

First team schoolboy rugby players'
understanding of their future career trajectories

By

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades, the growing global popularity of rugby has led to professional rugby becoming a lucrative career prospect with bigger contracts, sponsorships and increased specialization in the sport. It is, therefore, not surprising that many high-school learners aspire to become professional players. However, only a small percentage of these players may fulfil their ambitions.

This study explored how first-team rugby players at school understand their future career paths, and how they plan for it. The investigation also explored how rugby players perceive their identity, the role of rugby in this regard, and their understanding of the transitions inherent to a career in rugby.

A social constructionist and systemic meta-theoretical framework was employed to shed light on the findings. It focused on how participants' reality can be shaped through social interaction, but also through cultural and historical influences.

For this qualitative study, seven participants were selected by means of purposive sampling. Selection criteria stipulated that the participants had to be in grade 11 or 12, and in their school's first-team rugby squad. Data were collected by means of semi-structured individual interviews, followed by a focus-group interview. The coach of the first team and the grade-12 head teacher also completed an open-ended questionnaire. Data were analysed through thematic analysis. The three main themes derived were *identity formation*, *the notion of rugby* and *career opportunities*. Each theme consisted of various subthemes and categories of codes.

The findings indicated that the participants regard the first three years after completing school as a crucial period and an indicator for a successful future career in rugby. The process of identity formation, arising from participation as first-team players, influenced the way they

perceived and planned for their future careers. Selection for a provincial side strongly influenced the career aspirations of the participants. It might be useful to develop scholastic and career counselling programmes to facilitate the holistic development of talented schoolboy rugby players in South Africa. Such programmes can focus on a balanced development of sport specific and academic skills, including psychological and practical preparation for the very specific nature of a career as a professional rugby player.

Keywords: Academics, Career trajectory, Transition, Rugby careers, Identity

OPSOMMING

Die wêreldwye gewildheid van rugby het die afgelope twee dekades baie toegeneem. Dit het gelei daartoe dat professionele rugby 'n winsgewende loopbaanvooruitsig geraak het met groter kontrakte, borgskappe en verhoogde spesialisering in die sport. Dit is dus nie verbasend dat baie hoërskool leerders daarna streef om professionele spelers te word nie. Daar is egter slegs 'n klein persentasie spelers wat suksesvol daarin is om hierdie ambisie te verwesenlik.

Hierdie studie het ondersoek ingestel na die wyse waarop eerstespan rugbyspelers op skool hul toekomstige loopbaanroetes verstaan. Die ondersoek het ook verken hoe rugbyspelers hul identiteit beskou, die rol van rugby in hierdie verband en hul begrip van die loopbaanfases wat inherent is aan 'n loopbaan in rugby.

'n Sosiaal konstruktivistiese en sistemiese metateoretiese raamwerk is aangewend om lig te werp op die bevindinge. Dit het gefokus op hoe deelnemers se werklikhede gevorm kan word deur middel van sosiale interaksie, sowel as deur kulturele en geskiedkundige invloede.

Hierdie kwalitatiewe studie het sewe deelnemers gekies deur middel van doelgerigte steekproeftrekking. Keuringskriteria het bepaal dat leerders in Graad 11 of 12 en in die skool se eerstespan oefengroep moes wees. Data is ingesamel deur middel van semi-gestruktureerde individuele onderhoude, gevolg deur 'n fokusgroep onderhoud. Die afrigter van die eerstespan en Graad 12 hoof het ook 'n oop-einde vraelys voltooi. Data is ontleed deur middel van tematiese analise. Drie hooftemas is afgelei, naamlik *identiteitsformulering*, *die beskouing van rugby* en *loopbaangeleenthede*. Elke tema bestaan uit verskeie subtemas en koderings-kategorieë.

Die navorsingsbevindinge het aangedui dat deelnemers die eerste drie jaar na voltooiing van skool as belangrike periode en aanduiding van 'n suksesvolle loopbaan in rugby beskou. Die

proses van identiteitsvorming, wat voortspruit uit deelname as eerstespan-speler van die skool, het 'n invloed gehad op die wyse waarop eerstespan-spelers hul toekomstige loopbane vooruitskou en beplan. Deelname aan provinsiale spanne het 'n sterk invloed op die loopbaan vooruitsigte van deelnemers gehad. Dit kan nuttig wees om skolastiese en loopbaanvoorligting programme te ontwikkel wat holistiese ontwikkeling van talentvolle skole rugbyspelers in Suid-Afrika sal fasiliteer. Sulke programme kan fokus op 'n gebalanseerde ontwikkeling van sportspesifieke en akademiese vaardighede, insluitende sielkundige en praktiese voorbereiding vir die hoogs spesifieke aard van 'n loopbaan as professionele rugbyspeler.

Sleutelwoorde: Akademie, Loopbaanfases, Oorgang, Rugby loopbane, Identiteit

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CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXTUALISATION AND RATIONALE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Sport has the power to change the world ... it has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than government in breaking down racial barriers. (Nelson Mandela – World Laureus Sports Awards, 2000).

Games and sport have been part of human existence for thousands of years (Schofield, 2012). They form part of the deeper human self, can be enjoyed by almost anyone from any background, and transcend cultural boundaries (Barnes, 2006). It has even been shown that games and sport are effective in breaking down racial barriers created through systems like Apartheid. A good example is the 1995 Rugby World Cup tournament (Evans, 2010). The 24th of June 1995 is considered an important day in the history of rugby, as this marks the occasion when the South African national rugby team, the Springboks, against all odds defeated the New Zealand All Blacks by 15 points to 12 (Grundlingh, 2015). President Nelson Mandela, wearing a Springbok rugby jersey with the number six on his back, supported the Springboks and their captain Francois Pienaar (who was playing in the number-six jersey). This led to a wonderful atmosphere in the stadium and the country, and according to Evans (2010) and Smith, (2013), for a moment when all racial barriers were forgotten and the country stood united.

Some of the earliest evidence of the positive effect that sport contests can have on society dates back to 776 BC, when the Olympic Games were held in Olympia, Greece. During these Games, there was a commonly accepted “Sacred Truce” which stipulated that all wars must

be suspended for three months during Olympic training and the Games. Also, athletes were guaranteed a safe pass through all city-gates on their way to the Games. It was also agreed that no death penalty would be enforced during this time (Parachin, 2008). So, it seems that during those early times of turbulence and war, sport already served as a tool for achieving reconciliation, humility and peace – albeit only for a brief period.

Throughout the years, the media focus on sport has developed tremendously (Hodges, Keyter, Tarr, Serra, & Surujlal, 2014). Nowadays, many people use sport to earn a livelihood (whether as players, coaches, analysts, journalists, sport psychologists, etc.). Against this background it is important for educational psychologists to implement effective strategies to work with athletes. There seems to be particularly important educational considerations when potential professional sportspersons are still at school. These include support in planning their careers (taking into consideration the transitions from being a talented athlete to becoming an elite player), and developing coping skills in all spheres of life. Gaining greater insight into sport and its cultural, political and social relevance may be regarded as particularly important in South Africa, because many people in this country are passionate supporters of sport.

Over the past two decades, the global popularity of rugby has grown significantly, leading to bigger contracts, sponsorships, and increased specialization in the sport. It is therefore no surprise that many high-school learners who play rugby, aspire to become professional players. At a young age, talented school players are identified and contracted by provincial sports unions, resulting in players with strong ambitions of a career in rugby spending long hours on the rugby field (Price, 2007). However, only a small percentage of high-school rugby players are successful in fulfilling their ambitions of becoming full time professional players after completing school, as the competition is severe and many factors might hamper their progress (Baillie, 1993; Hickey & Kelly, 2008). These factors include fairly predictable and structured events, as well as unexpected occurrences, such as career-ending injuries, loss

of form, and subsequent non-selection (McKenna & Thomas, 2007). It seems evident that players need to be prepared from a young age for post-rugby life, as their careers might end abruptly; and without warning (Brooks & Kemp, 2008). A popular sportswriter, Van Reenen (2012), stated that the transition to post-rugby life is difficult when players struggle to move on from their glorious pasts as rugby players, to the realities of everyday life away from the rugby field.

Aspiring professional players at school level might find it difficult to balance academic work with the constant striving for excellence in their sport (Kissinger & Miller, 2009). These learners almost need to practise daily to achieve optimal fitness and improve their physical skills. They might, therefore, be confronted with a conflict between the demanding roles as first-team rugby players on the one hand, and academic roles ascribed to learners on the other hand (Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler, & Cote, 2009). This could become problematic for the learners, since both these roles encompass the need to excel. Society perceives excellence in both domains (academics and sport) as important (Wylleman, Alfermann, & Lavalley, 2004).

Talented players need to cope with transitions during their rugby careers, as well as the basic transitions in their education (e.g., progressing to the next grade at school, college, university, or occupational world). Most tertiary education institutions in South Africa require learners to apply for admission during their grade-11 year, which makes this an important academic year for any learner. The strong focus on rugby and the amount of time devoted to it, might negatively affect the academic achievement of learners (Baillie & Danish, 1992). Some players regard academic under-achievement at school as a sacrifice that they are willing to make, seeing that the possibility of a career in sport is so lucrative (Hickey & Kelly, 2008). From a relatively young age, talented players need to learn how to cope with increased pressure. Consequently, learners also need to cope with the transitions and challenges inherent to a particular educational setting, such as selecting subjects, developing meaningful

teacher-learner relationships, intra-class relationships, and social interactions among their peers (Kissinger & Miller, 2009; Stambulova et al., 2009). Balancing all these different variables may prove to be challenging.

The termination of a rugby career is an inevitable part of any player's life. Because rugby is a demanding physical-contact sport, this can occur at any time (Smith & McManus, 2008). In addition to career-ending injuries, loss of form and deselection might also lead to early retirement (Kanemasu & Molnar, 2014; Price, 2007). According to Wylleman, Lavallee and Alfermann (1999), athletes require coping strategies to effectively negotiate the transition to life after sport. The retirement from elite sports (whether voluntary or otherwise) requires players to cope with adjustments on a physical, psychological, and social level. Grove, Lavallee and Gordon, (1997) found that between 15 and 19 percent of athletes required considerable emotional adjustment to retirement from sport, especially with regard to the emotional loss associated with separation from significant others, such as teammates and coaches. If players are better prepared for post-sport life, it might lead to smoother transitions and more positive adjustments.

1.1.1 Rugby as a career

Professional rugby involves hard physical work and high skill levels. Players spend many hours on the practice field perfecting their techniques, and physical fitness (Cresswell & Eklund, 2006; NZRPA, 2011). Players devote themselves to training willingly, as they are aware of the positive role that effective preparation plays in producing peak performance. Playing for a school's first team is a major achievement, especially in the context of most South African boys' schools (Noakes & Vlismas, 2011; Spamer & De la Port, 2006). Many first-team players enjoy high levels of recognition, not only from their teammates and peers, but also from the general public and media (e.g., articles about talented players and captains). This is in addition to live television coverage of schoolboy rugby matches. Rugby, and all the

ongoing discourses on the topic, are likely to influence a learner's sense of identity. It is logical to assume that they will miss the camaraderie and lifestyle of the sport after the completion of their rugby careers (NZRPA, 2011). A strong rugby identity can help to enhance performance on the playing field, but might at the same time lead to difficulties after career termination. In this regard, Cecić Erpič, Wylleman and Zupančič (2004) found that athletes who develop a strong athletic identity might be prone to frequent psychological difficulties and challenges with regard to coping with their post-sport career lives. The degree to which rugby players construct their identity through sport, might possibly lead to an identity crisis at the termination of their rugby careers (Hickey & Kelly, 2008; Wylleman et al., 1999). Learners who identify exclusively with the role of a rugby player, might find it problematic once that identity is no longer intact.

The career path or so-called job ladder of a potential professional player might become a major part of a player's identity (Spamer & De la Port, 2006). In short, the ladder in school rugby involves the development of players from a youth level, through the various age groups and into the school's first-rugby team (Maseko & Surujlal, 2011). First-team players compete at school level in order to be selected for their provincial side to compete at the annual Craven Week tournament, which is South Africa's biggest rugby event for high-school players. Players who perform well at this tournament can subsequently be selected for the South African Schools' or Academy team, which is effectively the top level of rugby for Under-18 players. Numerous Craven-Week players are awarded provincial contracts, which may further fuel their dreams of becoming full-time professional rugby players (Van Reenen, 2012). A job ladder in a sport such as rugby, however, does not produce career progression in the same way as those associated with traditional "white-collar" careers. Most of these school and professional players sign short-term contracts lasting between one and five years, with no guarantee of playing time or a starting position on the team (McKnight et al., 2009).

These short term contracts might add to levels of anxiety and stress regarding a career after rugby, as many variables can impact the development and functioning of the player.

A player might feel that he has not accomplished all his goals when he is plagued by injury or cut from teams, which could make it difficult for him to negotiate transitions (Hickey & Kelly, 2008). The realization that a player can no longer compete at the highest level, might have a negative effect on his self-esteem. This, coupled with inexperience in the occupational world, might lead to problems in the years following retirement (Baillie, 1993; Van Reenen, 2012). Professional rugby players, who are used to the hype and excitement of playing in front of thousands of spectators in the stadium and on television, can find it challenging to adapt to the normal workforce and structure of a nine-to-five working day or the so-called white-collar occupation (Baillie, 1993). Players need to prepare for this transition and be aware of the challenges related to the termination of their rugby careers. Obtaining some form of tertiary qualification during their playing days can facilitate the transition towards a post-sport career (Hickey & Kelly, 2008).

Having briefly described the career trajectory of a professional rugby player from school level, it seems appropriate to explore the process of deciding on a post-school career and how young people can be counselled during such a process.

1.1.2 Careers and career counselling

A career can be defined as a sequence of jobs and activities that constitute what a person does for a living, or the evolving sequence of work experiences over time (Bourke, 2003). Many theories of career and career development have been developed over the years: such as Super's developmental approach; Holland's personality-type approach; and Bandura's theory of accident or chance (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005). A large number of people spend the majority of their days at the workplace and derive meaning and identity from their occupations (Grove

et al., 1997). However, nowadays, occupational prospects are not as predictable as a few years ago, and the transition between different jobs and occupations is far more frequent and complex, due to the dynamic and varying nature of the world of work (Watson & Kuit, 2007). The manner in which identity and meaning are derived, has changed considerably during the modern era, with the paradigm of certainty being replaced by uncertainty; and predictability by unpredictability (Mkhize, 2005). Educational psychologists, therefore, need to be cognizant of the changes in the world of work during the counselling process and need to assist clients to avoid disappointment with this changing landscape. According to Mkhize (2005) these losses of meaning and marginalization have become a trademark in our postmodern world.

Over the years, career counselling has evolved from matching individuals and work environments, to a complex interplay of psychosocial and career concerns (Watson & Kuit, 2007). Psychologists now understand and accept that career planning involves both personal, emotional, and family issues, as well influences emanating from the media and discourse in the wider society – which might influence career choices. The interaction between career issues and personal concerns is important, and it is risky to separate these factors when working with clients (Bimrose, 2010). It can also be understood that the way in which any economy is structured co-dictates the way people consider and explore different career options (Patton, 2005). The current job market provides several opportunities for professional sportspersons on the short term, where they can earn high salaries, and, in addition, become well-known both nationally and internationally.

1.1.3 Athletic career transitions and retirement from sport.

The topic of sport-career transitions has received much attention in the sport and educational psychology literature since the early 1980s (Smith & McManus, 2008; Surujlal & Van Zyl, 2014). The phase between the end of an athlete's career and the beginning of a post-athletic

career, has received the most interest from psychologists. Retirement, whether planned or otherwise, involves many decisions regarding financial, medical, educational, and career matters (Maseko & Surujlal, 2011). In addition, the development of different ways of describing oneself, or the sense of “who you are”, in other words, your identity, plays an important role during this phase in a sportsperson’s life. Athletic retirement is different from occupational retirement, because athletes typically begin and end their careers at younger ages (McKnight et al., 2009; Smith & McManus, 2008). At the time when some athletes retire from their sport, their non-athletic peers have already spent a few years establishing their careers in other domains. Athletic career retirement can involve a major disruption in identity, as it encompasses a completely different lifestyle. This might differ from non-athletic career termination, as these individuals are usually better prepared and informed about retirement planning and transitions (Baillie, 1993).

According to Schlossberg (1981, p. 5), transition can be described as “an event or non-event, which results in a change in one’s perception about oneself and the world, and which requires a corresponding change in one’s relationships and behaviour.” Alfermann (2000) suggests that one should view transitions as life events, which influence a sportsperson’s future development and well-being. Transitions can generally be classified by their degree of predictability. Normative transitions are fairly predictable and structured and might be related to sport achievements or age bracket (e.g., the transition from high school to tertiary education or the transition from junior to senior level). Non-normative transitions generally have a low level of predictability and may occur unexpectedly (Stambulova et al., 2009). These transitions refer to those changes that are expected to take place, but which, due to circumstances, do not happen.

Athletes need to be prepared for a life after sport (Hickey & Kelly, 2008; McKenna & Thomas, 2007; Van Reenen, 2012). A combination of factors is responsible for ending a sport

career. Some common factors involve chronological age, career-ending injuries, loss of form, deselection, and voluntary retirement (Stambulova et al., 2009). Athletes generally experience involuntary retirement as challenging, because they are seldom adequately prepared for such a transition (Wylleman et al., 2004). Retirement from elite sport (voluntarily or otherwise) requires athletes to cope with adjustments on social, physical and personal levels. Wylleman et al. (2004) proposed that preparing for the transition towards retirement should take a lifespan approach, and not as a once-of event, in order to focus on the holistic development during a player's career. The quality of an athlete's adjustment to a post-sporting career will be influenced by the developmental factors related to the adaptation process, the causes of retirement, and the coping strategies mediating the response to athletic career termination (Wylleman et al., 1999). Some rugby players may lack diversity in their social identification, as the nature of their sport requires them to spend many hours on the playing field, resulting in a socialization process which occurs exclusively in a rugby environment (Baillie, 1993). Such a restricted development of life skills can hamper a rugby player's ability to assume non-athletic roles after retirement. Players, who neglect other spheres in life, such as education, developing friendships outside rugby, exploring other career and lifestyle options, might feel abandoned upon retirement which can increase feelings of worthlessness and loneliness (McKnight et al., 2009). These feelings can contribute to a negative self-esteem and issues regarding adaptation to a life after rugby.

It, therefore, seems obvious that preparation for the different transitions that have to be negotiated throughout a career cannot be underestimated. However, this is an area that has not been fully developed and adequately facilitated in South Africa, seeing that many players and athletes experience some pressure with regard to the process of ending their professional sporting careers.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Preparing for a post-sport life is troublesome for many retiring athletes, as their investment (and frequent over-investment) in sport might leave them with limited employment options and compromised psychological and physical well-being (Baillie, 1993; McKenna & Thomas, 2007). Athletes do not always have sufficient time to plan for retirement, or they choose to postpone their planning for retirement, due to their relentless pursuit of excellence, and the demands of their sport (Maseko & Surujlal, 2011). According to Van Reenen (2012) approximately 84% of professional players in South Africa find it difficult to survive financially once they stop playing rugby. One of the primary reasons for this unfortunate situation is that few players attain academic qualifications during their playing days, as their only focus is on rugby. This leaves them unprepared for the challenges of “real” life at the end of their “sport life” (McKnight et al., 2009; Van Reenen, 2012). In addition, the lack of anticipatory socialization (preparing for retirement before it happens) can negatively affect a player’s ability to adjust to a life after a sport career.

Finding a job and/or establishing a career after playing rugby can be a significant challenge because it is likely that players will experience a period of unemployment. According to a survey by the New Zealand Rugby Players’ Association (NZRPA, 2011), players who studied or gained meaningful work experience outside the realms of rugby, generally took less time to find a post-retirement job and experienced the process as less traumatic than their colleagues, who only focused on rugby. Apart from finding meaningful employment after retirement, several other difficult adjustments (specifically in terms of identity construction), need to be confronted. It would, therefore, seem that planning a career as a professional sportsman is an on-going and multi-faceted process, especially in a young schoolboy rugby player’s life.

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

There is a need to explore perceptions of athletes at school level of the transitions that occur throughout their sporting careers as well as thereafter (Wylleman et al., 2004). According to Mkhize (2005), one of the objectives of counsellors nowadays is to help their clients navigate the uncertainties which accompany change – in this case transition from one career to another.

It would be helpful for high-performing rugby players at school to be aware of the challenges of career termination and the importance of preparing for a life after rugby. An awareness of the many aspects that can impact their sport participation might also enhance their preparation for the transitions that await them, when they pursue a career in rugby. Athletes, who have not planned for retirement, might experience negative experiences such as emotional difficulties, decreased self-confidence, and identity crisis reactions (Surujlal & Van Zyl, 2014). A positive transition can take place when an athlete is able to make a quick and easy adjustment to the demands of a transition.

A number of sport entertainment industries and international governing bodies, have set up education facilities and player-development programmes to prepare elite performers for a life after sport (Baillie, 1993; Hickey & Kelly, 2008; Stambulova et al., 2009). However, some of these measures were only recently introduced in South African rugby, as part of the South African Rugby Players Association's (SARPA) first official guidelines and services to support current professional players to prepare for a life after retirement from rugby. This commenced in 2013 (SARPA Foundation, 2015). This foundation was formed to generate funds, bursaries, and donations and to provide a platform which offers professional rugby players the opportunity to develop their academic and personal skills during their careers. However, there seems to be a gap in research regarding the way schoolboy rugby players perceive and understand their future career paths. Gaining insight into these perceptions

might be valuable when developing programmes for facilitating informed future career choices.

These programmes will assist rugby players to optimise their entry into professional sport, and at the same time obtain academic qualifications for their post-sport careers. It can also be helpful in providing a foundation for the development of future systems regarding career assistance for all high-performing sportspersons in South African schools.

1.4 RESEARCH AIM

The aims of this study were to:

- explore the way talented rugby players in a privileged boys' school understand their career trajectories and plan for it, as many of these learners may aspire to become professional rugby players in the future;
- gain a greater understanding of how schoolboy rugby players construe their identities and how they make meaning of being rugby players.

I believe that the findings may provide valuable insight into the phenomenon of how young rugby players perceive themselves, how they think about their future career paths and the various transitions during their careers. Such an understanding and insight might in future lead to the development of programmes which could assist learners in reflecting about the future and the importance of looking at their own development holistically. This may lead to more informed decisions and a readiness for the challenges and rewards of a possible career in rugby specifically, but also for any other career for that matter.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main question that guided this research was:

How do first-team rugby players understand their future career trajectories?

In order to gain a clear understanding, the following subquestions were investigated simultaneously.

- How do first-team rugby players describe their own identity?
- What role does/can rugby play in this regard (currently and in the future)?
- How do first-team rugby players understand the transitions that have to be negotiated during a career involving rugby?

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to ensure its authenticity, a theoretical framework serves as a foundation from which to conduct research. It assists the researcher in providing the motivation for the study, data collection methods, and techniques to interpret and explain the research findings (Merriam, 2009). The theoretical framework, therefore, gives direction and meaning to the research process.

This study was grounded on the concept of social constructionism, as it is concerned with the cultural and historical influences in people's lives, and how it contribute to the way their reality is shaped through social interaction (Adams, Collair, Oswald, & Perold, 2004). The decision to use this particular perspective was based on the notion that the historical context of rugby in South Africa is of such a nature that professional players in this country earn much respect. The way they construct their identity could, therefore, be significantly influenced by playing rugby at this level (Rubin, 2013). The prevailing discourses of the time and context, structure the way in which people interact with the world, and research from a social constructionist viewpoint is "about interpreting the social world as a kind of language, a system of meanings and practices that construct reality" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, as cited in Adams et al., 2004, p. 356). Social constructionism also challenges conventional thoughts and allows for members of a community to construct their own knowledge, with a chance to present their own experience (Burr, 2003). It, therefore, provided me with an

important avenue to enter the life space of the participants in the study, as noted by Mkhize (2005). One of the main characteristics of the game of rugby is the emphasis on teamwork, and thus on a social unit within which meaning can be constructed. Therefore, a social constructionist framework enables a greater understanding of the views and meaning-making of participating young rugby players regarding their thinking about and planning of their careers.

1.7 RESEARCH PARADIGM, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.7.1 Research paradigm

A paradigm can be described as a lens through which we view the world, and a system by which various aspects of human behaviour are examined and explained. The research paradigm shapes the researcher's understanding and thoughts about knowledge, how it can be accessed, and how the research questions can be answered (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006).

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) stipulate that research paradigms are guided by three principles, namely ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Ontology relates to our perspective of reality, epistemology to one's relationship about what is known, and methodology to how specific knowledge is obtained. As researcher I attempted to position myself within an interpretive-constructivist paradigm and understood that my own assumptions, based on this paradigm, may be apparent in the text and in the way that I conducted this study. A more detailed analysis of these principles will be presented in Chapter Three.

This study was, therefore, conducted within an interpretative-constructivist research paradigm, because I believe that all people have unique individual ways of experiencing the meaning-making process. People understand life events and experiences in their own unique ways, and therefore life cannot be objectively quantified. A qualitative methodological

approach is useful when the researcher wishes to engage with participants to gain insights into their own meaning-making process (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). It is one of the most effective ways to understand behaviour from an individual's point of view.

1.7.2 Research design

A research design can be regarded as a framework of action that links the research question with the execution of the project (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). In this study I implemented a basic interpretive research design while using a creative expressive activity, individual interviews and a focus group discussion in order to collect the data. Participants of the study were required to answer a collection of questions relating to their understanding of their future career trajectories, as well as some other questions regarding their identity and the role rugby plays in this regard.

1.7.3 Participants

The participants of this study consisted of first-team rugby players from a privileged boys' school in the Western Cape. This study, therefore, used purposive and convenience sampling, as the participants were selected from a certain group of people and with a specific purpose in mind – to understand and gain insight into their perceptions and ways of thinking. The selection of participants was based on availability and practical considerations, such as accessibility and geographical location. The head coach of this team and the grade-12 head teacher of the school also took part in this study, by completing an open-ended questionnaire relating to the research topic.

1.7.4 Data collection methods

The following methods were employed:

1. A creative activity where participants were asked to design a theme and logo for their shoulder pads (protective gear that worn by many players). This served as an

instrument to facilitate open discussion and to gain understanding into certain aspects that might influence their way of thinking.

2. Individual participant interviews were conducted in a convenient setting at the particular school. (Matters pertaining to informed consent and confidentiality were explained at the onset of the interview process.) These interviews were semi-structured, using among other questions, the *Career Style Interview* (Savickas, 2002, as cited in Hartung, 2007) as guide to facilitate the questioning process.
3. A focus-group interview took place where the preliminary themes identified from the individual interviews, were presented to the participants. This also served as a checking measure. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), a focus-group interview is a method where data are obtained in a collective interaction setting where participants might feel more relaxed and at ease.
4. The head coach and the grade-12 head teacher of this particular school completed an open-ended questionnaire, in order to gain an understanding of their perspectives regarding the career planning of talented rugby players at their school.

1.7.5 Data analysis

The research data comprised the participants' answers from the qualitative individual interviews and focus-group discussions. A thematic analysis process was implemented. Within psychology this technique is generally considered to be compatible with a social-constructionist paradigm. It is regarded as a foundational method for qualitative analysis, which provided me with an useful and flexible research tool to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) as well as providing a detailed and rich account of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis also takes into account that the researcher plays an active role in reflecting and thinking about the data in order to generate themes.

1.7.6 Ethical considerations

A researcher not only has the responsibility of protecting the well-being of the research participants, but also towards his/her colleagues and the people to whom the findings of a study will be presented. By adhering to the ethical principles stipulated by Wassenaar (2006) one can strengthen the ethical credibility of a research study. These principles are: justice; non-maleficence; autonomy; respect for the dignity and rights of participants; and beneficence. Additionally, two other key ethical principles that should be considered in any project include confidentiality and consent. Confidentiality involves protecting the identity of the person from whom information is gathered by means of pseudonyms and by ensuring that all data will be protected at all times (Merriam, 2009). Informed consent ensures that participants are well-informed about the process of research and that they will voluntarily consent to participate. Patton (2002, as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 233) provides a checklist to aid researchers in ensuring ethical conduct:

1. *Explaining the purpose of the inquiry and the methods to be used*, to ensure that participants understand the research process.
2. *Promises and reciprocity*, by doing what one promises to do and giving feedback about the research.
3. *Risk assessment*, which determines the different levels of risks for the participants.
4. *Confidentiality*, by using pseudonyms to ensure that participants' identity is protected and by ensuring that identifying information is not presented in the published research.
5. *Informed consent* and assent can be obtained by being open and transparent about the purpose of the research, as well as ensuring that participants understand the aspect of voluntary participation.

6. *Data access and ownership* are the researcher's responsibility to ensure that research data are safely protected against any unauthorised access, as well as clarifying and providing feedback to the participants who has ownership of the data.
7. *Advice* throughout the whole process of the research study through regular and in depth supervision with experienced supervisors.

With regard to the above-mentioned principles, permission for access to the participants was obtained from the Western Cape Department of Education and the principal of this particular school. Ethical clearance was also granted by the Research Ethics Committee of the Stellenbosch University for the research to be conducted (Number: DESC/Ellis/Apr2015/4).

Informed consent and assent were obtained from participants and their legal guardians by means of a letter of consent (Appendix A) and a letter of assent (Appendix B) which informed them of the confidentiality of the research; that there would be a low risk involved; that their roles in the research are voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. Research participants were also informed that feedback on the findings of the research would, upon completion, be made available to them upon completion of the study.

1.8 DECLARING MYSELF AS THE RESEARCHER

According to Merriam (2009), an additional method to endorse credibility is to declare oneself as the researcher.

I acknowledge that my own reality of who I am as researcher might have influenced the way I interpret the data and findings from the current research.

I am a 28 year-old male with a Bachelor's degree in Sport Science, an Honours degree in Psychology, and a Post Graduate Certificate in Education. This research thesis formed part of fulfilling the requirements for a Master's degree in Educational Psychology.

I grew up in a town in the Western Cape and was fortunate to attend a school where sport and academics were considered as important instruments to develop effectively. I was a relatively talented and enthusiastic athlete at school who participated in many different activities, and found it challenging to maintain a balance between academics and sports.

The town in which I grew up is very much a social community where people may be exposed to many different ideologies and ways of thinking, from a young age onwards. Growing up in this environment, I am fascinated with the role that sport can play in the daily functioning of a society, and I believe that sport can serve as a tool for developing meaningful relationships between people of different cultures. My worldview (constructivist-interpretative) and theoretical framework (social constructionism) guided my way of thinking about knowledge construction and functioning. I believe that the historical and cultural aspects of sport in South Africa can impact the way learners perceive their future careers, and I would find it meaningful to play a positive role in this regard. Finding an effective synergy between sport and academics, while enjoying the many challenges, nuances and pleasures that life as a whole offers, is something I aspire towards. This view and experience of life thus resounds quite significantly with the phenomenon that I set out to explore in this study. I, therefore, had to be vigilant about personal perceptions throughout the research process, in order not to allow bias to influence the findings.

1.9 DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.9.1 Schoolboy

For the purpose of this investigation, the term *schoolboy* refers to any male learner that is currently receiving formal education or is obliged to receive education as stipulated in terms of the South African Schools' Act.

1.9.2 Rugby

The term *Rugby* refers to a sport that consist of two teams of fifteen players each, with the aim of scoring the most points by gaining possession of the ball, to take it into opposition territory and to score points by means of tries (grounding the ball in the end zone of the field) field-goals (kicks), and drop or penalty goals (kicks).

1.9.3 Career trajectory

Career trajectory refers to the different paths and directions a person's career can take as he/she moves forward, side-ways, backwards or remains stationary (McKenna & Thomas, 2007). This thesis will refer in particular to the career paths of rugby players.

1.9.4 Transition

A *transition* is a life event which can change people's opinions and perceptions of themselves, especially with regard to future development and overall well-being (Alfermann, 2000; Schlossberg, 1981). Transitions are generally characterised as either normative (fairly predictable) or non-normative (lower level of predictability).

1.9.5 Identity

The term *Identity* refers to the manner in which one perceives and describes him/herself (Stambulova et al., 2009). People form and understand their identities in their own unique ways. In order to stay true to the meta-theoretical roots of socio-constructionism, these differences were kept in mind when attempting to understand the participants' own identity constructions.

1.10 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This thesis comprises the following chapters:

Chapter One: Contextualisation and rationale of the research study

This chapter focuses on introducing the study and serves as point of departure for the research. It also provides an outline and clarification of the processes and techniques implemented during the investigation.

Chapter Two: Literature review

This chapter provides a review of available literature regarding the topic at hand and also describes the theoretical framework of social constructionism.

Chapter Three: Research methodology, design and process

This chapter provides a discussion of the research process by describing the different features of a qualitative study, research paradigm, design, and methodology.

Chapter Four: Research findings

This chapter presents an outline and explanation of the different themes, subthemes, and categories that emerged during the data analysis.

Chapter Five: Discussion, conclusions, limitations and future research

The concluding chapter discusses the findings by placing them within the wider context of available literature about this topic. Final conclusions and recommendations are made, as well as a discussion about the strengths and limitations of the study.

1.11 CONCLUSION

Chapter One provided an outline and overview of the research study and discussed the problem statement, motivation and aim of the study, as well as a formulation of the research questions. Furthermore, the following were discussed: the theoretical framework, research paradigm, design, methodology as well as some ethical considerations pertaining to qualitative research. This was followed by a definition of terms, and, finally, an outline of the thesis chapters.

The next chapter provides a discussion of literature pertaining to the research framework and

facets relating to the research topic, such as a discussion about rugby as a sport, its impact on identity formation, and a conceptualisation of careers and career transitions in sport.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of a literature review is to provide a context in which the study is based, whereby one can identify how previous research has contributed to the current topic (Kaniki, 2006; Mertens, 2005). A literature review enables a researcher to place a new study in context with the existing literature about the specific topic at hand, in a manner which does not create any expectations or bias (Aveyard, 2010).

The literature review consists of highlighting different facets relating to the research topic. It will first describe postmodernism and how postmodernist thinking impacts the phenomenon of social constructionism. This forms the theoretical framework, which will promote the understandings constructed during this research study. The chapter will then continue with a short discussion of the economic impact of sport on society. Thereafter, I shall present a conceptualisation of rugby as a national and global sport, and how it has influenced social structures as well as the attitudes and aspirations of players. This will lead to a discussion about identity formation in sport, and how it might influence a player's career planning and career transitions. The chapter will be concluded with a discussion of career counselling in the postmodern context and how it can be adapted to be effective when consulting with sportspersons. In addition, a summary of available career-assistance programmes will be presented.

2.2 POSTMODERNISM

Social constructionism is one of the approaches in psychology which has risen from postmodern thinking (Watson & Kuit, 2007). Postmodernism stretches conventional boundaries and accepts that knowledge is developed through real experiences and

interpretations of situations. Within a postmodern approach to career counselling, for instance, it is accepted that both global and technological changes have impacted the world of work and that the nature of work security could be understood more in terms of employability than permanent employment (Watson & Kuit, 2007). This way of thinking allows for different interpretations and meaning making in certain situations, of which researchers need to be aware. One also needs to be aware of one's own subjective reactions or perceptions to certain stimuli. Social constructionism developed as an understanding of the different ways of experiencing and understanding life, influenced by multiple interactive constructions of meaning (generated linguistically) and in interpersonal interactions within social settings (Merriam, 2009).

2.3 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

Social constructionism challenges conventional thoughts and work from the premise that every individual has a unique way of understanding the social processes within a community (Burr, 2003). Social constructionism, therefore, aims to describe the way human beings in the broader society understand, and make sense of the different interactions and realities of the world. It is described by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, as cited in Adams et al., 2004, p. 356) as being “about interpreting the social world as a kind of language, as a system of meanings and practices that construct reality”. The prevailing discourses of time and context, therefore, structure the way this sense-making occurs, and the linguistically-produced statements which people often take to be absolute truths.

According to Burr (2003), social constructionism refers to reality being produced by a set of interrelated meanings, representations, stories, images, metaphors, and statements. One's sense of identity is affected by the context in which these “absolute truths” are constructed, and are, therefore, influenced by everyday structures such as politics, religion, history, and culture. South Africa is a country with 11 official languages and many cultures. A culture can

be defined as a social system of shared symbols, perspectives, and understandings (Stambulova et al., 2009). When working from this perspective, one should take this into account that in different cultural settings unique ways of meaning making exist, and that human behaviour is context-specific. Acknowledgement of different cultures also helps one to recognise that both formal and informal socialization influence the way people function in society (Beck & Kosnik, 2006; Wortham & Jackson, 2008).

Social constructionism also refers to a reciprocal process of meaning making and views reality as fluid instead of fixed (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Working from this understanding enables me as the researcher to understand and adapt the research process as certain developmental areas arise, seeing that I understand the process of change and am aware that personal growth is foreseeable.

People's realities and the way they make sense of their worlds are based on their own frames of reference. Burr (2000) identifies four principles to consider when working within social constructionism. Firstly, it is impossible to identify a single objective truth about life and its meaning, because every person experiences reality in a unique and different way. It, therefore, seems vital to regard each individual as the active agent in his/her own life, and to understand that individuals' own experiences relate to them forming subjective meanings of their personal realities.

Secondly, the way in which people give meaning to their life experiences, is linked to matters such as history and culture (Burr, 2000). People construct reality through social interaction (Beyer, Du Preez, & Eskell-Blokland, 2007) and, therefore, the researcher should keep in mind that different discourses regarding sport and its meaning exist, and that an individual's perceptions are influenced by the beliefs, values, labels, customs, institutions, and social realities of a culture (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Social constructionists work from the

understanding that these constructed realities interact with one another on a daily basis, and are transmitted from one generation to the next, and, therefore, become the “lenses” through which people constitute their identities – through which they view their lives. For players, the history and culture of rugby can play a major role in the process of identity formulation (Grundlingh, 2015; Niehaus, 2014; Price, 2007) (This notion will be discussed throughout this chapter.) It would thus seem as though the rugby world or culture, is a space within which distinctive meanings of identity may be constructed and re-constructed for participants in the various activities that constitute that world or culture.

Thirdly, language impacts the way in which knowledge is created and sustained through social interaction. According to Burr (2000) people’s daily interaction during the course of social life, expands their knowledge and leads to specific ways of perceiving the realities of their worlds. People construct, explain, and describe their own realities through personal relationships, which are influenced by the use of language in different settings and cultures (Beyer et al., 2007). Researchers working within social constructionism as theoretical framework, need to understand that different varieties of “truth” may be established by participants in the research process, since different socio-cultural groups communicate through different languages. The use of language not only refers to the spoken language, but also to the way certain societies value certain events or phenomena. The diverse use of languages may function as a means through which participants constitute their realities (Beyer et al., 2007), and, therefore, no single explanation or description of human behaviour can be regarded as the only or absolute truth.

Lastly, people are active participants in their own meaning-making processes, which are derived from their own personal experiences and situations (Burr, 2000). I, therefore, had to keep in mind that participants are not passive in the process of meaning making, and need to consider each individual in his/her specific context, as stories and experiences can be

interpreted in different ways. The context of this specific study was one of a high school in a town in the Western Cape Province, where the majority of people are knowledgeable about rugby as a sport and its status in the minds of the people. This is avidly described in the work of Wynand Claassen, a former Springbok rugby captain, who noted that rugby has a special fascination in South Africa, as a rugby field can be found in almost every little town, school or community, and that these fields are just as familiar as the local church towers (Claassen & Retief, 1985). It must, however, be noted that Claassen expressed this opinion from within his own framework as a player and person, and might therefore only relate to the communities known to him. I am of the opinion that the community where the current research was conducted may well have fitted into Claassen's framework.

Working from within social constructionism as theoretical framework provided me with an opportunity to get an insider perspective into the lives of the participants. The social and economic influence of sport, and specifically professional sport, and its impact on both individual as well as a group functioning within a society, cannot be underestimated. A society can be described as an organised group of people that are associated with one another for and by aspects such as cultural, political, scientific, and benevolent reasons (Prinsloo, 2005). In short, it involves a group of people and everyone that are affected by the functioning and operational structure within this group. The formation and development of different histories and different events have played a major role in the current functioning of society. One must, therefore, regard historical as well as contemporary events when considering the functioning of rugby within general society.

2.3.1 Economics of sport

The evolution of sport in the postmodern era has resulted in a multi-billion rand industry. For example, the commercial enterprise of sport is now considered as having a greater worth than the food and electronics industries (Grundlingh, 2015). As a result, there has been an

explosive growth in sports tourism, sports marketing and the consultancy sectors in sport (Hodges et al., 2014). Players have become marketable commodities and secure lucrative salaries and sponsorships. They are endorsed in the media and are constantly in the public eye (Price, 2007). Professional players are aware of the intense competition for a place a team and the potential loss of income if they do not perform well. They are, subsequently, faced with the duality of pursuing a sporting career, while also attempting to cope with the scrutiny and demands of the media. This has been the case since the establishment of the professional rugby in South Africa in the mid-1990s (Van Reenen, 2012). The change from amateurism to professionalism has brought about many changes in the context of South African rugby. It should be noted that one of the pioneers of South African rugby, Doctor Danie Craven, was opposed to professionalism and felt that money would ruin the intrinsic incentives of rugby. Even though rugby was played under amateur rules until the mid-1990s, this does not mean that players were not compensated in some way or another (Grundlingh, 2015). According to Schoeman, (2009) many rugby unions paid the players by means of “under-the-table” match fees and other forms of remunerations. These rumours and events played a role in shaping the context of rugby in South Africa, since these tales have been retold and relived by many generations. It, therefore, seems inevitable to consider the rich history of rugby as a sport and how it developed into one of the leading and eminent sports of modern society (Brooks & Kemp, 2008; Hodges et al., 2014) in an attempt to understand and regard the descriptions and analogies of the participants of the current study.

2.4 RUGBY

A game of rugby involves two teams of 15 players each, who pass, throw, catch and kick an oval ball, with the aim of scoring tries as well as scoring points through kicking the ball through the rugby posts in a specific way (Allison & MacLean, 2012). Rugby is a highly physical game with a high risk of injury, where contact between players consists of tackling,

scrumming, rucks and mauls. Despite the risk of injury, the game has various physical benefits for players, especially on the short term (Hattingh & Spamer, 2004). In the long-term, however, many retired players are plagued with rugby-related injuries. The ever-present danger and a sense of “manliness,” might be one of the reasons for rugby’s popularity, with more than 100 countries participating in this sport. According to Rubin (2013) rugby’s reliance on violence and physical and mental toughness, allows the sport to straddle the boundary between autonomy and reality without losing its balance. It is believed that rugby provides males with the opportunity to prove their worth in an almost “battle-like” arena, where there is no place to hide and where your reactions to events might be regarded as an indicator of your character and purpose.

2.4.1 History of rugby

According to common folklore, rugby as a sport originated in 1823, when William Webb Ellis picked up the ball during a game of soccer and started to run with it as opposed to kicking it, which was the custom during those times (Harris, 2013). The authenticity of this event has, however, been challenged by some authors and historians, with Allison and MacLean (2012) stipulating that the assumption of Ellis picking up a ball and consequently running with it works as a type of foundation myth, and subsequently, as a brand image. This image is still prevalent in our current era, where the ultimate award and prestige in rugby relates to being the winners of the Rugby World Cup. This tournament is played every four years and involves the top rugby-playing nations of the world competing to win the holy grail of rugby, namely the William Webb Ellis trophy (Harris, 2013). The specific development of the game of rugby in itself is, however, not the focus of this particular study, which concentrates more on the social effect of the sport. The game has developed significantly over recent years, both locally and worldwide, with many players now pursuing professional careers in rugby.

One approach to understand the impact of rugby on society is to look back at its origin and some aspects relating to it. According to Phillips (1996) rugby was born out of a need to provide a manly education and to restrain civilians from taking part in unruly behaviour. It provided men with the opportunity to be civilised members of the community, men who were also masculine and dominant. This is substantiated in the work of Collins (2010) in which he mentioned that Thomas Arnold, the headmaster of the Rugby School (the school in the town of Rugby in the United Kingdom – where according to the famous legend the sport originated), viewed rugby as an instrument to develop character.

In those early years, the popularity of the game progressed quickly, because the game does not require much equipment or careful preparation of a playing field. Rugby was also regarded as an effective alternative to other sports, since it was not easily affected by wet weather or stormy conditions (Phillips, 1996). Furthermore, rugby's requirement of physical strength, of lurking danger, and sense of "roughness", made it appealing among those groups where admiration for masculinity and toughness prevailed (McKenna & Thomas, 2007).

Playing rugby was seen as a way of proving one's worth as a man, especially in rural settings, where there was a general belief that the material luxuries of city living made men effeminate and "soft". This culture was described in a newspaper report in the *Evening Post* in 1905 (as cited in Phillips, 1996, p. 81), where it was stipulated that "The game would prevent young men from suffering the degeneracy of urban life, and reassure old men that through the performance of their teams, vicariously experienced, that debility has not yet stuck". Some authors went as far as to describe rugby as a form of war, since many principles of rugby were, according to them, equally applicable to rugby as a sport (Collins, 2010). This notion is still evident in postmodern society, with Rubin (2013) stating that rugby can be regarded as a metaphor for war.

Rugby carries the principle that individuals must put aside individual aspirations and aim to work for the greater good of the team (Niehaus, 2014). According to Rubin (2013) rugby can be differentiated from other social practices, due to the immediacy and “physical honesty” it requires. On the field, players are expected to react rapidly and decisively to immediate and unexpected challenges. On the field, there is no time or place for deception. The way a boy reacts to these challenges, could be an authentic indication of “who he is”, seeing that there are no place to “hide” on the rugby field. This expectation might contribute to the construction of his identity. A player’s responses to random stimuli, such as the bounce of the ball or the body position of an opposing player, are considered to be instinctive. According to some arguments, this reveals the nature of a player’s state of mind or true self, as these actions cannot be premeditated or performed deceitfully.

This leads to the notion of rugby as a space where qualities of “character” and “manliness” can be acquired. Virtues such as team loyalty, courage, determination, sacrifice, and hard work can be included in this notion of character (Niehaus, 2014). These values are instilled throughout the different stages of one’s career. In many instances elite players realise that in order to ensure success, they often need to adopt and promote certain values such as honesty, fair play, and ethical behaviour (Pipe & Hébert, 2008). These aspects might affect the identity formation and proposed career planning of players, due to the influence of general society and how people perceive rugby players.

The background history of rugby provides some insight into how rugby players think about themselves. A discussion on rugby and its specific origin in South African society contributes to a contextual understanding of the sport and its meaning for participants.

2.5 RUGBY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Rugby is considered to be the one of the most popular sports in South Africa, and is played by men, women, boys and girls of all shapes and sizes (Grundlingh, 2015). It is generally perceived as a man's sport, with only a relatively small number of girls and ladies playing the game. This is, however, not an indication that women are unaware of rugby as a sport. In fact, it is customary to see many female spectators at rugby matches in this country (Niehaus, 2014).

Springbok rugby players such as Bryan Habana, Francois Pienaar and Jean De Villiers have become role models for many young aspiring players in South Africa. They are idolized, not only on the rugby field, but also on a personal level. Some local and international professional rugby players earn very high incomes. According to Schoeman (2009) players based in South Africa could earn in excess of 2 million Rand a year. This, together with additional benefits such as sponsorships and popularity, contribute to many young South Africans considering rugby as a first-career choice.

The current economic climate in South Africa has led to an exodus players pursuing rugby careers abroad, as the exchange rate of the rand to the pound or euro creates a situation where a player can earn a high salary overseas (Hodges et al., 2014). Springbok winger, Bryan Habana reportedly earns almost €457000 (about 7 million Rand) a year playing for the French division-one club, Toulon (Totalsportek, 2016). A relatively new trend in the rugby world these days is players pursuing professional rugby careers in Japan, where they are offered a lucrative amount of the Japanese yen, to play only a few games in a season. The Japanese rugby league is perceived by many rugby connoisseurs as less brutal than its Super Rugby counterpart in the southern hemisphere, which does not take such a heavy toll on the players' bodies, and probably extends their playing careers.

Rugby as a sport has deep roots in the South African society, and may be characterised not only by its physical component, but also by its social dimension (Rubin, 2013). In many instances, the traditions, stories, myths and tales of rugby are established through rich descriptions from one generation to the next. Many rugby tales relate the ruggedness and tenacity of players from different eras, and often comparisons are made between current players and their predecessors from earlier years (Price, 2007). Many discourses about rugby are told and re-told. This consequently shapes young rugby players' understanding of themselves as well as possible decisions regarding career planning. To highlight some of these influences, a review of the history of rugby in South Africa is appropriate.

2.5.1 History of rugby in South Africa

According to Morrel (1996) rugby as a sport was brought to South Africa during the late 1850's to early 1860's. This resonates with the work of Niehaus (2014) in which he stipulates that rugby was first introduced to South African English-medium schools in 1861. During that time, it was believed that sport has a social function of bringing people together, to enjoy some leisure time and physical activity. Although the rivalry with soccer initially curbed the spread of rugby, participation in the game soon became regarded as a way of expressing one's manhood among certain groups in South Africa. It was seen as a means to provide men with the opportunity to solidify male bonds and develop an identity that was both noble and chivalrous, but, at the same time, also physical and powerful (Morrel, 1996). Taking part and excelling in rugby provided men with a certain social stance and acceptance, and in the process reinforced a class of masculinity, which has been central to its development in the first place. The perceived unifying effect of rugby was already observable in the aftermath of the bitter South African War (1899–1902), when rugby became a means of forging unity between Afrikaans and English speakers (Niehaus, 2014).

Many South Africans, especially the Afrikaners, value the Springbok emblem for the national team. The name, Springboks, was given to the national team on a successful tour of the British Isles in 1906 by the then captain, Paul Roos, also an Afrikaner. Since then, the South African national team has been known as the Springboks. This name is still in use today and has become a well-known brand in modern society (Grundlingh, 2015).

The first official university rugby club in South Africa (the Stellenbosch Rugby Club) was established in 1919 in the Western Cape (Grundlingh, 2015; Niehaus, 2014). Individuals such as Doctor Danie Craven and A.F. Markotter played a major role in turning the Western Cape, and more specifically Stellenbosch, into a dominant rugby force in South Africa. Craven in particular promoted the notion of developing players for the province of the Western Cape by taking rugby to the countryside, in order to make it more accessible to the people that lived in areas “deprived of opportunities”. This is specifically relevant to the South African context in which Apartheid and its legislation impacted the general society’s perception of rugby as a sport. Numerous studies convey the message that the Afrikaner and Afrikaner nationalism played a major role in the impetus of a strong rugby society (Grundlingh, 2015; Niehaus, 2014; Noakes & Vlismas, 2011; Rubin, 2013). Many people, therefore, regard rugby as the game of the white Afrikaner.

Although this perception may have been true to some extent, Parker (2013) indicated that a group that he described as the Cape Malays, founded the Western Province Coloured Rugby union in 1886, only three years after the establishment of whites-only Western Province Rugby Union. Parker (2013) also refers to rugby being enjoyed by the Xhosa populations in the Eastern Cape. Subsequently, it can be assumed that the game had been played in different communities in South Africa through the years, albeit that it also acted as a visible division between racial groups during the Apartheid regime. The existence of the different unions confirms this. Also, the survival of the title “Springbok” has been, and still is, a contentious

issue, as for some it is reminiscent of Apartheid and the historical exclusivity of the game. Nevertheless it would seem that rugby can generally be viewed as “entrenched in the DNA” of many different cultural groups in this country.

2.5.2 The role of rugby

According to Nauright and Black (1996) rugby has been a dominant force in the establishment of a national identity in South Africa. Many players take up the sport with the dream of becoming a Springbok. In general, these players are taught to play with passion, determination, perseverance, and bravery (Niehaus, 2014). Many players commence with their rugby career at a grade-one level and encouraged by parents, coaches and peers, are motivated to excel at the sport and become the best they can be. Rugby can also be regarded as a productive space and mechanism in the establishment of a school’s disciplinary practices (Rubin, 2013). Some schools use rugby as a mechanism to develop the pride and the “culture” of the school, while also using it as a tool to maintain classroom discipline and academic performance (Niehaus, 2014). Teachers and coaches may withdraw a player who presents disciplinary problems, for a specified time period from playing. Rugby may, therefore, be used to create order and discipline, as learners do not want to be excluded from the team and consequently let their teammates down. It is believed that this ethos leads to more acceptable behaviour in class.

Some players idolise their favourite players and dream about replicating their successes on the playing field. The general media also portray these players favourably in newspapers, television and magazines (Grundlingh, 2015). In many instances respected ex-players write about their lives as professional sportsmen, to earn an extra income and to tell their sides of the story.

Some Springbok captains and ex-players have published autobiographies written with the assistance of professional authors. These books offer unique insights into the lives of professional rugby players in this country. The autobiographies of Springbok captains in the post-apartheid era emphasise the passion associated with the game and the respect for the Springbok jersey (Niehaus, 2014). Francois Pienaar, who was South Africa's World Cup winning Springbok captain in 1995, mentioned in his autobiography that his players were willing to literally put their bodies on the line and sacrifice many privileges to make the country proud (Pienaar & Griffiths, 1999). One should remember that the 1995 Rugby World Cup tournament was the last international event of this kind during the amateur era of the sport. These ex-players all mentioned the unifying effect of rugby and its value as a tool for reconciliation and nation building.

Rugby does not only take place on the field, or "between the four lines" (a popular phrase used by coaches and administrators of the game). Rugby instils sentiments and dispositions that are congruent with participation in the broader society. Coping with the challenges and experiences on the playing field may also be linked to an ethos that prevails off the playing field. According to Light and Kirk (2001), rugby generates a type of social boost, where superiority in the sport helps one to rise to influential positions of power in the corporate world. They argue that social connections are established through shared participation, and young men who are motivated, committed and talented enough to make the first team of a good school, are perceived as successful by those in positions of power and influence in the corporate world. This notion is substantiated in the writings of Rubin (2013), where he reports that talented rugby players receive more scholarships to schools or universities, than the academically-gifted students or athletes from other sports do.

This high regard for talented players and subsequent social connections associated with excelling in rugby, lead to players forming strong identification with their roles as rugby

players. It, therefore, seems prudent to consider the effect of sport on an individual's identity formation.

2.6 IDENTITY IN SPORT

“Rugby, by its violent and immediate nature, is supposed to separate the committed from the lazy, the active from the passive, and the selfless from the selfish.” (Rubin, 2013, p. 155).

This quote is an example of the respect and prestige one can gain through participation in rugby. If one considers the social history of rugby in South Africa and its positive influence on factors such as nation building and national pride, it becomes clear that many people derive meaning from their identity as rugby players. A person's identity is a dynamic construct that is formed early in life, and is constantly up for re-evaluation. Social constructionists regard identity-formation as an ongoing process that is shaped by factors such as culture, language and interpretation of communities (Patton, 2005). It, therefore, seems important to evaluate identity-formation as a whole, in order to access and understand the different resources, influences and ideologies that impact a learner's identity whilst at school.

Rugby is not only a dominant factor in establishing “national identity”, but it can also play a major role in a school learner's identity, especially in the context of traditional boys' schools in South Africa. The term *identity* can be defined in various ways. For the purpose of this study, the understanding of identity is the way in which one perceives and describes oneself, the sense of who you are, or the degree to which a player identifies himself within the sporting role (Stambulova et al., 2009). The formation of identity plays an important part in the lives of sportspersons (Maseko & Surujlal, 2011), and may impact the manner in which they derive meaning and purpose in everyday life.

Playing for a school's first team is generally regarded as a notable achievement, seeing that the rivalry is severe and only a few players can be selected. In many instances, first-team players are idolised by their peers and the general public (Noakes & Vlismas; 2011; Van Reenen, 2012). As mentioned, it is not uncommon for the media to focus on school rugby and many matches are televised to a live audience, with experts and well-known ex-players analysing the teams and individual players (Grundlingh, 2015; Noakes & Vlismas, 2011). Some of the annual interschool rugby matches in South Africa, for example, Paul Roos versus Grey College, South African College School (SACS) versus Bishops Diocesan College and Oakdale Agricultural School versus Boland Agricultural School, have been a tradition for many decades. Perhaps one of the most famous interschool matches is the annual Paarl Gymnasium versus Paarl Boys High derby, which is known to attract up to 25000 spectators every year, while also being televised. Players regards these matches as an opportunity to display their talent and manliness, and winning these games is considered as major impetus for a successful year in the rugby calendar (Noakes & Vlismas, 2011). The high regard for these matches might result in high levels of anxiety and stress for players and their coaches. This is, however, not a modern phenomenon, seeing that the well-known sport scientist, Professor Tim Noakes, made notion of this factor as early as 1981, when he declared that the South African school culture has an unhealthy obsession with rugby, where the "winning-at-all-cost" mentality may prove to be more important than the welfare of players (Noakes & Vlismas, 2011). Interschool matches can also be considered an opportunity to display the skills and characteristics associated with elite school-rugby teams. A solid performance in these games may improve a player's standing as a possible future top-class player, since many influential persons (such as provincial selectors) attend these matches.

Talented school players are identified at a young age and some are contracted by provincial unions, which may lead to them pursuing a career in rugby (Price, 2007). It may, therefore, be inevitable for players to derive a part of their identity from being a rugby player, more specifically, from being a first-team rugby player. Brewer, Van Raalte and Linder (1993) refer to athletic or sport identity as the degree to which an individual identifies himself with the sporting role. A positive identity within a sport can be an important resource for a player at the peak of a career, but may also become a barrier in the process of adapting to a post-career life (Hickey & Kelly, 2008; Wylleman et al., 1999). The development of a sport identity is intertwined with the development of an overall identity, seeing that both are important factors to take into account when attempting to understand human functioning, and specifically vocational functioning.

According to Baillie (1993), athletic identity is formed and internalised early in life, during adolescence and early adulthood. Adolescents and young sportspersons who take a step towards a professional sporting career are more likely to develop an exclusive sporting identity, seeing that in many instances the sport becomes a central preoccupation for the players as well as for significant others in their lives (Wylleman et al., 2004). This tendency may be especially prevalent in a sport-fanatical country such as South Africa, where sport is regarded as a vital component in many people's lives. Rugby has even been promoted in some circles as a form of South African heritage (Grundlingh, 2015).

The strong attachment to a sport identity could dominate the other social roles that characterise this dynamic phase in one's life, leading to a lack of exposure in other spheres of functioning, such as future career, educational and lifestyle options (Baillie & Danish, 1992). First-team players could spend a great deal of their time with teammates where they talk, think and even "live" rugby. A strong identification with a sport may have a positive influence on exercise habits and sport achievements (Anderson, Masse, Zhang, Coleman, &

Chang, 2009). This positive development in the sport may then result in players taking on a stronger sport identity in their playing careers, where they develop a self-concept that does not extend beyond the role of a sportsman. Consequently, this may lead to an internalised sporting identity, which may dominate a young player's overall self-concept (Wylleman et al., 1999). Another risk of such a strong and exclusive athletic identity is that self-esteem and self-worth may become dependent on sporting performance, which may result in feelings of worthlessness when a player's performance falls short of expectations (Gustafsson, Hassmén, Kentä, & Johansson, 2008). In general, adolescents value the opinions and perceptions of their peers and teammates whilst at school. Peers can reinforce a player's sense of achievement during the early transition into the world of professional sport, as a player may enjoy high levels of respect and recognition when progressing through the various levels. However, peers can also be regarded as a source of potential humiliation for players when they exit from the sport, as it usually involves changes in relationships, perceptions and perceived levels of respect (Petitpas, Champagne, Chartrand, Danish, & Murphy, 1997).

Over-identification with a sport and exclusion of activities outside the sport may also pose a barrier to smooth transitions when players are faced with the challenges of adapting to post-sport careers, as these players are required to make adjustments on many different levels (Price, 2007). This resonates with Grove et al. (1997) who reported that retiring athletes experience a higher degree of emotional adjustment difficulties if they had a strong athletic identity at the time of retirement.

The prevalence of a strong sport identity combined with an over-identification with the role of sport in one's life, may lead to more frequent and more severe psychological and psychosocial difficulties in organising one's life after sport (Hickey & Kelly, 2008). This may be due to a lack of exploration of other life spheres, such as a future career, educational and other lifestyle options. According to McKnight et al. (2009) people with a strong sporting

identity are more likely to attach an inflated value to on feedback about challenges, successes and failures that they experience in the sporting environment, in comparison to people who have a more “balanced” identity. Van Reenen (2012) stated that life after rugby and the transition into this phase is a reality that cannot be underestimated. Wylleman et al. (2004) have suggested that preparing players for this phase may lead to positive and easier transitions. Gaining an understanding into the manner in which players perceive and comprehend the different transitions that need to be negotiated throughout their careers may assist role players in developing programmes aimed at assisting players throughout their careers.

2.7 CAREERS AND CAREER TRANSITIONS

The concept of “career” has been investigated for many years in the social sciences (Hartung, 2007; Smith & McManush, 2008; Surujlal & Van Zyl, 2014). Staying true to social constructionism as a theoretical framework for this thesis, a career may be described as a social construction which is constantly up for re-negotiation. In other words, the continuous process of actions a person takes on the career related journey through life. Throughout the years, many theories of career and career development have emerged, such as Holland’s personality type approach; Super’s developmental model; and Bandura’s chance theory (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005). The economic meltdown over the past few years resulted in global feelings of insecurity and uncertainty with regard to vocational planning and job security. This led to a society which requires people to be innovative and flexible in the ways they develop and perceive their careers (Patton, 2005). In a postmodern society, career development patterns follow a spiral-like curve, as opposed to the past, when it was more direct and stable (Mkhize, 2005).

According to Grove et al. (1997), people identify and derive meanings from their occupations, because they spend a good deal of their day at the workplace. As mentioned in

Chapter One, the manner in which meaning and identity is derived through the workplace has changed in the modern era, with the paradigm of certainty being replaced by uncertainty (Mkhize, 2005). This has affected the way in which people regard career transitions. The postmodern era is also characterised by constant change and adaptability, and people are willing to change their career paths accordingly. An emphasis and awareness of diversity with a variety of criteria, characterise postmodern society (Watson & Kuit, 2007). People have become increasingly mobile and able to move freely between different employers, relying on competencies that are transferable. It seems obvious that this should also apply to rugby players who could transfer their skills across various teams or to a lesser extent, various positions on the field (Price, 2007).

A transition can be defined as a point in life where a major change occurs (Petitpas et al., 1997), as it may be an event which also leads to changes in one's behaviour and relationships, due to a change in one's perception of oneself and the world. Career transitions, therefore, refer to changes or events that occur, which changes one's perception of the world of work. Any transition has the possibility to be a relief, a crisis, or a combination of both (Hatamleh, 2013). Sports participants are required to cope with new demands and challenges during each transition, while attempting to find a balance between demands and their available resources (Wylleman et al., 1999).

Transitions are either characterised as normative and predictable, or non-normative and unexpected (Petitpas et al., 1997; Price, 2007). Predictable transitions are those that one knows will occur and for which one can plan. In the wider occupational world, this may involve aspects such as promotions, progressing through the occupational ranking order, or general growth in the workplace (McKnight et al., 2009). Normative sport-related transitions generally involve aspects that are largely predictable, such as the beginning of specialisation in the sport, the transition between different age groups, and the transition from amateur to

professional sports. Retirement from sport is perhaps the clearest example of a normative and predictable transition, as all players must retire from sport at some stage of their lives (Wylleman et al., 1999). Due to the inherent physical risks of rugby, its prevalence of injuries (Hattingh & Spamer, 2004) and other variables that may affect the functioning of a player, transitions sometimes take place sooner than expected.

Unexpected and non-normative transitions refer to changes a person would accept to occur, but which, due to circumstances such as injury or accident, do not occur (Stambulova et al., 2009). In the so called normal occupations, this may include, among others, aspects such as retrenchment, not being selected for a particular post or resignation, due to unforeseen circumstances. In sports these transitions might be caused by factors such as injury, loss of form, or changes of teams, clubs or coaches. Many athletes find these non-normative transitions hard to deal with, both in a sport context as well as on a personal level (Maseko & Surujlal, 2011). Within the sport context these challenges might involve numerous adaptations and changes to overcome, while at a personal level it may affect aspects such as psychosocial, psychological, and academic-vocational development. Hatamleh (2013) found that many sportspersons only realise the value and need of educational qualifications after their deselection or subsequent transition out of a team. Due to the high injury risks involved in rugby, McKenna and Thomas (2007) noted that rugby administrators must pay particular attention to career transition and termination. It is, therefore, important to consider the effect of rugby transitions in the South African context.

2.7.1 Rugby transition in the South African context

The career trajectory of a talented rugby player at school and as a potential professional player can affect a major part of a player's identity (Spamer & De la Port, 2006). In short, progression in school rugby involves the development of teenagers from a youth level, through the various age groups and into the school's first team (Maseko & Surujlal, 2011). It

is important to note that there is, however, no formal agreement about what career progress might mean for professional players, as any sport career may be exposed to different and interlacing factors. In the next few paragraphs a summary and general outline of the perceived job ladder of rugby in South Africa will be presented. Although this is not a formal outline, it still relates to the careers of some currently-active players and so-called successful people in the sport.

As mentioned earlier, many rugby players begin participating in the game as early as Grade one. These players then progress through the age ranks of primary and secondary school, competing against other school teams. Some players also join a junior club team, especially when their respective schools don't offer rugby as a sport. These clubs then compete against other clubs and schools. However, many of these clubs are not always well-developed and may find it difficult to produce teams which are able to compete effectively in the various schools leagues.

Every year, the South African Rugby Union (SARU) hosts four national tournaments. These cater for three age groups, namely the U13 Craven week, the U16 Grant Khomo week and the U18 Academy/Craven week (Durandt, Parker, Masimla, & Lambert, 2011). First-team players compete at high-school level in order to be selected for provincial teams which will then subsequently compete at either the U18 Academy or Craven week tournament. The U18 Craven week is generally regarded as South Africa's most prestigious rugby-tournament for high-school players (Rubin, 2013). Players who perform well at this event may be selected for the South African Schools' or South African Academy team, which is effectively the top level of rugby for this age group. Numerous Craven Week players are also rewarded with provincial contracts, which may further fuel their aspirations of becoming full-time professional rugby players (Van Reenen, 2012). According to Wylleman et al. (1999) these dreams cannot be seen in isolation from other transitions in players' lives. These transitions

include those occurring in a sportsperson's scholastic/academic career, as well as psychosocial development and establishing interpersonal relationships. Another essential transition relates to scholastic and academic development. As mentioned in Chapter One, players at school need to cope with the pressures of academic life as well as the transitions in their sporting careers (McKnight et al., 2009). Strong academic performance at school level may provide a learner with various possible career options in the future, as this will enable them to enrol in an academic course of their choice. However, it has been found that some players negate the importance of academics as they put their sport first, second and third, with education and scholastic development further down the list (Hickey & Kelly, 2008). This resonates well with Bourke's (2003) finding that a large proportion of soccer players regards academic qualifications as unimportant. Lower academic performances may impact the way high-school players perceive their transition from school to a post-school career – which is a crucial pathway in a player's life. It, therefore, is imperative to consider the manner in which school-rugby players perceive the transitions that have to be negotiated after leaving school.

2.7.2 Players' perspectives on the transition to post-school careers

Facilitating an effective adjustment to the transition to post-school careers is one of the challenges that all high-school learners must face (Petitpas, Brewer, & Van Raalte, 1996). This transition is also relevant to high-school rugby players. Players could face various options after leaving school. In order to focus on academic advancement, some may decide to end their rugby careers after the completion of school, while others pursue future rugby careers while also pursuing a tertiary qualification. Others may decide to focus exclusively on rugby in their quest to become professional players (Petitpas et al., 1997). However, many sportspeople find it difficult to contemplate their future careers, as they may have a rigid focus of thinking only in a certain way (Price, 2007).

A strong focus on sport performance and a disregard of academic achievement whilst at school may lead to lower education levels among players, which may impact the way they perceive their transition to a life after school. Price (2007) indicated that young people with lower education levels experience marginalisation in the general labour market. It has been mentioned that not all players will “make it” to become a professional rugby player, due to many of random chance-factors that might influence a career in rugby. Even though players may be aware of these factors, some, nevertheless, might still consider rugby as their first-choice career. This could be the result of a combination of factors, such as a strong sporting identity, the pursuit of lucrative contracts, or pressure from family members (Hatamleh, 2013). Price (2007) found that many young rugby players have unrealistic ideas regarding the length of a future rugby career, even though they are aware of the inherent dangers and challenges of the sport. When a player is indeed challenged with early retirement from the sport, a few options are available. These options include, among others, pursuing further studies at tertiary institutions, or directly entering other careers in the work market.

2.7.2.1 The Varsity Cup

A strong academic performance at school can positively influence a player’s chances of being enrolled at a university of his/her choice (Hickey & Kelly, 2008). This is quite relevant in the current context of rugby in South Africa, because inter-university rugby has become prominent and popular in recent years.

A relatively new development in South African rugby is the establishment of the so-called Varsity Cup. This tournament was founded in 2008 and aims to promote rugby at university level and is characterised by its dynamic advertising and strong presentation in the media. It was introduced to promote the game of rugby at amateur level, in order to identify and develop a larger pool of talent for possible higher ranks in rugby. This led to many amateur players continuing towards professionalization, as they believe there is more at stake than

merely participating in this tournament (Hodges et al., 2014). The Varsity Cup changed the landscape of amateur rugby in South Africa. One of its current stipulations entails that players must be under the age of 25 and enrolled as full-time students at a university, in order to take part in this tournament. This can positively impact the academic performance and career planning of players at school level, as they may become aware of the university admission requirements. However, there is a possibility that players register for a course and then only focus on rugby, as the pressure to perform can be severe. According to Stovitz and Satin (2004) these players have to cope with the pressures of society, the coach, teammates and of course the pressures from themselves to live up to their own standards. This may lead to players training harder in order to meet the different expectations that are placed on them.

The positive impact of the Varsity Cup is twofold. It provides a major platform for aspiring players to showcase their talent and expertise to the general public. Additionally, it may also prompt players to alter their behaviours in order to meet the expectations of social agents, as many coaches and influential people in the rugby world value the notion of character and perseverance (Hodges et al., 2014). However, there are also some challenges with regard to participation in the Varsity Cup. Many South African students leave their homes environments to pursue tertiary education in a different geographical location. Players who are far away from their traditional support structures, might find it stressful to adapt to life away from home (Laureano, Grobbelaar, & Nienaber, 2014). Stressful life events like these, coupled with factors such as injury and de-selection, could force players to retire earlier than anticipated. The most likely time of disengagement occurs between the end of high school and entry into the university or other types of tertiary institutions, when large numbers of players are forced to give up their aspirations due to failing to gain entry into a tertiary institution, club or provincial teams (Baillie, 1993).

Many players, who are indeed successful in participating and excelling at the Varsity Cup, progress to provincial squads. In South Africa it generally involves, among others, playing for provincial sides such as Western Province, Natal Sharks, Blue Bulls, Free State Cheetahs, or the Gauteng Lions. These provinces are considered to be the big five of South African rugby (Noakes & Vlismas, 2011). Players who perform adequately at this level, may be selected for Super-rugby squads (combined regional teams participating in the Super-rugby competition, a global tournament consisting of teams from South Africa, Argentina, New Zealand, Australia, and Japan), and ultimately, the national Springbok team, which is the top level of professional rugby for this country. It is, however, not that simple, as the job ladder in a sport such as rugby does not produce career progression in the same way as those in traditional white-collar careers. Many talented players who are identified at school level, as well as Varsity-Cup players, sign short-term contracts with the rugby unions – usually lasting between one and five years – with no guaranteed playing time or a starting place in the team (McKnight et al., 2009; Price, 2007). These short-term contracts may add to increased levels of anxiety and stress regarding a career after rugby, as many variables can impact the development and functioning of a player. These high levels of anxiety might be prevalent during, as well as after a player's rugby career.

According to McKenna and Thomas (2007), players are in need of coping strategies to prepare them to make the transition to a life after rugby, as a career in sport is much shorter than most other careers or occupations. All sportspersons must retire at some stage in their careers, seeing that a professional sport career generally lasts between three and seven years (Petitpas et al., 1997). In comparison to other careers, a sportsperson's retirement occurs at a relatively early age. Sportspersons could potentially face another 40 years to work in the typical job market, and in many instances this might be in a career unrelated to sport.

2.7.3 Transition to a career after rugby

Retirement, whether planned or otherwise, involve critical decisions about financial, educational, medical, and career matters. Retirement is frequently treated as one-off event, rather than recognizing it as a complex process. Generally, retirement is regarded as something that only happens to “older” people, typically in the age range of between 60 and 65 years (Maseko & Surujlal, 2011). Many institutions have designed and facilitated specific programmes aimed at assisting employees with their retirement planning, whereby their financial needs are funded through a combination of a pension plan, retirement plan and a savings account (Wylleman et al., 1999). People generally choose to retire when they are eligible for pension benefits. This usually occurs at a later stage in people’s lives, when they are close to the legal age of retirement. However, this is not always the case when working as professional sportspeople, due to sporting careers being shorter and without the employment security that is customary in other occupations.

The termination of a sport-career and the beginning of a post-sport life constitute a phase which has received much interest over recent years (Smith & McManus, 2008; Surujlal & Van Zyl, 2014). Sport-career termination can be distinguished from other types of career termination, as many individuals who enter career retirement do not experience the same disruption and changes to their identity as sportspeople do (McKnight et al., 2009). Retirement from a sporting career is similar to retiring from other careers in the sense that it also involves many decisions about financial, medical, and future life aspects. However, many retiring sportsmen experience problems with regards to their daily functioning when retired, as their (over)investment in sport may have left them with limited employment prospects and a compromised state of psychological and physical well-being. Gordon and Lavalley (2004) found that sportspeople commit themselves mentally, socially, and physically to their sport, and are, therefore, left with little time to seriously think about their

retirement. The pressures and stress of having to perform well on the field might leave them with little time to do so. They often feel no urgency to pay attention to off-field issues, such as retirement plans or possible long-term investments (Maseko & Surujlal, 2011). The lack of planning for a life after sport may subsequently lead to retiring players feeling at a loss and becoming disillusioned with their situations.

According to Anderson and Morris (2000), the provision of career-counselling support will assist players in making a smooth transition to a life after sport. Preparing for retirement should make sportspersons more confident about retirement, seeing that they have a better idea about retirement needs, which can in turn lead to more appropriate attitudes and perceptions of this inevitable life transition.

2.8 CAREER COUNSELLING

The role of the counsellor in the postmodern context has shifted from tester to co-author, and from interpreting test scores to editing client's career narratives (Watson & Kuit, 2007). Postmodern counsellors generally call for a narrative- or life-story approach and are more concerned with clients' subjective understanding of their own realities. One should be conscious of factors that might influence individual functioning and meaning making, and consider objective as well as subjective influential factors when working with clients who wish to pursue a career in sport (Chope & Consoli, 2007).

In order to provide players with adequate career assistance, it is important to understand the different factors relating to sport careers. Players react to transitions and retirement in unique ways. As indicated throughout this chapter, the adaptation to transitions might be accompanied by challenges and difficulties at the psychosocial level, including cultural and social loneliness, degeneration of social contacts, and problems with regards to developing new friendships outside of sport (Cecić Erpič, 2001). One could, therefore, understand the

need for effective career counselling to help players overcome these challenges and to ensure quality of life throughout their sporting careers.

The termination of a sport career should be regarded as a transitional process rather than as an isolated occurrence. According to McKnight et al. (2009) planning for career termination contributes to better emotional, cognitive, and behavioural adaptation. In general, it is important to assist players to become aware of the importance of retirement planning and to increase awareness of transferable skills. It has been found that sportspeople respond positively to learning about the way specific skills from their sport can be transferred to other non-sport areas of their lives (McKnight et al., 2009). In the case of rugby union, this means educating learners about qualities such as perseverance, humility and hard work and how it can help them in their future careers. These qualities are often called transferable assets, and are characterised as being context and content free (Mayocchi & Hanrahan, 2000). The counselling process, therefore, needs to emphasize desirable qualities which the retiring players possess and help them to determine which of these can be applied to other settings.

Lavallee and Andersen (2000) proposed that interventions in working with players post-transition should take the following factors into account: the voluntariness of termination, availability of coping resources, the degree of identification with a sporting role, an awareness and better understanding of transferable skills, achievement of sport-related goals, and post-career planning for players. In other words, it should attempt to consider most of the different factors relating to retirement and the way it impacts on a player's functioning.

A number of career-development programmes have been produced by sport institutions around the world in order to assist players to develop and achieve sport-related goals throughout their careers and to develop a professional career outside of sport, with the focus on a post-sporting career. Examples of such programmes are the *Athlete Career and*

Education (ACE) programme in Australia, the *Career Assistance Programme for Athletes* in the United States, and the *Study and Talent Education Programme (STEP)* in Belgium (Wylleman et al., 2004). STEP provides information to players and aims to educate them regarding skills to optimise the combination of sports careers and post-academic vocational careers.

It seems vital that transition programmes need to be multidimensional by including support-enhancement and counselling components, in order to ensure the well-being of sportspersons (Wylleman et al., 2004). In general, these programmes aim to achieve this goal by ensuring that the following topics are covered:

1. Aspects relevant to a balanced lifestyle, such as self-esteem, identity, social roles, as well as participation in leisure activities;
2. Personal management skills, such as academic and educational expertise, transferable skills for sport careers, coping mechanisms, and information regarding skills required by professional occupations;
3. Social aspects, including the importance of quality relationships both inside and outside the context of sport and of a professional occupation;
4. Vocational guidance regarding aspects such as networking, knowledge of the job market, and general career advice;
5. The different facets of career retirements, such as possible advantages as well as problems related to retirement, physical, psychological, and emotional problems, and how to cope with decreased levels of physical activity (Wylleman et al., 1999).

The above-mentioned topics need to be kept in mind when planning career counselling at school level. Adopting a life-story approach offers opportunities to address some of the pertinent challenges that are likely to occur at later stages of a sporting career while the

learner is still at school. The different influences on career decisions are also important to highlight, as an in-depth understanding will assist young people to make informed decisions.

Another approach to career counselling is the *My System of Career Influences (MSCI)*. The MSCI is considered a useful career-counselling tool that can be used in both individual as well as group settings (Patton, McMahon, & Watson, 2006). The MSCI was developed to provide a straightforward counselling tool that can be used in a qualitative career assessment. It includes a booklet consisting of a series of worksheets which invites people to qualitatively reflect on the different aspects that may influence their future career functioning. The booklet consists of three sections. The first section, namely *my present career situation*, asks people to reflect on topics such as previous work experience, occupational aspirations, possible support networks and their different life roles.

The second section involves *identifying, prioritising and representing some influences* in a diagrammatical way. During this phase, participants are involved in thinking about the social system (critical thoughts about the people surrounding them), the environmental-societal system (reflecting about the way the environment and society may have an impact on them) and conceptualisation about the role of the time context of the different phases of their lives.

The third section entails *reflecting on my system of career influences*, which, as the title of this section portrays, involves thoughts about the process of reflecting on the different influences and new insights gained from completing a questionnaire.

The third section is then followed by an action plan for future use (Patton et al., 2006). The MSCI can serve as background in the development of programmes aimed at assisting schoolboy rugby players to make informed and insightful future career choices. In the context of rugby careers it seems as though previous experiences, aspirations, support networks, and in this study specifically the developmental phase, are important aspects to consider.

Therefore, a reflection on all the different influences on an aspiring professional rugby player can fulfil an important function.

I have been unable to find existing formal programmes in South African rugby. It is therefore unsurprising that approximately 84% of rugby-players seem to struggle to survive financially after their playing careers (Van Reenen, 2007). There is an obvious need to develop a programme aimed specifically at supporting young rugby players in the South African context in this regard.

2.9 CONCLUSION

Throughout the literature it is clear that aspiring young rugby players should be prepared for a life beyond the game. The current state of rugby in South Africa is of such a nature that talented players can earn much respect and admiration for their participation in this sport. This may contribute to players identifying strongly with the role of a rugby player, which impact their awareness about and preparation for other spheres of life and possible future career paths. This literature review provided a description of social constructionism as theoretical framework of this study. This was followed by a conceptualisation of literature regarding the sport of rugby, the possible impact of sport on identity formation, as well as a discussion of career and career transitions of sportspersons. The final section of this chapter covered the topic of the career-counselling programmes applicable to sport.

The next chapter will provide a description of the research design and methodology which formed part of, and supported, the current research process.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, DESIGN AND PROCESS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A researcher has to experience some degree of curiosity about a specific topic in order to facilitate critical thinking about it (Merriam, 2009). In Chapter One I gave an overview of my affection and passion for sport in general, and my interest about the way talented sportspersons plan for their future careers. The global market of sport has developed significantly over recent years and players are becoming celebrities on a global scale. This could be attributed to a number of factors, including the way modern media showcase talented players. The influence of social media and the subsequent observed “insider perspective” to the lives of professional players may further contribute to adopted social identities and overall perceptions of players at school level. I am intrigued by the manner in which these phenomena shape the way adolescents and young professionals perceive their current, as well as future, educational, and career development in general.

The primary purpose of this study was to gain insight into the way first-team schoolboy rugby players perceive their future career trajectories, seeing that rugby plays such an important role in South African society. I endeavoured to understand the perceptions of the players from their own lived experience, which is a crucial element for researchers working from within the meta-theoretical framework of socio-constructionism (Schwandt, 2000, as cited in Walters, 2009).

In order to achieve the aims of this research study, the following question guided the research process:

How do first-team rugby players understand their future career trajectories?

As mentioned in Chapter One, the following subquestions served as additional areas of enquiry during the research process:

- *How do first-team rugby players describe their own identity?*
- *What role does rugby currently and in future play in this regard?*
- *How do first-team rugby players understand the transitions that have to be negotiated in the course of a rugby career?*

In this chapter I will outline the research process and the procedures that were followed to gain insight into the players' understandings of their future career trajectories. In short, the research procedures applied a specific design within a research paradigm – a specific research methodology. The discussion of these aspects will be followed by a description of the different facets of qualitative research, the process of participant selection, as well as the manner in which the data were collected and analysed. Thereafter, I will discuss ethical considerations to ensure scientific rigour and trustworthiness. I will also present reflections of my personal growth, seeing that my research methodology forms an integral part of the interpretative-constructivist approach.

3.2 RESEARCH PROCESS

A researcher must ensure that the research process evolves in a logical way throughout the course of the study, and that it conforms to scientific rigour and general credibility (Merriam, 2009). In general, the research process begins with a specific topic of interest, which in my case was the educational development and career planning of talented sportspersons. I then decided on a framework for this particular study, in order to authenticate and expand on the manner in which the research was implemented. As a result, a specific research paradigm that is compatible with my thinking about ontology, epistemology and methodology, will form the cornerstone of the research. In short, a paradigm can be described as a way of thinking (Durrheim, 2006). Paradigms are dynamic and might take many years to develop, but since I

believe that people make sense and meaning of their own experiences in unique ways, I decided to work from an interpretative-constructivist paradigm in an attempt to understand the way first-team players understood their future career paths.

Research paradigms are all-encompassing systems of interrelated functioning and a way of thinking that assist researchers in defining the nature of their enquiry along three dimensions, namely: ontology (the nature of knowledge), methodology (how knowledge can be accessed), and epistemology (how to answer the questions of the research) (Durrheim, 2006). Ontological assumptions in the interpretative-constructivist paradigm refer to the multiple nature of realities that are constructed by participants in their own unique contexts, which are influenced by and based on their subjective experiences of social interactions (Durrheim, 2006). Another way of explaining ontology is that it is the manner in which researchers understand the nature of knowledge and how it is constructed – the result of both internal as well as social stimuli (Durrheim, 2006; Merriam 2009). For this reason, I explored the understanding of the lived experiences of the participants in a setting where they felt at ease and safe.

I acknowledge that the manner in which I as researcher understand reality could have influenced my interpretation of the realities of the individual participants of the study. Social constructionist theory allows me as the researcher to be part of the knowledge construction throughout the interviews and during my other engagement with the participants. I, therefore, tried to gain a deeper level of understanding of the participants own meaning-making and understand that I acted as a kind of co-creator in making sense of their experiences. In order to do so, I had to take an “emic view” or “insider perspective” to see the world through the eyes of the participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, p. 271). In order to understand the world of participants, I also had to link the process of knowledge construction with my own

understanding of reality and how knowledge is created, which refers to the methodology of the study.

According to Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004) the methodology of a study refers to the appropriate practical means and methods a researcher can implement in order to understand the world of the study participants. It applies the best way in which research can be conducted by taking into account ontological and epistemological considerations. As mentioned in preceding chapters, I decided to employ a qualitative methodology from the paradigm of interpretative constructivism to collect, interpret and analyse the data in order to answer the main research question and subquestions. This methodology included an inductive approach to data collection and analysis to investigate emerging themes from it (Durrheim, 2006).

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research is helpful to develop an understanding of the way people construct their own worlds and how they interpret and give meaning to their personal lived experiences (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research seeks to answer questions by becoming immersed in exploring communities and members of those communities, to gain an understanding of the different social roles and structures that may exist. My research into the way high-school players understand their future career trajectories had to be scientifically justifiable and plausible. A qualitative methodology enabled me to study human action from the participants' perspectives with the aim of describing and understanding their behaviour, rather than explaining it (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). It is advised that qualitative research should be conducted in the natural setting of participants in order to develop in-depth descriptions of social action, with a focus on processes rather than outcomes (Durrheim,

2006). Taking care of these aspects contributes towards ensuring reliability and validity of the data.

3.4 THE RESEARCH SETTING

The setting in which the research is conducted must be taken into account when analysing the research data. It was, therefore, essential that I had a clear understanding of the setting in which the research was conducted and in which the participants were located.

This study was undertaken in a town in the Western Cape Province. Interviews were carried out around the time of the school's annual interschool rugby derby match. These matches are generally characterised by an increase in school pride, patriotism and added identity formation regarding representing the school (Noakes & Vlismas, 2011). In order to stay true to the roots of social constructionism, I kept this in mind when analysing the data, as this could have influenced participants' perceptions and voiced truths.

3.5 PARTICIPANT SELECTION

A researcher needs to ensure the correct ethical progression is adhered to when selecting participants for a study. In the current study, this was implemented in the following order: First, I contacted the headmaster of a local school to obtain permission for the study to be conducted at his school. After receiving the permission letter from the headmaster, I obtained permission from the Western Cape Education Department to proceed with the study. This correspondence was included in my research proposal submitted to the Departmental Ethics Screening Committee of Stellenbosch University. Their decision was ratified by the Ethics Committee of the Stellenbosch University. After receiving the clearance for the study to be conducted, I contacted the sport organiser and the coach of the school's first rugby team and informed them about the aim of the proposed research. Since the purpose of this study was to gain insight into the way first-team players understand their future career trajectories, I

selected participants for this study according to pre-determined criteria. This method is called purposive sampling and is considered appropriate in qualitative research (Henning et al., 2004; Merriam, 2009). Purposive sampling allows a researcher to seek out individuals in a setting where the phenomena being studied were most likely to occur. The selection criteria of the current study stipulated that players had to be in Grade 11 or 12 and be members of the first-team rugby squad of this particular school. Potential participants received a summary of the research study as well as a consent and assent form. They were informed that involvement in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw participation at any point. Participants who were older than 18 years were required to complete only the consent form. Participants who were under the age of 18 had to complete the assent form; and their parents or legal guardians the consent form. Additionally, information was acquired from the first-team rugby coach the school's Grade-12 head teacher to ascertain their opinions on career planning of first-team rugby players in general.

The size of the research sample was relatively small, as the qualitative purpose of the research was to derive rich descriptions and depth of information within the specific context of the participants. A small sample was considered appropriate for this study, seeing that gaining in-depth knowledge is one of the main foundations of the interpretative-constructivist research paradigm (Patton, 2002). The manner in which I observed and analysed the data was supplemented by the richness of the information – adding to the validity of this study. Seven participants, (five from Grade 12 and two from Grade 11), took part in this study, as well as the first-team coach and the head teacher of the Grade-12 class at this school.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

3.6.1 The process of collecting the data

Qualitative researchers need to be precise about “the what”, “the why”, and “the how” they are when analysing their data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The first phase in any research process involves the development of a specific topic or area to be researched, followed by the formulation of research questions relating to this topic (Boeije, 2010). The researcher then decides on aspects such as a specific target population, sample size and the process of data collection, while adhering to the relevant ethical principles.

In this study, data were collected by means of semi-structured individual interviews, followed by a focus-group interview. Additionally, I requested the coach and grade head teacher to complete an open-ended questionnaire in which they provided feedback to questions about the research topic. This enabled me as researcher to analyse and interpret sound and reliable data (Durrheim, 2006).

To be available in written format, data from the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Interviews were conducted in the participants’ preferred language. This amounted to six of the individual interviews being carried out in Afrikaans, and one in English. The participants in the focus-group interview provided feedback in their language of choice, with ample opportunity to seek clarification regarding aspects that may have been confusing. Because this thesis is presented in English, the assistance of a qualified translator was obtained to help me with translating the Afrikaans transcriptions to English (using pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants), while ensuring that the context and meaning of responses remained the same (See the English transcriptions and the original Afrikaans transcriptions in Appendix M).

I collected the data without disturbing the participants’ natural setting – keeping social

constructionist procedures in mind. For this reason, interviews were conducted at a private location in the school residence familiar to the participants. After collecting the data from the different information sources/participants, the raw data were analysed and ordered into manageable categories, subthemes and themes, which I will present in Chapter Four.

3.6.2 Interviews

Interviews are considered to be the most frequently used method of data collection in qualitative research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). It usually involves a researcher engaging the participant in a focused conversation, with a series of questions relating to the research topic. According to Patton (2002) qualitative interviews provide the researcher with the opportunity to collect data which may not be directly observed, as the researcher may enter a participants' own reality, seeing the world through their eyes. Numerous categories of interviews are implemented in qualitative research, for example, unstructured, semi-structured or structured standardised interviews. For the purpose of this study, I used a semi-structured interview format, because I believed that this would provide me with an effective structure and at the same time enable me to adapt to the different dimensions that might be introduced by the participants.

3.6.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

A semi-structured interview allows for more or less the same questions to be put to all the participants, while being less structured and generally more open-ended than structured and standardised interviews (Durrheim, 2006). Semi-structured interview guides serve as a plan for the general direction and nature of inquiry, while also providing flexibility within the overall interview schedule. This provides the researcher with the opportunity to probe into the participants' responses as well as looking for alternative and emerging topics of discussion.

The researcher can, therefore, focus on each specific situation and adapt accordingly, in order to clarify responses and look for further detail (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

As mentioned in Chapter One, Savickas's *Career Story Interview* (Savickas, 2010, as cited in Hartung, 2007) served as guideline for conducting the questioning in this study (See Appendix C). This type of assessment gathers information in the form of self-defining stories from the participants about aspects such as career-adaptability strategies, life themes, personality style, and general life structure. My knowledge and appreciation of this interview guide influenced my planning and construction of the semi-structured interviews that were facilitated during the interviews. Throughout the interviews, I kept in mind the principles of social constructionism (see pp. 57, 59 – 62).

The interview sessions were scheduled on dates and times that were convenient for participants. As mentioned earlier, these interviews took place at a safe facility in the school residence. Interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.

The introduction phase of the interviews entailed discussions of anonymity and confidentiality, as well as re-affirming the right of participants to withdraw their involvement in the study at any time.

I also re-explained the overall purpose of the interviews and asked their permission to record all of the interviews, in order to be able to code the data at a later stage. The concluding phase of the interviews comprised of a short summary of what was said during this process and by asking whether each of the participants were willing to take part in a focus-group discussion at a later stage.

3.6.2.2 Creative data collection

During the individual interviews, participants were asked to complete a creative activity where they had to design a logo for their shoulder pads (protective gear that players use to reduce the risk of injuries). Participants received the general outline of the shoulder pads on a piece of paper (See Appendix D), and were then asked to design a logo which they feel might be relevant to them as first-team rugby players at this school. This served to facilitate open discussions about some aspects of their personalities and to grasp the manner in which they perceive themselves as first-team rugby players.

3.6.2.3 Focus-group interview

A focus-group interview can be described as a discussion conducted with a group who share similar backgrounds and experiences (Merriam, 2009). It is generally administered to a relatively small number of participants in order to create ample opportunity to engage and interact with each other. This type of interview provides additional research data, and at the same time gives the researcher an opportunity to re-affirm some of the themes originated during the individual interviews (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Focus-group interviews also generate rich data by giving the researcher insight into the inter-subjective experiences of participants (team members in this case) that may otherwise not have been available (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

The focus-group interview took place once all the individual interviews had been completed. After an initial analysis of the individual interview data, and a consideration of the academic pressures experienced by the Grade 11 participants with regard to the forthcoming exams, I decided to conduct the focus group interview with only the five Grade 12 participants. During the initial part of the session, I aimed to create an empathic environment where participants were again informed of aspects such as confidentiality, anonymity, and mutual respect.

Participants were able to freely discuss their own opinions and lived experiences of being first-team players at their school, while also reflecting upon their career planning for the future. I aimed to facilitate a type of bi-directional dialogue between participants, while at the same time summarising the different aspects that were shared. Specific guiding questions (See Appendix E) were used to elicit relevant data, to address gaps in the available data, and to engage less-verbal participants. These aspects served as an effective strategy to gain a better understanding of the opinions and feelings of participants and provided me with relevant data to analyse.

3.6.3 Open-ended questionnaires

In order to triangulate the research process, I also presented the coach of the first team and the head teacher of the Grade 12 group with an open ended questionnaire (Appendix F). This questionnaire comprised questions related to their opinions about the career planning of first-team rugby players; what schools can do to guide these players in this regard; and their role as coach/teacher in assisting the players with career development.

The feedback from the individual interviews, the focus-group discussion and the written feedback from the coach and grade head teacher provided me with relevant data to analyse.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

As mentioned in Chapter One, thematic analysis was implemented to examine the data. This approach is compatible with a constructionist paradigm and is regarded a foundational method in qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), thematic analysis can be used to categorise data into smaller units of meaning. It takes into account that I as researcher might have an influence on the formulation of categories and themes, since I played an active role in reflecting about captured data. The process of thematic data analysis occurs in six phases, namely, (1) becoming familiar with

collected data; (2) generating the initial or first version of codes; (3) searching for relevant themes; (4) reviewing these themes; (5) naming and defining these themes, and (6) producing a report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme refers to identifying something important about the data related to the specific research question. Thematic analysis also provides a rich description of data by searching across the data set, as it provides the researcher with the opportunity to constantly move back and forth between the various themes, data sets, and coded extracts of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It therefore is a recursive process implemented throughout the different phases of data analysis.

The coding process in this study was administered in the way described above. The first phase of coding began when I read and listened to all of the recorded data from the individual interviews that were transcribed, in order to develop general themes and subsequent opportunities for member checking during the focus-group interview. The second process of coding followed by the verbatim transcription of the data collected during the focus-group interview. The different interactions and feedback of the participants were then given codes that consisted of selected phrases or words, which conveyed the different units of meaning that became evident during the coding process. Next, I looked at the complete set of codes in order to assess which codes could be grouped together, were relevant, and which were richly described in the data. The codes that appeared infrequently were not included in the feedback about the research findings. However, I still regarded these codes as important aspects to take into account and reflect upon during the research analysis, as they might have affected the participants' understanding about the different questions that were posed. The codes that were richly described and occurred frequently were then grouped into various categories, subthemes, and themes in order to provide me with concise data to present as findings. During the process of writing the research findings in Chapter Four, the different codes were revisited and refined as new ideas developed, and consequently implemented a recursive

process in analysing the data. This provided me with a holistic insight and understanding of the data and also aided the formulation recommendations which will be presented in Chapter Five.

3.8 DATA VERIFICATION

Two of the cornerstones of scientific research are construct reliability (indicating that the research can be repeated in a different setting and yield similar results) and validity (measuring what was intended to be measured) (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2007). It should be noted that these constructs are generally more applicable to quantitative research studies. Qualitative research, however, have different conceptualisations regarding the nature of reality and it has been proposed that the following four central principles should be implemented to ensure trustworthiness (reliability and validity). The four principles of trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Merriam, 2009).

3.8.1 Credibility

The credibility of a study increases when there is conformity in the manner in which a researcher presents the different perspectives of participants, the objective truths and the meanings they ascribe to certain occurrences (Merriam, 2009). It refers to the accurate conceptions of the realities of participants in the study. According to Guba and Lincoln (1985, as cited in Merriam, 2009) and Babbie and Mouton (2001) the trustworthiness and credibility of a study can be strengthened by implementing strategies such as triangulation, member checking, and by using multiple sources of data to check consistency and accuracy.

3.8.1.1 Triangulation

Triangulation reduces the possibility of investigator bias by implementing various ways of looking at the participants' different perspectives and constructions of reality (Patton, 2002).

This usually involves implementing several strategies and methods in the process of confirming evidence from different individuals in order to look at the given set of data and to cross check the findings of the research (Cresswell, 2005).

This study consisted of multiple data-collection methods. First, I conducted a semi-structured interview with each participant. During the interviews I also asked the participants to complete an expressive activity, where they had to design logos for their shoulder pads. The individual interviews were followed by a focus-group interview with all of the Grade-12 participants. Data were also collected from the completed questionnaires of the coach and Grade 12 head at the school. The data were compared and cross-checked with each other, in order to form a clear understanding of the possible variations, similarities, and the development of emerging themes.

3.8.1.2 Member checking

Member checking involves the process of ensuring trustworthiness by ruling out misinterpretations that a researcher may have about the feedback of the participants in the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Merriam, 2009). The focus-group interview served as instrument to verify and confirm the data with the participants. The group's conversations and interactions about some of the themes that were evident during the majority of the interviews then led to further reflections and discussions, and further appraisal of these aspects. I found the member checking to be valuable for the overall dynamic of the focus-group interview, as it opened up many areas of discussion and constructive dialogue between all the participants and myself as the researcher.

3.8.2 Transferability

Transferability indicates that the methodology and possibly some of the findings of this study can be applied to other contexts (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Boeije, 2010; Merriam, 2009).

Since the aim of this qualitative study was primarily to generate in-depth, rich discussions of the participants' own perspectives of their future careers, I will caution against generalising the findings to other contexts. The descriptions of the participants' responses and reflections however, allow readers to make their own assumptions regarding the extent to which the findings of this study are applicable to other situations. Due to the purposive nature of the sample, I was able to select a certain population (first-team rugby players), for this study. Since there are many schools with a strong rugby culture in this country, I do feel that a possibility exists that some of the elements of this study may be applicable in other contexts. Wolcott (2005, as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 228) summarises the notion of generalisability quite effectively when he states that: "every case is, in certain aspects, like all other cases, like some other cases, and like no other case."

3.8.3 Dependability

In order for a study to be reliable in qualitative research, a researcher must question whether the results of the study are consistent with the collected data. Although there could be different interpretations of the same data set, some level of consistency must persist throughout the process of analysis and feedback (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). A researcher can guarantee dependability by ensuring that the results of the study make sense, by providing a detailed description of the research process as a whole, and by keeping accurate records of the analysis process. During this study I attempted to describe the different changes that may have occurred in the various settings and how these affected my way of thinking – which is another way of ensuring dependability (Trochim, 2006).

3.8.4 Confirmability

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001) the confirmability of the research process refers to the extent to which the findings of a study may be linked to the initial purpose of the

research. It relates to the degree of objectivity of the research. The reader of a research thesis should be able to estimate whether the researcher's own misconceptions or prejudices may have influenced the study, by tracing the research process along the line of audit trails, such as raw data, interview schedules, analysis and interpretations of the data. In this research the thesis supervisors ensured the confirmability of my research by means of check-ups during the analysis process, regular feedback sessions, and by assisting me to generate and include a relevant and concise sample of the audit trail (See Appendices).

3.8.5 Researcher reflexivity

Declaring one's position as researcher is regarded as an additional way of ensuring the credibility of a qualitative research study (Merriam, 2009). By explaining and clarifying one's own prejudices and assumptions related to the research study, the reader is provided with the opportunity to understand how the research was conducted and how the data were interpreted and analysed (Walters, 2009).

I acknowledge that the manner in which I as researcher played a part and contributed to the specific research context of this study, was influenced by the relationship between myself and each of the individuals, as well as the manner in which the focus-group session was conducted.

Working from within socio-constructivism as theoretical framework for this study, I reflected upon how my own views may have been shaped by the different interactions about this topic. Writing this thesis was, therefore, not only the result of my own actions and decisions, as many of my opinions were shaped and influenced by the different participants in the study, as well as those of my research supervisors, and general society.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As mentioned in Chapter One, the ethical principles proposed by Wassenaar (2006) were employed throughout the various stages of this research process. These principles are justice, non-maleficence, autonomy, respect for the dignity and rights of participants, and beneficence. I consider that adhering to these principles was my professional and moral responsibility as researcher. I also adhered to the checklist provided by Patton (2002, as cited in Merriam, 2009).

Before embarking on this research process, I obtained permission to conduct the research study from the headmaster of the particular school (Appendix G), as well as the Western Cape Educational Department (WCED) (See Appendix H). I then obtained ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the Stellenbosch University. (DESC/Ellis/Apr2015/4) (See Appendix I).

Once I received ethical clearance for the study to proceed, I initiated the required phases to conduct the research. By adhering to Patton's checklist, I ensured that the study was conducted in an ethical manner that is appropriate for qualitative research. Consent and assent forms (See Appendices A and B) assisted in an attempt to conform to the principles that are named in this checklist.

The first point in the checklist stipulates that participants must be aware of the *purpose of the inquiry and the methods to be used*. The detailed assent and consent forms in which the purpose and nature of the research were described, were used for this purpose.

The *informed consent and assent forms* served as guidelines for the dynamics of the research process. For example, they informed the potential participants of the voluntary nature of their involvement in the research project. This also assisted me as researcher to be transparent

about the purpose and goal of the research (Merriam, 2009). The participants were fully aware of the purpose of the study and knew that they could withdraw from it at any time and without prejudice.

Another principle listed by Patton (2002) relates *promises and reciprocity*. This proposes that as the researcher I must adhere to the different matters that were agreed upon. This requires being open and honest with the participants about, during, and after the research process. The consent or assent forms also served as an additional formal agreement between myself as the researcher and the participants. Furthermore, participants were informed that the transcriptions of their interviews, as well as the completed thesis, will be available to them if they so require to look at it.

A further checklist item pertains to the importance of conducting a detailed *risk assessment* by evaluating and determining the possibility and degree of risk that participants might be exposed to if they participate in a study (Merriam, 2009). Participants were provided with the contact details of a registered educational psychologist whom they could contact if they experienced any risk or discomfort due to their participation in this study. Additionally, I provided the school counsellor with a checklist and question sheet which they could use to identify and assist participants that might experience any discomfort due to their participation in this study (See Appendix J).

The informed consent and assent forms also notified the participants about the fourth stipulation, namely *confidentiality*. These forms specified that any information that was obtained in connection with this study and that could be identified with the participants will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with permission of the particular participant or as required by law. This was re-confirmed during the initial phase of each interview, as participants were informed that their identities will be protected by means of omitting their

names or by using pseudonyms (false names). False names ensure the anonymity of the participants. Also, real names were omitted when describing the participants' responses regarding old boys of the school, in order to leave no trail to the specific school or the research participants.

A stipulation relating to *data access and ownership* refers to the researcher's responsibility to ensure that the research information is protected from unauthorised access, as well as clarifying and providing feedback about the data, of which participants have ownership. This was accomplished in the following manner: all the data were stored on the researcher's personal computer (with additional security measures such as passwords for files). The computer was placed at my private home in a room and behind locked doors. The participants were informed that some of the information of the study might also be in possession of the thesis supervisors. The collected data (audio files, transcripts etc.) will be kept for a period of five years after which they will be destroyed.

The final format of this thesis will be published on *SunScholar* (an online research platform for the students of Stellenbosch University) and will, therefore, be available in the public domain.

During the overall process of this research thesis, I received regular and thorough supervision from two experienced research supervisors. Their valuable guidance and support can, therefore, be considered as fulfilling the last stipulation of Wassenaar (2006), namely *advice* throughout the research process.

3.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the research process by discussing the research design which was guided by the meta-theoretical framework of socio-constructionism. Thereafter, I described

the research methodology and the specific setting in which the qualitative research was conducted. This was followed by an account of the data collection methods that were used, as well as the procedures with regard to selecting the research participants. I then proceeded to a discussion and deliberation of the data analysis, data verification and the ethical considerations that were taken into account during this study.

The next chapter discusses the research findings, including the themes, subthemes, and categories which emerged during the research process.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an outline of the themes, subthemes, and categories that emerged during the research process. The data collected during the interviews were analysed in order to address the research questions. The primary research question that guided the study was:

How do first-team rugby players understand their future career trajectories?

The following subquestions were asked in order to better understand the experiences and perspectives of the participants in the study.

How do first-team rugby players describe their own identity?

What role does rugby currently and in future play in this regard?

How do first-team rugby players understand the transitions that have to be negotiated during a career involving rugby?

Figure 4.1 serves as an illustration of the different themes, subthemes and categories of codes that emerged during the research process.

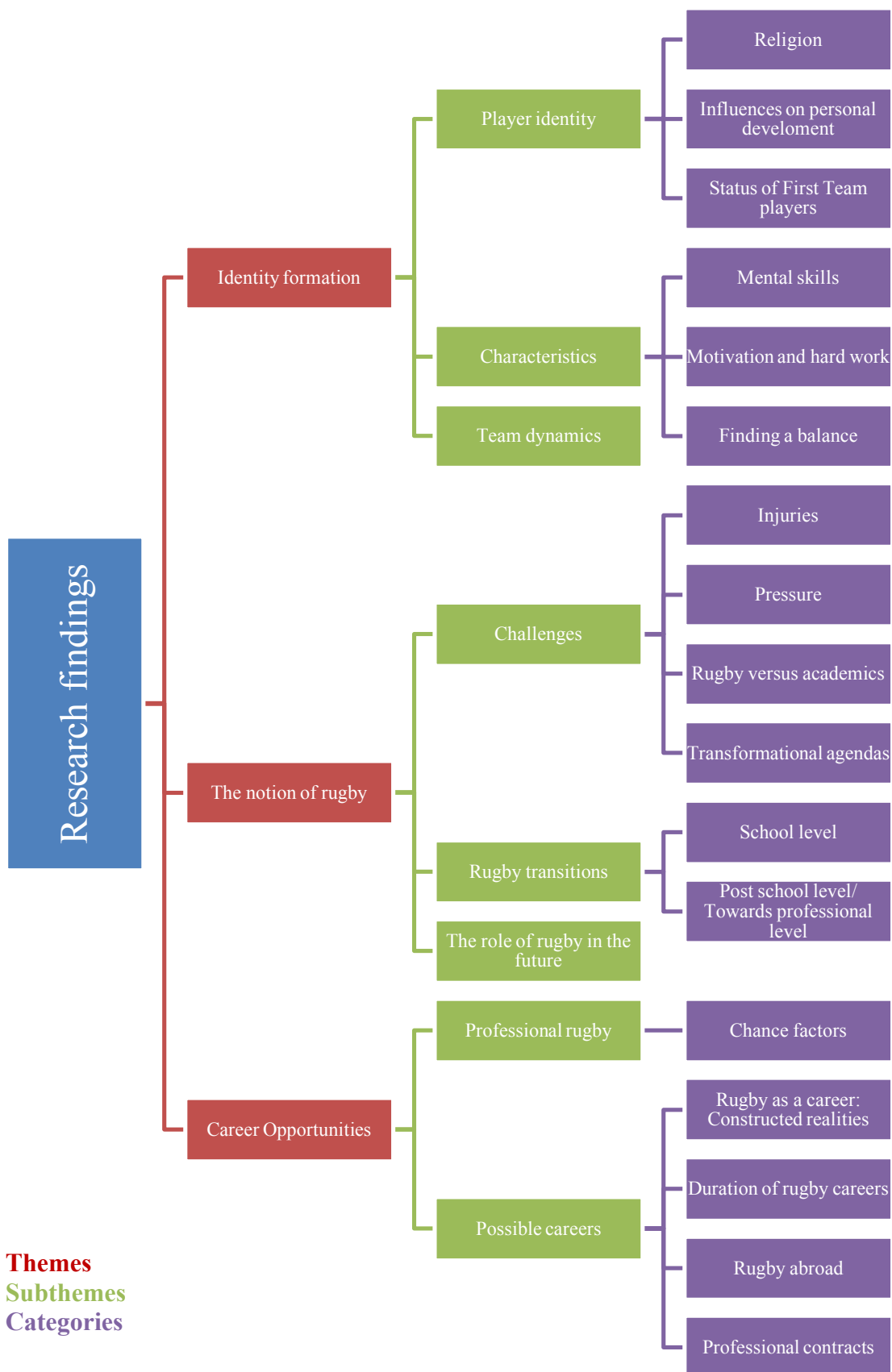


Figure 4.1: Thematic content of research findings

4.2 CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

It is necessary to explain the context in which the research was conducted, as it could have influenced the participants' interactions regarding their perceptions and understanding of the questions that were asked. This study was based in one of the top rugby schools in South Africa, one with a proud rugby heritage.

The specific time period and setting in which the interviews were conducted, could have contributed to the nature of the answers to some of the questions, as the interviews took place around the time of an important annual interschool rugby derby, which is generally regarded as one of South Africa's biggest school-rugby games of the year. It was also the last school match for the majority of the participants, as they were in their Grade-12 and final year at the school. Interschool rugby matches are generally characterised by an increase in school pride, loyalty, and added meaning to being a member of a particular school (Noakes & Vlismas, 2011). Because the participants were all members of the first-team squad for this occasion, their thought patterns, originating from intrinsic as well as extrinsic factors, may have been influenced by this important event in the school calendar.

4.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following section will explain the themes, subthemes, and categories that emerged from the research process. During the interviews it became clear that the participants' identity formation within their current context may have shaped their perceptions about their future. This section is, therefore, structured in such a way that one can assess the impact of the themes relating to *player identity* and the *notion of rugby*, in order to evaluate its impact on the way participants perceived their future career paths.

4.3.1 Identity formation

The manner, in which participants described their own identity formation, emerged as one of the main themes in the research findings. This theme emerged in the following manner: Several categories of codes that comprised different factors impacting the participants' reported sense of identity were grouped together to form subthemes, which were then grouped together to form the main theme of *identity formation*.

4.3.1.1 Player identity

The participants all mentioned the value of being an active member of the first-team squad and they expressed their gratitude towards the school for the opportunities to develop their self-worth by being part of the squad.

I am crazy about my school and the rugby... I would love to have everything... to have the whole season over again. [Participant 1]

I will always remember it... for the rest of my life... (the school) is 'legendary'... There is nothing better as to be able to say that we are proud of our school and thankful for the privilege to be here and to hang out with wonderful friends. [Participant 2]

The majority of the participants referred to the high levels of prestige and status associated with playing for this team and reflected upon how this has influenced their own development. The high regard for the players could have contributed to the construction of their identities as being valuable and esteemed by other people and players. The following subthemes and corresponding categories of codes regarding player identity emerged during the coding process:

- ***Religion and faith***

Several participants spoke about how their religion and/or faith influenced their thinking and planning for the future. It also became evident that they were aware of and understood the chance factor related to a career in rugby (or any other career for that matter) and looked, among others, upon their religion and/or faith as a way to cope effectively in this regard. The following quotes demonstrate the role of religion and/or faith in the identity formation of the participants:

And then I decided to go and study so I can play residence rugby, and if it is God's will, I shall be noticed, because of residence rugby. [Participant 1]

I usually take it day by day, but as I told myself... uhm, in five years' time, it depends. Like, it has a lot to do with God. It depends where He wants me. For instance, He might want me to do something else... [Participant 5]

- ***Influences on personal development***

When discussing personal development and the people they perceive to have had an impact on their current functioning, several participants spoke about the significant influence of close family members on their perceptions of life and rugby in general. The participants reported that these people often had been the reason they took up the game of rugby in the first place, and that they hope to be successful in rugby in order to make them proud. In responding to one of the research questions relating to why he took up the game of rugby, Participant 3 stated:

It was, I got into (rugby), my, my... My older cousin he's what, he's about 27 now... He played first team for Hamiltons and he played Province U21 and he was somebody to look up to. I looked up to him all my life and it was like, we were always together.

Another participant stated:

Uhm... probably my parents, everyone's role models are probably their parents. You look up to them – their, the way they raised me, I would probably want to raise my children in the same way, the same values. [Participant 6]

An interesting concept that became evident during the interviews was that several participants named ex-learners of their school as role models who were influential in their rugby careers. As mentioned earlier, this may be attributed to the strong emphasis on school pride and loyalty peaking with interschool matches.

I look up to the “old boys”, they really are the backbone of our school. Without old boys, the school would be nothing, you understand? For instance, if there weren't old boys, the traditions would fade away, like literally. So old boys mean a lot in my life, and for me as a person and so on. [Participant 2]

(Name omitted) is a role model for me. So, uhm, a lot of people don't like him, but, uhm, it doesn't bother me. Like, I am a guy, if I like a guy I will tell him. So, yes, for me he's a very good role model, and like, like the way he plays and how he does things etc. [Participant 5]

- ***Status of first-team players***

To be a member of the first team of this particular school is regarded as a major achievement. The way in which fellow learners, the media, and the public focus on the school in the period surrounding the annual interschool rugby derby, further contributes to this factor. The participants all conveyed the message that the competition to be part of this team was severe and that it was a privilege to be selected. It became evident that this high status influenced the positive experiences as top level schoolboy rugby players, which may have an impact on

future career decisions. The following comments were made relating to the competitive element and, therefore, also implying the status attached to being selected for the team:

It gets hectic in that even on our level now still at school level, it is, there's a whole, look, there's like I think we're 250 in the Grade, we're two Grades going for first team.... So, I'm not joking, there's about 10-15 boys all going for my position.
[Participant 3]

You must really have your things in place. There are a lot of guys who also want to pull the first team jersey over his head. [Participant 7]

This competitive element may have contributed to the high status and subsequent identity formation of the first-team players in this school. The majority of the participants were aware of their status as first-team players, and the recognition they received from their peers and others.

First team is THE thing in (school name omitted). Understand – you are main. You walk down the corridor with your legs wide open. [Participant 1]

Definitely, if you play for the first team, people look at you, people recognise you, people praise you, they say this of you, they say that of you, good things, bad things.
[Participant 2]

... and like, I think it is, its every child's dream in (Name omitted) school, like, just to pull the first-team's jersey over their heads. [Participant 5]

The participants conveyed an awareness regarding the fact that some of the first-team players may find it challenging to deal with these high levels of status. Several participants expressed

the notion that some players tend to become overconfident within this role and identify exclusively with the role of a first-team rugby player:

But there are guys that don't care about academics, because rugby is their love. Actually you can't blame them, because I mean, it is their passion. [Participant 1]

I feel that (the big status of first-team players) is totally wrong. [Participant 1]

From my point of view, a lot of people, like, they think rugby is their everything. Those people are usually the people that fall out early and so on. [Participant 5]

This notion of the status associated with being recognised as a rugby player was accentuated in the words of the Grade-12 head teacher of the school when he confirmed how some of the players identified exclusively with their role as first-team rugby players:

Most of the boys only practise and play (rugby) and hope that an opportunity will open up during the year or towards the end of the year to become a professional player. They only dream and there is no actual plan with regards to goals and a plan B, for example, academics. [Grade-12 head teacher]

It was interesting to observe that although many of the participants reflected upon a “rugby identity” as an important factor to consider when functioning in a school context, none of them seemed to consider themselves as identifying exclusively with this role. This may be attributed to the variety of factors which may influence their perception of themselves, which I will refer to in Chapter Five. The conversations regarding identity construction consequently led to a consideration of the different characteristics that develop from playing competitive rugby.

4.3.1.2 Characteristics

Several participants described the idea that participation in rugby provides them with an opportunity to develop several meaningful characteristics that can be transferred to other spheres of life. The participants acknowledged that their actions and behaviours were closely observed by others, and were aware that many first-team players are recognised and well-known in their immediate school contexts, and also in the general public. All the participants regarded their involvement in the first team as a contributing factor to them becoming more aware of their actions and to assist them in making better behavioural choices.

You must set an example for other people, I must set an example for other younger players so that they can achieve what I achieved on Saturday (the school was victorious in the Interschool rugby match). [Participant 1]

I think a first-team player has a responsibility towards the, uhm, probably towards the school and other learners, especially those in lower Grades, to set an example. If you first go play rugby and behave badly in school and always get sent out (of classes) and are a troublemaker, then others will regard you in a different way and will not say there's THAT guy, they will say there's the first-team player that was sent out. [Participant 6]

I would say rugby try to force it (positive characteristics) on you. Not force, but, it is part of rugby's phases, you must be humble, you must be disciplined. Things like these, otherwise you will not make it, understand? [Participant 7]

- **Mental attributes**

Sport society generally considers rugby as a game that requires both physical as well as mental abilities in order to be successful. This perception was mentioned by several

participants during conversations about characteristics of successful players. The concept “mental attributes” came to the fore during most of the individual interviews. This was also a relevant topic during the focus-group interview.

In responding to an open question regarding the requirements to become a successful player, some of the following comments were made:

Rugby has changed and moved on from a physical game to a mental game. The teams that are the most mentally healthy at the end of the game... are the teams that win.

[Participant 1]

A lot of guys, like, they take it too emotionally; Okay, I'm not good enough, I give up, stop playing rugby, or I don't want to play rugby anymore... Where other guys go; Okay I didn't make it, I'll train harder and I'll show them next year, I will make it... So, it's a mental attitude you must have. You must have that mental attitude to succeed.

[Participant 3]

But then there are also a lot of guys, who are good in rugby, but then their temperaments, or their minds, are not in the right place, and then they fall out of the bus.

[Participant 6]

- ***Motivation and hard work***

The participants broached the importance of motivation and hard work in order to be recognised as a player and consequently to be selected for the first team. Many considered these as important prerequisites in order to be a successful player, to such an extent that it may have become a part of their own identities, both as players and as human beings.

Firstly, to realise and to wake up thinking about rugby, it is the first thing I do, think about rugby. [Participant 2]

You have to (work hard). If you don't work harder than the guy next to you, you're not going to make it.... You have to stay ahead. [Participant 3]

It's self-discipline. It's like those people who do the hard work, will, at the end of the day, reap the rewards of it. [Participant 5]

During the creative activity, which formed part of the individual interviews, where the participants had to design a logo for their shoulder pads, several players included the team's motto in their logo. It refers to motivational aspects and team spirit. These drawings are deliberately not shown here, to protect the identity of the school. Those participants, who did not write the team's motto, instead wrote their own phrases related to motivation and the importance of hard work. This is a further indication that the participants strongly identified with these factors. The following phrase, which does not refer to the motto of the team in any way, was illustrated on a shoulder pad. (See Appendix D for illustration).

The wolf on the hill is not as hungry as the wolf climbing the hill. [Participant 7]

The large number of comments relating to hard work and strong motivation deemed it appropriate to discuss these characteristics with participants during the focus-group interview, where several of these aspects were highlighted. Several participants believed that these virtues are transferable to other career fields as well. When asked about how the characteristics of successful players can be used in a different field, one participant selected hard work as an effective transferable factor. This was then re-affirmed by the other participants to the focus-group interview.

Yes, I think, especially when you enter into a career where you are pressurised for time and so forth, I know with this, if you go into an accounting direction then you will be pressurised for time and then you have to work hard and put in the hours. [Participant 4]

Conversations around this topic consequently led to a general discussion regarding the importance of finding a balance between the different domains of functioning, which were also one of the categories of codes that emerged throughout the individual interviews.

- ***Finding a balance***

The participants expressed the importance of being able to find a balance between rugby, academics and personal life. Many references were made to the challenges with finding a balance between rugby and academics, which I will discuss at a later stage. Although many references have been made to other players identifying exclusively with the role of a rugby player, there were also several responses that shed light upon the way participants constructed their own opinions regarding balancing these different domains. Most of the participants considered themselves as being successful in balancing these domains.

We had a good year, but did not win (opposing school's name), because we had to get a balance between school work, rugby, and relationships, those are the three things. It is relationships, sport, and academics, and that is mostly what everything is about. [Participant 1]

You must keep your mind healthy by always having something to do that can take your mind off rugby. So, you don't have only that to focus on, do some hobbies and things, so you can get away from it and will be able to see the bigger picture or so. [Participant 4]

The references to different relationships serve as an effective introduction for the next theme which emerged from the data. The process of being selected for the first team had been a long journey for many of the participants, one in which they established some meaningful friendships and relationships with others. Rugby's emphasis on teamwork and team cohesion may have played a role in this regard.

4.3.1.3 Team dynamics

Numerous references were made during the interviews about the many hours spent on the rugby field and the commitment it required to become as fit and skilful as possible. Many of the participants believed that these long hours and subsequent involvement in the team context were worthwhile sacrifices and regarded it as a facilitating factor which led to the development of many special friendships with fellow team members. The significance of the team environment was also evident in the creative activities, where several participants chose to write down the team's motto for the year.

There is nothing better as to be able to say that we are proud of our school and thankful for the privilege to be here and to mingle with wonderful friends. To build friendships that will last for the rest of our lives. I was with my friends today and we spoke again about winning the interschool's match and just about where we've come from.
[Participant 2]

My best friends are the guys in my rugby team. It was, going, starting Grade eight and coming to the hostel and that, I never, like, obviously I didn't know anyone coming here. I knew one or two guys that played Province Under13 with me and then through rugby, my roommate now, we've been together for four years. It's our fourth year together. I actually met him (in Grade eight), we ended up playing lock together that year.
[Participant 3]

Yes, I think that you form good friends with the guys playing with you... we have been together for four years... you will still be in contact with them in some way or another... just not in the same way as... say... ten years ago. [Participant 7]

During the group interview it was observed that participants felt at ease in each other's company and seemed to value, and cherish, their relationships with each other. Rugby is, according to the participants, always a major topic in their social gatherings, as a team and in general. These conversations about rugby and life in general might have shaped the way the participants regarded rugby as a game.

4.3.2 The notion of rugby

The way in which the participants perceived rugby and the different aspects relating to participation in this sport, emerged as one of the main themes of the study. This theme comprised various subthemes and categories according to the specific data that were presented. The way the players understood and perceived the current functioning of the sport in general may have had an impact in the way they planned for their futures, from which the following subthemes and categories that emerged during the interviews serves as examples:

4.3.2.1 Challenges

During the interviews, it became evident that the participants experienced many challenges being first-team players in a school that places a high premium on rugby performance. The many references to this aspect consequently led to the construct “challenges” to emerge as one of the subthemes within this section. This subtheme included various categories of codes matching the descriptions of the various challenges that were identified by the participants.

- ***Injuries***

Many participants acknowledged the possibility of suffering injuries and how this influences a player in the short- as well as in the long term. Most of the participants expressed concerns about the unpredictable nature of injuries, but seemed to prefer not to think about it too much. When discussing the challenges regarding a career in rugby, the following comments were made:

There's no possibility that you will not be injured. You will get injured and there will be small things that will affect you. Yes, for me it is just like ... you must just work harder when you are injured. [Participant 2]

I think there are a lot of things that can play a role...the biggest one is, for example, an injury. I heard that at training, perhaps your first season, you did not go and study or anything, and then you break your leg, where after the doctor says that you will never be able to play again, or perhaps serious concussion. So I think injuries are a big part (of a career in rugby). [Participant 4]

Obviously injuries that nobody can control, can have a very big influence (on a career in rugby) [Participant 6]

Injuries are unexpected... so you think... today you get your fifth cap for the Springboks and you think you're going to get fifty more... and on cap number ten you twist your knee, tear your ligaments, or break your leg... and yes okay, there is a possibility of injury, but if you're already there (on the field), you're not thinking about injuries. [Participant 7]

- **Pressure**

The prestige associated with the first team contributes to the levels of pressure experienced by players in the first team of this school. The participants described the proud manner in which the school and its supporters regard the team and how this might contribute to some of the pressures involved in playing for the team. Specific notions of the types of pressures were, among others, factors such as verbal abuse and the high expectations placed on first-team players to win rugby matches.

You hear, like, you hear really bad things from the crowd and so on... and sometimes you need to make a decision, but, like, it doesn't really bother me... but when I started (playing for the first team) it bothered me a lot. [Participant 5]

Everybody always expects the first team to win, the whole school can, there can perhaps be an U15 E team that loses, nobody really cares, but when the first team loses then everybody is negative and everything... [Participant 6]

- **Rugby versus academics**

Another category that emerged during the interviews involved the participants reflecting about the challenges to finding a balance between academic work and rugby-related activities. At this school first-team players practise about four times a week after school throughout the year. Playing for this team also involves pre-season and post-season training. Then there are the additional hours in the gymnasium. This might present time-management problems for players.

Now at school, it is difficult, a lot more tests/assignments. Everybody says that Grade 11 is tougher, but Matric is a lot more work. So, there are more tests and stuff that you write. Your rugby coach doesn't always worry about which test you write or when you

write them, because his job was given to him and he must win, regardless of the circumstances. So, it is difficult for you as a player, to balance everything. [Participant 4]

We started training last year at the end of September, like four times a week for about a month and a half, then I wrote exams and then in the second week of school this year we started training four times a week. [Participant 6]

Most of the participants in the study tend to focus more on the rugby-related matters and find it difficult to maintain a balance between rugby and school work. As mentioned earlier, rugby's status and its strong influence on identity construction could have a significant effect in this regard.

Because I know my academics in rugby (season), is, goes very low. Because I don't study in rugby season... because like, ja, I tend to focus on one thing. I focus on rugby and then I leave the academics. [Participant 3]

You go and work for the W.P. (Western Province) and that is where you will stop. Or you will drop out before that. And then, the other direction is when you start slacking when it comes to your studies and academics. Haha, this is more common, to ignore your studies instead of rugby. [Participant 7]

The grade-12 head also mentioned the challenges rugby players experience with regard to balancing academic work and rugby.

I think that there must be a greater focus on academics and studying while playing rugby. This will ensure that players focus on being balanced and consequently led to men that can handle the pressures of rugby and normal life. [Grade-12 head teacher]

Another aspect mentioned in the interviews related to the political and societal influences that could hamper players' development and career future. Participants perceived the current inconsistencies in the administration of the sport on macro-level as a challenge to overcome, both in the present as well as in the future.

- ***Transformational agendas***

The manner, in which media and public perceptions portray the stipulations regarding provincial rugby teams and transformational agendas, resulted in some of the players being sceptical about a future in rugby in South Africa. Some participants expressed their own understanding of this factor and spoke about this as a negative situation in South African rugby. When commenting on the different factors which might play a role in their futures, the participants named both the current quota system (guidelines for the racial compilation of provincial rugby teams) as well as other political elements that might contribute to the deciding outcome for a career in rugby.

It's like, it's almost impossible... For an average, well a good white guy to make a team now, because, if you're not brilliant, you're not going to make it. [Participant 3]

My personal opinion is that the whole quota system is just as good as "buying in". because, it is so unfair towards the other guy who really deserves it and a guy that works hard, and then there comes another guy that pays... and "buys" themselves into a team. [Participant 4]

Like, my basic view of South African rugby is, like, like many people say it is not what you do, but rather who you know. And that stuff is also evident in rugby, as many guys come in at places where... someone gets them in, because they know them... and this is what I think, is kind of happening in South Africa, kind of. [Participant 5]

The awareness and opinions regarding the different factors that could influence a career in rugby might have affected the way these players experienced the rugby transitions at school and the way they expected to negotiate them in their rugby future. The way the participants perceived these transitions consequently emerged as another subtheme within the theme of the notion of rugby.

4.3.2.2 Rugby transitions

The manner in which participants perceive the different transitions that need to be negotiated during a career in rugby was dealt with in one of the sub questions of this research study. Conversations around this topic then developed around two main areas, namely the transitions during school and those after the completion of school. The feedback during this section of the interviews revealed that the majority of the participants regarded selection for the provincial U18 Craven-week team as the major impetus to reach the highest level of rugby for schoolboys in South Africa – selection for the national South African schools' team. Several participants considered this as an important factor in establishing a possible future rugby career, while acknowledging the chance factor (which will be analysed later stage in this chapter). The following are some comments made about transitions at school level:

- **School level**

My personal opinion is that the whole quota system is just as good as “buying in” because, it is so unfair towards the other guy who really deserves it and a guy that works hard, and then there comes another guy that pays... and “buys” themselves into a team.
[Participant 4]

He perhaps sees a gap for himself and then get selected by the W.P. He gets his Grant Khomo (U16 provincial tournament), after which he goes to Craven week. Maybe, he

first plays for the Academy in his Grade-11 year. And in matric, he will play Craven week. If he gets noticed, he will obviously make SA Schools. From there onwards people will recognize him, and will offer him contracts. [Participant 7]

During the interviews, several participants reflected upon the importance of being successful in the period just after the completion of school, in order to be successful as a player in the long term.

- ***Post-school level to professional level***

Several participants regarded successful participation at the U21 level as an important benchmark for a career in rugby. Succeeding at this level was deemed a good indicator of future successes as a professional player. This perception may, however, impact the career planning of school players in general, seeing that many players may, therefore, only focus on a three-year goal of being successful at the U21 level of rugby.

U21 is make or break for a rugby player. After U21 you can't continue... it is... you're either gonna make it or you have to drop out and study. I feel that after three years you don't feel like studying. After three years you won't open a book. You only gym and play rugby. [Participant 1]

Then they are out, again, for a while. Then I thought of having a backup. In my opinion, U21 is a good foundation. Like, I enjoy rugby so I would enjoy playing it, and after that, I will follow a different path. [Participant 7]

4.3.2.3 The role of rugby in the future

During the general conversations concerning planning for the future and where they saw themselves in 10 years, all the participants conveyed the message that they would still want to be involved with the sport to some extent in the future. Their love for the game and the

camaraderie associated with participation in rugby resulted in aspirations of involvement as either a player, coach, spectator/supporter or anything within the wider spectrum of the sport.

Like, understand, I don't think rugby is my profession... you see, I will be at that age where I will rather watch rugby than play it, rather support. I will always have a love for it, but don't think that it is something that I would want to do for the rest of my life. I feel like it must stop, stop somewhere. [Participant 1]

Yes, I would obviously want to see myself in a Springbok jersey... uhm... just to represent the school. I really want to continue and to just like do stuff for people, like, less-privileged people, because I really got a lot of opportunities in the school that I wouldn't have gotten elsewhere. [Participant 2]

Obviously at, at the union, at the club overseas (in 10 years' time)... And then hopefully play in, in like first teams and like, up there in their main side. [Participant 3]

Yes, I would like to be involved in rugby in one way or another. And yes, then I would want to move on and have a solid thing and rugby as a side line, where I would either coach or play at a club. [Participant 7]

The information provided in the above-mentioned sections, serves as an appropriate introduction and useful background to the manner in which the participants regard their future careers. Seeing that the general aim of the research was to gain an understanding of the way first-team players perceive their future careers, many of the interview conversations were facilitated around this topic. This consequently led to the development of one of the main themes of the research data, namely *career opportunities*.

4.3.3 Career opportunities

Grades 11 and 12 are generally known as the years in which high-school learners are required to make important decisions about their future careers. During the interviews with the participants it became evident that they all seem to understand different aspects relating to career development, in their own unique ways. As mentioned, the participants' identity construction and insights about the general notion of rugby may have impacted the way they plan for future careers. The following subthemes and categories emerged as relevant points to consider within the career-opportunities theme.

4.3.3.1 Professional rugby

It seems that the concept of a "professional player" is not well-established and clear among high-school players, as differing opinions regarding this concept were raised. The discrepancies in this data suggest that this as an important point to consider. Some participants proposed that being a professional player entails playing for a club or provincial union, whereas others felt that one can only call oneself a professional player once you've played for the national Springbok team.

For me, you will make it... when you run out for the Springboks, where for other people it is when you play provincial, but do you always want to be second best for the rest of your life or do you want to be the best? [Participant 1]

Another example of the inconsistencies is provided below, where one participant commented about an old boy of the school who is currently contracted in the Springbok Sevens rugby team, more commonly known as the Blitzbokke. Thus, even though some players regarded playing for a club as being a professional player, this participant differed from them by not even regarding being contracted for the national sevens team as being a professional player.

(Name of contracted sevens player)... I mean, a lot of those people... (contracted sevens player) did not become a professional, professional. [Participant 4]

It appeared as though the participants understood that becoming a professional player can relate to many different chance factors which included, among others, someone in the general rugby circles realising your potential. These people include, among others, coaches and the professional scouts for the different provincial unions. Several of the participants conveyed the idea that being in a well-known rugby school may be a positive contributing element in this regard.

- ***Chance factors***

Yes, like, from what I have seen, I think luck plays a big role at the end of the day. [Participant 5]

I have a passion for rugby so I will do my best to go on with it, but, I know there are about 5000 guys in the Western Cape... So it is odds and evens, understand? [Participant 7]

Almost all the participants reflected on the importance of being at “the right place at the right time” in order to account for this chance factor and, consequently, to be selected for the various teams. Many of the participants believed that being selected for the U19 Craven-week team was one of the main stepping stones in becoming a professional player. It was evident that the participants were aware of the different opportunities that opened up when one plays for a Craven-week team. Being selected for these teams are subsequently something towards many players aspires.

These days it becomes more difficult to get in somewhere if you don't have Craven week behind your name, if you don't have SA Schools behind your name, seeing that most people get signed at Craven week and so forth. [Participant 5]

A large number of the participants conveyed the idea that being in a well-known rugby school may be a positive contributing element with regard to selection for provincial teams. Being a member of a well-known rugby school provides players with better access to quality coaching, facilities, and contact with influential people in rugby circles.

I mean, I mean, I can see how difficult that is for people from other schools... the less-privileged, to play professional... that is also why we don't have a good soccer team. Our school is not good at soccer, because there is no demand for it... understand? There aren't people who want to play it. [Participant 1]

Like, I would say, the name of your school and so on. Like, when they hear (Name of school) or (name of school) and so on, then they'll know it's a good resource. [Participant 5]

The set-up that you're in... understand? So, your chances are better for selectors to see you in one of the super schools. Understand? [Participant 7]

Participants mentioned various factors that can influence their decisions regarding their future careers. By examining the themes regarding identity formation and the participants' reflection about the notion of rugby in general, I provided a background against which the data relating to the main research questions could be analysed. Exploring the way in which the participants understand and plan for the future careers then led to delving into one of the main questions of the study, namely the perceptions of their future careers.

4.3.3.2 Possible careers

As evident in the previously mentioned sections, various factors could influence the career planning of a first-team player whilst at school. During the interviews it became clear that the participants all perceived their future careers differently. The following categories were identified in order to analyse the available data relating to possible careers.

- ***Rugby as a career: constructed realities***

The majority of the participants in the study indicated that they would pursue a career in rugby in the years following the completion of school. A career in rugby was envisioned as a first-choice career, with something else to “fall back onto”, in the case of a career in rugby not going according to plan. This “something to fall back onto” is an important factor to consider, because it became evident that many participants were still uncertain about what “something to fall back onto” really entails. These participants’ dreams and aspirations to become professional players might, therefore, dominate their current career planning, especially in the short- to midterm. This was accentuated in the words of the first- team coach when he commented on the career planning of first-team players in general:

Most players who do decide at an early age that he wants to become a professional player does not always realise the magnitude of the pyramid effect in rugby that lies ahead of him. [First-team coach]

It is important to mention that not all the participants planned to follow a career in rugby. Some planned to pursue tertiary education after the completion of school and to play for the Varsity-Cup team of their university. Upon further exploration it became evident that these players were not selected for any provincial teams or squad’s during their U19 school-rugby careers. It may, therefore, be regarded that the rewards that accompany playing for a Craven-

week or provincial team may be a significant incentive to the rugby career aspiration of players whilst at school.

- ***Duration of rugby careers***

The way in which the participants understood the duration of a career in rugby, may shape the way they plan for their futures. It became clear that the participants had differing opinions and perceptions regarding the length of such a career. This led to the development of this category, seeing that there were also many inconsistencies relating to the concept of “professional career”. It was concluded that the length of a career in rugby was not yet an established concept agreed upon. The following comments relating to the length of rugby careers were made about future career planning:

I think professional rugby is a tough thing and I've got respect for all of them... Don't think that it is something that I would want to do with my life... until the age of 40, or say, 38... or will be able to do. [Participant 1]

The other thing is... yes, you can't bargain that you will play until you are 30/40. Some guys have bad luck and at about 25, they break a leg or something like that happens. [Participant 5]

But the thing is... that... you only play rugby for about 10 years and then you have... what... 40 years left. [Participant 6]

During conversations about factors that may influence a player's decision about a future career in rugby, the financial aspect came to the fore. The global growth of rugby has resulted in players increasingly becoming marketable commodities in the world of sport. Most of the participants reflected upon the importance of investing and/or saving money during a career,

in order to ensure financial stability after retirement. Several participants regarded a career overseas as one way to ensure financial and career stability.

- ***Rugby abroad***

A number of factors were named as possible contributors to the dream of pursuing a rugby career abroad. These included the situation of rugby in South African, along with the extreme competitiveness, transformational agendas and the attraction of a favourable foreign exchange rate. It seems that many current first-team players do not only perceive a career overseas as the final phase of their careers, but, in fact, contemplating about taking up such a career at a relatively young age.

You're not going to (be financially stable), clubs don't pay well enough. And if you, like, if you can, those who haven't made it here have gone overseas, then they play rugby in France and that, in England, and a lot of guys who you would never say will make it here have made it there, because they play a whole different type of game to us. [Participant 3]

As a player I would want to play professional, not necessarily as a Springbok, somewhere professional. Whether this will be in SA or somewhere abroad don't matter. If I can play professionally, I will be very happy with myself. [Participant 6]

Uhm, not necessarily to play abroad from a young age... but, recently, it looks like more people go and play abroad and make a success of it. So, if I had to follow that path, it would also be okay. [Participant 6]

Throughout the interviews it came to light that the financial aspect of a career in rugby is one of the major features that contribute to the way first-team players consider their future career paths. Another interesting factor that came to the fore during the conversations about finances

was the influence of professional contracts and the manner in which these contracts were considered.

- ***Professional contracts***

The signing of a professional contract could serve as an indicator of job security and possible financial security in the short term. Nowadays, many players sign these contracts at a relatively young age. During the interviews it became evident that several participants who had aspirations to become professional players had already signed contracts with a provincial union whilst still at school. The majority of the participants noted that provincial unions target and contract talented players at schools from as young U16 level, to ensure possible future involvement with the specific province. In many instances these contracts involve substantial financial remuneration and sponsorships.

And I spoke with them (a specific province) negotiated with them, and things started to happen... but there are obviously other provinces that also want me... but I decided to stay with my province. [Participant 2]

I was lucky, I signed a contract, I played under 16A at the school in 2013... and then I played Province under 16 that year, and then I signed a junior contract with (Province)... after under 16 and then... That's carried on at this present time now until October when my new contract starts. [Participant 3]

There are guys at school that make big bucks, guys who start with R2 000 per month... The big contracts at school are between R2 000 and R30 000. [Participant 7]

The participants perceived signing a professional contract as an important step on the career ladder for a professional rugby player. The dream of signing a provincial contract can, therefore, motivate players to train as hard as possible and devote themselves to rugby from a

young age, as the financial rewards of and subsequent label as a “signed” player are indications of possible future rugby successes.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter described the information that was collected during the individual interviews, the creative activity, the focus-group interview, and the open ended questionnaires. This was analysed and presented according to three overarching themes, namely, *identity formation*, *the notion of rugby* and *career opportunities*. Each of these themes consisted of various subthemes, and categories.

The next chapter provides a discussion of the findings, linking them to the wider context of available literature about this topic.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to explore and gain a better understanding of the way in which first-team schoolboy rugby players perceive and understand their future career trajectories. The qualitative-research process was guided by an interpretative-constructivist approach from within the meta-theoretical framework of socio-constructionism. The discussion of the research findings was presented according to these frameworks.

The first section of this chapter describes the research process and procedures. I then precede with a discussion and summary of the research findings by placing them within the wider context of existing and relevant literature about this topic, after which I present a conclusion from the research findings. This is followed by some recommendations, based on the findings of the study, to support and encourage career development of schoolboy rugby players. This chapter concludes with a discussion about the strengths and limitations of the study, as well as suggestions for future research.

5.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

To answer the main research question and subquestions, seven semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with first-team players of the school where this study was conducted. During the interviews participants were asked open-ended questions, and also completed a creative activity in which they had to design a logo for their own shoulder pads. I also facilitated one focus-group interview with the five Grade-12 participants in the study. In addition, an open ended questionnaire was given to the coach of the first team as well as to the grade-12 head teacher of the school, to facilitate further triangulation of the research data.

Data were analysed by means of thematic data analysis, which is considered a useful method in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

5.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The collected data provided valuable insight into first-team schoolboy rugby players' perceptions of their future career trajectories. Having a vision for a future career is regarded as an important part of any high-school learner's life, as they currently live in a society which requires people to be flexible and innovative in the way they consider their current and future careers and the possible influences that might contribute to decisions in this regard (Bimrose, 2010; Patton et al., 2006). This factor was evident in the findings from this study, as each of the participants regarded their futures differently. There were, however, some matters that were discussed frequently with regards to how the participants understood their future career trajectories. These aspects formed the basis from which the research findings were presented. Three main themes emerged as relevant and meaningful within the context of the study. These three themes were presented in the research findings under the following headings: *identity formation*, *the notion of rugby* and *career opportunities*. Each of these themes comprised various subthemes and categories of codes. For the purpose of this chapter, I discussed and evaluated how each of these themes was used to answer the main research questions and subquestions, by placing the findings within the wider context of existing research and literature.

During the interviews it became evident that the participants' identity formation within their current contexts and the way in which they understood the game of rugby in general, might have shaped their perceptions about future career opportunities. Seeing that career development does not occur in a uniform progression, but rather in a recursive and spiral-like way (Mkhize, 2005), I discussed and evaluate the type of interlacing factors within the

findings that could have shaped the way the participants understood and reacted to the various questions of the study.

The participants all experienced identity formation in their own unique ways. There were, however, some general factors that played a role in the majority of the participants' processes of identity formation. These factors were classified and presented under subthemes as *player identity*, *characteristics* and *team dynamics*. Some of these subthemes comprised various categories of codes. It became evident that the majority of the participants strongly identified with the role of a first-team rugby player. Such identification within rugby is not unique to the sport itself, as Cecić Erpič, (2001) found that many talented individuals in different sports develop strong sport/player identities. The nature of identification within the *player-identity* subtheme was influenced by the participants' comments regarding *religion and faith*, *influences on personal development* and on the way in which the *status of first-team players* in the school may have influenced the manner in which they perceived and described themselves. Several participants indicated that their parents or close family members played an active part in their development, both as human beings and as rugby players. This finding is in accordance with that of Bourke (2003) who found that parental influence has an impact on career decision making and that one should consider all the cultures, life histories, and family backgrounds when attempting to understand players' career choices.

In many instances, factors such as culture and close family members can influence the faith and religious beliefs of school learners. According to Scolnicov (2007) one's religion is a product of legal and social mechanisms, and the social aspect can, therefore, not be underestimated in the identity formation of school learners. This might have been a contributing element in the numerous references to religion and/or faith when asked about career planning and life in general. These findings demonstrate how the social-constructionist

theory as explained in Chapter Two, supports the unique ways in which family, religion, context, culture, history, etc., influence how participants see themselves and their possible career paths.

The high status associated with playing for their school led to participants receiving many accolades and recognition due to their participation in the team. Understanding the identity formation within the particular context of the school was of extreme importance for this study, as Guest and Schneider (2003) propose that one should distinguish between structural and subjective identity of people within the social context of their surroundings. For example, the structural role of being a rugby player does not differ from school to school; the objective of a team is always to score more points than the opponents to win a rugby match. The subjective identity, however, varies greatly between different schools, and was given meaning by the context in which the participants found themselves. The school in which the participants were based placed a strong emphasis on rugby performance and school pride, which were aspects that became evident during the data collection procedures. This also contributed to the strong identification as first-team rugby players, as many references were made to the hype and honour involved in playing for the first team. This may also have been a contributing element to all of the comments regarding the “old boys” of the school, as the players strongly identified with the school’s ex-players who are now earning their trade in professional rugby.

This high status of the first team contributed to players being extremely motivated to perform to the best of their abilities. The participants regarded having high levels of motivation and the ability to work hard as important characteristics of their own selves. Several participants mentioned the great deal of time devoted to training sessions and skill development exercises to develop their abilities. The subtheme *motivation and hard work* is in line with the general

consensus of the game of rugby, as participation in this sport provides numerous opportunities for players to display values such as determination, persistence, patience, and commitment (McKenna & Thomas, 2007; Surujlal & Van Zyl, 2014). These high levels of motivation and numerous references to hard work may be regarded as positive as well as negative aspects to consider. On the negative side, this may result in participants over-identifying with their role as rugby players, as Webb, Nasco, Riley, and Headrick (1998) stated that strong commitment to a sport might result in sport participants defining themselves around the sport and to the role of being an athlete, or in this context, the role of the rugby player. Such dominant sporting identities could lead to heightened levels of stress and a need for effective coping resources, seeing that players might be subjected to instances where they do not meet the expectations as first-team rugby players at this prodigious school – and might then struggle with their subsequent identity formation. As mentioned in the preceding chapters, a strong identification with the role of being a sportsman might lead to psychological and organisational difficulties in a post-sport career (Cecić Erpič, 2001; Grove et al., 1997; Wylleman et al., 2004).

The positive outcomes of motivation and hard work, in the context of this study, were that the participants perceived these characteristics as important life skills that can be transferred to other contexts as well. Understanding that participation in high-level rugby can assist players in developing transferable life skills is important, as Price (2007) indicated that players who possess meaningful life skills will be better equipped to cope with challenges outside of sport. This is substantiated by Pipe and Hébert (2008) who suggest that when players adopt and display some of rugby's values such as honesty, fair play, sportsmanship and ethics in an institution and environment where these values prevail (such as the school where the study was conducted), it might lead to lifelong application of these attributes. Being involved in high-school sport might further add to the life-skill development of players, as Kendellen and

Camire (2015) stated that sport represents a context which provides opportunities to develop social as well as psychological dispositions. It is, therefore, important to ensure that first-team players learn to consider how their participation in rugby provides them with appropriate transferable life skills, for a life after rugby. Petitpas et al. (1997) found that players who acquired important life skills during their participation in sport, tend to view themselves not just as talented players, but as talented people, and are, therefore, better equipped to turn their sport success into life success. Therefore, schools need to consider providing players with programmes to develop their awareness of transferable skills in order to develop an understanding of how sport can assist them in making appropriate choices.

Another characteristic that became evident during the interviews was the frequent references to the *mental attributes* required to succeed in rugby. Several participants commented about the role of a good mindset as a valuable asset for a first-team rugby player. This bodes them well for the future, as Dweck (2006) proposes that a positive mindset can assist high-performance athletes to reach both personal and professional goals. According to Dweck (2006) one should cultivate a mindset that is not “just about winning”, but rather about finding success in learning and improving. It is, therefore, considered as important for players to *find a balance* between the demands of rugby and the other spheres of life, which was also one of the characteristics that became evident during the interviews. Many participants regarded their teammates as an important instrument in finding a balance in life.

Most of the participants highlighted the many friendships that were formed due to their inclusion in the first team. Playing rugby with teammates can help to secure meaningful and long-term relationships (McKenna & Thomas, 2007). Participants also believed that *team dynamics* can assist players in making better behavioural choices, as they have to uphold and maintain their respected status as first-team players. This is in agreement with the opinion of

Houlihan and Green (2011) who believe that sport promotes socialisation and enhances the values of good citizenship. In the context of this study, the values of good citizenship may be interconnected with the development of being a “good learner on the school grounds”, as many participants referred to their responsibility as first-team players, to display good and respectful behaviour and to be role models to younger learners. The history and, possibly, the effect of storytelling throughout different generations, might have impacted the manner in which the participants understood their own identity in this regard, since rugby has long been used as an instrument to develop moral as well as physical development (Rubin, 2013). The way in which the participants understood the sport of rugby as a whole, seems to have had an impact on the way they planned for their future careers.

Participation in top-level, leads to many accolades and rewards (Noakes & Vlismas, 2011). However, it also presents to many challenges for sportspersons. It became evident during the study that high-school rugby players also experience many challenges as members of the first team. Aspects such as *injuries, pressure, transformational agendas* and the issue of balancing rugby and academic work, subsequently termed in the analysis as *rugby versus academics*, emerged as challenges associated with being first-team players of this school. All the participants made comments about the difficulties of finding this balance. The pressures associated with the first team resulted in many participants practising as hard as possible in order to be prepared for the different rugby matches – and perhaps neglecting academic work in the process. According to McGillivray and McIntosh (2006), it is understandable that athletic pursuits take precedence over academic development in the short term, but it may be unsustainable in the long run, because not all players will achieve their sport aspirations. This could create a challenging dilemma for players in the first team, since the pressure to perform well might lead them to believe that selection in the team is largely dependent on their

performance (Cresswell & Eklund, 2006), which may result in them training as hard as possible to stay in the team.

The participants in the study commented that their teachers and coaches put pressure on them to perform well, and that teachers don't always make exemptions for players with regard to their already-busy schedules. This issue appears to occur worldwide, as it was reported in the study of Brettschneider (1999) that academic facilities do not always make exceptions for young competitive players with regard to homework, tests, number of lessons and school attendance. It might happen that players regard the integration of rugby and education as a type of "trade off", with the striving for success in one endeavour being sacrificed at the expense of the other (Cosh & Tully, 2013). It is not uncommon for players to feel that sport must take priority over other things (Hickey & Kelly, 2008). The social rewards of rugby and its associated status in the specific school might have influenced the participants when forced to choose between rugby or academic studies. They are likely to rather focus on rugby, as first-team rugby is more enjoyable and rewarding than to be one of the "smart kids in class" (Kendellen & Camire, 2015). It was evident in this study that those participants who identified strongly or almost exclusively with the role of a rugby player, tended to sacrifice their educational pursuits more readily. Sacrificing their academic pursuits might cause players to experience the transition between rugby and a life after rugby as troublesome (Hatamleh, 2013; Hickey & Kelly, 2008; Maseko & Surujlal, 2011; Van Reenen, 2007). It must be mentioned that in the particular school where the study was conducted, there might have been some informal arrangements between the teachers and the research participants regarding academic work, but these types of arrangements appeared to be limited in number.

The participants understood the *rugby transitions* from school level to senior level in a more or less similar way. The majority felt that being selected for a provincial team, especially an

U19 Craven-Week team, is a major contributor and benchmark for becoming future professional players. Playing in the U13 Craven week, however, was not regarded as a rigid prerequisite for future success as a high-school or possible future professional player. It, therefore, seems that participants had a good understanding of this factor. Durandt et al. (2011) found that only 24.1 percent of players who participated in the U13 Craven week were also selected for the U19 Craven week. It is also clear that the participants regarded the current *transformational agendas* in South Africa as an additional challenge that needs to be overcome.

The numerous references to political agendas, transformation and the importance of knowing the “right people” might have been influenced by the way in which this aspect is dealt with in the media. The South African Rugby Union (SARU) received specific guidelines and targets to adhere to with regard to participation in the 2015 Rugby World Cup tournament. These guidelines stated that the Springbok team must consist of at least 11 generic black players (black, coloured or people of Indian descent who are born and raised in South Africa) as part of the World-Cup team, in order to reflect South Africa’s progression with regards to the transformation commitments as stipulated in the tri-lateral Memorandum of Agreement (Mbalula, 2015). The guidelines related to transformation are evident at different levels of rugby in South Africa, as various provincial teams, from junior level upwards, have received stipulations regarding fielding teams that have a demographic presentation of the different racial groups in this country. Because of rugby’s popularity and its high profile in South Africa, these measures are often discussed in many different contexts with different meanings attached to them. Historical factors might have influenced the participants’ perceptions and understandings of this important aspect which affects their pursuit of career opportunities in the world of rugby.

Albeit in different forms, all the participants envisioned themselves as still being involved with rugby in the next five to ten years. Some will continue to pursue their dreams to become professional players whereas others plan to be coaches or spectators/supporters of the game. According to Anderson and Morris (2000) the thought of leaving the game may be emotionally distressing, as the love for the game and its impact on identity formation play such an important part during a playing career. Even though the participants expressed an understanding of the chance factors related to professional rugby, many still aimed, or hoped, to pursue a career in this sport. The status of rugby in South Africa and in the school might have influenced the career planning of the participants, as Price (2007) stated that players' career planning and development could be shaped by the specific sport in which someone participates. During this study it became evident that the signing of rugby-related *professional contracts* whilst at school strongly influences the career planning of players at school level.

The players who were contracted, or received an indication that they will be contracted at provincial unions, all indicated that they hope and plan to pursue careers as professional rugby players after leaving school. Several players emphasised the importance of being fully committed to rugby and gave an indication that, when faced with choosing between rugby and academic-related activities, they would choose rugby. Additionally, players who were part of the first-team squad, but who were never part of a provincial team at senior high-school level, instead opted to pursue tertiary studies at a university, with the possibility of playing rugby for the a university team and, hopefully, participation in the Varsity-Cup competition. According to Price (2007) the signing of a contract at school level might lead to “at-risk” players who focus all their energies on a career in rugby, ending up in compromised academic pursuits. This was also evident in this study, as those players who were contracted, planned to pursue a career in rugby directly after completing school. According to North and

Lavallee (2004) there is an issue with players being recruited directly out of school as these contracted players experience a false sense of security that could result in them placing a low priority on their overall career development. This is in accordance with the opinion of Hickey and Kelly (2008) who stated that many sportspeople regard their future away from sport as a distant priority. Several of the participants in this study did mention having “something to fall back onto”, but few were able to describe precisely what that “something” was. According to Monsanson (1992, as cited in Price, 2007) when faced with planning for a life after retirement, athletes tend to adopt a “waiting strategy, that is, worry about it when the time comes” (p.75). Seeing that many participants were unable to provide a clear indication of what the “something to fall back onto” was, it may be speculated that they also adopted a similar type of “waiting strategy”.

Most of the participants perceived being successful in the U21 rugby ranks as a good indicator of future successes as professional rugby players. In the next few years these participants will be faced with the hard reality that only a small percentage of players will be successful in their quest to play professional rugby. According to various authors, the actual number of players that successfully make the transition from school sport to professional sport is extremely small (Hickey & Kelly, 2008; Price, 2007; Surujlal & Van Zyl, 2014; Wylleman & Anderson, 2004). This might result in participants retiring from the sport earlier than they anticipated, or continuing the game at a lower level, such as club rugby. The topic of retirement was also a relevant during the interviews, and it became evident that the participants had differing opinions about the duration of a career in rugby. Some participants believed that a career in rugby usually lasts about 10 years after completion of school, whereas others were of the opinion that professional players retire at around 38–40 years of age. These findings are in line with the opinion of North and Lavallee (2004) who suggested that professional rugby players have overly-optimistic hopes of a long career in rugby. In

fact, a professional sport career is one of the shortest careers that one can maintain (Wylleman et al., 2004). In a survey among retired players, which was carried out by the New Zealand Rugby Players Association (2011), the average age of retirement for a professional player in New Zealand was 32. However, in the study of Price (2007), it was stated that the average professional-rugby career lasts three years or less. It is evident that the relatively brief nature of a career in rugby may be due to the high levels of competition, the physically-demanding nature of the sport and also the effect of injuries (Price, 2007). The participants all regarded injuries as a noteworthy challenge to overcome. They also acknowledged that this is part of rugby and appeared to understand that injuries might occur at any time. According to Brown et al. (2012) the high incidence of injuries (69 injuries per 10 000 hours of exposure) are related to the high collisions and contact nature of the sport.

The current nature of rugby in South Africa influenced the participants' perceptions of their future careers paths. Several participants regarded South Africa as a challenging environment to pursue a future rugby career, and believed that an overseas rugby career could be a viable option for them in the future. This appears to be a worldwide phenomenon, as the globalisation of rugby resulted in many players striving to play for clubs around the globe in order to fulfil their desire for success (Price, 2007). Loyalty towards one's province or country – which was such an important part of rugby in its amateur days – seem to have made place for employability, as many players are now migrating between different clubs, provinces and countries. This was also evident during this study, when several players mentioned the possibility of pursuing future careers abroad. This could be one of South Africa's toughest obstacles in the way of growth and development of the game, especially because many talented players leave the country at a young age (Romanos, 2002).

5.4 CONCLUSION TO THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

This research study aimed to explore the manner in which first-team rugby players understand their future career paths. To get a clear understanding, I also investigated the way in which these players describe their own identity, the role of rugby in this regard, and their understanding of the transitions inherent to a rugby career.

The manner of identity formation, resulting from participation as first-team rugby players at this prodigious school, impacted the way the participants perceived and planned for their future careers. The majority of the participants, who were selected for a provincial team or practice squad at some stage during their high-school careers, envisioned a possible career in rugby as their first choice and as a worthwhile option to pursue. By being successful rugby players, the sport seemed to provide them with opportunities to construct their identities by living up to expectations of being positive role models, and acquiring transferable habits, such as being motivated and having a good work ethic. Even though these participants seemed aware of chance factors related to a professional rugby career, they still persisted in their pursuit of this dream. The participants that were not contracted by a provincial team or union during their high-school careers also foresaw themselves as being involved in rugby in the future, albeit not necessarily as professional players. All the participants regarded the first three years after the completion of school as crucial for future success as rugby players. Being selected for an U19 Craven-Week team and, possibly, the national Schools' team, was regarded as a major stepping stone for a career as professional rugby players. It appeared that participants believed that the transitions they encountered during their school years, could also help them to deal with unplanned and unexpected obstacles later on their career paths. However, when compelled to choose between rugby-related commitments and academic studies, the majority of participants indicated that they would choose rugby. For many talented rugby players the path through life can be related to walking a fine line between

success and failure, dream and trauma, hope and disappointment, academics pursuits and sport success, and perhaps amateur rugby and professional rugby. It became evident that first-team rugby can be both a resource as well as a constraint, seeing that several participants regarded both positive as well as negative aspects related to being involved in this team.

First-team player participants mentioned that they are subjected to immense dual pressures of rugby training and school responsibilities. They experience being strung between the different structures of school and training, and the expectations placed on them to successfully commute between these two worlds (Brettschneider, 1999). It would be ideal if schools and other educational institutions could be more accommodating by assisting sportspersons to gain academic qualifications without having to sacrifice their sport careers.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study indicated that high-school players who identified strongly with the role of first-team rugby players tend to foresee themselves as being future professional players. However, only a small percentage of these players might successfully manage the transition between amateur rugby to professional rugby. It will, therefore, be useful to develop programmes to promote the holistic development of talented South African rugby players. Such programmes could assist players in making informed decisions regarding future career paths, effective money management, and overall personal development. According to the New Zealand Rugby Players Association (NZRPA) (2011) players who studied or gained meaningful work proficiency during their rugby careers, experienced smoother transitions to post-rugby careers than players who focused only on rugby. Since numerous school players are identified and contracted by provincial unions at a young age, such programmes should commence at an early age in so that players can begin to think about obtaining other qualifications during their quest for a professional rugby career.

Selection for a provincial team strongly influenced the career planning of the participants whilst at school. It is recommended that all provincial players receive scholastic and career counselling, facilitated by professionals such as registered educational psychologists. This could provide players with a holistic development and an understanding of how they can use rugby as a tool to develop their skill in other career fields as well. This can also assist players with academic, emotional, and sport-related guidance and support. Such programmes can provide a database for SARU to address the skill development of players, as well as assist the organisation in providing support for their players, both during a career in rugby as well as thereafter.

It is wise to take note of the work of the South African Cricketers Association (SACA). It offers player a tailored, personalised support service, which comprises three main areas, namely, (1) cricket as a career, (2) career transition and education, and (3) player lifestyle. This support programme was launched in 2008 and provides bursaries for tertiary education and vocational-skills training, such as assistance with interview techniques, compiling a resume (CV), and job placement in the off-season. Players, who have retired or have lost their professional contract, have full access to the programme for 12 months after leaving the game (SACA, 2016). Even though the SARPA Foundation – a division of the South African Rugby Players Association (SARPA) – also assists players with opportunities to develop personal and academic skills during their careers, there is currently no formal guideline with regard to academic development. In addition to the development of programmes from a young age onwards, SARU could consider providing a similar programme as SACA to assist current retired players to have access to tertiary education and development.

5.6 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

As far as I can ascertain, this study was the first of its kind to explore the manner in which talented schoolboy rugby players perceive and understand their future careers. The findings could help others in developing programmes to assist players to develop not just as rugby players, but in all spheres of life.

Due to the structure and nature of the research design, I was able to gain in-depth insights into the career perceptions of first-team rugby players within this context. I also acquired information and relevant data from both the coach as well as the Grade-12 head teacher at the school. This enabled me to obtain a wide array of data to consider. The individual interviews lasted about 45–60 minutes each, which allowed enough time for the participants to communicate freely and to open up about their experiences.

The focus-group discussion served as tool to confirm and conceptualise the relevant themes that were identified during the individual interviews. However, the focus-group discussion also served to inform the participants about the importance of planning for a career after rugby. This may serve them well in the future. Because the focus-group discussion took place after the interschool's victory, it also provided the participants with an opportunity to think about the impact of their school on their personal development.

5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The participants in this study were limited to one school and thus represented only one specific context. The small and limited scope of this study, therefore, means that the findings cannot be generalised to the broader context of different schools in the many different contexts in South Africa. However, it is plausible that similar results could be obtained from first team players from other elite schools in the current national school's ranking system.

It was interesting to observe that some of the participants chose to “tone down” their publically-expressed perceptions about the importance of academic work when asked about this in the presence of the other participants during the focus-group interview. Reflecting on this aspect afterwards, brought about questions on interpersonal relationships that could have been explored. Discussing this aspect might have opened up extended possibilities, as Cosh and Tully (2013) stated that athletes sometimes try to avoid feelings of inadequacy by pretending that they do not care about their academic performance. Thus, even though the focus-group consisted of a group of teammates and friends, it became evident that some of the participants felt uncomfortable to speak about their academic work in front of others. This is an area that, if I had the opportunity to conduct the study again, I would take more care of.

5.8 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

According to Wylleman et al. (2004) a need exists for the development of a specific methodology to evaluate sportspersons’ perceptions of the transitions occurring throughout their careers. Such a methodology will also be relevant and useful for rugby in the future, as it could provide support for professionals who are assisting players with regard to structuring optimal transition experiences throughout their careers. In addition, it can further assist the various role players in exploring the diversities that exist in views about gender, sport and culture-specific characteristics in South Africa, as well as ensuring that the demands of particular stages of transitions are appropriate for the developmental level, as well as for the available resources for players in different regions of this country.

Prevention is better than cure. Schoolboy rugby players need to be prepared for a life after rugby. It was stated by Schoeman (2009) that no research has ever been conducted in South Africa in terms of career-development programmes for professional players. In light of career development being regarded as an ongoing process, I suggest that such programmes should

be implemented from a young age. The effectiveness of such a programme can be evaluated through an empirical study.

Further research could perhaps focus on the number of U19 Craven-Week players who are successful in pursuing a career in rugby. A follow-up study, with U19 Craven-Week participants who aspire to be professional rugby players, could be conducted on a three-year, five-year or even 10-year interval, in order to gain insight into the transitions and career life-spans of professional rugby players in South Africa.

Another recommendation would be to conduct a similar study at schools in different contexts and/or in other sport codes. This may benefit schools and role players in developing individualised programmes tailored for specific sports, and which aims to support talented young people to reach their full potential, as athletes as well as human beings.

5.9 CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Sport and exercise have always been an important aspect of my life. During the course of this research, I began to realise that being a talented athlete can be both a blessing and a curse. A blessing, as involvement and participation in sport can foster many friendships, privileges, much prestige and enhanced levels of self-worth. On the other hand, it can also be a curse, as an over-investment in the self as a sportsperson might lead to compromised well-being in other areas of life.

The more insight I gained into the participants' experiences of being first-team rugby players, the more I realised the immense pressure they are under to perform. One of rugby's virtues is the importance of putting the team interests above one's own. It is, therefore, understandable that schoolboy players might be tempted to sacrifice educational progress in order to focus on rugby, as they want their team to succeed and are aware of the importance of working hard

towards this goal. As the literature in this regard, as well as participants to this study indicated, such sacrifices might prove to be costly for individuals in the long run. SARU is in need of a formal career-development programme for its players (Schoeman, 2009). Ideally, this study might play a positive role in this regard.

The current landscape in South Africa is plagued with violence, crime and political turmoil. The youth of today will be required to make positive differences in the future. Sport and education can prove to be an effective instrument in this regard. I want to conclude this thesis by adapting the famous words of Nelson Mandela by saying that “a healthy combination of sport and education can change the world, one active learner at a time.”

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APPENDIX A

PARENTAL CONSENT FOR LEARNER TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Schoolboy rugby players' understanding of their future career trajectories as potential professionals

Your son has been asked to participate in a research study conducted by (Name omitted), from the Educational Psychology Department at the University of Stellenbosch. The results of the study will contribute to fulfilling the requirements in order to complete a Master's thesis. Your son was selected as a possible participant in this study because he is currently in the first team rugby squad at (name omitted) school.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to evaluate how schoolboy rugby players see rugby as playing a role in their future careers, and how they understand the nature of a career in rugby, including the different transitions that have to be negotiated.

2. PROCEDURES

If you provide consent that your son may volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher would ask him as participant to comply with the following:

Interviews

The participant will be required to partake in a creative activity that form part of a semi structured individual interview of about 45 – 60 minutes, where the researcher will ask questions relating to the research title.

The participant will also be required to partake in a focus-group discussion of about 45 – 60 minutes with some of his team mates. This may provide him with the opportunity to have an open discussion with the researcher and his team mates regarding the role of rugby in his possible future careers.

The interviews will be conducted at a setting where the participants feel safe and secure. A facility at (name omitted) has been offered in this regard.

Timeline

The individual interview will take place in May 2015, whereas the focus-groups interviews will be conducted in the period July – August.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The researcher does not foresee any sizeable risks or discomforts for the participants in this study. However, in order to ensure the safety and well-being of each participant, every individual will be provided with the contact details of a registered Educational Psychologist. The Educational Psychologist will be available for consultation if the participant experiences risk or discomfort in any way. Additionally, the researcher will also provide the school counsellor and rugby coach with a checklist and question sheet which they can use to identify and assist participants that may experience discomfort due to participation in this study.

Contact details of (name omitted) (Educational Psychologist)

Cell:

PS

Address:

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Partaking in this research study may assist participants to start thinking and reflecting holistically about their future careers.

The findings of the research might contribute to recommendations that will assist players, schools and sport organizations in facilitating effective and holistic career planning from a young age onwards

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants will not receive any payment for their involvement in this research study.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with the participant will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of the following: Data will be stored in the researcher's personal computer, with additional security such as passwords on all the files and documents intact. This computer will be placed at the researcher's private home in a safe room, behind locked doors. Additionally, some information of the research may also be in possession of the research supervisors. The research data will be kept behind locked doors for a period of 5 years, thereafter it will be shredded.

The results of the study will be made available to the research supervisors and examiners of the thesis at the University of Stellenbosch. The final format of the thesis will be published in SunScholar (an online research platform for the students of the University of Stellenbosch) and therefore be available in public domain. The identity of each participant will be protected by means of pseudonyms (false names). The implementation of false names will ensure the anonymity of the participants.

Interviews will be recorded by means of a recording device. The participant has the right to review the tape if he requires to. The audio tapes will be in possession of the researcher on his personal computer, in a safe and secured room behind locked doors.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

The participant can choose whether to partake in this study or not. If he volunteers to be in this study, he may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. He may also refuse to

answer any questions he doesn't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw him from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Me (Name omitted) (Supervisor) or Dr Name Omitted (Co-Supervisor).

(Name omitted): Tel:

Cell:

Email:

(Name omitted): Tel:

Email:

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development at Stellenbosch University.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to [*me/the participant*] by [*name of relevant person*] in [*Afrikaans/English/Xhosa/other*] and [*I am/the participant is*] in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to [*me/him/her*]. [*I/the participant*] was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to [*my/his/her*] satisfaction.

[*I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study/I hereby consent that the participant may participate in this study.*] I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Participant/ or Legal Representative

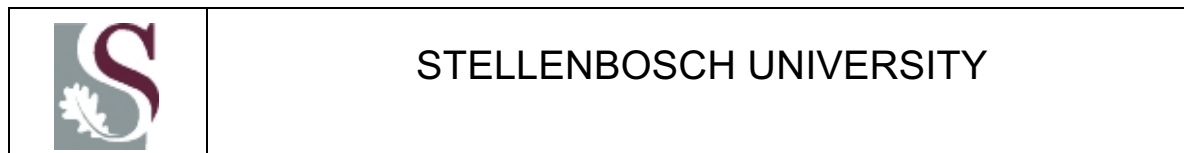
Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the participant*] and/or [*his/her*] representative _____ [*name of the representative*]. [*He/she*] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other*] and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into _____ by _____*].

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX B**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT FORM****PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT FORM**

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: Schoolboy rugby players' understanding of their future career trajectories as potential professionals

RESEARCHERS NAME(S): (Name omitted)

ADDRESS:

CONTACT NUMBER:

What is RESEARCH?

Research is something we do to find new knowledge about the way things (and people) work. We use research projects or studies to help us find out more about the different and unique people in the world. Research also helps us to find better ways of helping people to reach their full potential.

What is this research project all about?

I want to find out how talented schoolboy rugby players plan for their future careers and the role that rugby can play in this regard.

Why have I been invited to take part in this research project?

You are in Grade 11 or 12 and part of the First Team Rugby Squad at (name of school omitted). Well done!

Who is doing the research?

My name is (name omitted). I am an old boy of (name of school omitted). I believe that it is important to start planning for a career at a young age and I would like schoolboy rugby players to make meaningful and informed decisions while planning for their future careers.

What will happen to me in this study?

You are asked to partake in a creative exercise that forms part of an individual interview of about 45 – 60 minutes. You will also be required to take part in a focus-group interview (an interview and discussion with some of your team mates.) The individual interview will take place during May 2015 at a setting where you feel comfortable. A facility at (Name omitted) will be available in this regard. Interviews will be recorded by means of a recording device and will be transcribed. You have the right to review the tape and/or transcription if you feel like doing so.

Can anything bad happen to me?

Not really. You will only be required to talk to me as researcher in a setting where you feel safe. I shall also ensure that there are enough people to help assist you, if you do experience some discomfort due to partaking in this research.

The person you can contact in this unlikely event is Ms. (Educational Psychologist)

Cell:

PS

Address:

Can anything good happen to me?

Yes. This research study and the conversations in the interviews may help you to make informed and meaningful decisions about your future career/careers.

Will anyone know I am in the study?

Only the people in the focus-groups will know who you are. We shall discuss confidentiality during the focus-group conversations in order to ensure that each participant feel safe and secure. Everything you say during the individual interview will be confidential and we shall use pseudonyms (false names) to protect your identity when writing the research findings. The data of all discussions will only be handled by the researcher and his Research Supervisors.



Who can I talk to about the study?

- Name omitted (Researcher)
Email: [.....](#)
- Name omitted (Supervisor)
Email: [.....](#)

What if I do not want to do this?

It is not compulsory to take part in this research study and you can stop your participation at any time. In other words, you may refuse to take part in this study, or you may take part and then at a later stage decide to drop out, if you feel uncomfortable in any way. You will not be in trouble at your school if you do this.

Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it?

YES

NO

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

YES

NO

Do you understand that you can pull out of the study at any time?

YES

NO

Signature of Child

Date

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Title of thesis

Schoolboy rugby players' understanding of their future career trajectories

Interview Schedule

Opening (5 minutes)

Establish rapport by introducing myself as the researcher and by explaining the objectives of the individual interview.

Purpose: I would like to find out how you plan for your future career and the role that rugby can play in this regard.

Motivation: The findings of the research can help me to finish my research thesis in order to fulfil the requirements of the degree Masters in Educational Psychology.

Time Line: This interview will proceed for approximately 45 – 60 minutes. Are you available to respond to some questions at this time?

Transition to the Body of the Interview (15 minutes)

Transition: We shall now proceed with a creative activity. If you had to design a logo for your own shoulder-pants about who you are, why you play rugby and the role of rugby in your life, what would that design look like? Feel free to add any motivational phrases, pictures of your heroes, goals for the future, etc.

- Let's discuss this design of yours. Please take time to explain your design and why you decided upon each specific element in this design.
- Proceed to talk about the design for about 5 – 10 minutes. This discussion will involve questions about the participant's position in the team, role models and possible magazines or television shows. Several of these points of discussion are inspired by the Career Story Interview of Savickas, (2010, in Maree, 2010).

Body (25 – 30 minutes)

1. *Questions about role of rugby in future careers trajectories*
 - If you had to explain to a complete stranger how someone can become a professional rugby player, what would you say?
 - Where do you see yourself in 5 years? What role can rugby play in this regard?
 - And where do you see yourself in 10 years? What role can rugby play in this regard?

- How would you describe the different transitions that someone must go through in order to become a professional player?
 - Why do you think some players are successful in fulfilling the dream of becoming a professional rugby player, while others don't make the cut?
 - Almost every occupation in the world has its own challenges. How would you describe the challenges of being or aspiring to be a professional rugby player?
2. *Questions relating to the identity as a first team rugby player*
- Some people may perceive first team rugby players as so called "jocks" that only focus on rugby and nothing else. How do you feel about this?
 - You described yourself during the creative exercise. Now, if we lived in an alternative universe where there was no such thing as rugby, how would you change the description of yourself and your hobbies?
 - They say that the tallest trees catch the most wind. If this is indeed the case, what are the responsibilities of being a first team rugby player in XXX School?
 - In what ways does being a first team rugby player in XXX School, change the way other learners (especially younger learners) look at you?
3. *Resources and constraints that might influence a career as professional rugby player*
- What resources does one need in order to become a professional player?
 - What may be the possible constraints that may hinder the process of becoming a professional?
 - Let's make it a bit more personal. If you were to become a professional rugby player, what resources and constraints might influence your career as a professional player?

Conclusion (5 – 10 minutes)

- A) Summarizing and checking the content of the interview with the participant.
- B) Maintaining report (I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know?)
- C) Future action to be taken. (I should have all the information I need. Would it be alright if I ask you to partake in a focus-group interview after the June holidays?)

I conclude that the Research Story Interview proposed by Savickas (2010, in Maree, 2010) impacted my way of thinking and consequently the development of this specific interview schedule.

Researcher: (name omitted)

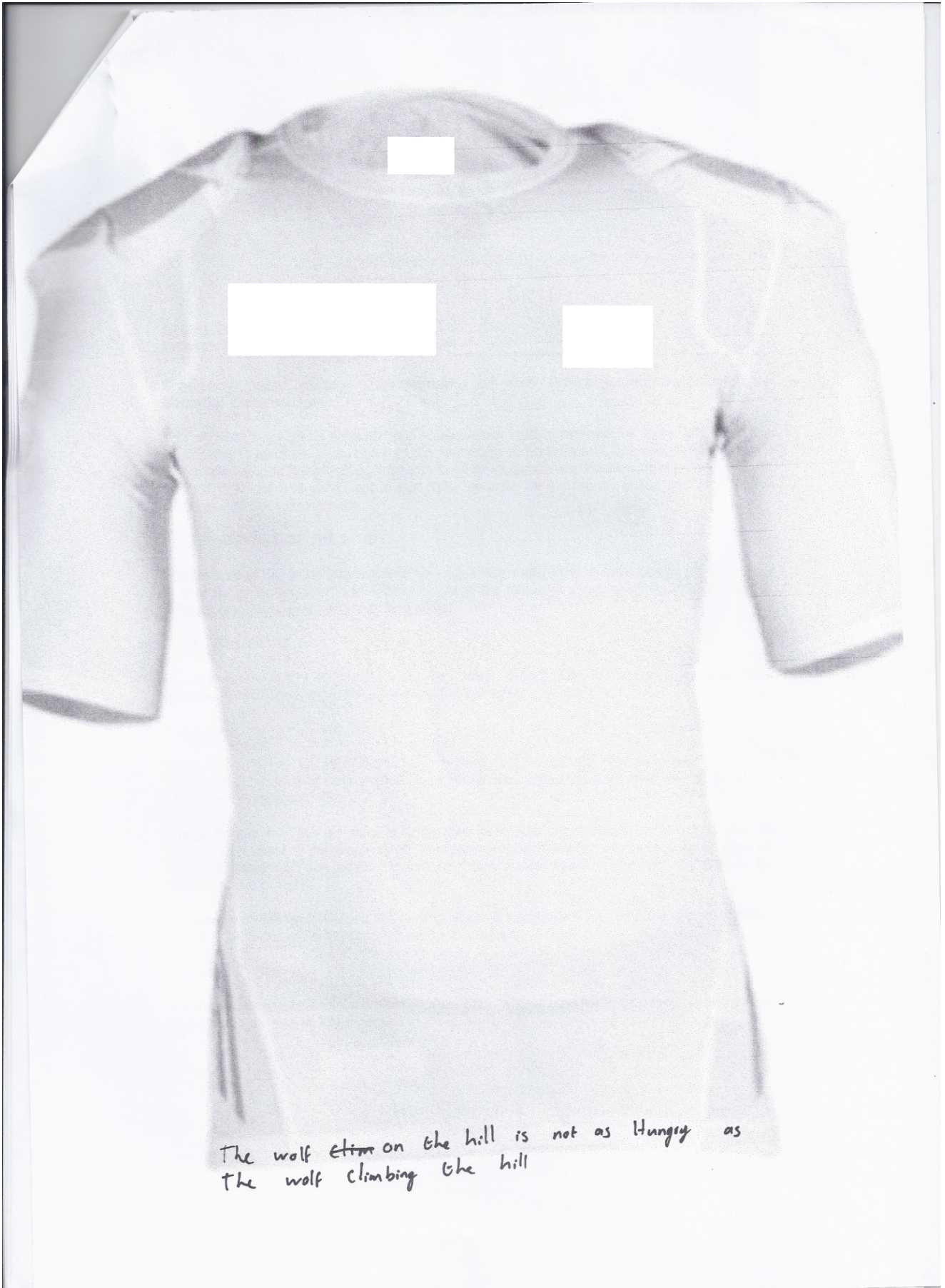
Student number:

APPENDIX D

GENERAL OUTLINE AND ILLUSTRATION OF CREATIVE ACTIVITY



We shall now proceed with a creative activity. If you had to design a logo for your own shoulder-pants about who you are, why you play rugby and the role of rugby in your life, what would that design look like? Feel free to add any motivational phrases, pictures of your heroes, goals for the future, etc.



APPENDIX E

FOCUS-GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Fokusgroep Onderhoud

Basiese beplanning vir gesprekke

- **Inleiding:** Verwelkom almal en bespreek oor doelwitte van die dag, etiese aspekte en die belangrikheid van mekaar respekteer in die groep.
- **Bevestiging** van almal wat in die fokus groep deelneem.
- **Uitbreiding en bevestiging** van wat deelnemers vlg jaar en oor 3 jaar wil doen
- Bespreek sekere van die temas wat voorgekom het tydens die onderhoud (*Rugby vs Akademie, beserings, identiteit, harde oefening, vaardighede, 'commitment', oorsee, die belangrikheid van balans vind ens.*)
- Watter eienskappe van rugby kan mens in ander situasies ook gebruik?
- Wat kan skole doen om spelers te help om 'gebalanseerde lewens' te lei?
- Verduidelik *Dual Career* en bespreek dit met groep
- Hoe voel hulle oor Ross van Reenen se boek wat aanvoer dat 85% van professionele spelers finansiële suksesse 5 jaar na aftrede?
- **Samevatting** van alles wat gesê is.
- **Bedank almal vir hul deelname in studie en wens sterkte toe vir die toekoms**

APPENDIX F
OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COACH AND GRADE-12
HEAD TEACHER

Schoolboy rugby players' understanding of their future career trajectories

1. Hoe dink jy/julle beplan eerstepan rugby spelers vir hul loopbaan in die toekoms?
(Dit hoef nie noodwendig 'n loopbaan in rugby te wees nie)
2. Wat kan 'n skool in plek sit om spelers te begelei in hul beplanning van toekomstige loopbane?
3. Watter rol speel jy as afrigter/onderwyser in hierdie besluite oor die toekoms?


APPENDIX G
RESEARCH APPROVAL AND CONSENT LETTER FROM
PRINCIPAL OF SCHOOL



WIE DIT MAG AANGAAN

Hiermee word toestemming aan

Naam: Tiaan Ellis
ID nommer: 8806085117085
Studente nommer: 15165809 (Universiteit van Stellenbosch, Meesters in
Opvoedkundige Sielkunde)
Epos: ellistiaan@gmail.com

verleen om navorsing, ten opsigte van verdere studies, by 
doen.



10 Maart 2015



APPENDIX H
RESEARCH APPROVAL FROM WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT

Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za

tel: +27 021 467 9272

Fax: 0865902282

Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000

wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20150327-45657

ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Mr Tiaan Ellis



Dear Mr Tiaan Ellis

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: SCHOOLBOY RUGBY PLAYERS' UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR FUTURE CAREER TRAJECTORIES

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **04 May 2015 till 30 August 2015**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T. Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard

Directorate: Research

DATE: 30 March 2015

APPENDIX I

**RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER AND STIPULATIONS FROM THE
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE: HUMAN RESEARCH
(HUMANITIES)**



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jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

Approval Notice
Stipulated documents/requirements

25-May-2015
ELLIS, Tian

Proposal #: DESC/Ellis/Apr2015/4

Title: Schoolboy rugby players' understanding of their future career trajectories as potential professionals

Dear Mr Tian ELLIS,

Your Stipulated documents/requirements received on 06-May-2015, was reviewed
Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham
REC Coordinator
Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

APPENDIX J

CHECKLIST AND QUESTION SHEET FOR COACH AND SCHOOL COUNSELLOR

Dear Coach

Some of the first team players at (name omitted) been identified to participate in a research study with the title "Schoolboy rugby players' understanding of their future career trajectories as potential professionals." These players qualified for the study on the premise that they are currently in the first team rugby squad of (name omitted). The purpose of the study is to evaluate how schoolboy rugby players see rugby as playing a role in their future careers, and how they understand the nature of a career in rugby, including the different transitions that have to be negotiated.

Potential risks and discomfort for the learners.

I do not foresee any sizeable risks or discomforts for the participants in this study. However, there exists a slight possibility that conversations during the interviews may lead to participants experiencing some doubts about their own perceptions of their future careers as potential professionals. This may lead to some levels of uneasiness or anxiety. It is highly unlikely that this will occur, but it is my ethical responsibility to have structures in place in order to ensure the well-being of participants.

I have provided each participant with the contact details of an educational psychologist. She will be available for consultation if the participant experiences risk or discomfort in any way. Her contact details are also available on this document.

Contact details of (Educational Psychologist)

PS

Cell:

Address:

Why did I contact you?

I would appreciate it if you can assist me by informally and subtly observing the players in your squad for the next few weeks, in order to ensure the well-being of the participants in the study. I provided a list of behavioural aspects to look out for. Please contact myself or (name omitted) if a player exhibits some of the aspects named below. This only serve as a guideline, so please feel free to use your professional expertise and knowledge in this regard.

Possible behavioural aspects to look out for:

General

- The player displays signs of a depressed mood and is irritable most of the day, nearly every day (feeling sad, empty, hopeless etc.)

- The player exhibits a decreased interest in most activities.
- He does not seem to enjoy activities as much as previously.
- An observable fatigue or loss of energy.
- A diminished ability to think or concentrate.
- The player talk about thoughts of death or suicide **(please alert myself or the educational psychologist immediately if/when this happen)**
- Irrational worries and/or preoccupation of unpleasant worries.
- Player has trouble relaxing.

Please feel free to contact me directly with any queries in this regard. Your co-operation in the well-being and development of each player is greatly appreciated. Good luck with the season and I believe that the learners will live up the expectations the school.

Kind regards

Tiaan Ellis

Cell:

Email:

Dear Mr. (Name omitted)

Some of the Grade 11 and 12 learners at *X School* have been identified to participate in a research study with the title "Schoolboy rugby players' understanding of their future career trajectories as potential professionals." These learners qualified for the study on the premise that they are currently in the first team rugby squad of X school. The purpose of the study is to evaluate how schoolboy rugby players see rugby as playing a role in their future careers, and how they understand the nature of a career in rugby, including the different transitions that have to be negotiated.

Potential risks and discomfort for the learners.

I do not foresee any sizeable risks or discomforts for the participants in this study. However, there exists a slight possibility that conversations during the interviews may lead to participants experiencing some doubts about their own perceptions of their future careers as potential professionals. This may lead to some levels of uneasiness or anxiety. It is highly unlikely that this will occur, but it is my ethical responsibility to have structures in place in order to ensure the well-being of participants.

I have provided each participant with the contact details of an educational psychologist. She will be available for consultation if the participant experience risk or discomfort in any way. Her contact details are also available on this document.

Contact details of Ms. (Educational Psychologist)

Cell:

PS

Address:

Why did I contact you?

I would appreciate it if you can assist me by informally observing the learners in your class for the next few weeks, in order to ensure the well-being of the participants in the study. I provided a list of behavioural aspects to look out for. Please contact myself or (name omitted) if a learner exhibits some of the aspects named below. This only serve as a guideline, so please feel free to use your professional expertise and knowledge in this regard.

Possible behavioural aspects to look out for:General

- The learner displays signs of a depressed mood and is irritable most of the day, nearly every day (feeling sad, empty, hopeless etc.)
- The learner exhibits a decreased interest in most activities
- He does not seem to enjoy activities as much as previously.
- Observable change in sleep patterns (learner started sleeping in class)

- An observable fatigue or loss of energy.
- A diminished ability to think or concentrate.
- The learner talk about thoughts of death or suicide (**please alert myself or the educational psychologist immediately if/when this happen**)
- Irrational worries and/or preoccupation of unpleasant worries.
- Learner has trouble relaxing.

School

- Grades/work performance deteriorating
- Missing classes or frequent 'bunking' of classes.
- Decreased effort in schoolwork.
- Moderate (or severe) academic or stress relating to schoolwork.

Please feel free to contact me directly with any queries in this regard. Your co-operation in the well-being and development of each learner is greatly appreciated.

Kind regards

(Name omitted)

Cell:

Email:

APPENDIX K

**PORTION OF TRANSCRIPTION FROM INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW –
CODING: THEMES, SUBTHEMES AND CATEGORIES OF CODES**

	Theme	Subthemes
<p>N: hoekom sê jy so?</p> <p>S: ek weet nie. Ek het min gelees daarvan of min gelees van iemand wat iets anders wat iets studeer het.</p> <p>N: ja, mens lees min daarvan</p> <p>S: ja, dit is al hoe ek iets daarvan sal weet, dis nie asof die mense hier praat daarvan</p> <p>N: ok, ek gaan nou vir jou bietjie uitvra, vrae meer oor jouself, jou identiteit, as jy gemaklik is daarmee? Sommige mense beskou ouens wat eerste span speel, veral mense wat nie eintlik weet wat aangaan noodwendig nie, as n Jock. Wat net fokus op rugby. Hoe voel jy oor dit?</p> <p>S: <u>uhm party keer is dit net op jokes gebaseer, ander keer is dit.. Ek fokus nou op my skoolwerk en goeters. Daar is ouens wat net rugby speel en niks skoolwerk doen nie, hul punte is bietjie sleg.</u> Gelukkig sosialiseer ons nog baie en is gebalanseerd, ons is nie ouens wat net rugby speel nie.?</p>	<p>The notion of rugby</p> <p>Identity Formation</p>	<p>Challenges</p> <p>Status of first team players</p>

	Theme	Subthemes
<p>T: And then, so, yes. If you, uhm... Why did you decide to play rugby from a young age onwards?</p> <p>D: It was, I got into, my, my... My older cousin he's what, he's about 27 now.</p> <p>T: Ja</p> <p>D: He was very into rugby and played Province U21 and everything and he's... Like, he's very into it. Always watched the rugby, always went to all his games.</p> <p>T: Uh-huh</p> <p>D: He was, like, growing up, he was like my role model.</p> <p>T: Your cousin?</p> <p>D: Ja, my older, my older cousin, like... Because obviously, he was the only provincial player, like in our family.</p> <p>T: Tell me more?</p> <p>D: He played first team for Hamilton's and he played Province U21 and he was somebody to look up to. I looked up to him all my life and it was like, we were always together.</p> <p>T: I can imagine. I mean especially at a young age having a brother or a cousin or anything, a family member that plays provincially, that....</p>	<p>Identity Formation</p>	<p>Influences on personal development</p>

APPENDIX L

**PORTION OF TRANSCRIPTION FRO FOCUS-GROUP INTERVIEW –
CODING: THEMES, SUBTHEMES AND CATEGORIES OF CODES**

	Theme	Subtheme
<p>Toe julle gekies is vir die <i>squad</i>, hoe het dit beïnvloed hoe julle na juisself gekyk het? Of hoe jy oor juisself dink?</p>	<p>Career opportunities</p>	<p>Challenges</p>
<p>G: Ja ek sal se jyt jou doel bereik, maar dan moet jy ook besef daars groter goed in die prentjie ook, jy kan nie ophou werk en stop waar jy is nie, jy gaan moet aanhou werk en volgende doelwitte vir juisself moet stel.</p>	<p>Identity Formation</p>	<p>Characteristics</p>
<p>N: en dis daai geval van om bo te bly, neem ek aan?</p>	<p>The notion of rugby</p>	
<p>G: ja. En dan beteken dit die doel/droom wat jy gehad het is nie so groot soos die een wat jy volgende gaan aandurf nie.</p>		
<p>T: julle ouens wat nou bv. Akademies, in vlg jaar wil gaan swot, X, jy en Y, hoe het dit beïnvloed hoe julle na akademie gekyk het saam met die rugby, jul oefen mos nou gereeld en daai tipe goed, hoe het dit beïnvloed hoe julle daai twee balanseer?</p>		
<p>PA: ek dink dis maar moeilik om die twee te balanseer, maar, jy balanseer dit nou maar uit en as jy rugby oefen dan oefen jy rugby en waar jy 'n kansie kry dan leer jy nou maar.. en.. andersins is dit maar bietjie 'n geclash, maar ek is nie een van daai ouens wat heeldag agter die boeke sit nie, ek is nie 'n akademiese' mens nie, is maar net lucky dat ek maklik leer.</p>		

APPENDIX M

AFRIKAANS TRANSCRIPTIONS AND ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

Ek is mal oor die skool en die rugby... Ek sal graag alles wil oorhê... die hele seisoen wil oorhê [Participant 1]

I am crazy about my school and the rugby... I would love to have everything... to have the whole season over again [Participant 1]

Ek sal dit vir altyd onthou vir die res van my lewe. Die skool is n “legend” my skool se rugby is ek mal daaroor, ek sal enige dag weer alles, die hele seisoen wil oorhê [Participant 2]

I will always remember it... for the rest of my life.. (the school) is ‘legendary’..There is nothing better as to be able to say that we are proud of our school and thankful for the privilege to be here and to hang out with wonderful friends [Participant 2]

En toe besluit ek om te gaan studeer en kan dan koshuisrugby speel, en as dit die Here se wil is dan sal ek raak gesien word deur koshuisrugby [Participant 1]

And then I decided to go and study so I can play residence rugby, and if it is God’s will, I shall be noticed because of residence rugby [Participant 1]

Ek vat dit gewoonlik dag by dag, maar soos ek het vir myself gesê het, uhm... Oor vyf jaar, dit hang af. Soos dit het baie te doen met die Here. Dit hang af waar Hy my wil hê. Sê nou maar Hy wil hê ek moet iets anders doen...[Participant 5]

I usually take it day by day, but as I told myself.. uhm, in five years’ time, it depends. Like, it has a lot to do with God. It depends where He wants me. For instance, He might want me to do something else....[Participant 5].

Uhm, ... seker maar my ouers, almal se rolmodelle is seker maar hul ouers. Jy kyk maar op na - hulle die maniere soos hulle my groot gemaak het sal ek seker eendag my kinders ook so sal wil grootmaak, dieselfde waardes..[Participant 6]

Uhm... probably my parents, everyone's role models are probably their parents. You look up to them - their, the way they raised me, I would probably want to raise my children in the same way, the same values [Participant 6].

Ek kyk op na die 'old boys', hulle is rêrig die ruggraat van ons skool. Sonder 'old boys' sou die skool niks gewees het nie verstaan jy! Soos, as daar nie 'old boys' gewees het nie, sonder hulle vou die tradisies net soos letterlik. Soos 'old boys' beteken baie in my lewe en vir my as 'n persoon en so...[Participant 2]

I look up the 'old boys', they really are the backbone of our school. Without old boys, the school would be nothing, you understand? For instance, if there weren't old boys, the traditions would fade away, like literally. So old boys mean a lot in my life, and for me as a person and so on..[Participant 2]

X is 'n rolmodel vir my. So, uhm... Baie mense hou nie van hom nie, maar, uhm, dit pla my nie. Soos ek is ook 'n ou as ek van 'n ou hou sal ek dit vir hom sê. So ja, hy's vir my 'n baie, 'n goeie rolmodel, en soos, soos die manier hoe hy speel en hoe hy dinge doen en so aan [Participant 5].

X is a role model for me. So, uhm, a lot of people don't like him, but, uhm, it doesn't bother me. Like, I am a guy, if I like a guy I will tell him. So, yes, for me he's a very good role model, and like, like the way he plays and how he does things etc. [Participant 5].

Jy moet redelik jou dinge in plek hê. Daar's baie ouens wat ook dáái trui oor sy kop wil trek [Participant 7].

You must really have your things in place. Theres a lot of guys who also want to pull the first team jersey over his head [Participant 7].

Eerste span is diè ding in (the school). Verstaan - jy is main. Jy stap wydsbeen in die gange af. [Participant 1].

First team is THE thing in (the school). Understand – you are 'main'. You walk down the corridor with your legs wide open [Participant 1].

Definitief as jy eerste span speel, mense kyk vir jou, mense sien jou raak, mense prys jou, mense sê die van jou, mense se daai van jou, goeie goed; slegte goed [Participant 2].

Definitely, if you play for the first team, people look at you, people recognise you, people praise you, they say this of you, they say that of you, good things, bad things [Participant 2].

...en soos, dis ek dink, dis elke kind se droom om in XXX school, soos net die eerstespantrui oor sy kop te trek [Participant 5]

.. and like, I think it is, its every child's dream in XXX school, like, just to pull the first team's jersey over their heads [Participant 5]

Maar daar is ouens wat glad nie omgee vir akademie nie, want rugby is hul liefde. Eintlik kan jy hul nie kwalik neem nie, want ek meen dit is hul passion [Participant 1].

But there are guys that don't care about academics, because rugby is their love. Actually you can't blame them, because I mean, it is their passion [Participant 1].

Ek voel dit (die groot status van Eerstespanspelers) is heeltemal verkeerd (Participant 1)

I feel that (the big status of first team players) is totally wrong [Participant 1]

Van my oogpunt af, baie mense, soos, hulle dink rugby is hulle alles. Daai mense is gewoonlik die mense wat baie vroeg uitval en so aan. [Participant 5]

From my point of view, a lot of people, like, they think rugby is their everything. Those people are usually the people that fall out early and so on [Participant 5].

Die meeste manne oefen en speel net (rugby) en hoop dat daar 'n geleentheid gedurende die jaar of na die einde toe sal oop gaan om 'n professionele speler te word. Hulle droom net en daar is geen daadwerklike plan met doelwitte en 'n plan B (bv. akademie) nie. [Grade 12 Head]

Most of the boys only practice and play (rugby) and hope that an opportunity will open up during the year or towards the end of the year to become a professional player. They only dream and there are no actual plan with regards to goals and a plan B, for example, academics [Grade 12 Head].

Jy moet 'n voorbeeld stel vir ander mense, ek moet 'n voorbeeld stel vir ander jonger spelers sodat hul kan achieve wat ek Saterdag achieve het (the school was victorious in the Interschool rugby match). [Participant 1]

You must set an example for other people, I must set an example for other younger players so that they can achieve what I achieved on Saturday (the school was victorious in the Interschool rugby match). [Participant 1]

Ek dink 'n eerstespan rugbyspeler het mos 'n verantwoordelikheid teenoor die.. uhm... seker teenoor die skool en teenoor die leerders, veral in die laer grade, om 'n voorbeeld te stel, as jy eers gaan rugby speel en in die skool sleg optree en altyd uitgestuur word en moeilikheid maak dan gaan hulle anders na jou kyk hulle gaan nie sê daar's dié ou nie, hulle gaan se daar's die eerstespan rugbyspeler wat nou uitgestuur is. [Participant 6]

I think a first team player has a responsibility towards the, uhm, probably towards the school and other learners, especially those in lower grades, to set an example. If you first go play rugby and behave badly in school and always get sent out (of classes) and are a troublemaker, then others will regard you in a different way and will not say there's THAT guy, they will say there's the first team player that was sent out [Participant 6]

Ek sou sê rugby probeer dit (positiewe karaktereenskappe) op jou afdwing. Nie afdwing nie, maar dis deel van rugby se stappe, jy moet nederig wees, jy moet gedissiplineerd wees. Al sulke dinge, anders gaan jy dit nie maak nie, verstaan?[Participant 7]

I would say rugby try to force it (positive characteristics) on you. Not force, but, it is part of rugby's phases, you must be humble, you must be disciplined. Things like these, otherwise you will not make it, understand? [Participant 7]

Rugby het geskuif van fisiese game na 'n mental game Die spanne wat die beste mentally healthy is aan die einde van 'n game, is die span wat wen. [Participant 1]

Rugby has changed and moved on from a physical game to a mental game. The teams that are the most mentally healthy at the end of the game... are the teams that win [Participant 1].

Maar dan is daar ook baie ouens wat tog ook goed rugby speel, maar dan is hulle temperament, of hulle kop wat nie op regte plek is nie, en val dan bietjie uit die bus uit. [Participant 6]

But then there are also a lot of guys, who are good in rugby, but then their temperaments, or their minds, are not in the right place, and then they fall out of the bus [Participant 6].

Om eerstens soos te besef en op te staan elke oggend dink jy aan rugby, dis die eerste ding wat ek doen - dink ek aan rugby. [Participant 2]

Firstly, to realise and to wake up thinking about rugby, it is the first thing I do, think about rugby [Participant 2].

Dis self-dissipline. Dis soos daai mense wat die harde werk gaan insit op die ou einde van die dag gaan die harde werk uitkry. [Participant 5]

It's self-discipline. It's like those people who do the hard work, will, at the end of the day, will reap the rewards of it [Participant 5].

Ja.. ek dink veral as jy in 'n beroep ingaan waar jy gedruk is vir tyd en so, ek weet met die, as jy nou 'n rekenkundige rigting gaan gaan jy baie gedruk wees vir tyd en dan moet jy maar hard werk en lang ure insit. [Participant 4]

Yes, I think, especially when you enter into a career where you are pressurised for time and so forth, I know with this, if you go into an accounting direction then you will be pressurised for time and then you have to work hard and put in the hours [Participant 4].

Ons het goeie jaar gehad , maar het nie (skool) gewen nie, want ons moes 'n balans kry tussen skoolwerk, rugby, verhoudings, daai is maar die drie main goed. Dis verhoudings, sport en akademie en dit is eintlik maar waarom enige iets gaan. [Participant 1]

We had a good year, but did not win (opposing school), because we had to get a balance between school work, rugby, and relationships, those are the three things. It is relationships, sport, and academics, and that is mostly what everything is about [Participant 1].

Jy moet jou kop gesond hou deur altyd iets te hê om te doen wat jou aandag so bietjie aftrek van die rugby. Sodat jy nie net dit het om op te focus nie, moet jy hobbies en goeters doen, sodat jy bietjie weg kan kom daarvan af en die groter prentjie kan kyk of so. [Participant 4]

You must keep your mind healthy by always having something to do that can take your mind off rugby. So, you don't have only that to focus on, do some hobbies and things, so you can get away from it and will be able to see the bigger picture or so [Participant 4].

Daar is niks beters as om tog te kan sê dat ons trots op ons skool en net dankbaar is en dat dit rêrig 'n voorreg is om hier te wees en saam met wonderlike vriende te meng. Vriendskappe te bou wat mens sal hou vir die res van ons lewens. Ek was vandag saam met my vriende en ons het vandag weer gepraat oor ons interskole-wen en net soos van watter plek ons van kom. [Participant 2]

There is nothing better as to be able to say that we are proud of our school and thankful for the privilege to be here and to mingle with wonderful friends. To build friendships that will last for the rest of our lives. I was with my friends today and we spoke again about winning the interschools match and just about where we've come from [Participant 2].

Janee ek dink jy bou goeie vriendskappe met die ouens saam wie jy speel.. ons kom al vier jaar saam... jy gaan steeds in kontak wees met hulle op n sekere manier... net nie in dieselfde mate as wat jy was nie... 10 jaar terug nie. [Participant 7]

Yes I think that you form good friends with the guys playing with you... we have been together for four years.. you will still be in contact with them in some way or another.. just not in the same way as .. say.. 10 years ago [Participant 7].

Daar is nie 'n moontlikheid dat jy nie gaan beseer word nie. Jy gaan beserings kry en jy gaan soos dingetjies kry wat jou gaan affekteer. Ja, soos dit is net vir my soos... Jy moet net harder werk as jy 'n besering het. [Participant 2]

There's no possibility that you will not be injured. You will get injured and there will be small things that will affect you. Yes, for me it is just like..... you must just work harder when you are injured [Participant 2]

Ek dink daar is baie goed wat 'n rol kan speel, die grootste soos bv. 'n besering. Het gehoor mens kom uit by 'n oefening, miskien jou eerste seisoen, jy het nie gaan studeer of niks nie, en breek jou been en dr. sê jy kan nooit weer speel, of erge harsingskudding. So ek dink beserings is 'n groot deel (of a career in rugby). [Participant 4]

I think there are a lot of things that can play a role - the biggest one is, for example, an injury. I heard that at training, perhaps your first season, you did not go and study or anything, and then you break your leg, whereafter the doctor says that you will never be

able to play again, or perhaps serious concussion. So I think injuries are a big part (of a career in rugby)[Participant 4]

Obviously beserings wat niemand nie kan beheer nie, wat ‘n baie groot invloed het en ja [Participant 6]

Obviously injuries that nobody can control, can have a very big influence (on a career in rugby) [Participant 6]

Beserings kom onbepaald. So jy dink, vandag kry jy jou vyfde cap vir die Springbokke en jy dink jy gaan nog 50 kry. En op cap nommer 10 buig jy jou knie, ligamente af, of breek jou been. En ja okay, daar is ‘n moontlikheid van besering, maar as jy klaar daar is, jou kop dink nie aan besering nie. [Participant 7]

Injuries are unexpected.. so you think.. today you get your fifth cap for the Springboks and you think you’re going to get 50 more... and on cap nr. 10 you twist your knee,tear your ligaments, or break your leg... and yes okay, there is a possibility of injury, but if you’re already there, you’re not thinking about injuries.. [Participant 7]

Soos, jy hoor... Soos jy hoor baie slegte goed van die crowd en so aan. En soms moet jy ‘n besluit maak, maar, soos, ek steur myself nie rêrig daaraan nie. Soos toe ek begin het, het ek baie (my daaraan gesteur). [Participant 5]

You hear, like, you hear really bad things from the crowd and so on.. and sometimes you need to make a decision, but, like ,it doesn’t really bother me.. but when I started (playing for the first team) it bothered me a lot [Participant 5]

Almal verwag altyd van die eerste span om te wen, die hele skool kan, daar kan dalk ‘n onder 15 E span wees wat verloor, niemand gee rerig om nie, maar as die eerste span verloor dan is almal negatief en alles. [Participant 6]

Everybody always expects the first team to win, the whole school can, there can perhaps be an U15 E team that loses, nobody really cares, but when the first team loses then everybody is negative and everything... [Participant 6]

Nou op skool is dit moeilik, baie meer toetse/take. Almal sê graad 11 is moeiliker maar Matriek se werk is baie meer. So daar is baie meer toetse en goed wat jy skryf. Jou rugby afrigter ‘worry’ nie altyd watse toets jy skryf of wanneer jy toets skryf, want sy werk is

vir hom gegee en hy moet wen onder alle omstandighede. So, dit is moeilik vir jou as speler, moeilik om alles te balanseer. [Participant 4]

Now at school, it is difficult, a lot more tests/assignments. Everybody says that Grade 11 is tougher, but Matric is a lot more work. So, there are more tests and stuff that you write. Your rugby coach doesn't always worry about which test you write or when you write them, because his job was given to him and he must win, regardless of the circumstances. So, it is difficult for you as a player, to balance everything [Participant 4]

Ons het laas jaar einde September al begin oefen, soos vier keer n week vir so 'n maand en 'n half, toe skryf ek eksamens en toe begin ons van die 2de week van skool en oefen vier keer per week wat ons oefen. [Participant 6]

We started training last year at the end of September, like four times a week for about a month and a half, then I wrote exams and then in the second week of school this year we started training four times a week [Participant 6]

Jy gaan werk vir die WP en dis daar waar jy gaan stop. Of jy gaan nog voor dit uitval. En dan die ander rigting is jou swottings gaan bietjie slack. Haha. Dis die meer algemene enetjie om die studies te skrap in plaas van die rugby. [Participant 7]

You go and work for the WP (Western Province) and that is where you will stop. Or you will drop out before that. And then, the other direction is when you start slacking when it comes to your studies and academics. Haha, this is more common, to ignore your studies instead of rugby [Participant 7]

Ek dink daar moet ook 'n groter fokus geplaas word op akademie en om te gaan swot en rugby te speel. So sal daar 'n beter fokus op gebalanseerdheid wees en dit is op die ou einde manne wat die druk en die normale lewe kan hanteer.[Grade-12 Head]

I think that there must be a greater focus on academics and studying while playing rugby. This will ensure that players focus on being balanced and consequently lead to men that can handle the pressures of rugby and normal life. [Grade-12 Head]

My persoonlike opinie is die hele kwota sisteem is vir my net so goed soos inkoop. Want, dit is so onregverdig teen 'n ander ou wat dit verdien en 'n ou wat hard werk en dan kom daar net 'n ander ou wat geld betaal en hul inkoop. [Participant 4]

My personal opinion is that the whole quota system is just as good as 'buying in' because, it is so unfair towards the other guy who really deserves it and a guy that works hard, and then there comes another guy that pays... and 'buys' themselves into a team [Participant 4]

Soos, my basiese oogpunt van Suid-Afrika rugby is, soos, soos, baie mense sê dis nie wat jy doen nie, dis wie jy ken. En daai goed is ook so in rugby, want baie ouens kom in plekke in waar... Iemand hulle inkry omdat hulle hulle daar ken en dis vir baie, dis wat ek nou baie dink, wat in Suid-Afrika half soos, half gebeur en so aan. [Participant 5]

Like, my basic view of South African rugby is, like, like many people say it is not what you do, but rather who you know. And that stuff is also evident in rugby, as many guys come in at places where.. someone gets them in because they know them.. and this is what I think, is kind of happening in South Africa, kind of.. [Participant 5]

Hy sien dalk 'n gaping vir hom en hy word gekeur by die WP. Hy kry sy Grant Khomo, O/16. Daarna gaan hy Cravenweek toe. Dalk speel hy eers Akademie in sy Graad 11 jaar in juniors en speel hy eers Akademie. En in Matriek sal hy Cravenweek speel. En as hy uitstaan sal hy obviously SA Skole maak. Van daar af sal ouens hom raaksien, vir hom kontrakte aanbied. [Participant 7]

He perhaps sees a gap for himself and then get selected by the WP. He gets his Grant Khomo, after which he goes to Craven week. Maybe he first plays for the Academy in his Grade 11 year. And in matric, he will play Craven week. If he gets noticed, he will obviously make SA schools. From there onwards people will recognize him, and will offer him contracts [Participant 7]

Onder 21 is maak of breek vir 'n rugbyspeler. Dis van na onder 21 kan jy meer aangaan nie. Dit is van... of jy gaan dit maak of jy moet maar uitval en studeer. Ek voel na drie jaar is jy nie meer lus vir studeer nie. Na drie jaar gaan jy nie 'n boek oopmaak nie. Jy gym net en speel rugby. [Participant 1]

U21 is make or break for a rugby player. After U21 you can't continue... it is... you're either gonna make it or you have to dropout and study. I feel that after three years you don't feel like studying. After three years you won't open a book.. You only gym and play rugby [Participant 1]

Dan gaan hulle uit weer vir 'n lang tyd. Dan het ek daaraan gedink om 'n backup te hê. O21 is vir my 'n goeie basis. Net om, ek geniet rugby so ek sal dit graag wil speel en daarna sal ek in 'n ander rigting wil ingaan. [Participant 7]

Then they are out, again, for a while. Then I thought of having a backup. In my opinion, U21 is a good foundation. Like, I enjoy rugby so I would enjoy playing it, and after that, I will follow a different path [Participant 7]

Soos verstaan, ek dink nie dat rugby is my professie nie. Sien ek gaan dan daai ouderdom wees waar ek liewers rugby kyk as speel, liewers support. Ek sal altyd die liefde daarvoor hê... Maar dink nie dit is iets wat ek vir die res van my lewe wil doen nie. Dit voel vir my dit moet stop, tot op 'n punt. [Participant 1]

Like, understand, I don't think rugby is my profession.. you see, I will be at that age where I will rather watch rugby than play it, rather support. I will always have a love for it, but don't think that it is something that I would want to do for the rest of my life. I feel like it must stop, stop somewhere [Participant 1]

Ja, ek sal natuurlik myself soos in 'n Springboktrui wil sien, uhm, om net vir die skool te verteenwoordig. Ek rêrig wil net aangaan en soos dinge gaan doen vir mense soos vir minderbevoorregtes, want ek het rêrig baie geleenthede gekry in die skool wat ek nie liewers anders sou gekry het nie. [Participant 2]

Yes, I would obviously want to see myself in a Springbok jersey.. uhm... just to represent the school. I really want to continue and to just like do stuff for people, like, less-privileged people, because I really got a lot of opportunities in the school that I wouldn't have gotten elsewhere [Participant 2]

Ja, ek sal betrokke wil wees by rugby op een of ander manier. En ja, dan sal ek van daar af wil aanbeweeg en 'n vaste ding hê en rugby as 'n sideline hê. Waar ek of afrig of vir 'n klub speel miskien. [Participant 7]

Yes, I would like to be involved in rugby in one way or another. And yes, then I would want to move on and have a solid thing and rugby as a sideline, where I would either coach or play at a club [Participant 7]

Vir my is jy gaan dit maak ... as jy opdraf vir die Bokke, waar vir ander mense is dit speel provinsiaal maar wil jy tweede beste wees vir die res van jou lewe of wil jy eerste beste wees? [Participant 1]

For me, you will make it... when you run out for the Springboks, where for other people it is when you play provincial, but do you always want to be second best for the rest of your life or do you want to be the best? [Participant 1]

X ek meen baie van daardie mense het... X het nou nie professional, professional geraak nie. [Participant 4]

(Name of contracted Sevens player)... I mean, a lot of those people... (contracted sevens player) did not become a professional, professional [Participant 4]

Ja, soos, wat ek uit my eie oogpunt gesien het dink ek luck speel 'n rol op die ou einde van die dag [Participant 5]

Yes, like, from what I have seen, I think luck plays a big role at the end of the day [Participant 5]

Ek het 'n liefde vir rugby so ek sal my bes probeer om aan te gaan, maar... ek weet daar is nog 5000 ouens in die Wes-kaap... So dis nou maar odds en evens, verstaan? [Participant 7]

I have a passion for rugby so I will do my best to go on with it, but... I know there are about 5 000 guys in the Western Cape... So it is odds and evens, understand? [Participant 7]

Deesdae raak dit al hoe moeiliker om êrens in te kom as jy nie Cravenweek agter jou naam het nie, as jy nie SA Skole agter jou naam het nie, want die meeste mense word geteken by Cravenweek en so aan. [Participant 5]

These days it becomes more difficult to get in somewhere if you don't have Craven week behind your name, if you don't have SA Schools behind your name, seeing that most people get signed at Craven week and so forth [Participant 5]

Ek meen, ek meen ek kan sien hoe moeilik dit is vir mense van ander skole... die minderbevoorregtes... om professioneel te kan speel... dit is ook die rede hoekom ons nie goed sokker speel nie. Ons skool is nie goed in sokker nie, want daar is nie voete nie... verstaan... daar is nie mense wat dit wil gaan speel nie. [Participant 1]

I mean, I mean, I can see how difficult that is for people from other schools... the less-privileged, to play professional.. that is also why we don't have a good soccer team. Our school is not good at soccer, because there is no demand for it.. understand.. there aren't people who want to play it [Participant 1]

Soos, ek sou sê. Die naam van jou skool en so aan. Soos as hulle hoor, XXX School of YYY School en so aan, dan gaan hulle weet dis 'n goeie hulpbron. [Participant 7]

Like, I would say, the name of your school and so on. Like, when they hear XXX school of YYY school and so on, then they'll know it's a good resource [Participant 7]

Die opset waarin jy is, verstaan?... So jou kanse is groter vir keurders om jou raak te sien in een van die Super Skole, verstaan? [Participant 7]

The set-up that you're in.. understand... so, your chances are better for selectors to see you in one of the Super schools.. Understand? [Participant 7]

Ek dink professionele rugby is 'n moeilike ding en ek het respek vir almal van hulle. Dink nie dit is iets wat ek met my hele lewe sal kan doen nie. Tot ouderdom 40, sê 38, sal kan doen nie. [Participant 1]

I think professional rugby is a tough thing and I've got respect for all of them... Don't think that it is something that I would want to do with my life.. until the age of 40, or say, 38... or will be able to do [Participant 1]

Die ander ding is... ja, jy kan ook nie daarop bargain dat jy gaan speel tot jy 30/40 is nie... Van die ouens draai uit, hier op 25 breek 'n been of iets gebeur. [Participant 5]

The other thing is... yes, you can't bargain that you will play until you are 30/40.. some guys have bad luck and at about 25, they break a leg or something like that happens.. [Participant 5]

Maar die ding is, dat, mens speel net seker so 10 jaar rugby en dan het jy nog, wat, 40 jaar lewe oor. [Participant 6]

But the thing is.. that... you only play rugby for about 10 years and then you have.. what.. 40 years left [Participant 6]

As 'n speler sal ek professioneel wil speel, nie noodwendig Springbok nie, iewers professioneel. In dit SA of iewers, oorsee. As ek iewers professioneel kan speel sal ek baie tevrede wees met myself. [Participant 6]

As a player I would want to play professional, not necessarily as a Springbok, somewhere professional. Whether this will be in SA or somewhere abroad don't matter. If I can play professionally, I will be very happy with myself [Participant 6]

Uhm, nie noodwendig om van 'n vroeë ouderdom oorsee te gaan speel nie, maar die laaste tyd lyk dit meer dat daar gaan baie mense speel oorsee en maak 'n sukses daarvan. So, as ek nou daai paadjie moet loop dan is dit ook ok. [Participant 6]

Uhm, not necessarily to play abroad from a young age... but, recently, it looks like more people go and play abroad and make a success of it. So, if I had to follow that path, it would also be okay [Participant 6]

En ek het toe gepraat saam met hulle (one province) 'genegotiate' en dinge het toe gebeur 'obviously', en, maar daar is 'obviously' ander Provinsies wat ook na my soek, maar ek het toe besluit om by (province) te bly. [Participant 2]

And I spoke with them (a specific province) negotiated with them, and things started to happen... but there are obviously other provinces that also want me.. but I decided to stay with my province [Participant 2]

Daar's manne (op skool) wat groot geld maak en manne wat so op R2000 per maand begin. Die groot kontrakte op skool gaan so van R2000 na R30 000. [Participant 7]

There are guys at school that make big bucks, guys who start with R2000 per month....

The big contracts at school are between R2000 and R30 000 [Participant 7]