and role models who can help them reach their goals;

8) **Rebounds and Rewards** - The participants learn how to rebound when a goal or step becomes too difficult to reach and have to identify a rebound plan if they are having trouble reaching their goal. They are also asked to share their accomplishments to date and describe how they plan to reward themselves;

9) **Identifying and Building on Your Strengths** – Participants identify their personal strengths including those learned through the program and describe how these strengths can be developed. They then identify an area in which they want to improve and list how this can be accomplished, and;

10) **Going for Your Goal** – Participants play “Know-It-All-Baseball” a game which enables them to integrate and apply what they have learned in the previous workshops.



The study by O’Hearn and Gatz (2002) evaluated the GOAL program which was implemented at two middle schools in a multi-ethnic urban community in Los Angeles. The program was administered to four hundred and seventy nine middle school students by forty six high school student leaders. Their results indicated that there were gains in knowledge of the skills being taught and an improvement in problem-solving skills while the program leaders increased their knowledge of life skills. Similarly Forneris, Danish and Scott (2007) examined the impact of GOAL on the acquisition of skills of twenty adolescents in the areas of setting goals, solving problems and seeking social support. The researchers reported that the participants learned how to set goals, solve problems and find the appropriate type of social support. The study by Goudas, Dermitzaki, Leondari and Danish (2006) also used the GOAL program to examine the effectiveness of a life skills training program taught to seventy three seventh grade pupils as part of physical education lessons. The results indicated that the participants who received the program demonstrated enhanced knowledge about life skills and higher self-beliefs for personal goal setting.

### **2.4.2 SUPER Program**

The premise of the Super program is that participation in sport has the potential to enhance personal development. Participants learn the physical skills related to a specific sport, the life skills related to sports in general and play the sport (Danish, Forneris, & Wallace, 2005). “Participants are taught to use a variety of skills to improve their athletic performance, some physical and some mental, to recognize situations both in and out of sports requiring these skills, and then to apply them in sport and non-sport settings” (Danish, Forneris & Wallace, 2005: p.50). The eighteen program modules are taught like sports clinics and are presented under the following topics; developing a team, dare to dream, setting goals (part 1 – part 3), making your goal reachable, making a goal ladder, identifying and overcoming roadblocks to reaching goals, seeking help from others, using positive self-talk, learning to relax, managing emotions, developing a healthy lifestyle, appreciating differences, having confidence and courage, learning to focus on your personal performance, identifying and building on your strengths and goal setting for life (Danish et al., 2005).

According to Danish, Fazio, Nellen and Owens (2002) the goals of the SUPER program are for each participant to leave understanding that (a) there is a relationship between performance excellence in sport and personal excellence in life, (b) mental skills can enhance sport and personal performance and (c) there are effective and accessible student-athlete role models. They also state that the skills which are taught varies depending on the sport and the environment and includes basic life skills like identifying sport dreams, turning dreams into goals, setting reachable goals, developing plans to reach goals, identifying and overcoming goal roadblocks, coaching oneself by managing emotions, believing in oneself and developing a support team. Furthermore, participants are taught to

use these skills to improve athletic performance, and to recognize situations in and out of sport where the skills are required and apply them. The program has been applied to an array of sports such including football, golf, rugby and volleyball.

Two separate studies by Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish and Theodorakis (2005), using an abbreviated form of SUPER, examined the effectiveness of a life skills program for Greek youth between ten and twelve years of age who participated in sport clubs. The participants in the first study were forty female volleyball players and while thirty two male soccer players participated in the second study. Their findings supported the effectiveness of a life skills program that integrates sport and life-skills training. Goudas and Giannoudis' (2008) study evaluated an abbreviated form of SUPER taught in a physical education setting to grade six and eight pupils. They found the program to be effective in teaching life skills in conjunction with sport skills. Furthermore they opined that their results proved that the program was effective for teaching life skills in middle and high school students. Additional research conducted by Brunelle, Danish and Forneris (2007) to determine the impact of a life skills and community service program on adolescents' prosocial values indicated that the program had a positive impact on both aspects. Their findings also suggested that the SUPER program is able to teach life skills to adolescents in a sport environment.

### **2.4.3 Kicking for Peace**

The Kicking for Peace soccer program was initiated by the Western Cape Network for Community and Peace Development and involves local communities, the University of the Western Cape, local government departments and the City of Cape Town (Keim, 2008). It brings together boys and girls from volatile communities to play soccer and learn life skills



like conflict transformation skills, communication, problem solving, leadership, community development and peace building skills and provides a healthy alternative to drugs and crime (Keim, 2012).

Using sport as a tool the aim of the program is to promote peace, development and transformation through recreational soccer training and tournaments for boys and girls in formerly segregated communities in the Western Cape where there is a dearth of extramural programs or recreational activities (Keim, 2008). The objectives of Kicking for Peace are:

- Provide soccer training for boys and girls
- Facilitate coaching clinics and training workshops
- Link sport skills with accredited life-skills training
- Promote health and well-being in local communities by including workshops on tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, obesity, nutrition and other pertinent topics
- Empower and train youth and parents in coaching, administration and life skills
- Promote mutual understanding, joy of the game, team-building, and fair play
- Contribute to social transformation and peace-building by sponsoring soccer tournaments within a multicultural context, bringing together young people and their parents from formerly segregated communities (Keim, 2008).

The Kicking for Peace project is active in eleven communities where over 350 young people are involved in football tournaments which provides an alternative to gangs, boredom and drug use while experiencing teamwork and interacting with peers from different communities (Keim, 2012). Evaluation research indicated that the participants got to know and learn to respect each other while they also discovered positive things about

themselves and strengthened their own self-respect, respect for others, trust, love, dedication and perseverance (Keim, 2008). The evaluation process was conducted by a research team which included civil society organizations, community members, academics and youth using focus groups, interviews, questionnaires and observation to collect the data (Keim, 2008).

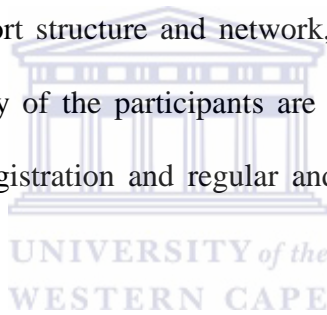
#### **2.4.4 AMANDLA EduFootball**

AMANDLA EduFootball is a non-profit organisation based in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. The program was created to meet the needs of children in childcare facilities and care homes. It was founded in 2007 by a German national completing his one year community service at a children's home in the township. During his time at the home he noticed that young people were not engaged in any healthy or active pursuits and that a large number of boys and girls in childcare facilities were being drawn into gangs, crime, drugs or became parents themselves due to a lack of regular and consistent after school and holiday programs (Voysey, 2014). To address this need he started a football team at the home providing football coaching as well homework assistance.

Due to the success of the first season the project was expanded to include ten residential childcare facilities around Cape Town, bringing together children from different cultures but similar backgrounds on a weekly basis. To date there are over thirty AMANDLA registered childcare facilities in Cape Town accommodating between ten and two hundred young people who often have no exposure to sports programs and team events due to a lack of funding and basic resources such as transport (Voysey, 2014). Amandla EduFootball youth are also currently involved in various programs such as developmental

football leagues, youth leadership programmes, life skill programs and the crime prevention initiatives (Voysey, 2014).

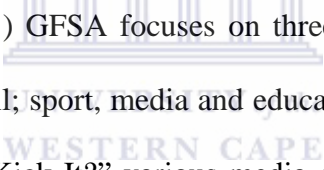
The participants play in a co-educational soccer league and are involved in a life-skills program where they are taught skills such as communication skills, teamwork, social awareness, discipline, commitment and responsibility (Voysey, 2014). To this end they have developed their own fifty session life skills program called The Golden Thread. The program connects football with life skills. Sessions are conducted once a week and have identified football and life skills outcomes. According to Voysey (2014) the program curriculum has been divided into 3 phases; **my position** – deals with who they are; **my team** – deals with their support structure and network, while **my game** –deals with the future. At present the majority of the participants are male however there is a drive to understand barriers for the registration and regular and consistent attendance of female participants (Voysey, 2014).



For now, evaluating the impact of the program has proven to be quite challenging (Voysey, 2014). However, that is not to say that they have not been effective. Crime statistics, accessed from the police by Amandla EduFootball, indicated a decrease in violent crime within a six hundred metre radius from the football facility as opposed to the rest of Khayelitsha (Voysey, 2014). While it can be inferred that a decrease in crime in the area is due to the program until a proper study is conducted or a monitoring and evaluation program is implemented the claim will remain anecdotal.

#### 2.4.5 Girls and Football SA

The goal of GFSA is to encourage girls in South Africa to play football as a source of empowerment and to use the media to raise awareness on the importance of sport for women (Lintmeijer, 2011). “At GFSA we tackle a broad range of topics that relate to girls, and that relate to the age group we work with (at the moment ten to fourteen years old, but sometimes we work with girls fourteen to eighteen years of age): peer pressure, health, puberty, friendship, role models, gender challenges, etcetera” (Lemmen, 2014). In a country with high incident rates of HIV/Aids, teen pregnancy and violence against girls and women GFSA provides a platform for them to develop using football as a vehicle for education and as a source of empowerment to equip them with a strong sense of body ownership and promote self-esteem (Girls and Football, SA, 2014).

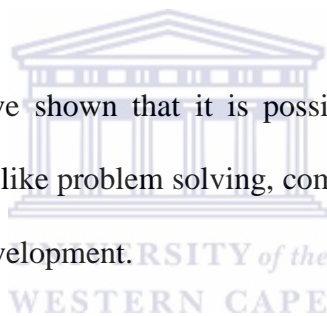


According to Lintmeijer (2011) GFSA focuses on three areas to raise awareness on the importance of women’s football; sport, media and education. **Media** - through their award winning documentary “Can I Kick It?” various media channels and social media, GFSA raises awareness on women’s sport in South Africa both regionally and globally. **Education** - as mobile technology campaigns have proved to be accessible, cost efficient, effective and given the fact that the majority of people in South Africa have mobile phones GFSA has launched a text messaging health campaign, aimed at reaching as many girls in South Africa as possible. The goal of the program is to provide girls and young women with accurate information otherwise not available to them. **Sport** - two hour workshops are conducted on a weekly basis starting in a classroom setting and ending on the football field. The workshops are designated as a safe place where the participants can be themselves and free to ask questions. During the football session the games are tailored to

build self-esteem and other life skills with the objective of building trust and helping participants become more open towards the volunteers and each other.

At GFSA, the project manager indicated that she has seen the girls becoming more confident while their communication skills have also improved (Lemmen, 2014). According to Lintmeijer (2011) GFSA had a positive impact on the girls in terms of life skill building as they seemed to have learned most of the life skills that the organization aimed for and inspired them to have dreams and ambitions. She too noted an increase in confidence on the part of the participants. This was garnered from interviews she had conducted with twenty nine of the participants.

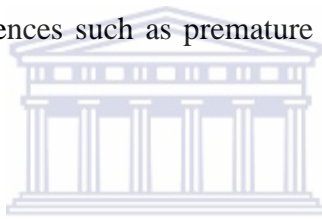
In summary these studies have shown that it is possible to use sport based life skills programs to develop life skills like problem solving, communication skills and goal setting and promote positive youth development.



## **2.5 Life skills as part of Athlete Career Assistance Programs for Athletes**

Life skills is one of a variety of multidisciplinary services included in career assistance programs to help athletes cope with the demands of being an elite athlete. Life-skills training programs are one way of supporting athletes to deal with the many transitions that they are expected to face in both in life and when performing (Anderson, 2009). According to Schlossberg (1981) a transition is an event or non-event that changes how an individual perceives them-self or their environment requiring a change in assumptions or behaviour that leads to either to growth or deterioration. The term was originally used to describe the process of athlete retirement from high-level competitive and professional sport (Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee, 2004).

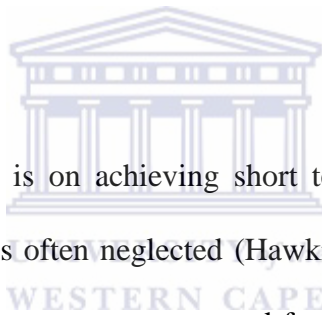
Athlete career transitions can be either normative or non-normative (Stambulova et al, 2009). Normative transitions are fairly predictable and includes events like the beginning of sport specialization, the transition from junior to senior level, and the transition from amateur to professional sports (Stambulova et al., 2009). Non-normative transitions do not occur in a set plan or schedule but are the results of important events that take place in an individual's life (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). This could be in the form of a season-ending injury, the loss of a personal coach, or being dropped from the team unexpectedly. Being able to cope successfully with transitions in and outside sport allows athletes to live a long and successful life in sport and adjust effectively to life after sport (Stambulova et al, 2009). Alternatively they state that not being able to cope with a transition is often followed by negative consequences such as premature dropout from sport and substance abuse.



Athlete career transition research was the catalyst for the development of athlete career assistance programs. Athlete career assistance programs were developed to assist athletes with their participation, developmental, lifestyle, educational and vocational development issues. According to Wylleman et al., (1999) athlete career assistance programs were designed to help resolve the conflict athletes faced in having to choose between pursuing their sporting and post-athletic career goals. For example, in Australia, career assistance programs like the Athlete Career Education (ACE) Program, the Life Skills for Elite Athletes Program (SportsLEAP) and the Olympic Job Opportunities Program (OJOP) have been developed for elite-amateur athletes (Lavallee, Grove, & Gordon, 1997).

Most athletes retire either voluntarily or involuntarily during their mid to late 20's and are required to move into another focus area requiring different skills and competencies to the

ones they have learned and perfected (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). Retirement from work is associated with the end of a working career, involves financial and lifestyle planning and an understanding of its demands and challenges (Price, 2007). Retirement from sport is unlike retirement from work in that the athlete retiring from sport still has many productive career years ahead of them (Murphy, 1995). For some athletes the process of adjustment to the event of retirement can prove to be a difficult and disruptive process due to the age, income, and ego involvement of the individual athletes (Baillie & Danish, 1992). Some of the difficulties that athletes encounter during their transition out of sport include missing the social aspect of sport, work or school pressure, finances, loss of status, lack of confidence, injury and feeling incompetent in activities other than sport (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993).



Since an athletes' main focus is on achieving short term success education, work and career planning beyond sport is often neglected (Hawkins, Blann, Zaichkowsky & Kane, 1994). Consequently most athletes are not prepared for or lack the resources to deal with retirement and as a result they experience trauma (Anderson, 2009). Life skill programs are one way of supporting athletes in dealing with the many transitions that they are expected to face in both in life and when performing (Anderson, 2009). The following studies are cases in point. The study by Goddard (2004) stated that the student athletes found value in the way the Challenging Athletes Minds for Personal Success (CHAMPS)/Life Skills program supported and prepared them for their futures. Similarly Mateos, Torregrosa and Cruz (2010) indicated that participants were satisfied with the Tutorsport (TS) athlete career assistance program especially as it helped them with their career making decisions. While Bobridge, Gordon, Walker and Thompson (2003) found that youth-aged male cricketers improved the career goal decidedness, awareness of career

options, confidence in decision-making ability, awareness of career options and awareness of a need for a career outside sport of the participants.

## **2.6 Career Assistance Programs for Athletes**

As stated previously, athlete career assistance programs have been developed to support athletes making the transition from an athletic career to life after retirement (Anderson & Morris as cited in Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee, 2004). Governing bodies and sport institutions in various countries have developed life skills programs to support athletes with sport career transitions, especially athlete retirement. Athlete career assistance programs are a combination of workshops, seminars, educational modules, individual counselling, and/or a referral network providing individualized and/or group-oriented support services to athletes regarding their athletic participation, developmental and lifestyle issues, and educational and vocational development (Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee, 2004). According to Wylleman, Lavallee and Alfermann (1999) sports career assistance programs should provide athletes with (a) clinical guidance or counselling mainly in the form of educational modules which are preventive in nature (i.e., to optimize the athletes' skills and resources to cope with transitions); and (b) skills and coping resources for transitions specific to the athletic career (e.g., retirement from competitive sports), as well as transitions occurring in athletes' non-athletic spheres of life but which do affect the development of the athletic career (e.g., transitions in the scholastic / academic career).

Retirement is a point of transition from an activity where there has been a commitment of time and energy and a role identification that can happen at any stage in an individual's life (Baillie & Danish, 1992). Retirement from work is associated with the end of a working



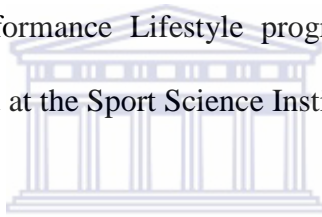
career, involves financial and lifestyle planning and an understanding of its demands and challenges (Price, 2007). Retirement from sport is unlike retirement from work in that the athlete retiring from sport still has many productive career years ahead of them (Murphy, 1995). For some athletes the process of adjustment to the event of retirement can prove to be a difficult and disruptive process due to the age, income, and ego involvement of the individual athletes (Baillie & Danish, 1992). Difficulties that athletes encounter during their transition out of sport include missing the social aspect of sport, work or school pressure, finances, loss of status, lack of confidence, injury and feeling incompetent in activities other than sport (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993).

Career termination research, in particular how athletes coped after leaving elite sport, gained traction during the 1970's in response to reports of distress experienced by retired athletes (Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee, 2004). For example the studies by Mihovilovic (1968) and Hill and Lowe (1974) indicated that dysfunctional responses by athletes to career termination included alcohol abuse, neglect of personal hygiene, attempted suicide and identity confusion. Moreover Mihovilovic (1968) stated that athletes found the retirement process to be painful, marked by feelings of frustration and conflict especially if they did not have another career or activity to fall back on. Similarly Werthner and Orlick (1986) determined that the majority of the athletes faced some degree of difficulty when they transitioned out of sport.

Contrary to the findings of Mihovilovic (1968) the process of retirement from elite sport was found to be not as traumatic as first thought. According to Coakley (1983) retirement from competitive sport involves new opportunities and the potential for growth and should not be seen as a problem or source of personal trauma. While the studies by Allison and

Meyer (1988) and Sinclair and Orlick (1993) indicated that athletes did not find retirement from competitive sport to be traumatic and that the change was positive. Consequently, as it was found that retired athletes do function in society, a re-evaluation of the phenomenon led researchers to recommend that retirement not be seen as a singular event but part of a process and one of a number of transitional phases occurring during the course of an athletes' career (Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee, 2004).

The following is an overview of four athlete career assistance programs offering life skills training programs for elite athletes: the ACE program in Australia, the High Performance Sport New Zealand (HPSNZ) Athlete Life Programme in New Zealand, the English Institute of Sport' (EIS) Performance Lifestyle program and the Macsteel Maestro's program (MMP) headquartered at the Sport Science Institute in Cape Town.

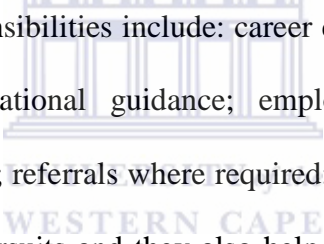


### **2.6.1 National Athlete Career and Education (ACE) program**

The ACE program was introduced in Australia at the Victorian Institute of Sport in 1990 and the National Athlete Career and Education (ACE) Program was implemented in Australia in 1995. It was formed due to concerns that Australia's elite athletes were missing out on essential life-skill development in the pursuit of sporting excellence, and that their transition out of sport was often traumatic (Australian Sports Commission, 2014).

Every year more than three thousand elite athletes are eligible to access the program and are assisted by qualified staff located in each state and territory. Only athletes involved in a national senior squad or on scholarship with the Australian Institute of Sport are eligible for the program. It is funded by the Australian and state / territory governments, managed

by the Australian Sports Commission and is delivered through the Australian Institute of Sport and state and territory institutes and academies of sport (Australian Sports Commission, 2014). A scholarship provides an athlete with access to elite level coaching, sports science and sports medicine services and appropriate national and international competition. The National ACE program works in co-operation with these areas to provide athletes with a fully integrated approach to life-skill and sport development (Australian Sports Commission, 2014). The objective of the ACE program is to provide a nationally consistent program to assist athletes with their educational, vocational and personal development while they are pursuing and achieving excellence in sport (Australian Sports Commission, 2014).



The ACE advisers' core responsibilities include: career counseling and planning; personal development programs; educational guidance; employment preparation; transitional support; online service support; referrals where required; assistance to manage the balance between sporting and other pursuits and they also help athletes make the transition from elite sport to retirement and life after sport. To ensure that they understand the needs of each athlete and the sport as a whole, the ACE personnel liaise closely with coaches and sports science and sports medicine staff. This ensures that ACE personnel are involved in the long and short term planning process of each sport enabling them to understand the commitments required of their athletes so that they can best advise them on the most suitable planning for life skill development (Australian Sports Commission, 2014).

### **2.6.2 Performance Lifestyle Program**

The English Institute of Sport (EIS) Performance Lifestyle program (PLP), formerly known as Ace UK, is a personalised support service designed to help each athlete create

the unique environment necessary for their success. It is available to athletes on the World Class Performance Programme (WCPP) and those nominated by their Home Country Institutes (UK Sport, 2014). The WCPP has been running since 1997 and covers all the summer Olympic, Paralympic as well as the high-performing winter Olympic sports and operates at two levels, podium and potential podium. The podium level supports athletes with realistic medal winning capabilities at the next Olympic/Paralympic Games. The potential podium level supports athletes whose performances suggest that they have realistic medal winning capabilities for 2020, as well as newly funded sports demonstrating the ability to be competitive by 2020 (UK Sport, 2014).

The PLP is delivered by 20 trained and accredited athlete advisors providing support to over 1000 athletes giving them the necessary skills to cope with the special demands of being an elite performer and to prepare them for their life after sport (English Institute of Sport, 2010). The advisors work closely with coaches and support specialists as part of an integrated team to minimise potential concerns, conflicts and distractions. They support athletes with time management, budgeting and finance, dealing with the media, sponsorship and negotiation/conflict management. Advisors also provide advice to athletes on finding suitable jobs and deciding on a future career which includes help finding a job to supplement income that fits around the athletes training demands, work placements, or planning for a career after sport. Athletes can arrange to have confidential individual sessions with athlete advisers based at sports institute sites throughout the UK, or attend squad and regionally organised multi-sport workshops. Sessions with advisors can take place either 1:1 or as a workshop to a squad, the latter which may involve the athlete's support network (coaches and parents). As confidentiality is paramount in building rapport

and a relationship between adviser and athlete information is only shared if the athlete gives their permission (UK Sport, 2014).

### **2.6.3 Athlete Life Programme**

Sport New Zealand, previously Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC), is responsible for running sport and recreation in New Zealand. It is funded by appropriations voted for by the New Zealand Parliament and profits from the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board (Sport New Zealand, 2014). High Performance Sport New Zealand (HPSNZ) was launched as a subsidiary of Sport New Zealand to focus on elite athletes and ensure that they are as prepared as they can be when they arrive at the start line.

HPSNZ's Athlete Life Programme is a customized support program which helps to create the unique high performance environment necessary for success. The program assists athletes with short and long-term planning and decision-making and focuses on a holistic approach to improving performance (High Performance Sport New Zealand, 2014). The Athlete Life Advisors work closely with athletes, coaches and national sports organizations and are also able to put athletes in touch with an agreed provider network through High Performance Sport NZ. The programme also utilizes an established external network of advisors to assist with career, employment, education, sponsorship, financial planning and media issues (High Performance Sport New Zealand, 2014).

### **2.6.4 MACSTEEL Maestros programme**

The MACSTEEL Maestros Programme (MMP) was founded in 2001 to increase the capacity of sport stars to be the masters of their own future by equipping them with the skills to be successful inside and outside of competition during and after their sporting

careers. Central to the programme is the holistic approach to athlete development with mentoring and monitoring at all levels. The program provides athletes with the following; a full medical assessment and assistance, total fitness evaluation, effective training programs, access to fitness center, dietary advice, injury rehabilitation services, educational and career advice, formal life skills workshops, informal mentoring as well as ongoing feedback (Siljeur, 2014). The program is based at the Sport Science Institute of South Africa and operates regional centres in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, Port Elizabeth, East London, Bloemfontein and Potchefstroom.

According to Siljeur (2014) the MMP has evolved to focus on three distinct target groups; the individual outreach program, the group program and the elite individual program. **The individual outreach program** provides an environment in which young, talented and financially disadvantaged athletes can receive guidance to realize their full potential. The program mentally prepares athletes for competition in the international arena and also concentrates on their physical abilities and personal growth. Long-term, the goal is to develop potential stars into world-class athletes who are able to compete and excel at the highest level while coping with the pressures of such a lifestyle. **The group program** depends on the athlete's specific needs and can provide both physiological and life skills modules or just focus on the latter. Groups needing assistance are identified by their federations and the co-ordinator, in conjunction with the players and administrators, set up modules that can be run over a period of days, weeks or months. Experts in various fields are called upon to facilitate the modules. **The elite individual program** concentrates on top class athletes who need specific attention on a one-on-one basis. The modules are based on a needs analysis involving the athlete, administrators and various service

providers. The modules range from stress management and media training to substance abuse and many other life skills components (Siljeur, 2014).

## **2.7 Comparative overview of the life skills training provided by the Ace, Performance Lifestyle, Athlete Life and the MacSteel Maestro's programs.**

A comparative overview of the four athlete lifestyle development programs (ACE, Performance Lifestyle, Athlete Life and the MMP) indicated that their primary goal is the holistic development of elite athletes of which athletes' life skills development is a big part. The programs are designed to provide support to athletes in key areas; personal development, career management and financial management and are comprised of a variety of components e.g. decision making, stress management, time management, media training and career planning. The content of all four programs are also similar. Similarities in content between the ACE and Performance Lifestyle programs, can partly be explained by the fact that up until February 2004 the Performance Lifestyle program had been known as Ace UK as it was used under licence by UK Sport since 1999 (Horler, 2004). As athletes require different skills to help them cope, they all design bespoke program to suit the athletes' specific needs.

However, while there are similarities, differences in the budgets, athlete numbers, eligibility and the program delivery are evident particularly where the MMP is concerned. The Ace, Athlete Lifestyle and Performance Lifestyle program are all funded by their respective governments unlike the MMP which is sponsored by a private company. The government sponsored programs therefore have more money to spend on athlete services. For example according to John Steele, the UK Sport Chief Executive, UK Sport would invest close to £900,000 a year into Performance Lifestyle as part of the preparation for the

London 2012 Games (Langley, 2009). This enables them to service more athletes than the MMP. At present the ACE program services over three thousand athletes while the Performance Lifestyle and Athlete Lifestyle programs service more than one thousand and five hundred athletes respectively. The MMP on the other hand has eighty athletes on the program.

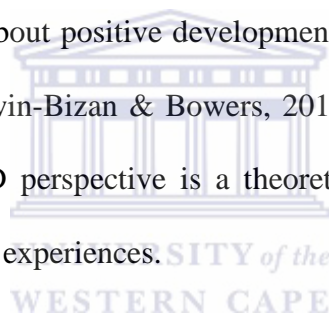
With regards to athlete eligibility, the MMP services financially disadvantaged athletes who are ranked in the top five nationally, or part of the South African team and between ages of fourteen and nineteen years of age. The other three programs work with elite athletes regardless of their financial circumstances. The Athlete Lifestyle program can be accessed by athletes on the on the World Class Performance Programme and those nominated by their Home Country Institute (English Institute of Sport, 2010). The amount of funding they receive enables them to employ trained and qualified advisors. Ace has twenty two athlete advisers, Athlete Lifestyle has sixteen athlete advisers and Performance Lifestyle has twenty advisors. The MMP has eight mentors (two are full-time), of these eight mentors three are psychologists, one is a counsellor, three have a background in athlete management and one is an academy manager (Siljeur, 2014). Athletes are on the MMP for three years after which they move on to the alumni program. The alumni program has no year limit but offers limited services to the athletes due to the limited budget. They also have to maintain their elite status within their sports and be in an educational institution or working (Siljeur, 2014). Athletes can access the Ace program as long as they are on scholarship with the AIS or any state institute or academy of sport which could be anywhere from one to fifteen years (Price, 2014). In the U.K. athletes who are on the World Class Programme in Olympic and Paralympic sports receive Performance Lifestyle support for as long as they are on program and for a further six months as they



transition off it (Mitchell, 2014). Finally, the Athlete Life Programme currently caters for four hundred and forty two carded athletes, serviced by seven full time and eight part time advisors, who receive support (even if they are de-carded or retire) until they have successfully transitioned out of the program (Stanley, 2014).

## **2.8 Theoretical Framework**

The research makes use of PYD theory to achieve the objectives of the study. The study objectives sets the scene and identifies the key tasks that needs to be undertaken (Gratton & Jones, 2004). Like life skills programs, the PYD theory focuses on developing young people who are safe, happy, moral and fully engaged in life. The PYD perspective frames most of the current research about positive development across the period of adolescence (Lerner, von Eye, Lerner, Lewin-Bizan & Bowers, 2010). According to Turnnidge, Côté and Hancock (2014) the PYD perspective is a theoretical framework that can enhance understanding of youths' sport experiences.

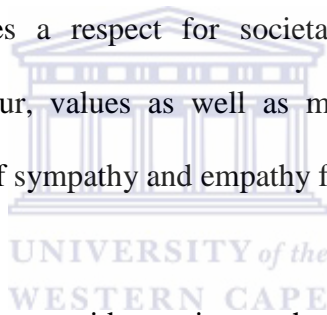


In this study the 5C's model of PYD theory provides a lens through which to explore and identify the life skills elite adolescent South African athletes deem to be important. The 5C's model was not used as point of reference against which the data was tested but rather applied to inform the approach in which the semi-structured interview guide were constructed and used to conduct the interviews with elite adolescent athletes. As the 5C's model of PYD theory will provide a lens through which to analyse the data a table is proposed. The table categorizes the life skills topic covered by the MMP opposite the corresponding C's of the 5C's model of PYD and will be used to evaluate data obtained from the participant interviews. The table, table 2.1, can be found on page 43. According to Vo and Park (2009) frameworks like the 5C's guide researchers and practitioners in

understanding the process of PYD and the effectiveness of community interventions to promote PYD. Furthermore they indicate that the 5C's is one of the most cited models within developmental literature and used by both researchers and practitioners in youth development programs.

The theory of PYD is a positive approach to young people's development during adolescence, focusing on the talents, strengths and potential of the individual (Armour, Sandford & Duncombe, 2013). It is a way to view development, rather than a specific construct, and is a generic term referring to ways in which children and adolescents can accrue developmental experiences through their involvement in organized activities (Holt & Neely, 2011). The theory of PYD, which is derived from the Developmental Systems Theory, stresses that positive youth development emerges when the plasticity, potential for systematic change in structure and function of human development, is aligned with developmental assets (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas & Lerner, 2005). This perspective is a shift from the deficit model, which saw adolescence as a stressful period where adolescents needed to be taught how to avoid and diminish negative behaviour, to a positive model where young people are seen as resources to be developed (Jones & Lavalley, 2009). PYD has a set of principles that has to be integrated into support programs for adolescents. These principles enable them to grow up competent, healthy and reach their full potential. These principles are: 1) an emphasis on positive and healthy outcomes; 2) strategies that are aimed to include all youth; 3) a long-term commitment to youth development strategies; 4) the involvement of the greater community; 5) collaboration between agencies and community groups and 6) that youth are included as active participants and equal partners in any youth development initiative (Dotterweich, 2006).

The 5C's model of PYD proposes five core indicators of positive youth development namely; competence, confidence, connection, character and caring (Jones, Dunn, Holt, Sullivan & Bloom, 2011). According to Lerner, et al., (2005) these indicators can be defined as follows: **competence** is the positive view of one's ability to function and act effectively in specific areas including social, academic, cognitive and vocational. Social competence relates to interpersonal skills (e.g., conflict resolution), cognitive competence pertains to cognitive abilities (e.g., decision making), school grades, attendance, and test scores are part of academic competence while vocational competence relates to work habits, career choice explorations including entrepreneurship; **confidence** refers to a sense of self-worth; **connection** refers to having positive bonds with people and social institutions; **character** denotes a respect for societal and cultural rules, possessing standards for correct behaviour, values as well as morals and integrity while **caring** reflects an individuals' sense of sympathy and empathy for others.



Youth development programs provide settings where relationships form, there are opportunities for growth and development occurs (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). One of PYD's main goals is to involve youth in productive activities that build on their existing strengths and abilities (Turnnidge, Cote & Hancock, 2014). These activities provides opportunities, learning experiences, and support that promotes characteristics of PYD and thriving, helping youth become active producers of their own positive development (Ramey & Rose-Krasnor, 2012). Moreover, Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak and Hawkins (2004) determined that positive youth development programs were effective in promoting positive youth behaviour outcomes including problem solving, interpersonal skills and self-control as well as preventing youth problem behaviours such as drug and alcohol use, violence and high-risk sexual behaviour.


In addition to the physical benefits, it is also supposed that participation in sport can improve mental health and psychological well-being, address aspects of social exclusion as well as contribute to community development and social cohesion (Coalter, 2007). Sport programs are among the most popular activities for boys and girls and the reason why youth sport programs represent a significant socialization opportunity (Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish, & Theodorakis, 2005). Research on the effects of sport on positive youth development has been conducted by various researchers. For instance Fraser-Thomas, Cote, and Deakin (2005) found that organized sport has the potential to play a significant role in contributing to youths' positive development. While Eccles, Barber, Stone and Hunt (2003) suggested that participation in extracurricular activities during the high school years provided protection from involvement in risky behaviours and promoted academic performance. Likewise, Bailey (2006) found that physical education and sport in schools contributes to the development of both the children and the educational systems. Moreover, Martinek and Hellison (1997) found that sport or physical activity programs in and outside of the school can address the whole person and teach values like goal-setting, teamwork and conflict resolution. Furthermore, Holt, Sehn, Spence, Newton and Ball (2012) reported positive outcomes in terms of social connection and empathy with peers which are consistent with the 5Cs constructs of caring/compassion and connection related to the PYD. Consequently, the sport context is uniquely positioned to foster PYD (Gano-Overway, Newton, Magyar, Fry, Kim & Guivernau, 2009).

In summary, sport development programs provide a setting and opportunities for youth to grow and develop. At the same time, PYD theory models have been developed to address and promote youth success. The PYD 5C's model does not only focus on content knowledge and specific skills but encourages a holistic view of development by taking the

whole person within society into account (Luke, Stein, Kessler, & Dierking, 2007). According to Lerner et al. (2011) the Cs of the 5C's model of PYD is a means to operationalize the developmental characteristics that youth need to become successful and contribute to society. As such the 5C's model is appropriate to for exploring and identifying the effects of a life skills program on the participants.



Table 2.1: 5C's of PYD definitions and corresponding MMP life skills topics. (Derived from correspondence with Taylor (2015) and Lerner et al., 2005: p.23)

<u>5 C's of PYD and Definitions</u>	<u>Associated MMP Life Skill</u>
<p><b><u>Competence:</u></b>            Positive view of one's actions in domain specific areas including social, academic, cognitive, and vocational. Social competence pertains to interpersonal skills (e.g., conflict resolution). Cognitive competence pertains to cognitive abilities (e.g., decision making).            School grades, attendance, and test scores are part of academic competence. Vocational competence involves work habits and career choice explorations, including entrepreneurship.</p> 	Assertiveness Career guidance Conflict management Communication Contracts and agents Decision making Employment skills Etiquette Financial skills Goal setting Leadership and followership Media training Mental skills Nutrition Presentation skills Problem solving Sexual health Servicing sponsors Social networking Social skills Taxation Teamwork Time management Touring skills Using technology
<p><b><u>Confidence:</u></b>            An internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy; one's global self-regard, as opposed to domain specific beliefs.</p>	Self confidence Self esteem
<p><b><u>Connection:</u></b>            Positive bonds with people and institutions that are reflected in bidirectional exchanges between the individual and peers, family, school, and community in which both parties contribute to the relationship.</p>	Forming relationships Social responsibility
<p><b><u>Character:</u></b>            Respect for societal and cultural rules, possession of standards for correct behaviours, a sense of right and wrong (morality), and integrity.</p>	Corruption in sport Doping in sport Harassment Respecting differences Substance abuse Taking responsibility Values and Ethics
<p><b><u>Caring:</u></b>            A sense of sympathy and empathy for others.</p>	Social responsibility

## 2.9 Chapter Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to provide a review of the literature concerning life skills for elite adolescent athletes. Over the years athletes have encountered issues with managing their athlete and personal lifestyles especially their transition out of elite sport. To assist them, sports institutions in various countries developed career assistance programs including life skills training, to help athletes with their participation, developmental and lifestyle issues as well as their educational development. Life skills training forms an important element of youth development programs as it assists with the holistic development of the participant. An examination of the literature revealed a deficiency of research data on the content requirements of life skills programs to support elite adolescent athletes. The bulk of the articles pertaining to athletes and life skills focuses on two areas namely sport-in-development and athlete assistance programs. The overview of the career assistance programs outlined their programs content and described the similarities and differences between them while the review of athlete assistance programs chronicled its development over the past six decades. The following chapter focuses on the research methodology used for data collection and analysis to determine the life skills needs of elite adolescent athletes.

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The current chapter presents the research methodology used for data collection and analysis. The reason for employing this approach is explained. The research design, research setting, research instrument, population and sampling and data collection procedure is presented while the data analysis process is also described. Validity, trustworthiness and ethical issues relating to this study are also discussed.

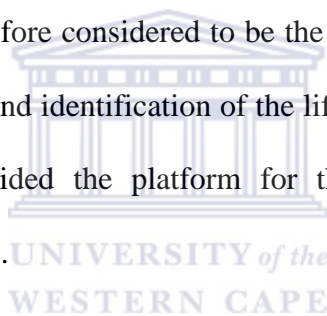
#### **3.2 Research Design**

This research is an exploratory study of the life skills needs of elite adolescent South African athletes. According to Gratton and Jones (2010) exploratory research is conducted when very little or no knowledge of the phenomenon is available. The study employed a pure qualitative research design. Pure research explores a particular concept, or issue, without regard for a specific problem, to gain a better understanding of the overall concepts (Gratton & Jones, 2010). According to Punch (1998) qualitative methods are the best way of getting the insider's perspective of the meanings people attach to things and events and therefore can be used to study the lived experience of people. While Kidd (2002) is of the view that qualitative research methods has the ability to access in-depth personal experience and meaning, cultural diversity, contextual factors, theory/ hypothesis generation and elaboration, rare cases/ conditions, and exploration of a topic. Moreover, Gratton and Jones (2010) stated that the need to understand the underlying experiences, feelings and emotions related to behaviour has led to qualitative research becoming increasingly important within sports studies.



A semi-structured interview guide was developed to facilitate the collection of data. Semi-structured interviews allows themes to emerge that may not have surfaced from a more structured format enabling the subjects to reveal insights into their attitudes and behaviour that may have not been readily apparent (Gratton & Jones, 2004). A purposive sampling procedure informed the sampling process. Purposive sampling allows for identification of the specific individuals who have the information needed related to the research question (Blankenship, 2010). A thematic coding framework was developed to analyse the interview data. The thematic analysis method is used to identify, analyse and report themes within data as well as organise and describe the data in rich detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A qualitative approach is therefore considered to be the most appropriate for this study as it allowed for the exploration and identification of the life skills needed by elite adolescent athletes. Furthermore it provided the platform for the participants to describe their experiences in their own words.



### **3.3 Research Setting**

The respondents in this study were based in three different cities. Aisha, Janet, Kim and Thami (pseudonyms) were based in Cape Town, Khaya, Mandisi and Rania (pseudonyms) were based in Johannesburg while Andile and Nelisiwe (pseudonyms) were based in Durban (See Table 4.1, pg. 59).

According to Gratton and Jones (2010) the location of the interview is important and needs to take place where the interviewee is comfortable answering questions, relatively private so that there will be no bias from the presence of others and free from high levels of background noise. The location for the Cape Town interviews was the MMP head office

based at the Sport Science Institute in Newlands. The room designated for the MacSteel Maestro's athletes was made available for each of the interviews. While the room is enclosed and private there is the potential for noise disruption as it is situated next to a training area utilized by other athletes. The interviewer was necessitated on one occasion, during the interview with Thami, to pause the interview in order to close a window due to the noise levels outside. The setting for the interviews with the Johannesburg based athletes was the MacSteel Maestro's regional office based at the University of Johannesburg. Like in Cape Town, the room that is designated for use by MacSteel Maestro's was made available for the interviews. This venue was enclosed and private.

Of the two interviews conducted with the Durban based athletes, one was conducted at the regional office while the second interview was conducted at the gymnasium where the athlete trains. The interview with Nelisiwe was conducted at the Newton Agency, a sports agency whose venue doubles as the MMP regional office. An office was provided to conduct the interview. While enclosed the office was not totally quiet as office noise could be heard during the interview process. However, this did not have any effect on the interview. The interview with Andile was conducted at the gymnasium where he trains. Andile stays outside the city of Durban, and had not been to the Newton Agency offices. Coming to the regional meant that he would have to travel by taxi as there was no other means for him to get to the venue. The MacSteel Maestro's manager decided that it would be better to conduct the interview at the gymnasium where he trains as he was too young to travel to by taxi unaccompanied. Prior to the interview date the MacSteel Maestro's manager arranged with the gymnasium manager to use an office at the venue. However on arrival the gymnasium manager could not be found and the original venue was locked. A second venue was provided. This venue was not enclosed and doubled as a rest room for

the gymnasium staff leading to a number of interruptions. Noise from the practicing gymnasts also affected the transcription of the interviews as there were occasions where it was hard to make out what was said. Furthermore all of the interviews were conducted in English. And while English was not the home language for some of the participants it did not prove to be a limitation as all of them understood and spoke English.

### **3.4 Research Instrument**

For the purpose of this study, a semi-structured interview guide was developed to facilitate the interview process for the adolescent participants. Semi-structured interviews allow considerable leeway for questions to be adapted to suit the respondent (Martin & Winters, 1998). This ensured that the participants had a better understanding of the research question. Semi-structured interviews have a predetermined list of topics to cover however the sequence or manner in which the questions are asked are not specified but arise from a natural conversational style (Sanders, 2010). Life skills and positive youth development literature was consulted to inform the interview guide. The list of questions used in each semi-structured interview in this study can be found in *Appendix C*. The questions acted as a guideline and were not created to encourage pre-determined responses, but rather to ensure that the information obtained to ensure that the information obtained from the participants was relevant to the focus of this study.

The guide comprised of opening, introductory, key and closing questions. Opening questions were of a demographic nature (e.g., age, sporting code, number of years on the program) to help put the participant at ease. Introductory questions introduced the general topic of discussion and provided the participant with the chance to reflect on their experience of the life skills program. The types of questions asked were; “what they

understood life skills to be?"; "which aspects of the program they found beneficial?"; "which aspects of the program they felt could be improved upon?"; "which life skills should be added or deleted from the program?"). Key questions focused the discussion on the needs of adolescent athletes in different life domains. Types of questions asked were; "which life skills adolescent athletes need for sport?"; "which life skills adolescent athletes need outside sport?"; "which life skills do adolescent athletes need to prepare them for retirement from sport?"; "which life skills do they think are the most important for their current sporting career and in their personal lives?". Closing questions brought the discussion to an end, and ensured that the participants had adequate opportunity to talk about issues they felt were relevant. The interview guide included open ended questions about their experiences of the current life skills program utilizing the 5C's of PYD as themes. While coding the data, ideas that occurred were written down in as much detail as possible. According to Punch (1998) during the data analysis process it is a good idea to make use of memos as it assists the researcher to think, make decisions and interpret while analysing data. Atlas.ti 7.5.6 data analysis software assisted the researcher in analysing the data.

### **3.5 Population and Sampling**

The study population were current elite adolescent South African athletes who had been part of the MMP for at least one year. At the time of the study there were eighty two athletes aged between fourteen and twenty two years, based at eight regional centres.

Initially, to ensure that athletes from a variety of sporting codes and diverse backgrounds were included in the study, the MMP Athlete Service Manager identified the regional centres where there would be enough athletes who met the criteria. Consequently three

regional centres, Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg, out of eight were identified. Once identified, the mentors (regional service managers) were contacted to notify them of the study and provide them with the study details.

The original intention was to purposively select twelve athletes, two male and two female athletes from each of the three selected regional centres, to form the sample of the study. Athletes in this study were purposively selected based on their age, gender, race and length of time on the program. For the purpose of the study male and female athletes between the ages of sixteen and nineteen years were selected to participate in this study. In purposive sampling individuals are chosen for a particular purpose for example they are “typical” of a group or represent a diverse perspective on a particular issue (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). This was based on the age range of adolescence provided by the National Department of Health (Department of Health, 2012). It was felt that athletes who have been on the program for a year would have had experience of a life skills program and therefore able to provide rich data. However the mentors were only able to identify nine athletes, four male and five female athletes to form the sample.

### **3.5.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

Inclusion criteria refers to the attributes required of potential participants for inclusion in the research whereas exclusive criteria refers to the attributes of potential participants which would make them unsuitable for inclusion (Sanders, 2010). For this study the inclusion and exclusion criteria included the following:

- The study was limited to athletes on the MACSTEEL Maestro’s Life Skills program.

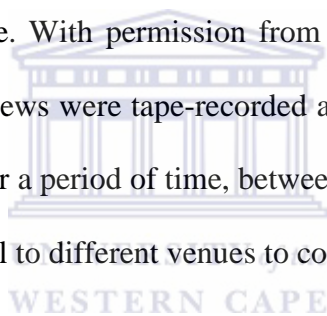
- Only athletes between the ages of 16 and 19 years were approached to participate in the study.
- The study only included athletes who had been on the program for one year as they had the experience of a life skills program and consequently better understood the concept of life skills.
- The study only included athletes from three of the eight regional centres.
- Athletes from a variety of sporting codes were chosen to ensure as that more than one code was covered.
- The athletes were from financially disadvantaged families.

### **3.6 Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher was given the regional service manager / mentors' contact details as they would facilitate the participant identification process. The mentors initially identified potential respondents and informed them of the aims and objectives of the study. The mentors then informed the athletes' parents and/or guardians of the study and requested their consent for them to participate. Once they had consented, the mentors approached the athletes. The respective mentors then provided the researcher with the details of the athletes who had agreed to participate after which they liaised to arrange for a suitable date to conduct the interviews.

Interviews were scheduled with the athletes at a time suitable for them and held at the regional office at which they were based as the setting was familiar to them and a place where they felt comfortable. This also ensured that the interviews were kept confidential as they were not scheduled with participants at the same time if more than one athlete from the same region happened to be selected.

Before commencing each interview, the researcher adhered to the same protocol; the participants were briefed about the study, informed of the aims and objectives of the study, what procedures would be followed and also informed that their participation would be completely voluntary. They were then invited to sign the consent form. The researcher then engaged the participants in informal conversation for a few minutes in an attempt to establish rapport and to encourage a relaxed mood. Although the researcher attempted to ask each question in the same order to ensure consistency, the order of introductory and key questions were changed at times to support the direction or flow of the interview. Prior to finishing each interview, the researcher asked each participant whether they wished to add any further information or detail that they felt relevant to the topic which had not been covered in the interview guide. With permission from the participants and their parents and/or guardians all the interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. The interviews were conducted over a period of time, between August and November 2014 and required the researcher to travel to different venues to conduct the interviews.



### **3.7 Data Analysis**

The study employed a thematic analysis approach to analyse the data. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting themes within data and can be used within different theoretical frameworks as it is not joined to any of them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis method is used to identify, analyse and report themes within data as well as organise and describe the data in rich detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data was analysed through the lens of the 5C's model of PYD theory as described in chapter two. A set of codes were developed using predefined codes and those that emerged from the data. Predefined codes included the 5C model indicators of PYD namely; Confidence, Competence, Character, Connection and Caring.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim from the audio recordings. A verbatim record of the interview facilitates data analysis and brings the researcher closer to their data (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). After the transcription process the researcher thoroughly read through all the transcripts several times in an attempt to get familiarised with the data. The text was then coded by extracting words or phrases related to each of the specific pre-determined themes and grouping them together. While coding the data, ideas that occurred were written down in as much detail as possible. The memos were written down directly onto the transcripts and assisted the researcher in identifying areas appropriate for the discussion section of the study. According to Punch (1998) during the data analysis process it is a good idea to make use of memos as it assists the researcher to think, make decisions and interpret while analysing data. The coded data was then reviewed to ensure its validity in relation to its grouped theme and to confirm that it accurately reflected the theme. The grouped themes were then combined into a narrative summary. This narrative summary aimed to reflect the experiences of the participants. The categories were later used to identify any relationship between the collected data and then refer back to literature in order to build a valid argument.

### **3.8 Validity and Trustworthiness**

The validity of a research study is the extent to which its conclusions can be generalized to other contexts (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). For example Creswell (2009) recommends the use of one or more of the following strategies: triangulation; member checking; rich, thick description; clarify researcher bias; present negative or discrepant information; spend a prolonged time in the field; peer debriefing and the use of an external auditor to review the entire project. To ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, along with their individual range of



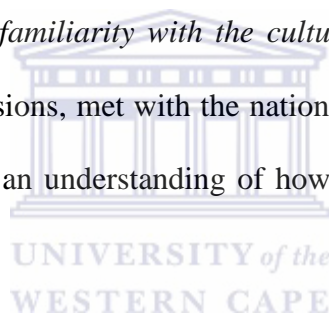
strategies, should be adopted (Guba as cited in Shenton, 2004). Consequently this study adopted the following criteria and range of strategies;

### **3.8.1 Credibility**

To address credibility the researcher has to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon is presented (Shenton, 2004). To ensure credibility in this study the transcripts were transcribed verbatim. According to Halcomb and Davidson (2006) the existence of verbatim transcripts can be beneficial in facilitating the development of an audit trail of data analysis by supervisors or independent persons.

*The development of an early familiarity with the culture of participating organizations.*

The researcher, on a few occasions, met with the national manager and the athlete service manager of the MMP to gain an understanding of how the organization and its program works and to establish trust.



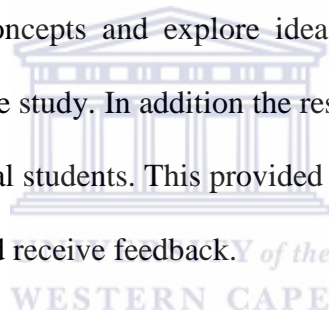
*Adoption of well - established research methods.* According to Creswell (2009) interviews are one of four basic data collection procedures in qualitative research. This study adopted a semi structured face-to-face interview method. This method is suited to exploring the opinions and perceptions of respondents and allows for probing for more information and clarification of answers (Barriball & While, 1994).

*Tactics to help ensure honesty in informants when contributing data.* To help ensure honesty in informants potential respondents were given the opportunity to refuse to participate. Each interview started with the interviewer restating the aims and objectives of the study, assuring the participants of their anonymity, guaranteeing confidentiality and

confirming to the interviewees that they were free to withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences. Furthermore, the participants were informed that there were no right or wrong answers and that, as they were the experts, information on their experiences of a life skills program were being sought. Moreover, the interviewer also spent the first couple of minutes trying to establish a rapport with the participants.

*Iterative questioning.* During the interviews the researcher used probes and returned to matters that the participant raised or did not understand by using rephrased questions.

*Frequent debriefing sessions.* The researcher held frequent meetings with the research study supervisor to clarify concepts and explore ideas as well as keep the researcher focused on the objectives of the study. In addition the researcher attended a weekly writing tutorial for masters and doctoral students. This provided the researcher with an opportunity to express and clarify ideas and receive feedback.



*Peer examination / scrutiny of the research project.* To ensure that the findings were as a result of the perceptions and experiences of the participants and to provide an objective view a doctoral student read through all the transcripts providing feedback with regards to coding of the data.

*Examination of previous research findings.* The researcher compared the findings of the present study to previous studies addressing similar issues to assess the extent to which they are analogous.

### **3.8.2 Transferability**

To allow transferability the researcher should provide sufficient detail of the context of the fieldwork for the reader to decide if the current environment is similar and if the findings can be applied to another setting (Shenton, 2004). This study included an audit trail which included thick, rich descriptions of the setting, participants, context within which the data was collected and description of the reason for decisions made regarding data collection or analysis. According to Shenton (2004) thick description of the phenomenon being investigated is important as it allows the reader to understand and compare the phenomenon described with those that have emerged in their situation.

### **3.8.3 Dependability**

To address dependability the study processes need to be reported in detail to enable a future researcher to repeat the work (Shenton, 2004). The researcher provided an in-depth description of the research methodology used for data collection and analysis. This allows for the study to be repeated.

### **3.9 Ethics**

Ethical clearance, registration number: 13/10/51, was obtained from the Senate Research Committee at the University of the Western Cape on the 5 December 2015 while permission to conduct the research study was obtained from MACSTEEL Maestros. Once identified, the participants were invited to be part of the study. The participants, along with their parents and /or guardians, were briefed verbally and in writing (*Appendix A*) on the goals and purpose of the research study, the reason why they were nominated and how valuable their input would be. They were informed that all information provided would remain confidential and that participants would be given pseudonyms to conceal their

identities. It was also explained that participation was voluntary and that they would be able to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. After they agreed to participate the participants were asked to read and sign informed consent forms to gain participant assent while their parents and/or guardians read and signed informed consent forms to get legal consent (*Appendix B*). The forms were issued before the interviews were conducted.

With the consent of the participants and their parents and/or guardians the interviews were tape recorded. Only the researcher and supervisor had access to the responses. Audio tapes, notes and transcripts were locked away and only accessible to the researcher while computer files were password protected. After completion of the study all records were kept for three years after which they were disposed of.

### **3.10 Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter presented information regarding the research methodology used for data collection and analysis to determine the life skills needs of elite adolescent athletes. The study employed a pure qualitative methodological approach. A qualitative research design was utilized to explore the athletes' experience of a life skills program and the reason for employing this approach is explained. The purpose of the qualitative approach was to gain the athletes' perspectives of the important life skills to be included in Life Skills programs in South African elite sport. A semi-structured interview guide was used to explore the perceptions, insights and beliefs of the participants of a current South African life skills program. Data gathered in the interviews from the study was analysed by means of a thematic analysis. In Chapter 4 the results of the interviews will be presented and discussed.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Introduction

This study aimed to explore and identify the essential life skills necessary for inclusion in a life skills programs in South African elite sport focusing on the development of adolescent athletes. A qualitative approach was employed as it offered the opportunity to focus on the participants' thoughts, feelings and to identify differences which would provide rich description of the data. Data were analysed deductively through the lens of the 5 C's model of PYD using the constructs of the model as pre-determined themes. Deductive data analyses tests whether data are consistent with prior assumption, theory, or hypothesis identified or constructed by the researcher (Thomas, 2006). For the purposes of this study the working definitions of the constructs of the 5C's model of PYD as espoused by Lerner et al. (2005) served as a set of measures for the indicators of the 5C's. The constructs are defined as follows; *competence* is the positive view of one's ability to function and act effectively in specific areas which includes social, cognitive, academic, health and vocational competence; *confidence* refers to sense of self-worth; *connection* refers to having positive bonds with people and social institutions; *character* denotes a respect for societal and cultural roles, possessing standards for correct behaviour, values, morals and integrity while *caring* reflects a sense of sympathy and empathy for others.

The section begins by introducing the participants in the study. A presentation of the findings follows. The findings are reported by introducing the theme. A summary of the participant responses relevant to the theme ensues. The summary identifies the common

and separate responses of the individual participants. The literature is then compared to the findings. The process is repeated for each theme in turn.

## 4.2 Profile of participants

Table 4.1 Profile of participants

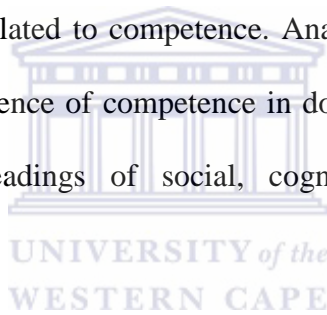
<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Sport Code</i>	<i>Time On MMP</i>	<i>Highest Representative level</i>	<i>Location</i>
<b>Aisha</b>	Female	17yrs	Coloured	Karate	1yr 5months	National	CPT
<b>Andile</b>	Male	16yrs	Black	Gymnastics	2yrs	National	KZN
<b>Janet</b>	Female	16yrs	Coloured	Volleyball	1yr	National	CPT
<b>Khaya</b>	Male	16yrs	Black	Swimming	9 months	Provincial	JHB
<b>Kim</b>	Female	16yrs	Coloured	Athletics	2yrs	National	CPT
<b>Mandisi</b>	Male	19yrs	Black	Swimming	1yr	National	JHB
<b>Nelisiwe</b>	Female	18yrs	Black	Athletics	2yrs	Provincial	KZN
<b>Rania</b>	Female	18yrs	Coloured	Volleyball	2yrs	National	JHB
<b>Thami</b>	Male	18yrs	Black	Rugby	11months	Regional	CPT

### **4.3 Findings and Discussion**

The responses of the participants are discussed under the following themes; 1) Competence, 2) Confidence, 3) Character, 4) Connection and 5) Caring / Compassion.

#### **4.3.1 Competence**

According to Lerner et al. (2005), competence refers to a positive view of one's actions in domain specific areas including social competence (interpersonal skills), cognitive competence (cognitive abilities), academic competence (school grades, attendance, and test scores) and vocational competence (work habits, career choice explorations and entrepreneurship). For this section participant responses were analysed to determine if they exhibited evidence of skills related to competence. Analysis of the data revealed that all the participants exhibited evidence of competence in domain specific areas. The findings are discussed under the headings of social, cognitive, academic and vocational competence.



##### **4.3.1.1 Social competence**

In this section the participants' comments regarding the interpersonal skills needed by elite adolescent athletes are discussed. According to Schneider, Ackerman and Kanfer (1996) social competence is socially effective behaviour which is important as it helps people achieve personal goals that are social in nature. Social competence denotes the possession of interpersonal skills which participants exhibited evidence of in a range of situations. For example Riana stated that, in the past, she has had issues with her coach. She revealed that *"before I would not have challenged"*. However, subsequent to speaking with her mentor, she now finds it easier *"to challenge what he is saying and...like if I see something working that he doesn't I go to him and explain to him how I see it working"*. Equally,

Nelisiwe demonstrated a similar approach to dealing with conflict. She pointed out that in the event of a disagreement with her coach they tend to “*speak about it*”. With regards to relationships with team mates, Thami revealed that at one stage “*it wasn’t at all a good relationship because...I was not committed to them so I just played rugby you know, for myself*”. However, as a result of his participation in the MMP, he’s outlook has changed. He has come to realise that teamwork is important and that without his team mates he will not get anywhere. Similarly, Rania stated that she has changed the way she captains teams. She now checks with her team mates to see if they are experiencing any difficulties and tries to “*make more of an effort to be there*” for them whereas before “*it used to just be if you had an issue and you needed to speak to me then I was there*”. Being on the programme has also helped to develop her interpersonal skills off the field. She felt that having to speak to her mentor “*about my issues at home...issues I’m having with...people*” and interacting with the other athletes during the group sessions has boosted her confidence when it comes to communicating with people. This has extended to her social life as well where she has adopted a “*Think first before...acting at all*” approach when addressing issues she has with family and friends.

Within the social competence domain the required competencies to emerge were conflict management, communication, teamwork, assertiveness and social skill. As conflict in sport is inevitable, either with team mates, your coach or the opposition, the participants felt that being able to manage conflict is a necessary skill to possess. Similarly, communication skills are necessary as it helps athletes to get their views across to team mates, coaches, parents and friends. The participants felt that teamwork skills are needed because they cannot succeed on their own. They need their team mates. Assertiveness is a necessary skill to have when athletes need or want to get their views or opinions across to the coach



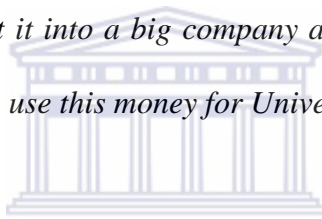
or teammates. Lastly, social skills are important as athletes also need to be able to interact with people off the field. These findings are comparable to the findings of Jones and Lavallee (2009) who found that social skills, which included teamwork and communication skills, were the most important skills for British adolescent athletes to learn.

#### **4.3.1.2 Cognitive competence**

The following section discusses the participant comments relating to the cognitive abilities that elite adolescent athletes need. Cognitive competence refers to thought processes and includes strategies for problem solving, abstract and deductive reasoning and verbal ability (Jimerson, Kaufman, Anderson, Whipple, Figueroa, Rocco & O'Brien, 2002). As a result of their busy schedules, one of the crucial cognitive abilities that emerged from the interviews were time management. The importance of being able to manage time effectively is demonstrated by this quote from Kim who described her daily routine; *"I have to leave the house at quarter to six then....I...go to school, normal school"* after school *"I have to walk down to the station"* where she catches a train *"... to go to the track and after the track I have to come home"*. Once at home she still has to eat, shower and do her homework. Some of the respondents indicated that being in the MMP helped them to develop this skill. For instance, when asked if he felt that being on the MMP has helped him in his personal life, Thami remarked; *"I changed....because now I know what to do, at what time you know I have scheduled my times what I did not have before"*. While Mandisi *"used to have a big issue with time management...well I felt like there wasn't enough time during the day to do what I needed to do"*. He had initially battled to manage university work and training but after speaking to his mentor and making use of

*“some of the ideas that...were being thrown at me....it helped me...manage my time better”.*

Participants exhibited characteristics of planning both in and out of sport. Its importance to adolescent athletes, especially since they are either at school or university, is illustrated by Aisha who stated; *“with school as well you need to have a balance so you need to have management of when times training, when are you going to have your study time and if it’s over the show you are just going to be lost”.* Khaya spoke about young athletes needing to plan financially for the future. He stated; *“let’s say I go to overseas for swimming and I win this....eighty thousand...this age what am I going to do with this money? I have to put it in the bank then I can invest it into a big company as I can...can get an interest when I’m older, I can say ok I wanna use this money for University”.*



All the respondents indicated that they have thought about life after sport. For example Khaya stated: *“I have to...have a career that ok after school, what I am going to do...I can’t swim for the rest of my life”.* When probed about the best time to start planning Mandisi felt *“now is the best decision, the best time to make the decision”.* Furthermore, those participants who were still at school indicated that they intended to study further once they had matriculated. For instance Aisha stated; *“after school I plan to go study further”.* Nelisiwe indicated that she has been evaluating her career options and has been applying to various universities. Outside of academics, Janet’s stated long term plan is to travel the world. Moreover, they felt that athletes had to start thinking about a career after sport at an early age. Rania stated, *“most of our sports there’s a age...factor where...we only play till we are a certain age and afterwards, like even now...for volleyball the cut-off for the national team is twenty six...and...I don’t think anybody plans to like live until they*

*are twenty six you need to have a plan for like after that*". Janet felt that *"when you come to grade twelve you must know already what you wanna do"*. In her opinion, in this way, *"they know what they wanna work for like in the future like they know what they wanna work ahead for"*. Thami added that in choosing a career after sport, it was important to *"look at what you love doing, what are your interests in life"*.

Allied to planning, participants also spoke about goal setting. For instance, Kim stated that it is important to *"set out your goals first and then...then you have to train for it"*. Khaya felt that goal setting is important because it helps you to focus. For example, when speaking about setting goals for himself in sport, he commented that he has broken five South African swimming records and that each time *"I planned it sir...I planned it in twenty eleven then twenty (inaudible) I broke it and I was happy"*. His next goal is *"to go to Rio"* to represent South Africa at the Olympic Games. Janet's short term plan is *"to take part in the Olympics 2016"* while her long term plan is *"to continue in my sport and to be successful and to take part in every international competition that's ahead"*. While making it in sport remains the main priority for most of the participants, Mandisi is different. He is aware that a lot athletes do not plan for life after sport and is already planning for his retirement from swimming. He stated that he has a career path and that *"if I do end up making it big in sport then that's like a big bonus but then I know as soon as I'm done with sport I've got something to fall back on"*.

The participants also spoke about the value of proper nutrition and making the right decisions with regard to what they eat to complement their athletic lifestyle. Rania's view is that *"if you are going to be in sport then...it's important, well also not if you are not going to be in sport it's still important but....with sports...with all the extra strain that you*

*putting your body through you need to have a balanced diet that's...fitting". While in Janet's opinion "if you gonna drinking and smoking and doing the wrong things...it's gonna affect you in your games". The consequence of this, she continued, would be that "you won't be able to last long...in the games". The other participants were of similar mind regarding the importance of a proper, appropriate diet. Other examples of cognitive skills exhibited by the athletes includes the relaxation technique utilised by Khaya if he gets nervous before a race and Mandisi who stated; "before I get medicine at the doctor I also tell him I'm involved in sport so any performance enhancers I can't really take".*

The requisite competencies to emerge within the cognitive competence domain were time management, financial planning, goal setting and nutrition. Due to their busy schedules the athletes felt that it is important that they are able to manage their time effectively. The respondents felt that being able to set short and long term goals were important. Proper nutrition was also deemed to be important as it is necessary for athletes if they are to perform optimally. This corresponds with Manzini (2012) who stated that footballers felt it was important for them to receive advice on nutrition. The findings, as it regards to time management and goal setting, supports the results of Jones and Lavallee (2009) who identified time management and goal setting as important personal life skills to possess. While Manzini (2012) indicated that financial management skills are important for football players to have since they start playing football from a young age and often do not think about saving for the future.

#### **4.3.1.3 Academic competence**

The following section discusses the participants' comments with regards to academic competence. Academic competence is associated with the understanding and use of

effective study skills which function as critical tools for learning (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002). One of the major issues that elite adolescent athletes have to deal with is balancing training and competition with academics. For instance Janet referred to the time that a training camp was scheduled close to the June school exams forcing her to *“take my books...with”*. According to Rania it is important for athletes to find a balance because *“most of us when you become an elite athlete that’s where all your focus goes....I have a sport I need....to...go for training I need to go to the gym I need to make my coach happy I need to make sure that my fitness levels are at the top of it and....a lot of the time academics suffer”*. A number of participants spoke about how being on the MMP helped with issues of an academic nature. It helped Rania with *“focusing, getting myself to sit down and have a study session”*. She now finds it *“a whole lot easier to concentrate now...after having spoken to <sup>1</sup>\*John\* about issues....that I’ve had”*. While Thami indicated that being on the programme has helped him with his schoolwork. He stated; *“it has improved....me a lot because...I see a better side than I was before”*. He now works hard at school, does his homework, makes time to read and studies because *“education you know is a key, so if you have an education no-one can take that away from you”*.

Within the domain of academic competence, the respondents highlighted the need for academic support for athletes. This was due, in the main, to their busy daily schedule which makes balancing training, competing and academics a challenge. While life skills modules such as time management, taking responsibility and goal setting may help the athletes to prioritize and schedule study times, it does not provide them with the tools or teach them how to study. Although assisting the athletes to achieve academic success is an important aspect of the MMP, and tutors are provided for athletes if required, the program

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<sup>1</sup> \*John\* is the pseudonym given to Rania’s MMP mentor.

does not offer a specific module to address academic competence. The athletes' stated need for academic support is given credence by the study of Aquilina (2013) who found that student-athletes are dependent on a support network of people, including parents, coaches, peers, academic staff and other professional staff within sports, to help them cope with the demands of a dual career.

#### **4.3.1.4 Vocational competence**

In this section the responses of the participants relating to vocational competence is explored. Vocational competence is competence in a specific occupation and includes knowledge, understanding, skills, tasks, attitudes, experience and roles (Ashworth & Saxton, 1990). The participants were all aware that they needed to think about a career after sport. For example Aisha stated; *"I can't just be focused on a sport because if I get a injury now that leads me out of sport what am I going to do after that....to like you know have an income in life, like that"*. In the same way, Mandisi stated; *"it's like they are blind, thinking that they gonna make and seeing that not everyone makes it when they done then they like got nothing to fall back on then life begins to be a bit of a problem"*. Most of the athletes either want to or are studying further. Kim intends to study sport science and *"become a coach"*. Rania aimed to study physiotherapy and would like to *"open my own practice"* but as the university she studies at does not offer the subject she is studying to be a biokineticist. She chose to study biokinetics *"because I like sport I can't...I don't think I will be able to carry on without it...so even if I'm not playing or coaching I know I'll still be involved"*. Nelisiwe on the other hand, although undecided about the occupation, plans to *"go in the business world"*. Likewise, Mandisi is *"studying a B Com general but I'm looking to move into becoming a CA"* as he plans to be involved in corporate finance. Thami on the other hand wants to *"go to University for mechanical*

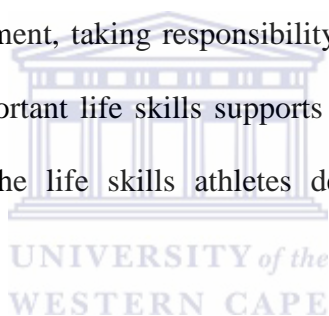
*engineer” because “my grandfather was a mechanic, my dad is a mechanic”. Alternatively Janet, who enjoys travelling, “would like to apply to become an air hostess”. She noted that she already “did research about it” and suggested that all athletes do research on potential careers so that “you can make decisions from there like if you don’t like it and then....you can move on”.*

The MMP addresses vocational competence through its career guidance and employment skills modules. Data analysis revealed that all of the participants were aware of the need for a career after sport and have thought about a possible career after sport. The athletes at university indicated that what they were studying for the career they intended to pursue after sport while those athletes still at school noted that they were busy evaluating future career options. The respondents’ post sport career choices varied and included becoming an air hostess, biokineticist, mechanical engineer and chartered accountant to name a few. The results support the findings of Bobridge, Gordon, Walker and Thompson (2003) who reported that youth-aged cricketers, participating in a career assistance program showed improvement in their career goal decidedness, increased awareness of career options and of the need for a career outside sport.

#### **4.3.1.5 Section Conclusion**

The development of skills, as it relates to competence, is addressed by the MMP through a variety of modules including conflict management, communication, decision making, goal setting and time management. In general, the findings indicated that the participants did exhibit characteristics of competence which were evident across its domain specific areas i.e. social, cognitive, academic and vocational competence. The participants indicated that being on the program has improved their self-confidence which, in turn, has helped them

in their personal lives, academically and in their sport. When reviewing the list of life skills topics offered by the MMP it can be inferred that the construct of competence is the primary development aspect being addressed. This supports the findings of Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) who determined that improving competency was the most common goal of youth development programs. The competencies to emerge were time management, communication, teamwork, assertiveness, social skills, conflict management, financial planning, goal setting, nutrition, taking responsibility, career guidance and employment skills. The finding that athletes feel the need for academic support, which is not provided by the MMP, supports the third objective of the study which is to explore the limitations of the current life skills program from the athletes' perspective. The identification of time management, taking responsibility, planning, goal setting, financial planning and nutrition as important life skills supports the fourth stated objective of the study which is to identify the life skills athletes deem important for their holistic development.



#### **4.3.2 Confidence**

The following section discusses the participant responses regarding confidence. Confidence suggests that the individual possesses a sense of positive self-worth, self-efficacy and global self-regard (Lerner, et al., 2005). Participant responses for this section were analysed to determine if they exhibited any evidence of skills related to the theme of confidence. The respondents revealed characteristics of self-confidence and self-esteem which is reflected in both their personal lives as well as in their sports life / athlete career. This is illustrated by the following quote by Nelisiwe:

*“What I learnt the most was...positivity and I have been using that especially with, when it comes to my schoolwork and training because sometimes I can be a negative person...so*



*after that workshop I...learnt quite a lot and I have changed...so I must say I'm...kind of a positive person now".*

#### **4.3.2.1 Self-confidence on and off the field**

This section discusses the participants' comments regarding the theme of confidence and the characteristic of self-confidence which is reflected on the field and in their personal lives. Confidence in sport refers to an athletes' belief in their own capability or their ability to be successful (Plakona, Parčina, Ludvig, & Tuzović, 2014). Nelisiwe elucidated that the MMP workshop that she had attended made her reflect on her mind set with regards to her personal life and athletics. After the workshop she decided to adopt a positive attitude. Her new outlook improved her confidence which in turn benefited her schoolwork. She spoke about how she has increased her goals; *"for example business studies I aimed for...an 80%. I know I could get more than 80% so...I increased my goal"*. Rania claimed that being on the MMP has developed her social skills. She stated; *"I feel a whole lot more confident....about myself in other situations not just when I'm on court or on the field...speaking...I used to have a problem speaking to people before"*. With regards to interacting with their coach, Rania explained that after speaking with her mentor she is now prepared to challenge her coach if she doesn't agree with him. She said; *"I find it easier now to challenge what he is saying"*. Kim observed that being able to access the different services offered by the MMP offers as well as the support from the mentor has boosted her confidence on the track. While Janet's confidence was boosted because she can see a huge difference in fitness levels between her and her team mates now that she has joined the MMP. Finally, Thami feels that he has become a better athlete because of what he has learnt on MMP. He is now more confident about meeting his goal of becoming a professional rugby player.

Sport programs can act as a vehicle through which youth can acquire positive developmental outcomes (Turnnidge, Côté & Hancock, 2014). The majority of the participants indicated that being on the MMP has given them self-confidence and this has helped them to perform better in their sport. The athletes' increase in confidence, especially those involved in team sport, may be because they have noted a difference between them and their teammates particularly with regards to fitness. They attribute the difference in fitness levels to the added services for example a biokineticist, psychologist and a fully equipped gym that they have access to on the MMP. Moreover, the increase in confidence has helped many of them to do better academically. This is significant if you consider that, in most cases, the career of an athlete is short and that not all young athletes become professional or are able to make a living out of sport. Furthermore, the athletes feel more confident when it comes to interacting with other people. This too is notable as being able to motivate and get instructions across to your teammates or getting your thoughts across to your coach is fundamental in sport. In addition, the role of the mentors in increasing the confidence levels of the athletes needs to be acknowledged. Many of the athletes mentioned that the support from their mentors has been instrumental in boosting their confidence which in turn has helped their performances on the field.

#### **4.3.2.2 Self-esteem on and off the field**

In this section the participant responses regarding the characteristic of self-esteem is discussed which is reflected both on and off the field. Self-esteem is a psychological construct and refers to the way people feel about themselves, which reflects and affects their exchanges with their environment and the people they encounter in it (Kernis, 2003). When asked if the MMP has helped her in her personal life, with her personal development, Aisha stated; *"It helped me with...my self-belief"*. Respondents also

indicated that being on the MMP has made them feel more positive about the future. This was particularly evident in Thami's case. He indicated that before coming onto the MMP he hadn't thought about a career after sport. He stated that, "*it changed me a lot because um I thought you know...what I wanna do is only to do sport you know, education wasn't there you know so...you can get an injury anytime so I have to have something for me beside rugby*". With everything that he has learnt on MMP, he feels that if he doesn't make it on MMP he would still be able to make it in rugby. He now also feels that, because of what he has learnt on the MMP with regards to fitness, he is able to take his friends for a training session, something he would not have done before. Similarly, Janet also feels that she will be able to use what she has learnt on the MMP to help her team mates; "*the things I do here I can go help them that side like if we in the gym that side there at school I can maybe like give my input on like...two or three exercises and if they doing it wrong I can show them, help them*". While Khaya remarked that being on the MMP has helped him at school as it has built up his self-esteem. In the past he used to not volunteer to answer questions in class. Now, he feels like "*I can say it freely...even if it's wrong*".

The athletes mentioned that being on the program has improved their self-esteem both on and off the track. Some of the athletes felt that, because of some of the things they have learnt so far for example proper training methods, that they would still be able to make it as an athlete even after they have left the MMP. The fact that the athletes are positive about the future is heartening given that they are only on the MMP for three years. Off the track the athletes' assertion that they would be able to build a career for themselves outside sport even if their sporting career was ended prematurely shows that the MMP message that the athletes have a plan for a post sport career is being heeded. With regards to self-esteem off the track the role of the mentor also has to be recognised. Many of the athletes

mentioned that they have spoken to their mentors about personal and sport related problems they are having. The one-on-one sessions that the athletes have with the mentors and the trusting relationship that has been built seems to have had a positive effect on the athletes. According to Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem and Ferber (2011), adolescent development is mediated through relationships with important people in their lives who influence the direction and pace of development. It can be inferred that the nature of the athlete and mentor relationship, has had a positive effect on the development of the athletes.

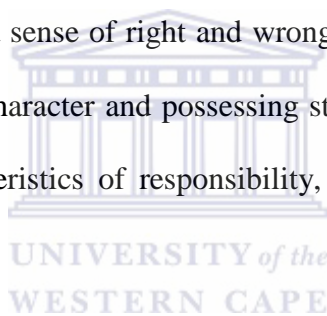
#### **4.3.2.3 Section conclusion**

The MMP addresses the construct of confidence through the self-confidence and self-esteem modules. Data analysis revealed that the participants exhibited characteristics of confidence in their personal lives as well as in their athletic careers. Off the field the respondents spoke about feeling more confident and having increased self-esteem. The participants indicated that the increase in confidence and self-esteem has helped them academically and socially. However the athletes indicated that they had not undergone self-confidence and self-esteem training while on the MMP. It can be supposed that this circumstance, the athletes' increase in self-confidence and self-esteem, may be due to them being selected to be on the MMP or due to the talks with their mentors. According to Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) it is the atmosphere rather than the program activities that differentiates successful youth development programs from other programs for youth. In their sport lives the athletes mentioned that they felt more confident about challenging their coaches and about their ability to make it as an athlete. These findings, and in particular the athletes recognition that they need to plan for their future post sport relates to Bobridge, Gordon, Walker and Thompson (2003) who reported that cricketers who

participated in a career assistance program exhibited an increased awareness of the need for a career outside sport. With regards to the study objectives, the finding that participants feel more confident and have higher self-esteem supports the first stated objective which was to explore how athletes perceived their development while participating in a life skills program. The fact that the participants feel that they have become better athletes while on the MMP supports the second stated objective of exploring the successful aspects of the current life skills program.

### **4.3.3 Character**

Character denotes respect for societal and cultural rules, possessing standards for correct behaviours as well as having a sense of right and wrong (morality), and integrity (Lerner, et al., 2005). With regard to character and possessing standards for correct behaviours on and off the field, the characteristics of responsibility, correct behaviour and teamwork emerged.

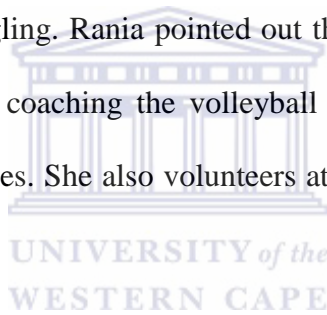


#### **4.3.3.1 Responsibility**

The following section discusses character and the characteristic of responsibility. According to Carter (2009) athlete social responsibility refers to a sense of responsible citizenship in sport and is the process of realising that, as an athlete, your role and responsibilities go beyond just competing and training. On the field one of the characteristics that emerged was taking responsibility. For example Janet felt that *“you can’t depend on your parent’s whole time”*. Kim was also of the opinion that, as an athlete, *“you have to take responsibility for yourself”*. To illustrate her point she described the time she went on tour without her coach or parents. She had to take responsibility for herself and, amongst other things, determine for herself what time to go to bed, the amount

of water she had to drink and by what time she needed to be at the warm up areas to prepare for her race.

Some participants felt that athletes need to give back to their communities and also help the young players. In Rania's opinion athletes need to give back to the community because *"there's no way you can make it out of the community without some help from someone"*. She pointed out that *"when you have forms and donation forms that you need to...have signed you go to people in your community first before you go to sponsors and other places"*. Janet thinks that, if they can afford to, athletes should *"go out to the poor communities buy them food....and give clothes, buy them clothes and things"* help those in the community who are struggling. Rania pointed out that, time permitting, she helps out at her old primary school by coaching the volleyball team or assists with sport at the school where her mother teaches. She also volunteers at athletic events or as an umpire at volleyball tournaments.



The athletes also displayed responsible behaviour with regards to substance abuse. For example Mandisi pointed out that as an athlete, he is aware that he is not allowed to take any performance enhancing drugs and therefore *"before I get medicine at the doctor I also tell him I'm involved in sport"*. Rania noted that she has never used any carbo loading or performance enhancing products. Janet commented that *"if you gonna take the wrong stuff it can also affect you like in your sports"*. Other athletes stated that they only used performance enhancing substances if their mentor or coach recommended or approved it. Furthermore, the athletes noted that they did not smoke or drink alcohol.

Athletes also spoke about having to take responsibility and work hard to reach their goals. Kim believes that *“you must make sacrifices to like become the best athlete like”*. This included not going out with her friends during the week because she has to be up early the next day to practice. Khaya, is planning to represent South Africa at the Rio Olympics and is *“training hard...in the morning and afternoon”*. Due to his busy schedule he indicated that while the other kids at school are playing in the afternoon he does his homework because *“I know...I don’t have time”*. Nelisiwe spoke about her determination to make a success of both her sport and studies while Kim mentioned that she would focus on and study harder for the next exam if she happened to do badly in a subject. Mandisi mentioned that *“you can’t shift the blame to someone else maybe for something that you did...or if you not performing well enough then you can’t shift the blame to your coach, maybe you not putting in the work”*. Thami revealed that he being on the program has changed his outlook with regards to academics. He stated that before *“at school I didn’t like to work hard you know, just ok I’m here at school studying blah, blah, blah and sometimes I won’t do my homeworks you know and get punished for that but err now I recognise that if I had homework let me do it because it will help me”*. His outlook has changed too. He has started to take responsibility for his actions and now knows *“what is wrong and what is right you know so I know what to do and what’s good for me”*.

The participants also spoke about taking responsibility when it comes to family matters. Aisha’s father is the main breadwinner in the family and she point out that she tries to help out where she can. She remarked; *“All I do is train and do what I’m supposed to do but where I can help as in little side jobs and getting money I give it, I just hand it all to them”*. Mandisi revealed that he comes from a family of five with one working parent. Therefore, as *“some things are quite costly”* and because *“not everything is about me”* he

tries to compromise when it comes to getting things for himself “*because that money could be used for something else*”.

Several athletes participating in the study by Jones and Lavallee (2009) indicated that is important for athletes to take responsibility for themselves. The majority of participants felt that it was necessary for athletes to be responsible, act responsibly and take responsibility in their personal lives and in sport. Like it or not, athletes are seen as role models in their community. Every step or miss-step is noticed. As role models it is incumbent on them to act responsibly and set an example for others on and off the track. The athletes on the MMP have indicated that they are aware of their responsibilities as athletes. They take responsibility for their own well-being by, for example, following a proper diet, staying away from drugs and making sure that they get enough rest. They are also aware that they are responsible for their own performances and that they have nobody but themselves to blame if they perform poorly. Off the track athletes also behave responsibly by helping their family. The athletes understand that their families support them financially but that money is tight. They help out in various ways, for example, by contributing financially or compromising and taking something cheaper. Finally, the athletes are aware of their responsibility to give back to their community. To give back to those who supported them and to support the younger athletes who are following in their footsteps.

#### **4.3.3.2 Values and Ethics**

This section discusses values and ethics which is a characteristic that emerged from the data. Ethics is concerned with judgements pertaining to moral decisions (Velasquez, cited in Joyner & Payne, 2002). Furthermore, Kreitzer (2006) defines values as standards or



principles that inform the way that we make important decisions relating to our personal and professional lives. In their personal life the participants spoke about making time for family and friends, being humble, setting an example, being a role model and having respect for people and their religions. For example Kim stated; *“you need to know who....who you are and where you come from and you have to be humble...off and on the track”*. While Nelisiwe felt that *“we need to respect each other’s religions and each other’s opinions”*. Aisha believes *“if you have respect for yourself other people will have respect for you like you”*. It is important for Aisha to set a good example for the students that she teaches through her behaviour *“so that they follow a good example”* and *“so that they also learn good morals and values”*. She also associates with *“people that’s sport wise and that knows about social life”* because she has seen how *“people who used to be friends with me how, how, their life turned out like pregnant ... or just like have no direction in life like failing school”*. Similarly Janet also mentioned the importance of not going *“after bad friends”* and making the right decisions. She stated; *“when you on a tournament...you obviously...gonna wanna have fun....so there’s gonna be....temptations...to want to take alcohol because this one is doing that and that one is doing that and you have a game the next day so you gonna have to make the right, right decisions...and choose your right friends”*.

Moral behaviour, in the context of sport, can be defined as low incidence of involvement in negative social behaviours (Kavussanu, Seal & Phillips, 2006). Elite athletes need to set a good example for others, especially kids, to follow. In sport, it is also necessary for elite athletes to have and show respect to their teammates, their coach and their opponents. Off the field the athletes have to pick the right friends. They have to choose friends who have the same values and ethics as they have. They need to find people who will encourage

them, not steer them wrong and who will not be jealous of their achievements. Finding people with these qualities can be difficult and may be the reason why the participants only socialise with other elite athletes. What is evident from the interviews is that the athletes, before coming onto the MMP, already possessed these characteristics which was instilled by their family. It would be prudent of the MMP to take cognisance of the fact that athletes do not come to the program devoid of life skills. The program should therefore identify the skills that the athletes possess and work on developing those that are lacking.

#### **4.3.3.3 Teamwork**

In this section the participants' comments regarding character and the characteristic of teamwork will be discussed. Teamwork is a multi-faceted type of cohesion associated with a team who share and understand all aspects of their team identity, team philosophy, individual rules and performance outcome goals (Hoffman, 2013). The participants spoke about the importance of teamwork and working hard for the team. They felt that it was important for athletes to motivate, encourage and support their teammates during a game even when they make mistakes. According to Janet; *"you need teamwork cause one person don't just make the team. We are six on the court...we have to support each other, motivate each other if you make a mistake....It's all about teamwork"*. Even the athletes involved in individual sport mentioned teamwork. For example, according to Khaya; *if like you've got a group of friends and...all of you swimming then...you got to...encourage everyone"* to try harder and not criticise them when they make a mistake.

In the study by Jones and Lavallee (2009) participants highlighted the importance of teamwork and athletes working together to accomplish an outcome. Being able to work in a team is a skill that is useful to have in sport and in life. In team sport athletes are required

to work together with their teammates to reach a goal. Similarly, in individual sport, the athlete and coach form a team and are dependent on each other to succeed. The participants valued teamwork and felt that it was critical that teammates encouraged each other and not criticise when mistakes are made.

#### **4.3.3.4 Section conclusion**

Congruent with the findings of Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003), the development of Character is second most common development goal addressed by the MMP. The life skills topics which are covered includes, amongst others, corruption in sport, substance abuse, respecting differences and values and ethics. Analysis of the data indicated that the participants possessed standards for correct behaviours, characteristics of which, again, were exhibited both as an athlete and in their personal lives. As athletes, the respondents spoke about taking responsibility for their performances, the importance of teamwork, not using illegal substances and training hard to achieve success. In their personal lives the respondents mentioned having respect for the others, values and ethics, the importance of family and friends, the need to give back to the community that they come from, setting a good example for others to follow as well as taking responsibility for their actions. The importance the participants placed on teamwork, family interaction, respect and taking responsibility are similar to findings of Jones and Lavalley (2009). These findings support the fourth objective of the study which was to explore and identify the life skills that are important to include in a life skills program.

#### **4.3.4 Connection**

Connection refers to having positive bonds with people and institutions that are reflected in reciprocal exchanges between the individual and peers, family, school, and community in

which both parties contribute to the relationship (Lerner, et al., 2005). The analysis of the data revealed that the respondents demonstrated characteristics of connection in a variety of situations. Their experiences are discussed under the following headings; 1) connection with coach, 2) connection with other athletes, 3) connection with family and 4) connection with MMP mentor.

#### **4.3.4.1 Connection with coach**

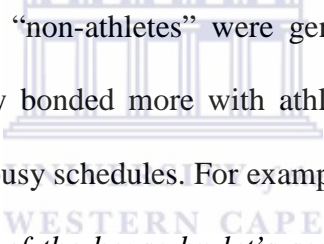
The ensuing section discusses the participant comments concerning the connection between athlete and coach. The athlete coach relationship is a decisive factor for performance in competition and is manifested in the athletes' need to obtain the knowledge, competence and experience of the coach and in the coaches' need to transfer his skills and competencies into performance and success (Philippe & Seiler, 2006). The participants generally had a good relationship with their coaches. However, in some instances the bonds between athlete and coach were stronger than others. Aisha, for instance, has been with her coach from the beginning. She noted that they have *"always had that tight relationship"* and that he is *"always someone I could go to, whenever things are tough at home I just go to him and we will sit and talk"*. She feels that they do not just have *"a coach relationship but...he's also like a father figure"*. Similarly Thami spoke about the strong bond he has with his coach. He stated; *"with my coach it's like a friend that I can talk to...and um someone that I can....say anything you know to and...my coach is like a big brother to us"*. Another aspect of the athlete – coach relationship to emerge was the issue of trust. Athletes indicated that they trusted their coach implicitly. For instance when talking about taking performance supplements, Nelisiwe stated; *"Well if he says take this and it will be beneficial then I will"*. What is evident regarding the issue of trust between the athletes and their coaches is that trust built up over time.

In sport connection is conceptualized as a measure of the quality of relationships and degree of interaction with peers and coaches (Vierimaa, Erickson, Côté, & Gilbert, 2012). If an athlete wants to be successful it is advisable to have a good relationship with the coach. The majority of the athletes on the MMP indicated that they have a good relationship with their coach. Some athletes even went as far as to say that they saw their coach as a father figure. The one stand-out feature with regards to the coach and athlete relationship is that it is based on trust. Moreover it emerged that the trust between the athlete and coach had developed over a period of time.

#### **4.3.4.2 Connection with other athletes**

In the following section the comments of the participants regarding their connection with athletes is discussed. According to Iso-Ahola (1995) athletes need the support and friendship of other athletes when injuries or personal problems occur. The data analysis revealed that the participants have developed positive bonds, particularly with other athletes. For instance, Rania's stated that her friends are mostly *"people who I grew up with in school who all played the same sports as me so we were always together over weekends"*. They feel that only athletes understand what it takes to be an elite athlete and what they go through with regards to time spent training and competing as well as the sacrifices that they have to make. This is illustrated by Kim who remarked; *"I don't like have friends at home like...in the road"* because *"the things they do and the things we do...is different"* and that *"if we talk about something then our friends will know what we are talking about"*. Kim's views were supported by Aisha who expressed that she socializes with athletes, including athletes on the MMP, because they are goal driven, busy and *"know what it's about"*. The participants also mentioned that they spent more time with other athletes because like them, they lead healthy lifestyles.

Interestingly some athletes also had a close relationships with fellow competitors. According to Aisha; *“outside of the competition we, everyone’s really close”*. They stayed connected on Facebook and spend time together after competition which included going sight-seeing and having after-parties. Mandisi indicated that he shares what he knows, the skills that he has learnt on the MMP, with swimmers that he has befriended as well as with the athletes he has met on the MMP. In addition although he did not perform as he would have liked at an international swimming gala he was glad that his team mates had performed well. He noted that; *“I didn’t race as well...as I would have liked to....but some guys did manage to pull it off so...which is good”*. His comments demonstrated that he has developed positive bonds with his team mates who are also his direct competitors.



In contrast, relationships with “non-athletes” were generally non-existent. Most of the participants indicated that they bonded more with athletes than with non-athletes. This however could be due to their busy schedules. For example a typical day for Aisha sees her *“getting done and getting out of the house by let’s say latest six, six – thirty getting to campus, go to all lectures”* after which its *“training, home, studying, gym, home”* before *“getting to sleep at a reasonable time because we need to get up early the next day”*. When asked about socializing with her friends Nelisiwe stated that; *“some of them I see during the weekends, that’s if I have time”*. Jealousy was also mentioned as a possible reason for them losing touch with their “non-athlete” friends. Aisha noted; *“but friendship wise... I don’t know what’s been happening there because I don’t know if its jealousy or what but the more I progress the more friends I seem to lose”*. However this does not mean that they did not make an effort to maintain friendships with “non-athletes”. Nelisiwe tries to keep in contact with her “non-athlete” friends through social media while Aisha said that she always makes time for them even if it means that she has to adjust her

training schedule. One athlete who did have “non-athlete” friends was Mandisi. Although he too socialises mostly with swimmers he does have other friends outside sport. He spoke about how he spends time with “*guys that I used to go to school with*” and how socializing with them has led him to meet new friends within their circle of friends.

Adolescents choose friends who share the same core values and similar views (Lerner et al., 2005). From the information provided in the interviews it can be seen that the athletes have developed positive bonds with other athletes. This is prudent given that athletes spend the majority of their time with other athletes. Being connected enables athletes to share experiences as well as speak to each other about issues they are having on and off the field.

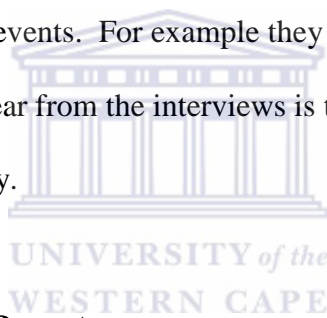


#### **4.3.4.3 Connection with family**

This section discusses the participants’ comments relating to their connection with family. Families who are highly supportive of their children’s participation in sport have a major impact on their children’s athletic development (Nieto, Perez, Sánchez, & Coll, 2011). The participants exhibited a definite connection with their families. Almost all the athletes spoke about the importance of family support. For instance Mandisi stated; “*the support of your family is very important... ‘cause I mean, at the end of the day they like your backbone*”. Furthermore, Andile spoke about how “*my relatives, they support, they support me throughout*”. Athletes also mentioned how important it was to spend time with family. According to Rania; “*finding time to spend with family because I think that would be an important...life skill for me...you have to spend time with your family and friends and...not neglect*”. In addition Rania stated; “*Sunday is normally family day so I spend it with my family*”. Kim revealed that she keeps in touch with her family even when she

travels; *“we a close family so...like there social media comes in place when I’m over there or they err we like we like Skype or we will like BBM or phone”*. While, according to Andile *“whenever I get competitions or something...wrong I err I confirm my mum and my mother quickly confirms my uncle”*. Although he has become independent, having been at boarding school since grade seven, Mandisi indicated that *“you gotta make time to go back”* because *“I realise sometimes my parents would actually like to see me”*.

Teenagers value their relationships with their parents and tend to incorporate their parents core values into theirs (Lerner et al., 2005). Having family support is important, especially for young athletes. Family members provide athletes with support in many ways, and not only by attending the sporting events. For example they provide financial support, moral support and advice. What is clear from the interviews is the most of the athletes do have positive bonds with their family.



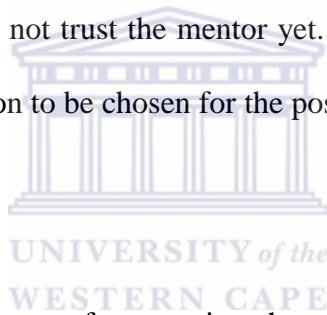
#### **4.3.4.4 Connection with MMP mentor**

The following section discusses the participant comments relating to the connection between athlete and mentor. Mentoring occurs when a teacher invests time in developing an athlete, when a trusting relationship develops, needs and interests fulfilled and imitation of behaviour happens (Bloom, Durand-Bush, Schinke & Salmela, 1998). Some of the respondents spoke about the connection they have developed with their MMP mentor. Mandisi revealed that he feels comfortable to speak to his mentor about issues or problems that he has. Likewise Thami felt that he could approach his mentor at any time and that he would assist him. He reported that *“if you have a question you can just pop in and ask them about what you, you wanna know”*. This process however did not happen overnight. Mandisi explained that *“at the beginning you’ll be very like conservative of what you say”*.



In contrast, it emerged that Janet would prefer to speak to the psychologist rather than her mentor “*because I don’t trust him yet. I don’t know him that long*”.

Positive bonding with an adult is crucial to the development of a child’s capacity to change and grow into a healthy and functional adult (Catalano et al., 2004). Athletes, particularly those in Johannesburg, spoke positively about their relationship with their mentor. Having a mentor for the athletes is significant in that it provides the athlete with somebody who is readily available to speak to, who they can confide in and who is there to look after their interests. However not all of the participants had this type of relationship with their mentor. One of the athletes stated that they did not have a close relationship with the mentor because the athlete did not trust the mentor yet. This highlights the importance of choosing the right type of person to be chosen for the position.



#### **4.3.4.5 Section conclusion**

The MMP addresses the construct of connection through its Forming Relationships and Social Responsibility modules. Data analysis revealed that the participants exhibited characteristics of connection which manifested principally in relationships with their coaches, fellow athletes, family and MMP mentor. These findings have parallels with a variety of previous studies. For instance, with regard to connection with coaches, Marthinus (2007) found that athletes put a great deal of trust in their coaches and also rely on them on a psychological level. The findings, as it relates to connection with other athletes and family, also share similarities with Jones & Lavallee (2009) as the participants spoke about appreciation of family (Family Interaction) as well as respect for teammates (Teamwork). Pertaining to connection with the MMP mentor, this study found that some of the athletes had developed a strong bond with their mentor. The use of mentors supports

the study of Armour, Sandford and Duncombe (2013) who suggested that establishing positive relationships between leaders, mentors and pupils are one of six key design features that should be embedded in the design of physical activity/positive youth development programmes to maximise the potential for a sustained positive impact on youth participants. Interestingly, Thami's assertion that there needs to be a good fit between mentor and athlete echoed those of respondents in the study by Price (2007) who emphasised the importance of a mentor needing to be the right kind of person and someone the athletes could connect with. The finding that certain athletes have developed strong bonds with their mentors supports the second stated objective of the study which was to explore the successful aspects of the current life skills program.

#### **4.3.5 Caring / Compassion**

Caring / compassion refers to a sense of sympathy and empathy for others (Lerner, et al., 2005). For this section the participant responses are analysed to determine if they exhibited any evidence of skills related to caring / compassion. More specifically it analyses the participant responses regarding their involvement in charity work.

##### **4.3.5.1 Athletes and charity work**

In this section the participants' comments relating to athletes and charity work is discussed. According to Burch and Murray (1999) some professional athletes' feel that it is important to help those less fortunate than themselves. Analysis of the data revealed that the athletes felt the need to give back to those less fortunate than them. For example Janet stated "*there's a lot of people that struggle....so if you have a lot go out to the community do something with it*". Andile also gives to those who are less fortunate "*some of my old clothes that don't fit me I'm, I'm able to give to people*". Similarly, Mandisi noted he's

involvement in charity work. He stated; *“Well I do, do, a bit of charity work during holidays like, like the December holidays”*. He explained that he and his friends approach restaurants to host a function where underprivileged kids are given a package, of items they had collected, to take home *“cause I feel like it’s quite important, to give back”*.

While some athletes are involved in charity work or participate in community projects in some form or the other, there were those who were not. Although they would like to be involved Janet, Khaya, Nelisiwe and Kim all cited not having enough time as the main constraint. For example Kim observed, *“I actually don’t have time”* while also adding that *“it’s too dangerous in our community”*. It is also worth noting that although Nelisiwe indicated that she did not have the time she did mention that *“I do make donations”*.

The athletes indicated that they are or would like to be involved in charity work in one form or the other as they feel that they should help those who are less fortunate. Some organize and participate in charity events, some athletes give their sponsored clothes to athletes or friends in their community while others donate money to worthy causes. This shows that the athletes do possess the characteristics of sympathy or empathy. This compares with Ramey and Rose-Krasnor (2012) who state that youth, exhibiting PYD characteristics such as caring, promote positive development in their communities and activities. However, what is not clear is if these characteristics have been developed while on the MMP or if they possessed these characteristics prior to joining the program.

#### **4.3.5.2 Compassion for other athletes**

This section discusses the participants’ comments regarding athlete compassion for other athletes. Compassion is the feeling you get when witnessing another’s suffering that

motivates a desire for you to help (Goetz, Keltner & Simon-Thomas, 2010). When talking about helping others or giving back to the community the majority of the participants generally spoke about it in a sporting context. The participants especially mention wanting to assist young athletes who find themselves in a similar position to what they were. Here they are referring to those athletes who need a sports organisation or an individual involved in sport to recognize their talent and provide them with an opportunity to showcase it. The athletes' general views are captured by the following quotes.

*“as sport person it’s important to look back you know, where you come from you know...and you know how it was difficult for you to, to, to, to...to make it as a professional player so....you have to look for the people that you may work with you know, to change people’s lives to, to, to, to be easier...to make it in future in sport”.* (Thami)

His sentiments were echoed by Mandisi who said;

*“...like with my journey as well I wouldn’t have made it thus far without certain people helping...me so I feel like it’s only...it’s only good if I can just do that for some else because maybe they can also realise their potential like somehow”.*

Equally, Nelisiwe stated her intention to support young athletes once she has retired from sport, *“It is what I told you like...nurturing up-coming athletes”.* While Kim indicated that she gives away her surplus sports equipment to those athletes who don’t have, *“if I like see that someone ...doesn’t have then I will...give...trainers or so...things like that”.*

Most of the athletes spoke about wanting to help younger athletes in the same position as they were. They understand how difficult the journey is to become a professional athlete

and would like to pass on what they have learnt. Given the above, it can be inferred that the athletes do possess the characteristics of sympathy / empathy.

#### **4.3.5.3 Section conclusion**

Analysis of the data indicates that the participants did exhibit characteristics of caring / compassion even though the MMP only addresses the development of caring / compassion through their social responsibility module. This supports Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) who found that only a small number of programs promoting positive outcomes for youth had the promotion of caring / compassion as a goal. Despite this, analysis of the data indicates that the participants have demonstrated characteristics of this skill. While characteristics of caring / compassion are evident in a variety of settings, it is most evident when it comes to the sports domain. The participants identified giving back, and in particular assisting young athletes in need of a break in life, as important. This finding corresponds with Ramey and Rose-Krasnor (2012) who indicated that youth who exhibit the PYD characteristics of caring and compassion promote positive development in their communities and activities. With regards to the objectives of the study the finding that athletes identified giving back as important supports objective four which was to identify the life skills elite adolescent South African athletes deem as important to include in a life skills program.

#### **4.4 Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter presented the results and findings of the study into the life skills needs of elite adolescent athletes. It discussed the results of the thematic analysis approach which was used to analyse the data from semi-structured interviews with nine elite adolescent athletes. Data was analysed through the lens of PYD with the working definitions of the

constructs of the 5C's model of PYD by Lerner et al. (2005) serving as a set of measures for the indicators of the 5C's.

The first theme to be discussed was Competence. The results revealed that the respondents exhibited characteristics of this construct across the domain specific areas of social, cognitive, academic and vocational competence. The second theme to be discussed was Confidence. Results regarding this theme revealed that the participants exhibited characteristics in their personal lives as well as in their sports life / athletic careers. Character was the third theme discussed. The results regarding character revealed that the participants possessed standards for correct behaviour which were evident both on and off the field. As athletes, the respondents spoke about taking responsibility for their performances, the importance of teamwork, not using illegal substances and training hard to achieve success. While in their personal lives the respondents mentioned having respect for the others, values and ethics, the importance of family and friends, the need to give back to the community that they come from, setting a good example for others to follow as well as taking responsibility for their actions. The fourth theme discussed was Connection. The results revealed that the participants exhibited characteristics of connection which manifested principally in relationships with their coach, other athletes, with family and with MMP mentor. Caring / Compassion was the last theme to be discussed. Results regarding caring / compassion is most evident when it comes to the sports domain. The participants identified giving back, and in particular assisting young athletes in need of a break in life, as important. Chapter 5 concludes the study. It will provide a summary of the findings as it relates to the study objectives and discuss the study limitations. In addition, recommendations for further studies along with possible suggestions to the profession to

adapt current life skills programs or develop new life skills programs for elite adolescent athletes will be provided.



## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Pursuing a career as a professional athlete has become a viable option for talented athletes to pursue. However, in their pursuit of athletic excellence many athletes neglect their academic, work and post sport career planning. To help athletes with their participation, educational, development and lifestyle issues many countries have developed athlete assistance programs. A review of the literature revealed that there is a paucity of research relating to the life skills needs of elite adolescent athletes.

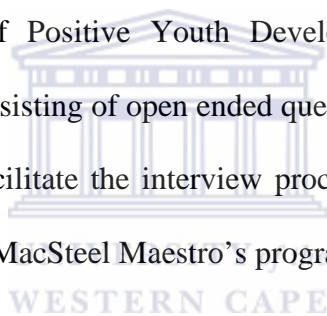
Many elite South African sportspersons come from disadvantaged backgrounds and struggle to handle the fame, fortune and pressure that comes with being an elite athlete. Various role players in sport are of the opinion that life skills are a need. In South Africa, apart from the MMP, there are no accredited life skills programs to assist elite athletes. This situation is set to change as SRSA's proposed academy system, which aims to develop athletes holistically, will include life skills training as one of its services. However, to date, there is no national plan, policy guidelines or a standardised policy with regards to the proposed life skills program.

As far as could be established from the relevant literature this study is the first to explore and identify the life skills needs of elite adolescent South African athletes necessary for inclusion in a life skills program to enable them to grow up competent, healthy and reach their full potential. The final result was a general description of the participants' experiences focusing on the common themes experienced despite the diversity of the



participants and the settings. Findings of the research provided a contribution to the literature in two ways. First, it provided a South African perspective of the life skills needed by elite adolescent athletes. Secondly, it identified the life skills elite adolescent South African athletes deemed important for their holistic development to include in life skills programs in South African elite sport. Time management and self - esteem / self – confidence skills were identified as the crucial life skills to be developed. This was followed by respecting differences, substance abuse, taking responsibility, teamwork, nutrition, social networking skills and social responsibility.

The study employed a pure qualitative research design using thematic analysis. Data was analysed through the lens of Positive Youth Development (PYD) theory. A semi-structured interview guide, consisting of open ended questions, was developed utilizing the 5C's of PYD as themes to facilitate the interview process. Nine current adolescent elite South African athletes, on the MacSteel Maestro's program, participated in the study.



In order to achieve the goal of the study, the following objectives were identified in chapter one:

1. To explore how elite adolescent South African athletes perceive their development whilst participating in a current life skills program.
2. To explore the perspectives of elite adolescent South African athletes on the successful aspects of the current life skills program.
3. To explore the perspectives of elite adolescent South African athletes on the limitations of the current life skills program.

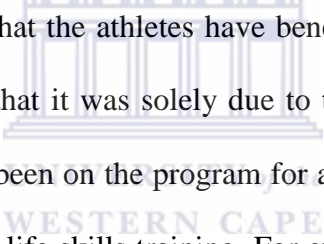
4. To explore and identify the life skills current elite adolescent South African athletes deem as important for their holistic development to include in life skills programs in South African elite sport.
5. To inform role players in South African elite sport of the life skills that should be included in a life skills program for elite adolescent athletes.

While the findings were presented and discussed in Chapter Four an overall summary of the findings as well as recommendations will now be presented.

## **5.2 Overall summary of findings**

The ensuing section provides an overall summary of the findings presented in Chapter Four. While the data analysis results and its comparison with the literature was reported individually above, it needs to be determined if the current life skills program facilitates the holistic development of the participants and producing athletes who are thriving and a benefit to society. In general it can be concluded that the participants have benefitted from being on the MMP, both on and off the field. The participants exhibited characteristics of competence, confidence, character, connection and caring / compassion in and out of sport. For example they were aware of the need to plan for a career after sport, spoke about wanting to give back to the community, were more confident on and off the field and developed positive bonds with their family, coach, other athletes as well as their mentor. The role of the mentor in this whole process should also be acknowledged. For instance the mentor at the Gauteng regional office had a big influence on the athletes. All the athletes seemed to have developed a positive relationship with him based on trust.

Using the MMP life skills topics as a guide, the respondents were asked to identify the most important life skills for adolescent athletes to develop. They identified time management and self - esteem / self – confidence skills as the most crucial life skills. This was followed by substance abuse, respecting differences, social responsibility, taking responsibility, teamwork, nutrition and social networking skills. Mental skills, sexual health, values and ethics, leadership and followership, media training, presentation skills, touring skills, servicing sponsors, taxation and using technology were not deemed to be as crucial. The findings of the study are similar to that of Jones and Lavallee (2009) with the common skills to emerge, from both studies, being respect, time management, teamwork, goal setting and family interaction skills.



However, while it was found that the athletes have benefitted from being on the MMP it cannot be stated conclusively that it was solely due to their involvement in the program. Even though the athletes have been on the program for at least nine months they have had varying degrees of exposure to life skills training. For example Mandisi stated that he has attended six life skill sessions and had one on one meetings with his mentor while Nelisiwe has only attended a workshop.

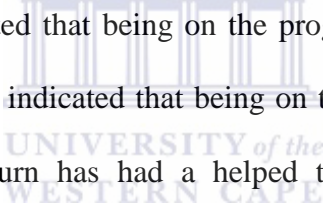
The role that the athletes' parents and coaches play in advising the athletes and teaching them life skills should also be considered. Most of the athletes still live at home and have close relationships with their parents. Their parents are concerned for their well-being and are constantly advising them on correct behaviour. For example Kim's parents spoke to her about the good and bad aspects of being on Facebook. Equally, Aisha has a close relationship with her coach who she has been with for many years. She revealed that, over

the years, they have developed a strong bond and that she considers him to be a father figure who she can speak to if she needs advice.

### **5.3 Conclusions related to the objective of the study**

The following section presents the conclusions of the research results as it relates to the stated objectives of the study. It will provide an overview of the athletes' experiences of a current life skills program and their perspective on the important life skills to be included in a life skills program for elite adolescent athletes.

#### **5.3.1 How elite adolescent South African athletes perceive their development whilst participating in a current life skills program.**

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- The participants indicated that being on the program has had a positive effect on them as a person. They indicated that being on the MMP has improved their self-confidence which in turn has helped them academically and in social situations.
  - The respondents indicated that being on the MMP has been beneficial as it has instilled confidence in them which, they feel, has enhanced their athletic performances. For instance Jerome pointed out that he has been selected for his rugby clubs' third side even though he is only nineteen years old.

### **5.3.2 The perspectives of elite adolescent South African athletes on the successful aspects of the current life skills program.**

- The athletes appreciated having a mentor who is readily available if they need help or advice about sport related or personal issues.
- The group sessions provides an environment where the athletes can meet and mix with each other. It also allows them the opportunity to share their experiences or problems they are encountering with other athletes and get or give advice on how to deal with it. It comforts them to know that they are not alone.
- The program aims to develop the athletes holistically, consequently they are assisted to perform academically as well as in their sport.
- The athletes are encouraged to think about their future after sport.

### **5.3.3 The perspectives of elite adolescent South African athletes on the limitations of the current life skills program.**

- A limitation that did emerge was the lack of academic support for student athletes.
- Although not identified by the athletes the discovery that most of the athletes hardly have any friends outside sport and only socialise with other athletes is an aspect that should be addressed.
- While athletes are happy with the list of life skills topics available to them and indicated that there were no modules that they would remove they did feel that the taxation, using technology and servicing sponsors modules are not needed at present and that the modules should be introduced once athletes have become more established in their sport.

- Similarly, some of the participants felt that certain modules i.e. sexual health and forming relationships, social networking and social skills, financial skills and taxation, forming relationships and sexual health overlapped and should be amalgamated.
- As they got to meet other athletes on the program and were able to share and learn from their collective experiences, the athletes felt that they should meet more often as a group.

#### **5.3.4 The life skills current elite adolescent South African athletes deem as important for their holistic development to include in Life Skills programs in South African elite sport.**

- The respondents identified time management and self - esteem / self – confidence skills as the crucial life skills. This was followed by respecting differences, substance abuse, taking responsibility, teamwork, nutrition, social networking skills and social responsibility. Mental skills, sexual health, values and ethics, leadership and followership, media training, presentation skills, touring skills, servicing sponsors, taxation and using technology were not deemed to be as crucial.

#### **5.4 Limitations of the current study**

This study gathered data on the life skills needs of elite adolescent South African athletes. It also provided information on the life skills adolescent athletes deemed to be important for their holistic development. However, there were limitations to the study that should be taken in consideration. The following limitations were identified;

- Although the program is called The MacSteel Maestro's Life Skills program, it is not a pure life skills program. Rather, life skills education is part of a bouquet of services which includes, for example, free access to a biokineticist, a dietician and use of the gym. The participants, on many occasions, when speaking about the benefits of being on MMP the athletes did not differentiate between life skills training and the other services on the program.
- The process of identifying participants and scheduling the interviews was protracted. Reasons for this included; the regional managers identified the participants and arranged the interviews and as this study was not their priority the scheduling of interviews took longer than the researcher anticipated, some athletes were still scholars and consequently only available to be interviewed after school and athletes either had practice after school or were training for national or international competition or tournaments. The fact that the researcher had to travel out of province to conduct the majority of the interviews also affected the scheduling of the interviews.
- The above impacted on the number of athletes who were available to participate in the study. As a result, while the study aimed to interview twelve participants, only nine athletes were able to participate in the study.
- While the study proposed to include all race groups to reflect the diversity of athletes in South Africa, no white athletes were found who met the selection criteria. Consequently five black (four males and one female) and four coloured (four female) athletes participated in the study. The participants were from the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provinces in South Africa.
- Although the athletes have been on the program for at least nine months, which Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins (2002) suggested was a

characteristic of high quality PYD programs, the athletes have had varying degrees of exposure to life skills training. Furthermore, each regional centre managed the process differently and modules were not taught in a systematic manner.

- While the majority of the participants have been exposed to life skills sessions in one form or the other there were those who had not received any life skills training.

## **5.5 Recommendations**

### **5.5.1 Recommendations to practice**

The ensuing recommendations are being made on the basis of the findings with regard to the life skills needs of elite adolescent South African athletes;

- Before entering the program the athletes should be assessed to determine their career, personal development or educational skills needs.
- Greater focus should be placed on providing academic support for student athletes. An initial recommendation is that a study methods life skills module be introduced.
- While the participants have exhibited characteristics of the 5C's, it cannot be stated conclusively that it was solely due to their involvement in the MMP. A longitudinal research design is recommended to examine the life skills needs and benefits of elite adolescent athletes over a more realistic time frame allowing for natural progression rather than focusing on short term / immediate results.
- A different methodology should be used for data collection. After the first set of interviews it became apparent that not all of the participants were able to define or give examples of life skills. In addition, it seemed as if some of the respondents were tiring towards the end of the interviews resulting in them providing one word answers. It is therefore recommended that in future a questionnaire be used instead



of an interview schedule. The questionnaire should also be made age appropriate for better understanding.

- It appeared as if the life skills training modules delivery process was managed differently at each regional centre and that the modules not taught in a systematic manner. This could, in part, be due to the reactive nature of program. The MMP should develop a more uniform method to deliver the life skills program.
- Individual athlete assessments should be conducted with all athletes entering the program to determine their educational, career and personal development needs. The athletes may then access any of the program elements according to their circumstance and needs.
- A monitoring and evaluation plan and systems should be developed to track the progress of the life skills program and review the content and relevance of the modules.
- While life skills modules such as time management, taking responsibility and goal setting may help the athletes to prioritize and schedule study times, it does not provide them with the tools or teach them how to study. A module on study skills should be included in the list.
- With regards to informing role players in South African elite sport of the life skills that should be included in a life skills program for elite adolescent athletes, time management and self - esteem / self – confidence skills emerged as the most important skills to possess. This was followed by respecting differences, substance abuse, taking responsibility, teamwork, nutrition, social networking skills and social responsibility. Mental skills, sexual health, values and ethics, leadership and followership, media training, presentation skills, touring skills, servicing sponsors,

taxation and using technology were not deemed to be as crucial. Additionally, the participants indicated that life skills programs should make use of mentors.

### **5.5.2 Recommendations for further research**

- As only nine athletes from three regional centres participated in the current study, further study incorporating athletes from the eight regional centres may provide a comprehensive picture of the life skills needs of elite adolescent South African athletes.
- With women's sport in South Africa becoming more professional and more women having the opportunity to be a professional athlete it would be worth exploring if female athletes have different life skills needs and what they are.
- Following on from Project Ithuseng, which focused on football, it would be worth investigating whether athlete life skills needs differ across sport codes.
- While the participants have exhibited characteristics of the 5C's, it cannot be stated conclusively that it was solely due to their involvement in the current life skills program. The role that coaches and parents play in athletes acquiring life skills needs to be considered and explored.
- The same study needs to be conducted but with athletes who have been through the program for example the MacSteel Maestro's alumni athletes.

### **5.6 Study Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to explore and identify the important life skills necessary for inclusion in a life skills program for elite adolescent South African athletes. A review of the literature revealed a paucity of research around the life skills needs of elite adolescent athletes. This study was the first of its kind to be conducted in South Africa and the

findings contributed to the current literature as it relates to life skills for elite adolescent athletes. Time management and self - esteem / self – confidence skills were identified as the crucial life skills to be developed. This was followed by respecting differences, substance abuse, taking responsibility, teamwork, nutrition, social networking skills and social responsibility. Allied to the stated study objectives the respondents revealed that the program has had a positive effect on their development both on and off the field. Furthermore, the successful aspects of the program includes having access to a mentor, getting to meet and share their experiences with the other athletes, that the program is focused on academic as well as sporting achievement and the athletes are encouraged to think about their careers after sport. Finally, all of the athletes were happy with the list of life skills topics on the current program.



## **5.7 Chapter Conclusion**

This, the final chapter, provided a summary of the research findings. The chapter began by providing a summary of the study objectives. The study limitations were then discussed before recommendations for future research were presented. Finally, a study conclusion was provided.

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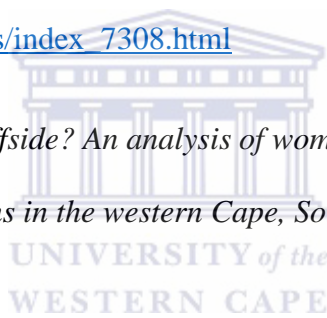
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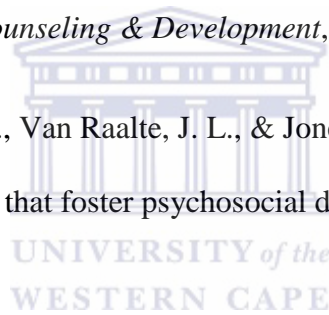
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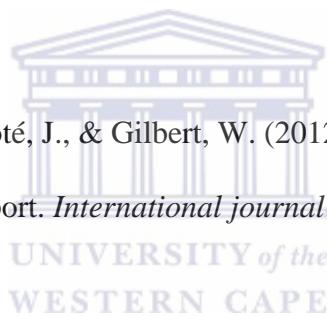
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## ANNEXURES

**Appendix A: Information Sheet**

**Appendix B: Informed Consent Form**

**Appendix C: Interview Guide**





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E-mail: myoung@uwc.ac.za

## INFORMATION SHEET

**Title: An exploratory study of essential life skills for adolescent elite athletes in South Africa**

### **What is this study about?**

This is a research project being conducted by Roger Woodruff at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are an elite adolescent athlete involved in a life skills program. The purpose of this research project is to explore and identify the important life skills necessary for inclusion in Life Skills programs in South African elite sport focusing on the development of adolescent athletes to enable them to grow up competent, healthy and reach their full potential.

### **What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?**

You will be asked to participate in an interview to discuss the research topic. It will take place at the regional MACSTEEL Maestro's office where you are based. You will be asked for your views on various questions regarding the life skills needs of elite adolescent athletes. The interviews will be arranged at a time that suits your schedule and will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes of your time.

### **Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?**

We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity in the data collection procedure. Although direct quotes may be used, no information that could identify you, e.g. name, or geographical location will be included in reports. Audio tapes, notes and transcripts will be kept in a locked cupboard only accessible to the researcher and computer files will be password-protected. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible.

### **What are the risks of this research?**

The study may include questions that may evoke emotional responses or could make the subject feel uncomfortable. You are under no obligation to answer and may ask to move on to the next question.

### **What are the benefits of this research?**

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about the needs of elite athletes. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of which life skills need to be included in a life skills program for elite adolescent athletes.

**Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

**Is any assistance available if I am negatively affected by participating in this study?**

Should your participation in the study evoke emotional responses, you will be referred to a counselor.

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

HOD: **Dr S Bassett**

Supervisor: **Dr. M Young**

University of the Western Cape

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Telephone: (021) 959 2350

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This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee.

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## CONSENT FORM: Participants

**Title of Research Project: An exploratory study of essential life skills for adolescent elite athletes in South Africa**

The study has been described to me in language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect me in any way.

Participant's name.....

Participant's signature.....

Witness.....

Date.....



I agree to be audio-taped during my participation in this study.

I do not agree to be audio-taped during my participation in this study.

I agree to be video recorded during my participation (for video conferencing interviews).

I do not agree to be video recorded during my participation (for video conferencing interviews).

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study coordinators

**Study Coordinator Name:** Dr. Marie Young

**University of the Western Cape**

**Private Bag X17, Belville 7535**

**Tel: 021 959 2377**

**Fax: (021)959-3688**

**Email: [myoung@uwc.ac.za](mailto:myoung@uwc.ac.za)**



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## CONSENT FORM: Parents/Guardian

**Title of Research Project: An exploratory study of essential life skills for adolescent elite athletes in South Africa**

The study has been described to me in language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree that my child may participate in the study. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my child's identity will not be disclosed and that he/she may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect him/her in any way.

Parent/guardian name.....

Parent/guardian signature.....

Witness.....

Date.....

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study coordinators

**Study Coordinator Name:** Dr. Marie Young

**University of the Western Cape**

**Private Bag X17, Belville 7535**

**Tel: 021 959 2377**

**Fax: (021)959-3688**

**Email: [myoung@uwc.ac.za](mailto:myoung@uwc.ac.za)**



## Interview Schedule

1. a). How old are you?  
b). Which sporting code you are involved in?  
c) How long have you been involved in your sport? (Tell me about your achievements in sport so far. / How does training and competing affect your schoolwork / studies?)
2. How long have you been on the Macsteel Maestro's program?
3. What is your definition of the term "life skills"/ What do you understand life skills to be?
4. Do you feel that being on the program is good for you – which aspects of the program did you find beneficial? (What do you like about the program? / Is there anything about the program that you would improve?)
5. Which life skills modules have you completed while you've been on the program? (Either as an individual or in a group)
6. The aim of the program is to develop athletes holistically – (helping participants to become better people and athletes)
  - a). Do you feel that being on the program has made you a better person? Why do you say so? Can you give me examples? Do you use what you learnt at home/ school/family and friends?
  - b). Do you feel that being on the program has helped you become a better athlete? Why do you say so? Can you give me examples? Do you use what you learnt in when you

practice or compete? Has it helped you with your performance, relationship with your coach, relationship with team members and your relationship with competitors?

7. Which life skills do you think adolescent athletes need outside sport - to have to manage their personal lives? (**refer to life skills list**) Why do you say so?
8. Which life skills do you think adolescent athletes need for sport - to be successful in sport? (**refer to the list**) Why do you say so?
9. Do you think that adolescent athletes need to plan for life after sport? (**If “no”** – why do you say so?) (**If “yes”** – why do you say so?).
  - b) When do you think they should start planning? Why do you say so?
  - c) Which life skills do you think adolescent athletes need to prepare them for life after sport? (**refer to life skills list**) Why do you say so?
  - d) Have you thought about your retirement from sport?
  - e) Do you have any short or long term plans in place? – (what are they?) (If “no” – why?)
10. Are there life skills, not on the current list, that you would like to see included?
  - b). Are there any life skills on the current list that you feel you don't need? (Not necessary?) What are they and why?
  - c). Are you involved in any community projects or charity work – (If “yes” - what is it and why did you choose to get involved?)

11. About what we have discussed today, which life skills, do you think, are the most important skills for elite adolescent athletes to learn for to be successful in sport? And in your personal lives? Why are they important?
12. Is there anything else that you would like to discuss on the topic of the essential life skills needed by elite adolescent South African athletes?

