“It’s not for fun anymore”:

Performance of Masculinity as a Source of Stress Among Professional Soccer Players in South Africa

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This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Abstract

Youth from lower socio-economic status communities have been reported to perceive involvement in sport, and the potential of a career therein, as important for social mobility and identity. Males from these communities have been reported to make more of an investment in sport since it is perceived as the main source of supporting a family, as well as establishing a sense of hegemonic masculinity, as other options are often limited. The research aims of this study were to determine the stressors that South African professional soccer players face, with a focus on how masculinity shapes their experience of stress. The study examined how the pursuit of hegemonic masculinity is played out amongst elite South African soccer players and how this influences the personal and professional stressors that players have to negotiate.

Semi-structured interviews with ten male athletes aged between 21 and 33 years from a professional soccer club in Cape Town, South Africa were conducted. Thematic analysis, adopting the lens of masculinity theories, was used to identify themes that emerged from the data.

Across the interviews what strongly emerged were the off-field performances of masculinity which indicated how gaining acceptance in professional soccer is performed through a lifestyle of consumer products, women, fame, alcohol and partying. The data indicated how soccer provides an alternative way of life to gangs and crime in which men can still attain masculinity. However, with the option of attaining masculinity through soccer, came its own set of challenges as participants indicated the disparity within a soccer player's identity between the fantasy and the reality of being a professional soccer player. In addition there were also challenges to the ability of participants to access on-field performances of masculinity.

This study adds to the literature on stress amongst athletes by exploring how social identity, and particularly masculinity, mediates experiences of stress amongst professional soccer players. It highlights the opportunity and need for the development of appropriate player well-being programmes which can be used to support professional athletes.

Keywords: Masculinity, professional soccer, stress, sport, South Africa

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Although soccer maintains global popularity, the experiences of the professional athletes involved in this sport are still under-reported within the literature (Noblet & Gifford, 2002), particularly with regard to the African context. In South Africa soccer is known as 'the people's game', as it is the most popular sporting code amongst lower socio-economic status communities (Groenmeyer, 2010). It is important to understand within what culture and setting a particular sport is taking place to fully understand the conditions that may be stressful to athletes participating in that sporting code (Kristiansen, Murphy, & Roberts, 2012).

Youth from lower socio-economic status communities have been reported to perceive involvement in sport, and the potential of a career therein, as important for social mobility and identity (Bejar, 2013). Males from these communities have been reported to make more of an investment in sport since it is perceived as the main source of supporting a family, as well as establishing a sense of hegemonic masculinity, as other resources and options are limited (Holt & Hogg, 2002; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). For these individuals there is more at stake to succeed in sport, and therefore they experience more pressure and greater levels of stress (Bejar, 2013). It then becomes important for these athletes to be able to manage the stressors they face in order to have success in their sporting performance and provide financial security for their families, as well as to maintain their psychological well-being (Sagar, Busch, & Jowett, 2010).

This is particularly true for the South African population of soccer players. A career in sport potentially offers an opportunity for an athlete to rise out of adverse circumstances. Youth in the South African context grow up with multiple adversities, including poverty, high levels of violence exposure, and high rates of HIV/AIDS. Statistics South Africa (2014) has highlighted that 45% of South Africans live in poverty, while South Africa is currently rated as the eighth most unequal society in the world (Swartz, Harding, & De Lannoy, 2012). Exposure to violence is a daily occurrence for many of the youth in South Africa that live in poor urban areas (Cluver, Gardner, and Operario, 2008; Kaminer, du Plessis, Hardy, & Benjamin,

2013; Kaminer, Hardy, Heath, Mosdell, & Bawa, 2013). Compounding this is the psychological distress that is experienced by many youth due to South Africa's HIV/AIDS epidemic (Cluver, Gardner, and Operario, 2007). Research has indicated that HIV/AIDS affects youth by exposing them to multiple stressors such as debilitating parental AIDS-illnesses, stigma and suffering multiple losses (Cluver et al., 2007; Foster, Makufa, Drew, Mashumba, & Kambeu, 1997). All these factors create a context with multiple adversities in which many professional soccer players in South Africa live. This context may therefore cause South African soccer players to have more or different personal stressors compared to professional soccer players in other contexts and parts of the world.

Internationally since 1995, soccer has seen an explosion in player salary, with some clubs such as SS Lazio Rome spending an amount on salaries that exceeded their club's total income (Poli, 2006). This was as the result of the Bosman's ruling coming into effect, which in 2001, International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) incorporated and established as a part of its rules and regulations. All associations of FIFA, including the South Africa Football Association (SAFA), must abide by the rule of allowing players in their respective national football associations to be able to engage in free trade without a transfer fee, once their contracts expire (De Sa, 2002). Players within the professional soccer context are thus in a better position to negotiate and earn high salaries, providing athletes the potential opportunity to be able to rise out of their adverse circumstances and mobilise their families with them.

However, the world of professional sport is not without its pitfalls, and research has found vocational and personal stressors lead to problems with mental health (De Goede, Spruijt, Iedema & Meeus, 1999). Therefore, it is crucial to understand what stressors these athletes experience, in order to facilitate the use of the potential opportunity (soccer career) for these athletes to become agents of change in their own lives and communities. These athletes are potential positive agents of change, but yet are highly susceptible to various stressors due to their contextual background and the nature of the sports world itself.

The research aims of this study were to determine the stressors that South African professional soccer players face, with a focus on how masculinity shapes their

experience of stress. The study examines how the pursuit of hegemonic masculinity is played out amongst elite South African soccer players and how this influences the personal and professional stressors that players have to negotiate. The results of this study may be used to inform and guide the development of appropriate player well-being programmes, through equipping coaches, counsellors, welfare officers and chaplains with information to better support the athletes with whom they work. The knowledge generated by this study could contribute to a more holistic approach to player development, and improved well-being of players within their professional and personal lives.

Chapter two will provide an overview of the existing literature regarding stressors amongst professional athletes, the literature on masculinity and the intersection of the role of race and class with masculinity, and the role of masculinity in sport. Chapter three describes the methodology of the research. The chapter starts with a discussion on hermeneutic phenomenology before describing the participants, and sampling procedure. It then describes the data collection method used, and the procedure for conducting the research. Chapter three further outlines the data analysis used, before discussing reflexivity, and ethical considerations. The following chapter presents the findings of the analysis and provides a discussion of these findings. The concluding chapter commences with a summary of the findings and then discusses the limitations and recommendations derived from the study.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

This chapter will review the role that stress plays within sport, and specifically within a soccer context. The chapter then reviews the masculinity literature and considers how masculinity may intersect with race and class to influence the stress experienced by soccer players.

2.1 Stressors in Sport

Stress is a concept that is not always fully understood, yet it dictates how individuals respond to their environment (Plaatjie & Potgieter, 2011). Different perspectives have understood stress as either an internal or external phenomenon (Aldwin, 1994; Mason, 1975). Internal stress is the emotional or biophysical response to a stress stimulus, for example the relationship between lifestyle stress and heart disease. External stress manifests as the types of stressors a person experiences at different stages of their lives, these normally involving major life changes rather than just annoyances (Rahe, 1998, as cited in Miller & McCool, 2003; Rahe, Ryman, & Ward, 1980, as cited in Miller & McCool, 2003). Another perspective in viewing stress is that of transactional stress theory. Within this perspective, stress is perceived by the individual as an imbalance between the demands from a person's environment and the resources that a person has to deal with these demands (Evans & Cohen, 1987, as cited in Miller & McCool, 2003; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). From this perspective, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) developed a model of stress and coping. They defined stress as a situation which exists between the environment and the person, and which has been evaluated by the person as being strenuous or having exceeded his or her resources and jeopardising his or her well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Stress has been found to be associated with a number of psychological complications (Kruger, Emekci, Strydom, & Ellis, 2012). Stress acts as a contributing factor towards problems such as anxiety, depression, alcohol abuse, hypertension, heart disease, sexual problems, injury and illness (Herbet, 1997; Kurtz, 2008; Plaatjie & Potgieter, 2011).

Like everyone else, sports people are susceptible to the effects of stress (Plaatjie & Potgieter, 2011). There have been many studies that have focused on identifying the

stressors that athletes experience. These studies have been carried out across various sports, including table tennis (Laborde, You, Dosseville, & Salinas, 2012), elite track athletics (McKay, Niven, Lavallee, & White, 2008), adolescent international golf (Nicholls, Holt, Polman, & James, 2005), single-handed round-the-world ocean-sailing (Weston, Thelwell, Bond, & Hutchings, 2009), professional rugby (Nicholls, Holt, & Polman, 2006), professional Australian football (Noblet & Gifford, 2002), Mexican and U.S. tennis (Puente-Díaz & Anshel, 2005), professional cricket (Thelwell, Weston, & Greenlees, 2007), university student athletes (Abedalhafiz, Altahayneh, & Al-Haliq, 2010), and South African non-elite endurance events (O'Neil & Steyn, 2007). Holt and Hogg (2002) have indicated that sport has the ability to try athletes and expose them to tremendously taxing and stressful circumstances. Engaging in sport has the potential to subject an athlete to a high-pressure environment. These stressors and pressures, if not managed and coped with, may result in psychological, physical as well as cognitive detrimental effects (O'Neil & Steyn, 2007). These athletes include soccer players, as they too have experiences that are related to stress, such as anxiety, disturbed sleep, poor performance, fatigue, loss of appetite, low resistance to physical illness and restlessness (Plaatjie & Potgieter, 2011).

The stressors identified within the sport literature have been divided into three main categories: competitive, organisational, and personal. Competitive stressors are those events or situations that are associated directly with competitive performance (McKay et al., 2008). Competitive stressors include competition preparation issues, whereby athletes have identified concerns about whether their nutrition is correct, about a lack of sleep, a lack of competitive experience, as well as not being mentally and physically as ready as they felt they could be before a match (Abedalhafiz et al., 2010; McKay et al., 2008). Another competitive stressor is that of injury, which includes the concern about not being able to perform due to injury as well as being worried that re-injury will occur (McKay et al., 2008). Performance expectations include athletes having self-induced pressure to do well in a match, and feeling under pressure to capitalise on the moments when an opponent makes an error (Thelwell et al., 2007). Thelwell et al. (2007) explored the pressure cricket athletes place on themselves to prove themselves in their performance, with cricketers identifying the fear of being bowled out and the pressure they felt to keep a good average score. Reeves, Nicholls,

and McKenna (2009) also identify opponents as being a competitive stressor, as athletes describe the concern they feel when their opponents are from a bigger, more famous club as well as the opponents being physically bigger than them. Other concerns about opponents are the concern that opponents may have knowledge of an individual's weaknesses, or that the standard of an opponent is better (Thelwell et al., 2007). Self-presentational concerns (McKay et al., 2008) were also identified as a source of stress. These include athletes' concerns about what others think of them in general as well as the evaluation received from others on their performance, which takes place in a public forum.

Organisational stressors are the events or situations associated with the organisations within which the athletes operate (McKay et al., 2008). Organisational stressors have been broken down into five main categories within the literature (Weston et al., 2009). Firstly several factors related to the sport were identified as stressful. This included the transport to training and being late for training. Another such factor could be the training environment; athletes identified changes in training setup that were unexpected, change of coach, having a lack of support in training, while also having doubts about performance during training as factors they experienced as stressful (McKay et al., 2008; Thelwell et al., 2007).

A second organisational stressor is the individual's role in the organisation. This includes role conflict and responsibility. Role conflict includes coach related stressors such as being criticized and threatened by the coach, who is meant to be teaching and guiding an athlete (Abedalhafiz et al., 2010). Other role stressors are the negative behaviour that an athlete experiences from other athletes and officials, and a lack of understanding of the demands experienced by athletes (McKay et al., 2008). A third organisational stressor is the sport climate and organisational structure, incorporating political and cultural issues. Some of the negative cultural norms that athletes report include the fickle environment they face at work and the pressure they feel to conform to the club image (Noblet & Gifford, 2002).

The fourth organisational stressor is sport-specific relationships and interpersonal demands, such as leadership styles and lack of social support (Noblet & Gifford, 2002). Athletes indicate that autocratic leadership styles, poor communication such as

a lack of feedback and false promises, not having their concerns listened to, and being ignored if injured or playing poorly, were perceived as stressful aspects of relationships within the organisation (Noblet & Gifford, 2002).

A fifth organisational stressor is that of athletic career and performance development concerns which includes salary and position security (Noblet & Gifford, 2002). Stressors here include athletes being aware of the competition for their position in the team, and job insecurity as athletes report not knowing how coaching staff rate them as a player and therefore facing selection uncertainty (Noblet & Gifford, 2002; Thelwell et al., 2007).

Personal stressors are defined as the events or situations that are associated with the personal (non-sporting) life events of a person (McKay et al., 2008). Personal stressors experienced by athletes include financial issues such as athletes' source of livelihood being dependent on their contract renewal, and their role as sole financial provider for a family (McKay et al., 2008; Thelwell et al., 2007). Another stressor experienced is the guilt about being away from family as athletes report being away for long periods due to matches out of their hometown. Athletes also stated how they would miss their family and friends, especially when having to relocate due to contract agreements (Noblet & Gifford, 2002; Weston et al., 2009). Other personal stressors are life events removed from sport such as difficulty maintaining personal relationships due to the athletic lifestyle and time demands (McKay et al., 2008). Other lifestyle issues which cause athletes stress include adjusting to independent living when relocated away from family, and the difficulty of finding a work and study balance for athletes wanting to further their education (Noblet & Gifford, 2002).

2.2 Stress in Soccer Players

Within the international and South African literature very little research has been conducted with professional soccer populations specifically (Plaatjie & Potgieter, 2011). This is despite soccer being the most popular sport across the world, attracting both the greatest number of spectators and participants (Kruger et al., 2012). Existing studies have largely focused upon the competitive and organisational stressors that these athletes experience (Reeves et al., 2009).

Research by Reeves et al. (2009) and Sagar et al. (2010) in the United Kingdom focused on stressors and coping strategies amongst adolescent soccer players. Through semi-structured interviews, Reeves et al. (2009) interviewed adolescent premier league academy soccer players with regard to stressors. From this research it was identified that some competitive stressors included facing opposition that were from higher ranking clubs or physically bigger, receiving coach criticism, lack of coach feedback and being uncertain with regards to position security (selection) in the team. Through quantitative and qualitative methodology, Sagar et al. (2010) sampled adolescent academy soccer players and also found that the pressure to succeed, and having uncertainty about career future sustainability, was present amongst other stressors. Neither of these studies explored the personal stressors that athletes may be facing.

In a qualitative study, which sampled professional United States soccer players, Kristiansen and colleagues (2012) highlighted the various organisational stressors that soccer players face. The stressors identified amongst participants (travel issues, position security, salary concerns, and team issues) were also found in studies that took place across other sport disciplines (Abedalhafiz et al., 2010; McKay et al., 2008; Noblet & Gifford, 2002; Thelwell et al., 2007). One of the stressors identified, travel issues, related to large amounts of time spent traveling away from athletes' homes and families due to the geographical distances between cities in the United States. Although for some young players travelling was initially an exciting part of the job, this diminished with age as it interfered with athletes attempting to fulfil family obligations. Athletes reported that not being able to be a part of daily family life routines as a result of travel commitments through work was a source of stress in their lives (Kristiansen et al., 2012). The same research highlighted that position security and salary concerns amongst athletes was a major stressor as many times athletes were insecure about their selection for the team and this led them to be worried that they would not be paid. Kristiansen et al. (2012) also highlighted team issues as a stressor, due to the excessive competition amongst teammates.

Even though Kristiansen et al.'s (2012) study, set out to explore organisational stressors, the presence of personal stressors, such as being stressed about making a living and being able to provide for their families, also emerged. The pressure to do

well can be increased by a player's family being dependent on them to succeed in sport, and a competitive stressor now becomes a personal stressor (Bejar, 2013).

One study conducted on soccer in South Africa (Plaatjie & Potgieter, 2011) focused on coping strategies that are used by soccer players. The researchers did this by examining the role of the environment, ethnicity and culture in a player's response to stressful situations in their lives. Plaatjie and Potgieter (2011) used an interpretive-qualitative methodology in which they used questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to obtain information from 33 soccer players that were registered to a Premier Soccer League (PSL) club in the Western Cape. This research identified some of the same competitive stressors (poor performance, fear of injury and making mistakes) and organisational stressors (dealing with intolerant players, player jealousy amongst teammates) that have been found in international research (Reeves et al., 2009; Sagar et al., 2010). Although Plaatjie and Potgieter's (2011) study did identify some personal stressors (being away from home, and finding balance in school work and workload), its main focus was on what coping strategies were employed.

As discussed above, there is extensive literature on the stressors experienced by athletes from various sports. However, as evident from the research presented above, the main focus has been upon competitive, organisational, and personal stressors, without consideration of how an athlete's social identity is affected by, and affects, the types of stressors experienced. Currently there is no research surrounding professional soccer which has focused on the role of a professional athlete's social identity, and specifically their masculinity, in constructing the stressors that players experience. There has been an absence of research on the social identity formation which soccer constructs for those who participate at a professional level. The role of factors such as race and class have been ignored, despite the position that these place each individual athlete in before soccer plays its role in shaping their identity and masculinity. Literature (Holt, 2003; Kristiansen et al., 2012; Nicholls et al., 2006; Nicholls, Levy, Grice, & Polman, 2009; Noblet & Gifford, 2002; Thelwell et al., 2007; Weston et al., 2009) looking into stress amongst professional sportsmen has presented the context in which sportsmen experience stressors as an equal playing field. However the reality is that people have unique social positioning depending on the intersection of their race, class, and gender (Cole, 2009). Literature surrounding

identity and hegemonic masculinity has indicated the significance of the interaction of class and race upon the attainment of hegemonic masculine identity (Burgess, Edwards, & Skinner, 2003; Cooper & Foster, 2008; Courtenay, 2000; Moolman, 2013; Pyke, 1996). When considering race and class, these are not merely categories to describe groups of people that may be similar or different to one another. These terms capture the historical and continuous relation of material, political and social inequality which is present in different contexts (Cole, 2009). Research has indicated that there needs to be an awareness of how masculinity is culturally and historically constructed to fully understand meaning making and identity formation amongst men (Shefer, Stevens, & Clowes, 2010). This is specifically important when considering the marginalised background from which many of the South African professional soccer players originate (Plaatjie & Potgieter, 2011).

Although many of the South African professional soccer players experience stressors highlighted in sports stress literature, they are not just athletes in isolation of other contexts. When stress is perceived through the dominant western medical science discourse, it is seen to be an undesirable outcome of "normal" functioning, holding individuals accountable for their predicament (Meyerson, 1998). However, research from a social constructionist and feminist perspective has suggested that stress is not constructed and experienced as neutral, but instead shaped by the diverse contexts of culture, gender, race, and class that people may inhabit (Banyard & Graham-Bermann, 1993; Kurtz, 2008; Meyerson, 1998). Thus instead of stress being seen as the difficulty of the individual, it can be reconstructed as a social experience (Meyerson, 1998).

In addition to being an athlete, many South African soccer players are also Black and Coloured[1] men who come from a low socioeconomic status background. Therefore to truly gain an understanding of the stressors experienced amongst these professional athletes, there needs to be an acknowledgement of the background and context from which these athletes hail. This type of research has not previously been done. In order

[1] These categories were introduced by the Population Registration Act under apartheid. Although racial categories are no longer legislated in South Africa, they continue to reflect real social and economic disparities between groups in South Africa.

to truly understand the stressors that professional soccer players face, what needs to be noted is how the experience of being an athlete, a professional soccer player, is mediated by their other experiences of themselves in the world, that is being a Black or Coloured male from a low socioeconomic status background in a highly unequal society. It is through this lens that this research aims to overcome the limitations of previous research that has investigated stressors amongst professional soccer players.

2.3 Masculinity

The study of men and masculinity, and the differing theories that inform the concepts, has in the last twenty years become a strong feature of gender research in South Africa (Morrell, Jewkes, Lindegger & Hamlall, 2013). Essentialism (Bohan, 1993), social constructionism (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988; Lorber & Farrell, 1991), Connell's (1995) sociological approach, and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) are amongst some of the streams of theory used to inform studies around masculinity.

One of the ways that masculinity has been described is from an essentialist view. Essentialisim constructs gender to be something which is resident within an individual, something that describes a person's personality, moral judgement etc. Essentialist models describe gender as a concept which is seen to be internal, fixed, and separated from the experience of social interactions and contexts of an individual's life (Bohan, 1993). Therefore an essentialist paradigm views masculinity to be unaltered by the cultural, social and historical developments of an indiviudal (Kaminer & Dixon, 1995). Other masculinity writers have, in contrast, argued that masculinity should be understood in relation to the social context in which it occurs (Kimmel, 1997). Several men's studies writers have adopted a social constructionist approach, which emerged as a response to essentialist understandings of masculinity and has deconstructed the view of an essential and monolithic masculinity.

Social constructionist explanations of masculinity identify that which is socially constructed to be desirable, appropriate and natural for the masculine gender (Everitt-Penhale & Ratele, 2015). These constructions of masculinity will differ with varying geographical, situational, and historical contexts. Masculinity is viewed as relatively fluid as context dictates how varying masculinities are shaped and evaluated

(Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985; Connell 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Everitt-Penhale & Ratele, 2015).

One of the most influential frameworks that grew out of social constructionism is the formulation of hegemonic masculinity that was developed in the late 1970s and is predominately associated with Raewyn Connell. Connell's (1995) approach proposes a multiplicity of masculinities and explains how these can be constructed in relation to one another in a manner that creates hierarchies of power.

Connell's proposal of masculinity is utilised extensively within studies of masculinity (Beasley, 2008; Hearn & Morrell, 2012). Hegemonic masculinity has been defined as the idealized form of masculinity at a specific time and place (Connell, 1995). Research by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) has indicated that different constructions of masculinity might function on various levels: local, regional, and global. Local hegemonic masculinity develops in direct person-to-person contact and within community relations. Regionally constructed hegemonic masculinity functions on a cultural and national level. Lastly, globally constructed hegemonic masculinity is manufactured through the media and world politics (Kurtz, 2008). It can be partly understood in terms of bringing to attention the power relations and hierarchical structures between men and women (Hearn et al., 2012). Hegemonic masculinity has most usually been conceptualised as a set of values, set by men in power, that functions to organise society in a gendered unequal manner (Hearn & Morrell, 2012).

Kimmel (1997) defines hegemonic masculinity as the recognition that not all masculinities are created equal, thus bringing attention to the diversity within masculinity. Connell (1995) emphasized that although hegemonic masculinity is associated with dominant masculinity, not all men have access to hegemonic power and they themselves as males may also be confined by and to it (Morrell et al., 2013). Hegemonic masculinity is thus seen to hold an authoritative position not only over women, but over other masculinities as well (Beasley, 2008). Researchers of masculinity, such as Kimmel and Connell, can be attributed not only with bringing to consideration how gender in general is integrated into social life and social organisation, but also with how masculinity specifically is integrated within all aspects of social structures (Beasley, 2008).

Hegemonic masculinity is constructed as an ideal that is exhibited in public spaces and embedded via social institutions such as the media (Connell, 1995; Cooper & Foster, 2008). There are ways in which men can 'be' masculine, 'do' masculine or 'perform' masculinity. Gender is constantly being formed and re-formed by what actions a person chooses to engage in, and how this is done in relation to other people (Shefer et al., 2010). For example, boys' performativity in a classroom has shown that boys actively play out dominant versions of masculinity (Dalley-Trim, 2007). This includes their verbal language usage and how they engage their bodies (Dalley-Trim, 2007). The use of heterosexist language functions as a tool to achieve this hegemonic masculine identity. With regards to the use of their bodies, males engage in an outward coding beyond the spoken language of masculinity. This is achieved through body styling and performing of repeated acts such as shouting and being loud, play fighting, and acting tough and cool (Dalley-Trim, 2007).

Currently in the earliest part of the 21st century, hegemonic masculinity is constructed as the David Beckham of soccer- the affluent, white, successful and powerful western man. Although few men hold this masculine identity, many strive towards it and thus support and sustain its power (Connell, 1987; Cooper & Foster, 2008). The multiple masculinities referred to by Connell (1995) arise from the intersection of differing identity markers such as race, class, and age.

This concept indicates that men can take up various positions within the structure of masculinity. They can be opposed to or undermined by hegemony, and they can also access it and exert its power over other men and women (Morrell et al., 2013). Despite the usefulness of Connell's approach to hegemonic masculinity (Burgess et al., 2003; Cooper & Foster, 2008; Everitt-Penhale & Ratele, 2015; Moolman, 2013; Morrell et al., 2013; Swain, 2000), she has received some criticism that her approach is not always easily adapted into resource poor and developing situations (Morrell et al., 2013). It has been argued that Connell's approach can overlook large numbers of men who, because of their geographical location, age, class, and race amongst other factors, find themselves situated in a position of declining material and symbolic wealth and power (Chant, 2000; Hunter, 2006; Morrell et al., 2013; Silberschmidt,

2001). Hence there is the need to bring in an intersectional awareness when investigating hegemonic masculinity.

Intersectionality, developed by feminist and critical race theorists, describes critical approaches which take into account both the consequence and meaning of several categories of social group belonging (Cole, 2009). One of the earliest expressions of intersectionality was a manifesto written by the Combahee River Collective (1977/1995, as cited in Cole, 2009), a group of Black feminists. They argued that it was problematic to try to separate race from class from sex oppression, as in their lives these categories were experienced simultaneously. By the early 1980s there had been an increase in research work around women of colour. Without naming the theory driving this work, it was addressing the intersections of class, gender and race (Cole, 2009).

Although other scholars were highlighting the limitations of examining race and/or gender as the primary category of difference or disadvantage, critical race theorist Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) is credited with coining the term *intersectionality*. Intersectionality is proposed by Crenshaw (1991) to acknowledge that identities are created through the intersection of multiple dimensions. Social identities are seen as intricate practices which are moulded through social institutions and social relationships. Another scholar, Patricia Hills Collins has contributed substantially to the work of intersectionality and highlighting the roots of intersectionality in Black Feminism (Haas, 2013). She highlights how intersectionality was born in reply to the numerous oppressions of class and race faced by Black women (Collins, 2015). Collins offers the definition of intersectionality to be a term which "…references the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but rather as reciprocally constructing phenomena" (Collins, 2015, p. 1).

These early expressions of intersectionality highlight how members in a particular group may hold numerous disadvantaged positions, therefore highlighting how an analyses of for example race and class separately may be limiting as individuals experience these positions simultaneously (Cole, 2009). It is important to note how social groupings together shape experience. South Africans' social identities therefore

cannot be understood unless observed in relation to their historical context. Many South Africans' social identities are linked to the country's past history of the unjust apartheid system, while also being constructed by political and economic changes and ideals that are set out in the post-apartheid South Africa (Moolman, 2013; Morrell et al., 2013). There is a grapple between striving for change while also being held to certain past identities. Intersectionality as a framework asks researchers to investigate identity, differences and disadvantage utilising a new lens (Cole, 2009).

2.4 Masculinity, Race and Class in South Africa

Within the South African context, due to past apartheid and colonial dynamics, there has been the creation of marginalised masculinity which is defined by race and class (Cooper & Foster, 2008). Although the social categories of race and class are distinct, they are not in isolation of each other as they overlap and are mutually organised through the other. In South Africa race continues to shape social environments and identities in profound ways (Moolman, 2013). Although in South Africa racial identities remain in some ways shaped by apartheid geography, they have been reshaped through the 1994 democratic transition (Moolman, 2013). Class is defined as the social practices that are learnt by social discourses which group people through their relationship to the economic system. Masculinity theorists such as Connell and Nurse have indicated that economic conditions are pivotal to understanding men and the position of masculinity (Moolman, 2013). South African men have encountered and will continue to confront conditions which destabilise their economic condition and therefore cause them to re-evaluate their masculinity (Morrell, 2001). Social relations are therefore reconstructed through social power. These relations are played out in the expression of multiple identities and legitimated through macro-social processes and institutions (Moolman, 2013). In this way intersectionality provides a lens to be able to understand the meaning attached to the many areas of masculine practices, indicating how race and class as macro-social processes have a meaningful impact on the power and position of men (Moolman, 2013).

Within the South African context hegemony has been contested for years on the basis of class and race (Morrell et al., 2013). Class and race is seen to form the structural context in which masculinity is enacted in everyday life (Pyke, 1996). It has been argued that marginalised masculinity consists of a large amount of machismo, as due

to the power that is lost through class and race these men try to regain power (Cooper & Foster, 2008). Despite being popularly utilised in literature, the term machismo is still only vaguely defined. Machismo has been described as referring to the behaviour of men in Mexican culture (Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey, 2008). Some literature defines it as the masculine force that drives all other masculine forces, while another definition is the manifestation of supposed male characteristics, both negative and positive (Andrade, 1992; Arciniega et al., 2008). Popular literature has associated the term with negative traits such as chauvinism, sexism, and hypermasculinity (Arciniega et al., 2008).

One of the ways in which men can attain the ideal of hegemonic masculinity is through risk-taking. Young men have been seen to be expected to partake in risk-taking behaviour, which in a South African context includes smoking, drinking, gangsterism, drug taking, and having multiple sexual partners (Shefer et al., 2010). An example of young men achieving the conventional hegemonic masculinity can be seen through their involvement in gang activity (Luyt & Foster, 2001). When the conventional hegemonic masculine identity isn't achievable to young men living in low-income areas, the attributes associated to hegemonic masculinity, such as success, control and toughness, may be attained through gang activity. Therefore these young men position themselves to display the features of hegemonic masculinity (Luyt & Foster, 2001). It has been suggested that hypermasculinity can be found in lower-status male groups in contexts of urban gangs, sexual conquests and crime (Pyke, 1996). This is understood as a response to dominant masculinity when marginalised men have their masculine identity undermined by their lower order-taking position relative to higher-status males (Pyke, 1996). However these hypermasculine actions are commonly self-destructive or dangerous (Courtenay, 2000). Social class standing influences the behaviours used to demonstrate masculinity. Sedite, Bowman, and Clowes (2010) argue that risk-taking is exaggerated in poor, urban settings, and that although race and class intersect to create a vulnerability to risk-taking in urban youth in South Africa in order to attain masculinity, it is also an anti-authoritarian stance positioning amongst the urban, working class, young men.

2.5 Masculinity and Sport

As discussed above, men play out their masculinity through various forms of social identities and processes. One of these avenues may be offered by sport. Sport is not part of a natural evolution of human life; it is rather a social institution that is created to reflect dominant power relations and social values (Burgess et al., 2003). In privileged schools in Britain sport was used to teach disruptive boys social control and how to defer to authority. Thus through sport acceptable definitions of what it meant to be a hegemonic man were created (Swain, 2003). The projected image of soccer has changed through the 1990s, developing a social and political currency that through commercial entities has had its value hyper-inflated (Swain, 2000). Through consumer culture soccer has developed an important role in advocating and sustaining hegemonic masculinity (Swain, 2000). It may be argued that the professional game of soccer, with its connotations of strength, power, muscularity, and fearlessness conveys the image of an ideal hegemonic man. Thus many males use the soccer identity as an ideal to construct and execute their versions of masculinity (Swain, 2000). Sport, for men who participate, becomes a proving ground that offers a medium for men who, due to their class and race, would not otherwise be able to assert masculine authority (Burgess et al., 2003).

A study conducted in England by Swain (2000) indicated how soccer in particular was a major signifier of successful masculinity within the school life of adolescent males. The main feature of soccer was its value of bonding, the formation of a collective group identity and culture of beliefs, rules, codes of conduct and behaviours. Simply stated, it gave youth an opportunity to ‘belong’. Soccer has been associated with prestige and status, and therefore males who are within this paradigm orient towards performing the role of what it means to be a soccer player, including its masculine associations of what a person who plays soccer should look like, act like and be like (Swain, 2000). Being able to successfully establish oneself as a good soccer player has a large bearing on establishing oneself as a ‘real’ man. Although soccer alone does not define the totality of masculinity, it is a key ingredient and a way of expression in helping to define some of the masculine features (Swain, 2000). A study by Light and Kirk (2000) identified how student athletes were glorified due to their identity as a first team player regardless of whether other areas of their lives (academics, relations with others etc.) were successful or not. Success in one area of

these youth's lives (their sport) seemed to certify them successful in life overall. The double-edged sword is that most of these youth, despite the praise they received, still faced a problematic path to self-realisation (Light & Kirk, 2000). When a sense of self and identity is solely based on who a person is as an athlete (an unsustainable position), this results in the collapse of self if the athletic part of the identity is removed from the person. Students who had their identity chiefly embedded in soccer therefore experienced identities that were at the same time well defined yet precarious (Light & Kirk, 2000). This is seen clearly when athletes reach retirement. Many athletes experience a loss of identity upon retirement due to the reliance on sport as their primary marker of identity (Swain, 2000).

Sport has been shown to be a powerful medium in which the construction of hegemonic masculinity is made available. Sport is a constitutional process that involves power relations and the production and reproduction of individual meaning (Burgess et al., 2003). It is an avenue through which men, especially men of lower-socioeconomic background, have been shown to pursue hegemonic masculinity (Burgess et al., 2003; Swain, 2000). Therefore the role of sport in masculine identity formation cannot be ignored. Research has largely focused on this issue within either a non-professional, youth, or spectator context. There is a dearth of research investigating how playing professional soccer allows, as well as influences, a specific type of masculinity, especially for those who perhaps do not have alternative ways to attain hegemonic masculinity, e.g. men who find themselves in contexts of marginalised race and class. Therefore this research seeks to fill the gap in which hegemonic masculinity, an important ideal in the sports world, is strangely absent among reported stressors in professional athletes. The current study sets out to understand what stressors South African soccer players face and how hegemonic masculinity affects and is affected by these stressors.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter began with reviewing the current literature surrounding stressors experienced within the professional sports world, including competitive, organisational, and personal stressors. Stressors identified specifically amongst soccer athletes were then reviewed. The chapter then went on to investigate the role of race and class in constructing experiences of masculinity. It discussed the power that men

in marginalised race and class categories are sometimes deprived of, describing how the attainment of a hegemonic masculine identity is then sought out through different avenues. The chapter then looked at masculinity and sport, highlighting how sport provides a medium to men who participate to assert their masculine authority, which otherwise due to their race and class they would not be able to. By investigating the stressors that these men experience it is seen that not only do these men experience stress in their working sporting contexts but that their world of professional sport is intrinsically linked with their quest for their masculine identity. Yet despite this, there is a lack of research exploring and investigating this experience. Through examining the ways in which masculinity constructs and mediates experiences of stress related to being a professional soccer player, this study aims to address this gap in the knowledge base.

Chapter 3
Methodology

3.1 Aim of Research

The aim of this research was to investigate the stressors that professional South African soccer players face, with a particular focus on exploring how these stressors may be mediated by the seeking out, and performance of, masculine identity within the South African context of race and class inequality.

3.2 Epistemological Framework

This study utilised a phenomological approach. The study was guided by methodological assumptions that are based on Heidegger's (1962, as cited in Holt, 2003) existential philosophy and interpretative (hermeneutic) phenomenology, which is one of two approaches that phenomenological psychology is often divided into (Spinelli, 2005; Willig, 2008). The other approach of phenomenological psychology is the descriptive approach, which is influenced by Husserl's philosophy and phenomenology (Spinelli, 2005; Willig, 2008). Phenomenology studies make the lived experience or the life world the starting point for reference (van Manen, 1997, as cited in Githaiga, 2013). Husserl developed his phenomenology as a method to investigate human experiences (the phenomena of consciousness) (Laverty, 2003). The goal of his method was to carry the essence of a person's lived experience into their realm of consciousness (Githaiga, 2013). The trademark of Husslerian phenomenology is its emphasis on description, hence it is known as descriptive phenomenology.

Heidegger, who had been Husserl's assistant, is regarded as being the founder of formal existentialism, with existentialists being on the whole concerned with human freedom, and how humans experience freedom in their worlds (Misiak & Sexton, 1973, as cited in Githaiga, 2013; Spinelli, 2005). Heidegger's viewpoint is ontological. While Husserl's focus is on the study of consciousness, Heidegger studies not just the consciousness of an individual but the individual as a whole (their whole existence) (Annells, 1996; Inwood, 1997, as cited in Githaiga 2013; Johnson, 2000; Osborne, 1994). Heidegger's stance is that meaning comes from the interdependent interaction between people, others and their world (Annells, 1996;

Conroy, 2003; Laverty, 2003). His concept *daesin* refers to the way that people make sense of their world, their position in it and how they become aware of it (Conroy, 2003). For Heidegger, people exist in a world where there is shared meaning as they interact with others and objects in a system of mutual interdependence. In hermeneutics interpretation occurs through a process of back and forth oscillation between parts of an experience and the experience as a whole, in pursuit of arriving at an understanding of the phenomenon (Conroy, 2003; Laverty, 2003). It is because of the interpretive characteristic (hermeneutic aspect) that Heidegger's phenomenology is known as interpretative or hermeneutic phenomenology. Thus hermeneutic phenomenology can be defined as aiming to understand an individual's experience by exploring the structure, essence and meaning of the lived experiences of the people involved, as according to Heidegger meaning occurs when people engage purposefully with their world via daily interactions (Githaiga, 2013; Kerry & Armour, 2000; Van Manen, 1997, as cited in Holt, 2003).

In hermeneutic psychology investigations, there is an emphasis on needing to understand the context in which participants experience a phenomenon. An individual's narrative reveals the significant contexts, such as the socio-cultural and historical contexts, within which the person experiences phenomena (Githaiga, 2013). This study utilised Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology as the methodological framework, which enabled the researcher to better understand the deeper meaning or significance of part of the individual's experience (Van Manen, 1997, as cited in Holt, 2003). As this current study's aim was to investigate what stress soccer players experience, conducting interviews from a hermeneutic phenomenology standpoint (with its ability to focus on the meaning of lived personal experiences) was considered to be an appropriate methodology.

3.3 Participants and Sampling Procedure

Ajax Cape Town Football Club was approached to take part in this research project. Ajax Cape Town (Ajax CT) is a local South African soccer club which is based in the Northern suburbs of the city of Cape Town. The club was officially formed in 1999 with the amalgamation of two Cape Town-based teams, Seven Stars and Cape Town Spurs. Currently Ajax Amsterdam is the parent club of Ajax CT, which creates a potential opportunity for South African soccer players to enter the European soccer

market and to earn an international and successful living from the sport. Ajax CT also has a youth development scheme through which they provide soccer opportunities to young people within the greater Cape Town area.

There exists at the club a cultural mixture as over the years the club has seen coaches of varying nationalities including Dutch, Turkish, English, Zimbabwean and South African. However, the majority of the club's athletes that comprise the first team are South African nationals, as according to the South African Premier Soccer League (PSL) rules only five non-South African athletes may be registered for a match day squad within a professional first team. The club's soccer players originate from varying backgrounds but the majority come from low socio-economic status residential areas in the greater Cape Town area. Whist the majority of the athletes in the professional team have come up through the ranks of a youth academy soccer club, being recruited at the age of about fifteen, there are also players who had been recruited into the team as adults in various transfer seasons. Although many of the soccer players had been in school at the time of recruitment to the soccer academy as a youth, not all the players in the team had finished their schooling due to sport commitments taking precedence.

Purposive sampling was utilised for this research study. An invitation to participate in the research was extended to all 30 athletes in the Ajax Cape Town professional team. The Head Coach of the professional team at the soccer club approved the research. The researcher presented the research project's aims and procedures to the whole group of athletes of the professional team. This took place in the meeting room at the training ground where the athletes receive their life skills training. At this meeting the researcher outlined what the project entailed and explained the consent and confidentiality aspects of the project. The athletes had a chance to ask questions about the project and voice any concerns that they may have had regarding any aspect of the research project. The sign up sheet where athletes could choose to participate in the research was left with the first team's chaplain. At the end of the meeting athletes could approach the chaplain and the researcher to express their interest in partaking in the research. Only athletes that were part of the professional team were included, as these athletes already have an established relationship with the club's chaplain, who assisted with the recruitment of participants. Ten athletes volunteered and were

interviewed. Of the ten athletes five grew up speaking Afrikaans, four speaking English and one speaking Sesotho. The age range of the ten participants ranged from 21 to 33 years of age. With regard to education eight of the athletes had completed their high school education (Grade 12), one had studied until the second last year of school (Grade 11) and one athlete had been studying in his second year at university before leaving to pursue a career in soccer. Seven of the athletes had grown up within the Cape Flats in Cape Town, while the three other athletes only moved to Cape Town upon finishing school.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Traditionally, phenomenological studies use individual interviews as a preferred data collection method because of the focus on the individual's experience (Creswell, 2007; Gathaiga, 2013). In this study semi-structured individual interviews were used to collect data. Semi-structured interviews allow for rapport building between researcher and participant, producing rich data (Smith, 2008). In this research project, there was already some trust and rapport between the club chaplain and the participants, as well as between the club chaplain and the researcher. It is through this that the researcher gained a comfortable rapport with some of the participants. For some of the other participants, who did not have a strong rapport with the chaplain, this methodology was helpful in allowing the researcher to build a further rapport with those participants. For this study some questions required deeper engagement from participants, thus the open-ended approach of semi-structured interviews suited this research (Gathaiga, 2013). The open-ended questions asked by the researcher act as prompts to the participant to talk about their lives or story. As literature within this area of research is scarce, employing semi-structured interviews was suitable as it allows for a greater flexibility of discussion, allowing the interview to venture into new areas if they arise (Smith, 2008). Semi-structured interviewing allows for a participant to choose what specific part of their life experience they want to share with the researcher (Willig, 2008). However, the researcher guided the interview, via her comments and questions, in order to obtain answers relevant to the research question.

The interview guide was adapted from previous research which used semi-structured interviews to investigate stressors in athletes (Noblet & Gifford, 2002; Reeves et al., 2009; Sagar et al., 2010; Thelwell et al., 2007; Weston et al., 2009). The interview guide consisted of two sections: demographic and background details, and exploration of stressors that participants experienced within their profession (Weston et al., 2009). The interview structure did not explicitly ask about masculinity, but rather focused on exploring experiences of stress. The analysis then adopted the lens of masculinity theories to understand the participants' experiences of stress. In the first section concerning the demographic and background details, the researcher asked where the participant lived, where he grew up, how many siblings he has, what his parents do for work, and his education. This was done in order to create a context within which to understand the individual's experience and choice of soccer as a career. In the second section, the researcher commenced by asking what the participants thought stress was and how it manifested in their lives. As a follow up probe, when necessary, the researcher defined the term *stress* for the participant as something in their environment that is requiring more of them to be able to handle the situation than what they currently possess. First the participants were asked about what is stressful in their lives in a general manner, and then when necessary follow up probe questions about personal stressors were asked. Throughout the interview the researcher used probes such as 'tell me more about that?', 'what was it about ____ that made it stressful?' and 'how did you respond to that situation?' in order to extract greater detail from the participant. The interviews assumed that the participant is the expert on his life, enabling the participant to tell his story about how his career has created experiences of stress (Reeves et al., 2009). Two pilot interviews were carried out to assess whether the interview questions were applicable and suitable to obtain data that addresses the research study's aim. After the pilot interviews there were no alterations made to the interview schedule. Having conducted and analysed all the interviews, the researcher was satisfied that data saturation was reached, and no further interviews were necessary. Glaser and Strauss (2009) first introduced the concept of data saturation to the field of qualitative research. Data saturation is the point at which no new data are found which can develop a category (Glaser & Strauss, 2009).

3.5 Procedure

The researcher communicated with the athletes to draw up a schedule of when would be convenient for the participants to complete the interview. Once the dates and times were set the researcher met up with the individual participants. There was one interview done per day. Each day at the end of the club's training it was arranged that one athlete stayed behind for the interview, thus making participation in the research project as convenient to the participants as possible. The interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes each and were conducted on the training grounds in a private unused office space. At the start of each interview the researcher read through the consent and confidentiality form and allowed the participant the chance to ask questions. The participant was informed that the interview would be audio recorded. Throughout the interview, should the participant have discussed any sensitive information that caused him discomfort or distress, the researcher, also a registered counsellor, was able to provide the participant the space to speak about their distress. On the one occasion that this occurred, the researcher worked to make the participant feel contained before leaving the interview. The participant was referred to the club's chaplain for further psychological support. The researcher liaised with the club's chaplain about the abovementioned referral. The researcher followed up with the chaplain and the specific participant had sought out a few further counselling sessions with the chaplain. There was no need for any referral to be made to state mental health services for any of the participants. After the data were analysed, verbal feedback and an information sheet on suggested coping strategies was given to the whole first team (including the participants) by the researcher in a follow up psycho-education group session. In order for the players to feel they have a source of continuous access to discussing coping and the topics discussed in the psycho-education group, the chaplain, who had previously been delivering such group sessions, assisted in the delivering of the psycho-education session. An outline of the session was conveyed to the head coach.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Thematic Analysis

The data generated by this research project was analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a theoretically flexible approach in which themes within the data can be identified, organised, analysed and reported (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Although there is international research on stressors experienced by professional athletes, not much is known about these factors within the South African context, nor has the influence of masculine identity on stress experienced by this population been examined. Therefore the use of thematic analysis is appropriate to provide a detailed description of the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Research by Noblet and Gifford (2002) which is one of the few studies to include personal stressors faced by professional athletes, also utilised thematic analysis methods to analyse their interview transcripts. Another study carried out by Holt (2003), which also employed a hermeneutic phenomenology stance, used thematic analysis from a phenomenological standpoint. Phenomenological thematic analysis was designed so that a series of relevant themes that represent a participant's lived experience could be developed (Van Manen, 1997, as cited in Holt, 2003).

Braun and Clarke (2006) have set out recommendations of the six phases to be carried out for thematic analysis. This research adhered to these recommendations. In the first phase the researcher read and re-read the transcripts to become familiar with the data. During this reading any ideas relevant to the research question that the researcher had with regard to coding the data were written down.

The initial codes were constructed during the second phase. Three randomly selected interviews were initially analysed. In this process the text of the entire interview was coded. At the end of analysing these three interviews all the initial codes were written down. Next the initial codes which spoke to the same topics were grouped together. Once a refined list of initial codes was created the researcher then analysed the remaining seven interviews, utilising the list of initial codes and noting any new codes. A process of constant comparison was used to decide if new codes were needed (Glaser & Strauss, 1965). By the fifth interview being analysed there were no new codes being identified. All the relevant data for each code were then gathered and grouped. This was done by colour coding the initial codes and highlighting the data which spoke to each code.

In the third phase themes were searched for. Each code was subjected to the question 'what does this sentence reveal about the experience or phenomenon being described?' (Van Manen, 1997, as cited in Holt, 2003). Codes that spoke to similar

phenomena were grouped together. From the grouping of codes various themes were formed. Themes were developed as units of similar meaning were identified. The relevant data were organised within each theme.

During the fourth phase a reviewing of the themes took place. Each theme was checked to ensure it had codes which formed a coherent pattern. Within each theme the relevant data were re-read to check that the data were related to the theme they were grouped within. The researcher then checked that the themes related to the research question. In phase five the themes were defined and named.

In the last phase a coherent and concise description of what the data is highlighting was produced. Referring to current literature, the themes identified were utilised to formulate an answer to the research question.

3.7 Reflexivity

Parker (2005) has defined reflexivity as the manner of dealing with the personal and historical aspects of a research relationship. Reflexivity requires that there needs to be an awareness of what the researcher's contribution is towards the construction of meaning that takes place throughout the whole research process. There needs to be an acknowledgement that in conducting research it is impossible to place one's own subject matter completely on the outside (Willig, 2008). Reflexivity urges researchers to be aware of how their involvement in a study influences, and shapes the research (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999). There are two types of reflexivity: personal reflexivity and epistemological reflexivity. Personal reflexivity refers to reflecting on the ways that the researcher's values, beliefs, and social identity shape the research. Epistemological reflexivity refers to a scrutiny of the research process (how the research question defined what could be 'found' and how the study's design 'constructed' the data findings), while keeping track of how the researcher's assumptions and understanding developed throughout the research (Gathaiga, 2013; Willig, 2008). When failing to address the issues defined by the two types of reflexivity, we risk having research that may be biased to the researcher's personal stance. The researcher interpreted the data from the interviews. Therefore my own beliefs and personal values need to be acknowledged as they may, although not purposefully, affect how the data was interpreted.

At a personal reflexive level, with regard to my beliefs and personal values, I acknowledge and am aware of the differences that exist between myself and the participants. Coming from a cultural and family background that prioritises and encourages the discussion of stressors and how to positively and effectively handle stressors, I reflected on my perception of what is considered to be 'normal' or healthy responses to stressors. I was aware of the possible beliefs that I may hold, such as religious beliefs that shape my identity, which not all the participants may share. I had also been previously involved in the world of professional soccer as I had previously worked as the welfare officer and counsellor at two professional youth academies. This experience may have influenced certain assumptions that I held. Some of the assumptions I had were that the participants would discuss the enjoyment they derived from the fame side of soccer, the easy access to multiple female sexual partners, as well as the harsh reality of growing up in a context of poverty, gangs, and crime.

The questions that were chosen for the interview allowed participants to describe the contexts in which they live and grew up in. This was done in order to gain a clear understanding of their lived experiences and not to let my assumptions shape the analysis. The other questions were open-ended and focused on the participants defining what may be stressful, as opposed to the researcher asking about specific presumed stressors. From an epistemological level, a factor that may influence how participants answered the interview questions may have been the social identity of the interviewer. My position as a White, English-speaking, middle-class female, with a different family and cultural background from that of the participants may have affected what the participants felt they were able to share, or perhaps how they chose to construct their experiences, in the interviews.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This research project adhered to the ethical guidelines of the University of Cape Town with regard to research with human subjects. In addition, this research gained the approval and met the ethical guidelines of the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology.

3.8.1 Consent and Confidentiality

At the first group meeting where the project was presented to the participants, the informed consent form and information sheet (See Appendix 1) was read and explained to the participants. The participants had the opportunity to ask any questions about the research project and any aspect of the forms which may have needed clarifying. Pseudonyms were used when participants were quoted in the research, and other identifying information was disguised.

3.8.2 Voluntary Participation

The participants were informed that their participation in the research is completely voluntary. They had the opportunity to withdraw from the project at any point without experiencing negative consequences. If they wanted to withdraw from the interview, participants were free to do so at any stage.

3.8.3 Risks and Benefits for Participants

This research project posed no great risk or harm to the participants. However, there was some risk of participants experiencing psychological distress during the interview as they discussed some life events. When a participant discussed any information that caused him distress, the researcher, who is also a registered counsellor, worked to make the participant feel contained before leaving the interview. Where necessary, the participant was referred to the club's chaplain (one of whose tasks is to provide emotional support to the players) for further support, and the researcher followed up with the chaplain to explore whether a referral to a state mental health service was required. In the one case where a referral to the chaplain was made, upon following up with the chaplain it was noted that such a referral was not required. Although some of the athletes did not volunteer to participate in the research project, they still had the option of receiving information on effective coping strategies as part of the group feedback.

A benefit of this research is that it informed and provided recommendations to the participants' soccer club on how to better prepare the club's athletes who might transition into the professional level to cope with stressors.

Chapter 4
Findings and Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings of the study, which are organised into four categories, namely, Soccer as an Alternative to Pathologised Versions of Masculinity, Soccer as a Gateway to Desired Masculinity, Off-Field Performances of Masculinity, and Challenges to the On-Field Performance of Masculinity. Soccer as an Alternative to Pathologised Versions of Masculinity discusses how playing soccer can offer an alternative way of life to gangs and crime. Soccer as a Gateway to Desired Masculinity examines the disparity within a soccer player's identity between the fantasy and the reality of being a professional soccer player. Off-Field Performances of Masculinity investigates how gaining acceptance in professional soccer is performed through a lifestyle of consumer products, women, fame, alcohol and partying. Challenges to the On-Field Performance of Masculinity discusses how experiencing an injury, being demoted from a team, and failing to meet fans' expectations challenges the ability to perform masculinity on the field.

4.1 Soccer as an Alternative to Pathologised Versions of Masculinity

It emerged that playing soccer is more than just another career option or form of recreational activity for participants. This category describes how, in the context of intersecting forms of oppression such as race and class marginalisation, soccer offers young South African men an alternative to a lifestyle of gangsterism and crime.

Soccer was presented by participants as creating a way in which young men, who are surrounded by gangs in their community, can be given an additional life trajectory besides gangsterism. Soccer was presented as an escape from the harsh reality of crime and violence, offering a safer context for young men to achieve and play out attributes of masculinity.

Eight of the ten participants spoke about the role of soccer in providing an alternative to a life in gangsterism. The Cape Flats area of Cape Town, where many of the professional soccer players in Cape Town (and the participants of this study) originate from, has high levels of gangs, drugs, and guns (Cooper & Foster, 2008).

For one participant, the reason he chose to play soccer was in order to avoid being involved in gang activity.

> Participant 1: "…the only reason that made me play soccer is because the gangsterism in that city is too much! So most of my friends were turning to gangsters, were becoming gangsters. So my mother and my father they said ok, we don't want you to be a gangster. Just find something to do after school. So I'm like ok I'll find something. So now, at school…they said go play soccer you never know. As time goes on some of my friends moved to different teams, like professional teams, and I was like ok I can actually get there. That's when I started doing it since."

For another participant, a passion for soccer from a young age meant that he was never drawn to belonging to a gang.

> Participant 9: "And especially at school you have friends that want to be gangsters, but me, I was always playing football"
> Interviewer: "Did you ever get asked to join (a gang)?"
> Participant 9: "From a young age I knew I was going to play football, so I never ever thought of that (joining a gang). I sometimes ask myself that question. I don't really know what I would have done. I think football was the main thing, but if it wasn't for football, I'm not actually sure what I would have done."

It emerged that it wasn't only the recreational access to soccer that acted as a protective barrier against gangsterism. It was the structure and organisation from playing soccer in an academy set-up, which ordered the time of the youth involved in the academy. Youth who played soccer in these contexts did not have the time to get involved in anything else besides their education and soccer.

> Interviewer: "Do you think soccer had a role in that (keeping you away from doing drugs and drinking)?"
> Participant 10: "Ja, actually. Because when I was in school in grade…I started playing for Ajax when I was grade 9 or 10. So after school, when I came from

school, in the early morning we had athletics and stuff, so we would practice at school. I would come home straight, just drop my bag and pick up my soccer bag, straight to training. Then I come home at six or seven, so by that time it's quiet outside. Most of my friends were inside, so I didn't really get the chance to get involved in stuff like that. So I stayed at home to do my homework and stuff, and by the time I'm finished it's nine or ten o'clock. Maybe I will go out, or some of my friends would come to me or I'd go to them. We'd just sit at the house and play games. It was basically like that until matric."

Interviewer: "School and soccer."

Participant 10: "And when it was holidays we used to train twice. Then it's early morning in, afternoon training again, and then go home at five or six o'clock. Basically the same."

Interviewer: "So it actually kept you busy."

Participant 10: "Ja"

Interviewer: "Kept you out of trouble."

Participant 10: "Ja, I didn't get a chance to do any of those things."

Yet having the talent to play soccer is not enough to keep youth out of the gangs. Many youth have the soccer talent but are surrounded predominately with the gang influence. Youth need to be provided the opportunity to be required to play or adhere to structure and rules to get them to choose a life outside of gangs.

Participant 9: "Even in my area there are plenty quality young players, but the surroundings influence them to become gangsters and smoke buttons or smoke drugs. And friends I think also will influence them: here, smoke this, or don't go to school, stay at home. You know such stuff, and that's why there are a lot of bad things happening in the area."

Participant 9: "Maybe if you are at home, you are just another human being or another football player being lost in your area. You get most youngsters who are quality players in poorer areas: Mannenberg, Mitchells Plain, Hanover Park. If they were just given the opportunity to play they will blossom."

Despite being a successful professional soccer player the reality of the pull of gangsterism is always present. Participants indicated that they were aware of how easy it would be to join a gang should they had to leave the world of soccer.

> Participant 9: "I could have become a gangster if I could have left football; I could have done something stupid not related to any football activities. Because your mind goes to another world when you are not at football, but I think the football was always the one thing on my mind. I always knew that football was for me."

Therefore, despite the challenging terrain that a career and identity in soccer hold (as will be discussed later), soccer was perceived by participants as an option out of a life of gangsterism. Being aware of this reality has led some participants to become proactive and provide opportunities to youth to play soccer instead of spending their free time getting involved with criminal activities.

> Participant 7: "And I bought them soccer nets. There's an open field by us. We drilled holes and put poles in there, and they've got nets. On Sundays, after lunch, they play soccer. It keeps them busy. Balls…everything I have extra…one ball can keep about twenty boys occupied for the afternoon, instead of stealing or doing whatever."

Participants noted that not all youth have parental figures in their lives that set an example of a life lived outside of gangsterism and other illegal activities. It is therefore important that youth are encouraged by role models like professional soccer players to utilise the opportunities presented to them.

> Participant 7: "No, I've got friends that live there (Cape Flats), so I go there and I see the kids on the street. And then they come to me, and say 'hey what about this and that.' So I said, guys, you've got a choice. Everybody has a choice in life. You can become a gangster or you can become something else. You've got a choice. Nobody is like, this is the way you're going to live and this is how you're going to end up."

In this way participants identified soccer as a protective barrier against youth involvement in gangsterism and crime. Once youth have access to an alternative to joining a gang, they can then exercise their agency and decide for themselves.

Due to an individual's positioning of race and class, sport represents one of the few possibilities for social upward mobility amongst working and lower socioeconomic class men (Messner, 2010; Weber, 1998). Although few of the participants spoke of pursuing a career in education, this was not necessarily attainable even if the desire to study further was present. The main barrier to studying further was highlighted as financial constraints. This motivated some youth to be even more dedicated to succeed in their sport, as they felt there wasn't really an alternative.

> Participant 9: "Maybe I would have gone to study, but sometimes financially you can't study because of certain things. But I think football was the outlet for me, and that's why I take my football seriously. That's why I try to achieve things with football, because if it wasn't for football, I don't think I'm good at something else…"

Messner (2010) indicates how athletes often divide along the lines of race and class. He indicates that while middle-class men perceive the improbability of a professional career in sports and are encouraged to pursue academic achievements, lower socioeconomic class men, which are a high percentage of men of colour, tend to pursue sport as a career as their best option. Although statistics indicate that few school-aged athletes move on to have professional sports careers, some young men chose to believe a different story (Messner, 2010; Weber, 1998).

Playing soccer was also seen by participants as an escape from the reality that many South African men who live in a marginalised class and race face, which is the reality of living in a community characterised by poverty, crime and violence.

> Interviewer: "What was it like growing up at home?"
> Participant 4: "It's known for lots of crime and violence and what not. But I was always on the field so…"
> Interviewer: "So you were always playing soccer?"

> Participant 4: “Ya…I was always on the field. But it was tough growing up. It was very tough. We weren’t well off; we were just ok you know. There would be food every night but there were certain things I couldn’t get because we didn’t have enough but ja we survived.”

Sport, and here playing soccer, not only allowed the participants an escape from this reality but also the opportunity to construct a preferred version of masculinity. Gangsterism offers men an unhealthy platform to perform their masculinity. Playing soccer allows men to be constructed as a winner, someone overcoming adversity in order to be successful, involving the notion of being ‘seen’. This notion of being ‘seen’ brings about honour and respect which are attributes of contemporary masculinity, with men feeling the need to be esteemed by other men (Cooper & Foster, 2008).

> Participant 9: “Training was hard and you went to go and sleep, but you as a person just had to do it. So I think, ja, football was like my escape.”
> Interviewer: “Just being out on the field.”
> Participant 9: “Ja, I could express myself. I was a winner, trying to win things.”

The context to display these attributes is important to focus upon because the alternative context to achieve this sense of masculinity is that of gangsterism, a version or performance of masculinity that is constructed by participants as pathologised and undesirable. Gangsterism is portrayed as being centred on the protection of reputation and overcoming adversity and risk (Cooper & Foster, 2008). As being ‘seen’ by achieving heroic acts is what gains respect amongst gangsters, playing soccer is an ideal replacement for a domain in which men can be ‘seen’ and gain respect and access to hegemonic masculinity. At the same time as soccer enables participants to avoid more pathologised performances of masculinity, it also enables access to valued, privileged performances of hegemonic masculinity, as discussed in the next theme.

4.2 Soccer as a Gateway to Desired Masculinity

This theme encompasses hegemonic masculine identity, which is defined as the ideal form of masculinity within a specific location and time, exhibited in public spaces and held in place by social institutions. Hegemonic masculinity is largely constructed by the Western version of masculinity as being affluent, successful and powerful (Cooper & Foster, 2008). This theme arose when participants talked about the process of transitioning into a professional soccer player.

This theme includes the lifestyle and identity that is perceived as defining a professional soccer player, as well as the contradictory reality of soccer as a job and not just a lifestyle. It also includes the financial issues and the role a young athlete plays in financially providing for his family, the pressure and guilt individuals feel to provide for their family, as well as the importance of planning for long-term financial security. This theme also includes the consequences of what happens when the identity of soccer player is removed from an athlete.

Before entering the world of professional soccer, all ten of the participants indicated that very often as an athlete, they were presented with a very specific portrait of what life is like as a professional. Often times it was the instant accessibility to fame and money that is portrayed as the core of a soccer player's lifestyle.

> Interviewer: “So before that time, what is it that the soccer world looked like?”
> Participant 2: “Fame, money. I mean, being on TV, that’s basically your own reward.”
>
> Participant 3: “I thought it was going to be glamour at the professional soccer club. Just getting the publicity and the fame, I thought that was going to happen.”
>
> Participant 4: “I used to look at him (Steven Pienaar) and his going overseas and all people talking about him and what not, he is driving a nice car and this and that. So that is what I was thinking about you know, the fame, the people talking about me.”

> Participant 6: “When you think about a soccer life, you just think of stadiums and fans, but you don’t really think of the hard work and stuff like that. You only think of the glory and fame, what most people would think of it. But as soon as you get into it, there’s more to it than that.”

Other times participants’ fantasies are based on their perception of successful international soccer players, who upon becoming a professional accrued possessions such as luxurious houses and cars. The association of successful soccer players and luxurious goods becomes so strong that this participant indicated how he perceived the sole goal of some soccer players to be playing well in order to buy luxurious goods:

> Participant 10: “You know, I always watch the premier league or the UEFA Championship League, and you read about Messi and Ronaldo and stuff, so before I started playing professional soccer you always heard, that one has a nice house. So I always thought, most of the players play soccer, but they like perfect themselves to be the perfect soccer player just to get that major contract and to get all this stuff. Or to buy them a house or a nice car, stuff like that.”

Through the media (glossy magazines, television and movies) masculinity has been embedded in lifestyle products. The media particularly conveys successful masculinity as being associated with status and class aspirations. This status is symbolised by consumer products such as cars and clothing labels (Ratele, 2014). To men who find themselves in a marginalised socioeconomic class and a race which was previously discriminated against, nice cars and houses within suburbia represent access to this upward social mobility towards a desired status in society and an attainment of successful masculinity (Messner, 2010; Swartz et al., 2012; Weber, 1998). Thus, soccer players playing well in order to buy luxurious goods can be interpreted as soccer players playing well in order to attain a successful version of masculinity.

On the contrary, not all participants originally set out with the goal to become professional soccer players, precisely because of the lifestyle that is attributed to being a soccer player.

> Participant 10: "Because I didn't always want to become a professional soccer player. I wanted to go and study and become an engineer. Because I always thought, no, I don't want to live that lifestyle and be like that. It's like just playing soccer and earning the money. Okay, it looked like a good thing to do, kicking a ball and earning a lot of money, buying a house or a car, but when I started playing professional soccer…so where is all of that now…then I realised it's not…say, it's not like Real Madrid. It's far different."

This participant foresaw his professional identity in a different career path, but upon entering the professional soccer world he perceived the reality of it and chose to use his position in a manner that aligned to his life choices and beliefs.

> Participant 10: "But it's what you do with your talent. Like God gave you a talent, it's how you use your talent, the talent God gave you, to praise him."

Five of the participants indicated that a source of stress was related to financial issues. It was often mentioned that participants had to support parents and extended families financially. For some participants the luxuries that are perceived as associated with the life of a professional soccer player are not the reason they chose to pursue a career in soccer. Rather for these participants soccer offers them a way of making a living, being able to survive in day-to-day life, and fulfilling the role of provider.

> Participant 1: "For me when I saw the professional life, I just saw like ok here…you can get big money, you get to live a fancy life, probably I can be one of those as well. But I'm not about flashy, I'm not about flashy things, I'm not about big house, I'm not about that. I just wanted to do well enough and probably make a living out of it."

> Participant 9: "If you know you are earning a little money, you can't want to go and live the big life of big players; partying and buying big things. You

> have to humble yourself and make sure you can survive for a full month with the salary, put money away, so if anything happens, you have something."

Even when a participant was only at the beginning stages of his career, he would still financially contribute to his family.

> Participant 9: "When I got semi-pro I even started with that little money that I gave. You could say that money was like a…how do you say…spending money, but yet I gave back."

At times a participant, although still young in age and career, would be one of the main breadwinners for his siblings and parents, while also attempting to establish and provide a life for himself.

> Interviewer: "What would you say is causing you worry?"
> Participant 1: "I would it is my parents. Because uhm… my father used to work and somehow he just decided to stop working, we don't know the reason. So now it's only my mother who is working, and my sister is at varsity. So now things are a bit difficult for her. Because she is the only breadwinner; she is the only one who is working at home. So now…I must also assist at home. And on the other hand I'm trying to make a life for myself so, ya."

Although this support towards a participant's family would be to cover expenses that included tuition for siblings, it would also be to cover the basic needs in life such as the provision of a meal at the end of the day.

> Participant 1: "I know I have to give money to my mother so that she can buy food and cook a proper meal at night to eat."

In a context of hardship and poverty, shaped by being positioned in a marginalised race and class, youth who achieve success are required to take on the role of breadwinner and provide financially for their families. Some participants were able to

recognise that for some of their teammates playing soccer was not about the lifestyle but about being able to feed their families.

> Participant 1: “When I go home people are like ‘ah I wanna be like you’ I’m like… boy you have to think about it really, if you really wanna be there (professional football) because its totally different, its not the same as when you in a township, when you play in a township and you play for fun, because there its not for fun anymore, some people use that to feed their families so…its not for fun anymore.”

The role of being a breadwinner and head of the household is considered to be a prominent marker of hegemonic masculine identity (Shefer et al., 2010). This is because tied into achieving the overall success of masculinity is being able to provide economic security to one’s own family (White, 1994). Being in a position of a marginalised race and class, in a context of poverty, an individual does not always have access to the social capital that is necessary to achieve upwards social mobility and attain a desired social status (Swartz et al., 2012). In the situation where soccer is played to feed one’s family, although enjoyable as there is the love for the game, playing soccer becomes very stressful. Although professional soccer is a paid job, there is no permanent guarantee that the athlete will have an income, as with sport there is always the possibility of injury and not making the team despite performing well. In these cases an athlete may lose his contract or not receive a playing bonus, thus his income is less predictable in the long run. This contributes to the stress these athletes experience as they as men try to achieve a sense of successful masculinity while being restricted by their social positioning that is constructed through race and class.

Even when a family did not request financial assistance, very often, as this participant indicated, he would put himself under pressure to provide for his family. A participant described how he did not feel any pressure from his parents, but rather from himself to provide for them, as he would feel guilty in having material luxurious for himself while his parents did not have the basic necessities such as food.

> Participant 7: “It was more pressure from myself wanting to provide for my family. When I grew up it wasn’t necessary – till today my parents tell me, it’s not necessary to provide for us, it’s not your duty. But I can’t drive a Mercedes Benz and my mother’s fridge is empty. You understand, that’s not going to be right, it’s going to eat at me. So they always tell me, ‘no it’s not your duty, just relax’.”

This feeling of guilt went beyond just the immediate family but also to extended family. When this participant would see his nephew with broken school shoes he would be moved out of guilt to go and buy him decent school shoes. Extended family started to view him as the ‘money man’, always approaching him as soon as there was something that needed to be paid, which he would do reluctantly.

> Participant 7: “…and then you get your odd family member or relative: saying to you uncle passed away, he wasn’t in the policy or whatever. And then you have to get a thousand rand out of your savings. You know, people always look at you: hey, here’s the moneyman. And it’s not like that. School fees…I go and visit my cousin, and when she goes to fetch her children and I see their shoes are broken…it eats me. I can’t wear a pair of shoes of R2,000 and see my niece or my nephew walking around like that. What size do you wear? Okay, come; let’s go to the shop.”

Although initially perceiving a career in professional soccer as being associated with instant fame, participants discovered that being a professional soccer player entailed a large amount of hard work in order to have a chance at being successful.

> Interviewer: “And then what did you think, after you transitioned into the club’s professional system fully?”
> Participant 2: “Obviously there’s more stress. You’re playing to stay at the professional club and team, and it becomes more stressful.”
> Interviewer: “Is it the survival thing?”
> Participant 2: “Ja. And the training obviously is strenuous, especially when you get up to the PSL. I suppose there are lots of positives, but there are a lot

> of negatives as well that come with, like if you are not being picked or chosen. So it's not all sunshine and roses all the time."
>
> Interviewer: "And now that you are in professional soccer, how would you describe the world? You said before you saw it as flashy…"
> Participant 1: "It's totally different; it's different to what I thought it was. Its actually hard work, its wow, the pressure."

These violations of expectations were perceived as stressors in the participants' life as no one had prepared them for the reality of what lay ahead, or for what it truly meant to be a professional soccer player.

The data also indicated that some participants were aware of the type of longevity that their careers held:

> Participant 9: "And that's why you have to save and put away; think long-term and buy a house and buy cars. You know, maybe buy properties and invest your money. You have to be clever because football is fifteen years, if you're lucky then maybe twenty years. It could be ten or five years, you never know. Injuries can happen any time of the day, so you almost have to insure yourself as a football player."
>
> Participant 9: "Look to the future and invest; save your money and open an account with your money. It just grows if you don't touch it. Because football and money are not going to be there forever and things are getting more expensive by the day."

Although another participant viewed investing in property as a wise decision to make, the temptation to spend money on other avenues was still alluring.

> Participant 2: "I think what could also be stressful is me paying off the house as well. So that does put a bit of stress on you as well…I know it's better for my future, but right now you always thinking, ja, but I could be doing this other thing with the money."

One participant admitted that it was only after he had spent his money on items that were not adding value to his life that he realised how quickly money could be spent with little return being received.

> Participant 6: "And the same thing happened to me: I got money and then I was like…I just want to go there, and let me buy this and this. And then you think about it, oh, wow, where's all the money gone? And it's not something valuable – you are just buying things just to buy because you can."

What is closely linked to a soccer player's identity is the perception that society and media construct a soccer player's life as glamorous. The reality however, is often not shown to the public. This participant indicated that at a point in his career, even on a professional contract, he was only earning enough money to be able to live from hand to mouth:

> Participant 7: "But people don't understand. People don't believe it when I tell them I only earned R1,000 a month, and I had to support my family. And for the first five years of my professional career I was living from hand to mouth at the professional club."

This participant emphasised the sacrifice he had to make in terms of spending in order to invest wisely. Although he lived according to his needs, he chose to first invest his money before splurging out on luxuries such as his dream vehicle.

> Interviewer: "So it wasn't this life that everyone thinks."
> Participant 7: "Ja, it wasn't this glamour. I only bought a car that I wanted, not a car that I could afford. A car that I wanted, after ten years of playing professional football. After I invested in houses, then I bought a car that I wanted."

Another participant specified that it wasn't enough to purely have a professional contract, as this guaranteed nothing. At the end of the day only hard work would suffice in order to achieve one's goals:

> Participant 6: “You need to work harder than everyone if you want to be something. Even though you have a professional contract, it doesn’t mean there’s a guarantee to stay there just because you made it already.”

Participants indicated that the main message they would tell youth desiring a career in soccer would be that should a youth decide to pursue this career, they should do so full-heartedly and work hard, as simply having the talent does not ensure that one will be a success on the field.

> Participant 9: “Ja. Like the youngsters coming up I always tell them, if you are in football, make sure you want your life to be like this. You know, don’t go into it half-half, go in full. Because I think football players who play football, some have to work hard; some are born with it at their feet so they don’t have to work hard because they have the skills and the ability. They have everything. So they also just have to push. Because it’s easy to have the ability, but then you don’t play.”

Contradicting the perception of the luxurious lifestyle of a soccer player, interestingly what emerged from the data was the concept that some participants view playing soccer as just another ordinary job.

> Participant 5: “Because people will be like no but its not a normal job, and I’ll be like no it is a normal job because at the end of the day whatever you do and get paid is what I’m doing to get paid. Perhaps the only advantage for you is that you see me work that is just it.”
> Interviewer: “And I think it sounds very interesting, because a lot of people don’t call playing soccer a job.”
> Participant 5: “Hmm.”
> Interviewer: “So is that how you see your soccer?”
> Participant 5: “Yes. You are obviously earning an income. You are obviously enjoying what you’re doing, so that’s a positive out of that. But at the end of the day it’s a job. The professional soccer club is a business.”

This perception of soccer as a job is what some participants claimed to have helped them maintain their motivation to work hard and make their careers a success.

> Participant 5: “This is why I harp on it as a job because at the end of the day it is a job. Because I always tell people when people ask me, wow you are playing football on tv how does it feel? I say no it feels good but it’s a job you know. I guess its my way of making sure to myself that I am always aware that as long as I have been playing the game as a pro on tv or whatever, it is still only a job you know. I’m only blessed to be able to still play the job each and every single day, every week you know. And I must never slack.”

Some participants were aware of the dangers of being immersed in the lifestyle aspect of fame and the pursuit of luxurious goods. They knew of other professional soccer players that had immersed themselves in the fame and money and in the process lost their careers as well as lost who they were as a person prior to becoming a professional.

> Interviewer: “But do you think it is a danger?”
> Participant 3: “It can be a positive and a negative. Positive, as I said, building your image, brand. Negative, as I’ve seen guys that have gone through the bad side of it, and their heads have gone out of the world, thinking they’ve made it. And it affects your game at the end of the day. You’ll be thinking about how you can get attracted to the people off the field. And that can hurt you on the field – you won’t be focusing on your own game. At the end of the day you might get lost and lose your job.”

> Participant 5: “Yes a void. Which is what happened to a lot of friends of mine. They have played for PSL or NFD for a year, and then after a year the fame went to their heads and they went off the rails. Now that same guy works for a local grocery store.”

While some participants had witnessed others losing their careers due to fame consuming them, others were also very aware of their individual behaviour which needed to be changed or monitored. One participant indicated how becoming a

professional soccer player with a club brought along stressors and responsibility of also having to be responsible for the name of the club along with his own name. This meant that whenever he was out he would feel an expectation, an extra weight upon himself, to uphold the name of the club he was contracted to. This conversation with a participant indicated this added sense of responsibility.

> Interviewer: "What would you define as…if someone said what comes with being a footballer, good and bad, what have you found?"
> Participant 2: "There's a lot of expectation on you that you never had before. So there's an extra weight on you basically."
> Interviewer: "To do what?"
> Participant 2: "Basically just uphold your name as well. I mean, there's like pressure on you of not dragging the…you can't do things that you did before. Because you are basically signed to the club, and then their name is on you as well."
> Interviewer: "What kind of things would that be?"
> Participant 2: "Like going out partying and stuff, and doing stuff that can make you go to jail. It's like doing stuff that you enjoy. It doesn't only affect you this time – it affects the club as well."
> Interviewer: "Is that something that you had to think about or change in your life?"
> Participant 2: "But some of the stuff, you go out and party and stuff. Whereas now there are more eyes on you and stuff, so you just have to tone it down a bit because you are responsible not only for yourself."

In line with viewing soccer as a job, some participants worked hard on the field in order to gain acceptance and recognition at what they do. Participants saw the value in working hard and waiting patiently to grab an opportunity when it arose.

> Participant 3: "Well, for me, I would just say work hard. Do the business on the field, and then you will be accepted. That's where I also got accepted. I trained hard; gave my everything. Even though I didn't play, I kept training and pushing for myself. And I think that's where I got my respect, doing well for myself, and once I had that opportunity to come into the team, you have to

take it with both hands to show the team that you're committed and you want to do the best for the team and not just for yourself."

One individual participant spoke strongly of this drive he had to push himself to perform the best he could in order to gain more in terms of salary and playing time in his career.

Participant 9: "But it's up to you also to push and to show them that you deserve more. That's also something you have to look at. So that's why I work so hard also, to show them I deserve more than what I'm getting."

In addition to utilising every opportunity was the sense of achievement for this participant and his family when he reached his goal of becoming a professional soccer player.

Interviewer: "So you said there are some positives about being a professional player. What are some of the positives?"
Participant 2: "I suppose you feel like you've reached your goal and what you've been working for. Obviously there's a sense of you being proud that you've made it this far. It's an accomplishment that your hard work has basically paid off. I mean, especially from your family as well, you know that they see it too."

These findings are consistent with other research that reported personal sources of stress amongst professional athletes. Sources of stress that were identified in previous studies (Holt & Hog, 2002; Noblet & Gifford, 2002; Thelwell et al., 2007), which resembled stressors found in the current study, included financial issues, and social evaluation and expectation. This study highlighted how the contrast between the fantasy and the reality of a professional athlete played a role as a stressor in participants' lives. What is unique about the current study is the context of the stressors, which played out within the intersection of race and class against the backdrop of an unjust apartheid system and all the consequences, inequality and poverty, of that past. The participants' emphasis on the need to work hard, to be responsible, to provide financially, to progress in their job, all construct a way to

achieve desired, hegemonic masculinity. They came to realise over time that a preferred version of masculinity is not necessarily automatically conferred onto them by being 'soccer stars' – they have to earn their security and success through hard work and discipline. The disjuncture between the fantasy of the kind of masculinity that professional soccer would provide, and the reality of how a preferred version of masculinity had to be achieved, created substantial stress for participants as they transitioned into professional soccer.

4.3 Off-Field Performances of Masculinity

Masculinity is constantly constructed and played out across various times and spaces. A professional athlete is not only an athlete trying to achieve a sense of masculinity on the field. The identity of a professional athlete, including their masculinity, is also being performed when they are off the field. This theme discusses how being a professional soccer player entails an ongoing off-field performance of masculinity. This performance is played out through consumerism, women, fame, alcohol and partying. These are all ways in which masculinity has to be relentlessly performed in order to ensure acceptance of the athlete into the professional soccer 'culture' as well as maintain their position there.

What emerged powerfully from the data was the theme of how an identity could be embedded in consumerism. One participant referred to the utilisation of this consumerism to build an identity to further his professional career.

> Participant 3: "But there's much more to it, like you have to build your profile, sponsorships, your image profile. You have to build that up as well. And at first I didn't take that seriously, but now at the moment I'm currently building that up and getting followers on Facebook and Twitter, and that's important to get known worldwide. Because it's important that guys overseas know you…your brand. Because I think for me as a young player, I want to go overseas and reach my goal. And to get that goal you have to build your profile up and let other people know who you are."

In this situation the participant seems to be aware and utilising the consumer culture to his benefit, building his brand to further their career. But this is not always the case.

Six other participants spoke about the utilisation of a consumer culture to build their masculine identity. Amongst some participants their sense of self-importance was directly proportionate to their fame and material possessions.

> Participant 7: "So two or three write-ups in the newspaper or you come on the news on TV, you go to a show that interviews you, and all of a sudden you change your walk…you understand? Having material things you think you are better than whoever or whatever."

Although some of the participants reported saving or investing in property to live in, the desire was to rather spend the money on alcohol, clothing and branded items.

> Interviewer: "What would you rather do with that money? What's an example?"
> Participant 2: "Probably more shopping sprees, which is not the right thing! Go out and buy more and stuff."

> Participant 8: "You spend money you are not supposed to spend, you haven't paid rent, and then you spend half the rent money. So those kinds of situations."
> Interviewer: "What would you spend the money on?"
> Participant 8: "Alcohol, friends. Going out and driving around, that kind of nonsense. Clothes. Ja, shopping and buying girls what you think is going to make them happy."

This is in line with previous research conducted amongst youth in low income communities in South Africa, in which young people identified that a key indicator that a person belonged or was respected was the material wealth that they were able to display (Swartz et al., 2012). Possessions and material wealth have become indicators or representations of having successfully negotiated a place in South African society post-apartheid (Swartz et al., 2012).

The power of brand association is important to note especially in the context of South Africa, which despite the efforts to ameliorate poverty, has experienced a deepening of poverty and inequality, with South Africa becoming one of the most unequal societies in the world (Posel, 2010). As Mbeki (2006, as cited in Posel, 2010) has stated, the freedom that was gained with the fall of apartheid is not defined by the ethereal gift of liberation, but rather by the designer labels that appear on our clothing and the vehicles we drive. This current trend pays no attention to the poverty, inequality and unemployment that has come to characterise the South African society (Ratele, 2014). Successful masculinity has been clothed in consumerism, and this identity is one of the most desired forms of masculinity in urban South Africa in so far as it is endorsed and favoured by the media and those in influential positions of power (Ratele, 2014). From the data it emerged that the individual's identity within a consumer culture is seen to be endorsed in a hierarchical fashion within the working environments that the participants find themselves in.

> Participant 7: "No. People think…people compare us to the people that play overseas. If Cristiano Ronaldo can buy a car every week…you understand? The basketball players…We are not the same we are not on that level. There's only one team that I can talk about, and I know that this top club they pay their players more. If you come with a crap car to the training sessions and the president comes, he's going to have a go at you. He's going to say, listen here, I'm paying you good money, why do you come with a Picanto or whatever. I'm paying you good money. In front of everybody he will say, go and buy yourself a better car."

The South African context has become one where enriched individuals adopt a lifestyle of prominent consumption (Posel, 2010). From the data it is seen that this tendency is both constructed and supported by the figures in participants' lives that they revere and respect, in other words their coach, teammates and other professional soccer players. When these figures of influence in a participant's life, along with the glossy magazines and television programmes, successfully tie masculinity to lifestyle products, a dangerous association is created, especially for those who cannot attain and sustain this access to these commodities. This access to masculinity becomes very costly to men who either live in low-income households or need to support a large

family in a low-income situation (Ratele, 2014). The danger in endorsing a sense of success and masculinity in consumer products, is that for those athletes who have limited means or limited periods of access to these products, the lack of the product has the potential to instil a deep desperation and fracture in the athlete's sense of self and existence.

In contrast to the above, some participants did not associate material wealth with happiness. However, this realisation seemed to emerge from experience over time in their careers.

> Paricipant 5: "Ya but you know I learnt there that life is about just being happy and you wont find the happiness in the clothes you wear or the kind of car you drive, it is just about where you are and make that space work for you. it was, I think I learnt that, you know it is not always the glamour stuff where you can find happiness."
>
> Participant 2: "Ja, it can happen so easily, to fall into that trap of spending though. So I'm glad that I had their (parental) support when it came to all of that. Because it could have been, with me coming here on my own, I just had freedom to do what I wanted, and it could have ended badly though."

Despite the awareness of living in a consumer culture, clothing and lifestyle product consumption is seen as the key to the accumulation of symbolic capital, where young men, poor or not, will go to great lengths to attain luxurious products and clothing to reframe their masculine identity, whether or not this carries the potential to inflict harm on themselves or others, physically or psychosocially (Ratele, 2014). Therefore it is important to be aware of how the idea of successful masculinity that is conveyed by the media and people in positions of power is bound with class and social status ambitions which become epitomised by expensive products such as labelled clothing and luxurious cars (Ratele, 2014).

As masculine identity is constructed and performed through consumer products, so are there masculine norms around how men view and treat women. Masculinity plays out a certain role with regards to women. This entails not only how men respond to

women but also how some women make themselves available to these men specifically because they are professional athletes. Talk about women featured constantly across the interviews, describing the varying ways in which participants treated and responded to the different women in their lives.

According to participants, the access to women that is granted to soccer players is quite easy and abundant once an individual is perceived as a successful professional soccer player.

> Participant 9: “Because girls will come to you and they would want to have sex with you. You go to clubs and they want to be near you.”

> Participant 4: “For the girls in Cape Town, I think some of them are after the fame, they say ‘I know this guy he is a rapper, I know this guy he is a soccer player…’ like you can see on social media every time they are posting pictures saying ‘I’m with this guy, I’m with this guy.’ So they only want to be your friend for the fame, just to be in the limelight.”
> Interviewer: “Do you feel as a professional soccer player it is easier to get girls?
> Participant 4: “I think I’ve experienced that, especially when I was at a big professional club. You know the black girls used to go like crazy when they see the professional soccer badge, especially in the small towns. Because they didn’t have like any big thing happening there. So then when the professional soccer academy came then everybody started to ‘oh the players, the players’. And then the guys used to change girls every week. Some used to go to a club get a girl come home, take her back get another girl you know.”
> Interviewer: “On the same night?”
> Participant 4: “Yes so I saw that. Playing soccer does give you an upper hand.”

It has been argued that men will use what resources are available, including women, in order to demonstrate and achieve masculinity (Courtenay, 2000). Women reacting to soccer players in this manner is what contributes to the hyper-masculine attitude, which normalises men having multiple sexual partners (Cooper & Foster, 2008). The

participants indicated that women not only seek the social status associated with a professional soccer player but the materialistic consumer products that they associate with the social status of a professional soccer player.

> Participant 9: “Because some girls will think, ja, he’s a football player and he can spoil you. He’ll take you out and buy you stuff.”

Even though participants are aware of the ‘social climbing’ intentions of certain women that approach them, there is a sense of affirmation of their masculine identity that is associated with the presence of readily available women.

> Interviewer: “So what has it been like when you go out and there are obviously girls there and they recognise you? What has that been like?”
> Participant 2: “At the beginning it’s cool. Obviously you can’t say you don’t get a sense of happiness from it, but it’s obviously false.”

> Interviewer: “How did you feel when these girls would just come over?”
> Participant 6: “Ja, you’re enjoying yourself obviously, I wont lie, but in the end you’re like…it’s pointless. It’s fake. It’s all fake to me. Like now, even when I go out with my boys, it’s just me and them. And then obviously girls are attracted to that. Ja, just because it’s soccer players.”

The data indicated that there was an awareness amongst participants of a right and wrong with regards to having sex with women. This is demonstrated by these three participants.

> Participant 6: “I try not to be stupid.”
> Interviewer: “What do you mean by stupid? What would be a stupid thing to do?”
> Participant 6: “Just sleeping around with different girls and stuff like that, and also spending money on girls that don’t even care about you.”

> Participant 8: “Yes, stuff like that. And then you sleep with girls who you are not supposed to sleep with.”

> Interviewer: “What would be girls that you’re not supposed to sleep with?”
>
> Participant 8: “Girls that you know she has been sleeping with those other three guys. You know that she’s been with those three guys, so you’re not supposed to sleep with those girls. But you know she comes and she tells you no she made a mistake with those guys and, you know, I use protection all the time. And if she is using protection, then obviously your chances of not getting a disease are high, so you also stupidly don’t use protection, you know understand. So that I didn’t handle very well.”

> Participant 9: “Because girls will come to you and they would want to have sex with you. You know, do stupid things, and you as a person have to think, because I mean, you don’t want children by everybody.”

Despite this awareness of a sense of right and wrong there is still the choice to engage in the very behaviour that is supposedly wanted to be avoided.

> Participant 8: “I started dating the mom in that year. The next year our child was born. But I still had my cheating antics.”

Swartz et al. (2012) define *ikasi style* as referring to the behaviours that youth engage in which are not necessarily socially acceptable, but are performed in order for youth to attain an indicator of belonging. Behaviour such as cheating on one’s partner, which is seen as socially unacceptable, is part of *ikasi style*. If the symbolic codes of a culture include men having multiple partners, then a man faces a choice of whether to learn and take up these symbolic constitutes of the identity in order to belong to that specific identity (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009).

Participants seemed to indicate an understanding that the choice to remain faithful is not always an easy choice when women are throwing themselves at the athletes.

> Participant 3: “I know there are some guys, especially soccer players that go overboard, especially with girls that come onto you and try to destroy relationships and things like that. It’s quite tough.”

However this participant indicated that it was due to a romantic relationship with a woman in his life that he was able to avoid the trappings of partying and drinking.

> Participant 4: “I’m excited…because if it wasn’t for her, if I didn’t meet her I was just going to be lost, I was going to you know…soccer player, center of attention, partying you know. But because I had her I had boundaries, I knew when to go out, when not to go out. So I think she played a big role in my success.”

While it emerged that there is an association of a particular kind of behaviour with regards to soccer players and women, some participants actively chose not to play the game of having multiple partners.

> Participant 10: “Why I should do that. Because most people have that mindset of footballers, that once they start earning that money, ja, they’re sleeping around with other girls every night, and everyday is a different girlfriend. But I think I will never become like that because I don’t have a…how can I say…I don’t feel to do stuff like that. I don’t feel it’s necessary.”
> Interviewer: “It doesn’t interest you or you don’t need it?”
> Participant 10: “Ja. I don’t feel because I’m a footballer I must do that, or that is going to define me as a footballer. I don’t have any interest in stuff like that.”

What also emerged from five of the participants was how fame constructs the social status of a professional soccer player and how this causes people to gravitate around them. Once a participant became a professional soccer player it brought about a change to their social circle, which this participant admitted to not necessarily handling well:

> Interviewer: “And then when you became a professional soccer player was it different? Did it bring extra things?”
> Participant 8: “It did. It felt good. It brought about people that you never invited into your life. You start meeting other famous people, not only soccer players but musicians, you know, the guys that love the finer things of life.

> They introduce you and you can start making your name. People recognise you and they stop you. Girls want to hang with you. You know, that kind of star figures it brings about. And some situations, I didn't handle them very well."

With the influx of people of status into an individual's social circle, comes the opportunity for upward social mobility, which may have been previously denied due to an individual's marginalised class and race positioning. With a movement of upward social status an individual is seen as successful and powerful, both attributes that a masculine identity encompass (Cooper & Foster, 2008). In this way, men achieve the status of having a successful masculinity as through playing soccer they have the option of expanding their social status to appear popular and influential.

Across the data it was highlighted that one of the most common occurrences once a participant was seen as a successful professional was that people would suddenly want to be associated and seen with that participant. Being seen with a professional athlete would indicate a higher social status, an upward mobility in society and access to resources and the finer products in life that are not necessarily attainable through other means (Ratele, 2014).

> Participant 8: "You meet those people, when they are with you, they expect to have nice things around them, you know, nice food, nice drinks, maybe nice guys, nice girls around them."

> Participant 6: "Ja, for sure. There, you just have to go to the place. You're the one that's just paying, but they will bring you girls. They know all the best clubs. You don't have to wait in line to go in. It's like that."

> Participant 4: "There are certain people who wants to like be with you because you are famous. There are people who want to talk to you now, 'do you remember me I was in your class, do you remember me I played with you back then?' And you don't…this is the first time you meeting them. Even with my family there's people who didn't want to know me back then, when we had nothing. And now people start talking to you on Facebook."

In these situations, while participants had spent much of their lives looking for a way to have social mobility, they themselves had become access points of social mobility to others.

Participants also felt that the reasoning some people sought to be associated with them was because they were perceived as having wealth.

> Participant 6: “Ja, and even the people I wasn’t friends with, now that they know I make money and stuff like that, now they want to be friends with you just because of that.”

> Participant 9: “Like as a football player, that there are going to be people coming to me who would want to take photos and who want to throw themselves on me. Because they know I’m a football player and I have money.”

> Participant 6: “I think it’s obviously all the same when you have money. You will always find people where they try to take advantage of you. Or be a friend, like you’re a fake friend, just to get whatever they need. Or just be in the scene with the soccer players or something like that.”

Participants indicated how it was only because of their involvement in a professional sport, that some people expressed care and interest. This results in a difficulty in forming and maintaining real relationships with others. When a participant loses ‘celebrity status’ then the so-called friends around a participant no longer were interested in associating with the participant.

> Participant 6: “Ja. And most people you meet, to be honest, very rarely that you find that people actually care about you because of you and not because you’re playing a sport. Everyone is saying hi to you because they see you walking around. They just want to be like that type of person. They want to be next to you because of that. Not because you have something that you guys both have, you have something in common, stuff like that. Like, say, if I

wasn't playing, they wouldn't be like 'keep your head up' and stuff like that, and like 'things will come.' If I was injured it wouldn't be like that, but as soon as I'm injured then they're like, oh, he's not playing, let's go out (away from him)."

Participant 8: So when those things (fame) stop coming, they're like…you're useless now, that kind of thing.

The theme of gaining acceptance into a group appeared throughout the data. Gaining acceptance was presented as referring to the activities and behaviour in which the participants felt they had to partake, in order to develop interpersonal relationships and be accepted into their soccer team.

The struggle to gain acceptance within the soccer team was often played out off the field. Eight participants indicated that in order to be accepted and respected on the soccer field they were required to first prove themselves and gain acceptance off the field, through partying and alcohol use.

Participant 3: "It has been difficult. At the start we wanted to fit in with the guys because it was difficult to be around and…and…"
Interviewer: "Just to be accepted."
Participant 3: "Ja. So we would go out with the big guys, a circle of big guys, partying a lot. Partying a lot, just trying to fit in."
Interviewer: "What kind of stuff happened with the partying?"
Participant 3: "Like just drinking too much. It was a lot. You know, we had to because we were new and young and the older guys would like say, ja, have this and have that. So we couldn't say no. As I've said, we were trying to fit in and just get along with the team so that they could see we respected them and we listened to them as well."

Participant 4: "And in that moment (when I first got into the team) I started going out with Tom, you know all the bigger guys would say lets go out."

> Participant 6: I knew they were bad friends for me because I could tell they only go with me now, because we're going to go to a club, buy bottles and all this. And then at the end of the day I'm like, wow, why did I do that, like how much can I possibly go out and have fun and drink? They are taking your money basically, and they're not giving you anything productive. Like I knew that, but I still went through that route because I didn't have family there and it was the first time I'd be leaving my family. So anyone who came close to me, I just took in.

This is congruent with research which indicates that when men start new jobs they have to learn to indicate their sense of masculinity in a manner that is in accordance with the organisation's (in this case the soccer team's) existing culture (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009).

Not only do athletes partake in the drinking culture to gain insider acceptance, but also alcohol is a consumer product that many youth and adults use to signify their identity and social place in the world (McCreanor, Greenaway, Barnes, Borell, & Gregory, 2005). Considering the consumerist identity already previously discussed, this adds a further appeal to the use of alcohol to establish a sense of self within society. This is in line with the *ikasi style* referred to above, which is used to achieve a social mobility when other resources are not available (Swartz et al., 2012). The problem lies in that the use of alcohol is not always productive or free from causing harm. Some participants were aware that the use of alcohol to get drunk, or being around others who have abused alcohol, has the potential to place an individual in harms way and negatively impact their career.

> Participant 9: "Sometimes, because people are drunk and you want to keep yourself like big, and then you can get stabbed. You know, some people, when they are drunk, they don't actually think what they're doing. Their minds go blank and they just do things, and then tomorrow they're like, did I do that?"

> Participant 3: "Well, for me, I would say it would affect a person, especially what you do off the field is an image to what you do on the field, so it's very important to be careful what you do off the field. I mean, you can be one of

the greatest players on the field, and when you go off the field you might be this guy that might end up in jail, and that can affect you. So it's very important that you stay humble and disciplined off the field. Because you never know, one day you might not play football again."

Participant 8: "But, you know, the problem came with the alcohol. You know, when you are drink alcohol you are totally not in control of your actions, right? Even though you think you're in control of your actions. Because now when you drink…before you drink you are only thinking about the beautiful girl…but when you start drinking you're thinking about having sex with her. So sex is always on your mind. Alcohol and girls. Alcohol and girls I didn't handle very well. I mean, sometimes I would drink when I was not supposed to drink. And everybody knows that you're not supposed to drink, but they are just drinking. It means you are not handling that properly. Going out and getting really drunk, and not wanting to get up in the morning to come for training. Because I'm thinking, you know what, I can afford to miss one training session."

Connected to the *ikasi style* as discussed above, is the reaction to turn to going out to party when an athlete faces a situation, like not being part of the team, that they may not have control over.

Participant 4: ya they (athletes) don't want to go to the coaches. No, that is the only way I think I can handle something, cause you need to have a reason to why you not playing. Even if the coach tells you that look the team is doing well, I can't change the team, that's a reason, so you know its not you. But I think…so else you sit with, everything builds up and you just want to party. Which a lot of players do here at the team. They work themselves up and then they start partying. Ya it's a whole big thing."

Interviewer: "So it just becomes a cycle…and then you don't get picked because you are out partying and then your performance is probably not great."

Participant 4: "And then you just going down and down."

> Participant 6: “I used to be always disappointed when I didn’t…so I was not playing there, and then all the time disappointed, disappointed, disappointed. And then I would tend to go out. That’s the first thing most players would do. When you are angered by something and you’re not playing, or you are injured, instead of really thinking that if you go out it’s going to be bad for you.”
>
> Participant 6: “It’s hard to take in. And then you go home and you’re not playing. You know, you sit at home, bored. You tend to want to do things that are not good for you, like going out.”
> Interviewer: “What kind of things would you want to do?”
> Participant 6: “Like going to clubs and tending to drink. All the girls…the girls. Whenever your friends call you outside of football, oh, there’s a party tonight. Ja, I’m going. Because you know that you’re not going to be playing – you’re not in the plans.”

The behaviours and responses that emerged all highlight and speak to the ways participants strive to achieve and maintain the status of hegemonic masculinity within their professional and personal lives. Despite the potential for self-destruction, attempts to attain hegemonic masculinity, such as sexual conquests, partying, and drug and substance use may be pursued when marginalised men have their masculinity undermined by either higher-status males or society (Courtenay, 2000; Pyke, 1996; Swartz et al., 2012).

4.4 Challenges to the On-Field Performance of Masculinity

These challenges are defined as the events or situations which an athlete experiences which are directly related to their role as a professional soccer player, and which may threaten the maintenance of an identity constructed around hegemonic masculinity.

One of the themes which emerged, as three of the participants highlighted, is that of injury as a catastrophe. An initial reaction to receiving an injury was that the worst-case scenario was foreseen. After suffering injury participants tended to become worried and display a despondent attitude, which was often accompanied by a sense of giving up.

Participant 3: "When I had my injury, I thought it was the end of it. I thought of giving up."
Interviewer: "On your soccer."
Participant 3: "Ja, giving up on soccer. I was out for a year and there were a lot of things happening."

Participant 7: "What caused me a lot of stress was, you know, at the beginning of the season I had some bad luck with injuries. I missed most of the pre-season, and I know if you do not have a pre-season, it's going to be very difficult to catch up with the rest of the group. And I got injured again after two or three weeks. I was injured for most of the season."

Participant 10: "I told them, it happened and it's done, so it's up to me now to sulk and say, ja, okay, it's happened to me. I just started playing and I got injured. I started playing again and got injured again. So it's easy for me to say, okay, ja…"
Interviewer: "Just to sit back."
Participant 10: "It's fine, I'm going to sulk now."

The role of injury as a substantial stressor has been found across many different sporting codes and contexts (Bejar, 2013; McKay et al., 2008; Noblet & Gifford, 2002).

Another on-field challenge which affects participants' ability to perform masculinity through his sport, is that of being demoted, which was discussed by six of the participants. This speaks to some of the experiences that an athlete faces when he is either dropped to a smaller team or not given playing time. When a participant moves from a higher ranking club to a club placed in a lower division he experiences this as if his dreams and goals are snatched away after being just in his reach for a moment.

Participant 5: "I remember I joined the professional club and then a few months after they offered me my first pro deal. Which was quite cool. But then a few months after that they asked me to go to a smaller team, to play

> more games you know. Which I took quite hard, you know because I had just signed and then a few months after…and I took it quite hard and I saw it as the end of my dream of playing for them."

Not only is his career performance being criticised but his platform in which to play out his masculinity has been diminished. Another area where being demoted occurred was when a participant was not being given enough or any game time.

> Participant 2: "No, definitely not. I struggle with it though, not playing, because juniors who are playing week in and week out. I guess it's football though, so you just have to deal with it."

> Participant 6: "I used to be always disappointed when I didn't (make the team)…so I was not playing there, and then all the time disappointed, disappointed, disappointed. And then I would tend to go out. That's the first thing most players would do…like in the beginning I struggled because I wasn't training and I had to go back home to fix my visa. And I had to wait two months for my visa to get fixed because there was something about foreigners."

Participants struggled with not playing, especially when other younger teammates were being given more playing time. The stress came in when there seemed to be a lack of understanding or communication as to why the participant was not being played. Participants felt that this lack of feedback was what intensified the stress of not being given game time.

In addition to the factors of injury, demotion, and reduced game time was the requirement of a participant to prove himself when joining a new team in order to gain acceptance. When moving to a new team this participant indicated how he was consistently placed on the spot to perform. When the team was struggling he would be expected to come onto the pitch and perform in order to make a change resulting in a win. The participant had indicated that this was a particularly stressful situation, in that he found himself being consistently required to prove his ability in what he felt was unfair terrain.

> Participant 5: “I was kind of used as a super sub, like when the team was down all of a sudden they would throw me on and expect me to pull something out of a hat you know, ‘lets see what he can do for us’.”
> Interviewer: “It sounded like they constantly wanted you to prove yourself”
> Participant 5: “Ya true true.”

Another contributing stressor to an athlete’s life includes the pressure that athletes feel in relation to the fans of the sport and the spectators who support and watch their games. Two of the participants indicated that they felt the pressure to consistently perform and win for their supporters. This participant indicated the pressure he felt when he faced supporters who did not accept a loss despite his best effort on the field.

> Participant 1: “Ya its hard work. Also the pressure, because obviously the supporters want their team to win all the time. Otherwise there are other ones who don’t really understand that, even if you really tried your very best they will never, they just want a win.”

Another participant indicated that when he played a home game, as he had grown up in that area where the games were held, more was expected of him in terms of performing well on the field.

> Participant 5: “I also feel that sometimes I put myself under pressure as well. And also I think the fans expect more from me because I’m from there.”

This expectation to do well placed the participants under pressure. This pressure leads to them making mistakes, and then only being able to focus on the mistake and the possibility of making a future mistake.

> Participant 1: “I sometimes put myself under pressure, ya sometimes I would say I put myself unnecessarily under pressure. Sometimes you make mistakes and then you keep on thinking about the mistakes, and then the moment you make that mistake…”

> Participant 5: “I couldn’t deal with like having a bad game, having fans having them swear at me you know, stuff like that. I couldn’t deal with that. It was hard ey. To be honest with you, for like a year I couldn’t cope with it. I would like play a game and I would have a bad pass and the fans would get on top of me and then for the entire game I was like out. I would be out of the game, I would just walk on the field, I wouldn’t look for the ball.”

This finding is supported by previous research (Nicholls et al., 2005; Thelwell et al., 2007), which identified performance expectations and making an error as stressors that athletes face. However this study’s finding differs to research by Thelwell et al. (2007) in that it speaks to the added pressure of playing a match in a home town area where an athlete grew up and not just in relation to the soccer club’s supporters. This pressure to succeed in performance, both in competitive games and training sessions, is one of the intersecting dimensions which contribute to the formation of an individual’s identity. As intersectionality theory describes, it can be seen that the social institution that an individual belongs to, and the social relationships within there, thus shapes an individual’s social identity (Crenshaw, 1991). Therefore it is important to be aware of the societal dynamics for each individual and how they find ways to perform their identity within their own social context.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed the findings of this study, which were organised into four themes. First Soccer as an Alternative to Pathologised Versions of Masculinity was discussed, where a career in soccer was presented as an alternative to a gangster lifestyle for young men in economically marginalised communities. Secondly the chapter identified Soccer as a Gateway to Desired Masculinity, where soccer was constructed as a platform in which the desired aspects of masculinity could be achieved, but the reality of this was not consistent with the fantasy. The chapter then moved onto the third theme, Off-Field Performances of Masculinity, which discussed how off-field platforms such as women, fame, alcohol and partying allowed men to play out aspects of hegemonic masculinity that allowed them to gain acceptance by their team, but which were also experienced as stressful due to unrelenting expectations to perform masculinity in these ways, regardless of the potentially harmful consequences. Challenges to the On-Field Performance of

Masculinity was the final theme discussed. This theme looked at the soccer related elements which may challenge an athlete in his performance of masculinity through sport. The final chapter will consider the contributions of this study with regard to existing literature on stressors amongst soccer players, and also evaluate the limitations and possible implications of the study.

Chapter 5
Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the stressors faced by professional soccer players, focusing on exploring how these stressors may be mediated by the performance of masculinity within the South African context of race and class inequality. This chapter summarises the findings of the current research and their relation to the reviewed literature. The chapter then provides an overview of the limitations of the study and then recommendations for future research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The literature has defined stress as an imbalance between the demands placed on the individual and the resources that the individual has to deal with the demands, with stress being perceived as causing some psychological complications (Kruger et al., 2012; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This study presented some findings which were similar to those found in other international studies. The study identified stressors such as injury, feeling the pressure to perform in order to meet fans' expectations, and fears about being demoted, which were also identified by McKay et al. (2008), Noblet and Gifford (2002) and Thelwell et al. (2007). The role of injury is important, as it is a potential barrier to performance, which affects career and financial income for athletes. This is particularly stressful for athletes who already find themselves in contexts of marginalised class and therefore financially pressurised situations.

In addition to injury affecting performance, this study also identified in line with Thelwell et al. (2007), the role that meeting spectators and fan expectations played as a stressor. Participants identified feeling the pressure to constantly win for their fans and supporters. Although other research has identified a link between performance expectations and making errors, this research highlighted further how the pressure to perform was increased when an athlete played a match in the home area where they grew up. This pressure, to satisfy the supporters and athlete's community, surfaced as a constant stressor for professional soccer players in this study. With the attainment of hegemonic masculinity in mind, this aspect of meeting fans' expectations allows men to display attributes of success and responsibility. Meeting fans' expectations may therefore be one way in which these men perform their masculinity.

Being demoted is a stressor which research by Noblet and Gifford (2002) share with this study as they discuss position security being a stressor that athletes face. This study identified that when junior athletes were selected above senior ones, or when an athlete moved from a team in the higher league, such as the Premier Soccer League (PSL) in South Africa, to a team in a lower league, such as one in the National First Division (NFD), this demotion was taken quite hard, with it seeming like the beginning of the end to an athlete's career. These three factors together form the challenges to the on-field performance of masculinity which professional soccer players may face.

While some stressors were shared between this study and others, there are findings which appear in research done both internationally and nationally which this study did not strongly identify. Although the participants in this study were aware of their own performances as athletes, they did not focus upon their opponents as a source of stress. However, Thelwell et al. (2007) identified how both the behaviour and attitude of opponents were identified as sources of stress amongst professional cricket sportsmen. Another stressor which did not feature in this study, which Noblet and Gifford (2002) identified as a stressor amongst footballers, was a feeling of low participation in decision making amongst athletes. This stress of being under an autocratic leadership did not seem to emerge amongst the participants within this study. Interestingly, although this study took place in a context of a developing country with participants coming from low-resource contexts, none of the participants spoke about poor playing facilities within their careers. However, this was seen to be a stressor found by Plaatjie and Potgieter (2011) when they conducted their study within a South African setting.

Although the international literature (Abedalhafiz et al., 2010; Noblet & Gifford, 2002) has investigated stressors within developed countries, there is scarce literature with regards to stressors amongst professional athletes, in particular soccer players, within economically developing countries. Furthermore, although there is an extensive literature on masculinity (Cooper & Foster, 2008; Courtenay, 2000; Everitt-Penhale & Ratele, 2015; Moolman, 2013; Morrell et al., 2013; Ratele, 2014; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009; Shefer et al., 2010; Pyke, 1996;), the research on stress amongst

professional athletes in general and soccer players in particular has seldom engaged with the issue of masculinity. Where this has been done (Burgess et al., 2003; Swain, 2000), it has not been in a low-resource context where issues of race and class intersect with masculinity to construct an athlete's experience. This study is one of the first to explore how the stress of attaining a preferred version of masculinity intersects with soccer's associated identity as well as how becoming a professional soccer player intersects with a marginalised context of race and class.

Stressors that emerged in this study that have not been extensively focused upon in the context of professional soccer, both internationally and nationally in a South African context, include how soccer provides an alternative platform for men to perform and attain masculinity as opposed to the often pathologised versions of masculinity available, however this performance also creates stress for players. The participants in this study originated from areas of high violence, crime and drugs and they discussed how soccer had provided them an alternative to a life of gangsterism. Sport is presented as a pathway for upward social mobility for young men in a lower socioeconomic class and marginalised race positioning. Soccer was highlighted not only as providing an escape from a harsh reality but it also provided a healthier platform in which men can be seen to be successful, and strong. A common form of attaining attributes such as bravery, respect and being seen is very often provided through the gang culture that many of the participants found themselves surrounded by. Soccer allows men to achieve those same attributes of hegemonic masculinity in a context that is more valued and idealised by society (Cooper & Foster, 2008).

It was identified that stress was experienced when a participant's own expectations of a soccer player's lifestyle were not met. Prior to entering the professional soccer industry participants indicated they perceived the lifestyle of a professional soccer player to provide instant access to fame, money and luxurious goods. However, upon becoming a professional soccer player they soon learnt that hard work was required to be successful and that the previously mentioned attributes were not a given, but if not handled correctly, rather potential pitfalls of professional soccer. Another stressor that participants indicated they felt was the added responsibility and stress they experienced once being signed to a professional team. This added responsibility referred to the participant now being not just responsible for their own name and

brand, but also to uphold the name of their respective professional soccer club. Although this played a role as a stressor, it could be viewed as a positive stressor as it assisted athletes to monitor their behaviour and choices that they made, to ensure they were acting responsibly.

For some participants playing soccer was not about the attainment of a luxurious lifestyle, but rather about being the breadwinner for their families. Participants spoke about their responsibility that they had to financially support their parents and families. This would particularly be stressful when a participant, despite their short time in a career or young age, would become the sole breadwinner for a family. Participants often described the pressure they placed themselves under in having to provide for their families. Being a soccer player was no longer carefree and fun, but rather a matter of survival. However, the study also indicated that some participants were aware of the brevity of their soccer careers and of the ability for them to continue to support their families. This contributed to the stress experienced as a professional soccer player, as an athlete's career is perhaps not as secure or longstanding as other career paths. While internationally soccer players may experience the pressure of a shortened career, in South Africa due to the intersecting context of race, class, and gender, professional soccer players in addition often feel the pressure to ensure the financial survival of their families.

In some situations a participant's identity was so embedded in that of being a soccer player that when faced with retirement, either due to injury or old age, they were uncertain that they would be able to transition and cope with this identity loss. These findings are crucial to note as recent research has indicated that anxiety and depression form part of the symptoms that retired soccer players experience (Gouttebarge, Aoki & Kerkhoffs, 2015). Research by Gouttebarge et al. (2015) has indicated there is a relationship between symptoms of mental disorders and career dissatisfaction, severe injury and other recent life events amongst professional soccer players. Therefore this study contributes to the literature to indicate the importance of post-career support that should be provided to athletes preparing to exit and those that have retired from professional sport. Although this research around retirement from sport and mental disorders exists internationally, there is limited to no research surrounding this field within the South African context.

Although soccer itself provides a platform to perform masculinity, associated with soccer are the off-field performances of masculinity. Participants reported the stress inherent in learning how to utilise the consumer market related to soccer in order to further build their reputation to be able to assist them in advancing within their careers. Participants spoke about the correct use of social media such as Twitter and Facebook in creating an online portfolio for themselves which international clubs could view as marketable and therefore profitable, thus enhancing the participant's chances of being selected over another athlete of perhaps equal talent.

This research indicated that although some participants saw value in investing their salaries in long term investments such as property, many participants chose to spend a large portion of their salaries on shopping for clothes, buying alcohol while going out partying and buying items which they thought would impress women and their friends. This supports research in South Africa that indicates that a key indicator that a person belongs is their ability to display material wealth (Swartz et al., 2012). This point is crucial to understand as many athletes and youth involved in playing soccer in South Africa are from a context of marginalised race and class due to an unjust apartheid system, which perhaps denied them of other resources (such as access to quality education and financial gain) to utilise for upwards social mobility (Swartz et al., 2012). Successful masculinity has become clothed in consumerism, being highly sought out in urban South Africa, in so far as it is favoured by people in influential positions and the media (Ratele, 2014).

One of the major stressors that were discussed across the data was that of gaining acceptance, seen to play out both on and off the field. What emerged through the lens of masculinity within this context was the role of women, fame, alcohol and partying. According to the study participants, women were often available to them and they indicated that women perceive association with a professional athlete as a way to increase their social status and that athletes enjoy this attention. This dynamic can contribute to the attitude of hyper-masculinity and the normalisation of men having multiple sexual partners (Cooper & Foster, 2008). Behaviours in response to women were identified to be sleeping with multiple women on the same night, cheating on wives and girlfriends despite being married, having a child or being in a committed

relationship. The younger participants indicated the pressure they felt to have to be seen with different women, as this was the established culture of the world of professional athletes. Some participants indicated regret and guilt in their behaviour, but then others denied responsibility for their behaviour by indicating that the strong temptation they felt they faced was too great for them to overcome. Many of the participants in this study come from experiences of exclusion due to the apartheid system, therefore when this upward mobility is not reachable via conventional terms, it is reached for via what Swartz et al. (2012) term as *ikasi style*. *Ikasi style* is used as the rationalisation for behaviours which are not necessarily socially acceptable in order for an individual to attain a sense of belonging. *Ikasi style* includes sex, alcohol, substance abuse, fashion, music, and violence (Swartz et al., 2012). In addition, if the main culture within professional soccer indicates that cheating is socially acceptable, although not publically endorsed, it is no wonder there is the continuation of the role of women being seen as a commodity for social status. Conversely some participants attributed their career success towards the woman in their lives that they have a romantic relationship with.

The element of fame was discussed as bringing about change to the social circles of some of the participants. Some participants admitted to not handling this very well. Participants found that upon achieving fame, many people suddenly wanted to be a part of their lives. Participants indicated this to be a negative experience as they became aware that the sudden new “friends” surrounding them did not care so much about them but rather more about what social status the participant could provide. Participants indicated that as soon as they did not have access to the desired resources or lost some social status then the new “friends” would often disappear as swiftly as they arrived. This left the participants feeling rejected and used, which contributed negatively to their lives. The fickleness of these types of relationships results in a difficulty in forming and sustaining real relationships between people, and thus the participants have deemed this to be something that acts as a stressor in their lives.

Participants described being required to prove themselves consistently on the field when first moving to a new team. In order to gain acceptance and respect on the field from teammates, participants felt required to do this first off the field. One of the stressors that were discussed across the data was the role of alcohol. The use of

alcohol was portrayed as a way in which participants were able to gain acceptance socially amongst their teammates. It was reported that younger athletes would need to prove their loyalty, earn their respect and gain an insider status by taking part in whatever was the established drinking culture of the new team they were entering into. This gaining of acceptance off the field which predominately involved partying and binge drinking, is what participants felt obliged to partake in to demonstrate their respect for the senior players. Although what is portrayed to the public is the pursuit of ultimate strength, fitness and performance, culturally amongst teammates what is additionally pursued are the lifestyle choices (such as partying and drinking) which are seen as markers of a successful athlete, and therefore a successful male. In other words, the athletes pursue a hegemonic masculinity by engaging in cultural 'machismo' around drinking and partying. Therefore, to establish a culture which is not centred on stereotypical 'machismo' and to provide a healthier option to assert masculinity, there is perhaps the need to take the time to assert and define what the unique internal team culture truly is, and for this process to incorporate the input of the professional athletes themselves as they are the ones which will be upholding this culture.

The results indicate how professional soccer is able to provide a context to men in order to construct an understanding of who they are and how they, and the world, see themselves (Burgess, et al., 2003). What being part of a soccer team allows for is a sense of belonging which may not be achievable elsewhere in an athlete's life. Soccer further provides a stage where men can perform and have their masculinities affirmed on a regular basis (Swain, 2000). This inclusion in a collective, the team, is a vital part of the development of a sense of self and identity. Soccer allows for inclusion into a social system, and an upward mobility, which may have otherwise been denied to young South African men due to the unjust apartheid system and ongoing inequality in South Africa. Through incorporation into the social system an athlete can become an agent of change who can then become active in defining and re-defining himself and his environment (Swartz et al., 2012).

5.2 Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this study that need to be considered. For this study only one third of the club's athletes volunteered to take part, so there may be

other different stories that were not accessed. This self-selecting sample could be biased in some way. This research also took place within the context of one professional soccer club in Cape Town, South Africa. There are numerous professional soccer clubs in South Africa and every club has their own club culture and resources that are made available to athletes. Although the sample for this study consisted of members from various communities around the Greater Cape Town region, the results cannot be generalised to the entire population of professional soccer players in South Africa. In addition, these findings may differ to that of professional soccer clubs in other soccer playing African countries such as Zambia, Kenya and Ivory Coast. The findings of this study may also differ to those findings that may be found in professional soccer clubs within more developed resource-rich soccer playing countries such as the United Kingdom, Sweden, Spain, and America. Therefore, generalisation between such contexts would not be appropriate. However, within this study there was to a certain degree heterogeneity amongst the athletes. There were some athletes who had previously spent a season or two at varying soccer clubs which saw them being based internationally in Sweden and Zambia, and nationally in cities such as Bloemfontein, Johannesburg and Durban. Despite this, further research needs to be conducted in order to establish whether these findings are found across varying clubs and countries.

Additionally, a methodological limitation could also have occurred in the data analysis phase of this research. As indicated in the methodology chapter, semi-structured interviews were used for data collection, which includes the subjective nature of the researcher conducting the interviews. The data could be affected if a researcher remains subject to their own interpretations. The participants may not have shared some aspects of their experiences due to their perception of the researcher's position as a middle-class, White, and educated woman. Therefore it is crucial that the researcher acknowledge her active role in both the analysis and collection of data, thus allowing the researcher to be able to understand that any beliefs and personal values held may play a role in influencing the results. Throughout this research the researcher was aware of and documented the beliefs and personal values that she held, both with regard to the topic and beyond which may have been different from that of the athletes (refer to reflexivity in chapter 3). Taking this into account, as well as the trusted rapport that the researcher had with the club chaplain and some athletes, it

helped to minimise the subjective bias which may have happened. However, it is possible that another researcher, with a different positioning, may have developed a different understanding of the data. In addition the lens of masculinity theory may have led the researcher to read the data in a particular way, while other readings of the data are possible if using a different theorised lens. Ideally, participant checking would have helped to validate the data, but this was not practically possible as the club's timetable did not allow for individual follow up meetings with the athletes.

5.3 Recommendations

Replicating this research at other professional soccer clubs in South Africa would allow for a greater generalisability of the results or identification of differences across contexts. The same research could further be conducted with a professional soccer club in a neighbouring African country such as Zambia. The richness of data from this study provides evidence of the importance of qualitative methods. Therefore, more qualitative academic studies should be conducted in comparable contexts in order to confirm, or disconfirm, this study and therefore strengthen its findings.

This study highlighted what a large role identity formation played within the lives of the professional athletes. This was both in terms of who the athlete was as a professional in his career, as well as who he was with regards to his masculinity. This process of identity formation was indicated to be a stressful process, with athletes not always aware that in the process of forming their identity, they were engaging in behaviour that could be potentially harmful. In addition to this stressor, work stressors surrounding their organisational context and competitive performance, as well as personal non-sporting stressors contributed to the overall stressors experienced by these athletes. Therefore a recommendation would be to develop a culturally appropriate psycho-education programme to be used to deliver information to athletes within soccer academies and clubs, to identify typical stressors, normalise these experiences, and promote effective ways of coping. The programme could introduce the concept of the process that young men go through in the search for identity through soccer. It could identify what reward certain behaviours give males, and, if this behaviour is potentially harmful, how else the athlete can attain the reward he seeks. The programme should incorporate experiences and language that is accessible to its audience, conveying its information within a manner that is appealing to

athletes. This programme could be delivered by existing internal support structures at the club, such as the chaplain. At the club sampled in this study, this could be incorporated into the chaplain's role as he already runs group sessions to enhance life skills such as communication skills, goal setting, and conflict management. The psycho-education programme could be developed in such a way that it can be utilised by others such as coaches for younger teams, or lay community members such as parents, teachers and community club coaches.

Future studies of stressors amongst athletes need to consider the broader social and cultural contexts in which athletes are embedded. The socio-cultural context of a person has an important function in the process of meaning making of their lived experiences. Considering the role of masculinity, and its intersection with race and class, can enhance and deepen our understanding of the challenges faced by professional athletes, particularly in contexts of poverty and inequality.

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Appendix 1
Informed Consent Form and Take Home Information Sheet

Information Sheet and Consent Form

University of Cape Town

Consent to participate in a research study:

Stressors amongst professional South African soccer players within a South African context.

Dear Athlete

Research Purpose

You are being invited to participate in a research study being conducted by myself; a clinical psychology masters student from the University of Cape Town. The purpose of this study is to investigate the stressors and coping strategies of professional soccer players in South Africa.

Research Procedure

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview which will take 60min. The interview will take place at your soccer training ground after one of your training sessions. The interview will ask questions about what stressful things you have faced and are facing in your life and how you have coped or are coping with them.

Possible Risks

There are no known risks to taking part in this research study.

Possible Benefits

After the interview, a feedback session will be arranged in which information (psychoeducation) around what effective coping strategies are and how to utilise these will be taught. Another benefit is that the research report (which will be availbe to you) can be used by both South Africa Chaplaincy and your club in order to better support you in times of stress.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You are free to refuse answer any question. If you decide to participate, you are free to change your mind

and withdraw from the research at any time. If you choose not to participate in this research, you will still be able to attend the group feedback session.

Confidentiality

All information you share in the interview will be kept strictly confidentional, and your name or any identifying aspects of yourself will not appear with the information that appears in my research report. If there is anything that comes up in the interview that makes me feel worried, I will need to share that with someone at the club who can support you. I will first inform you of this before I do this.

Your name and other identifying information will not be kept with the interview data, these will be separated and no one but myself and my research supervisor, Dr. Debbie Kaminer, will have access to these. Noone else will have access to the information obtained from the interview. Any report or publication of the study will not identify you in any way.

Questions

For any study-related questions or problems please direct them to:

Chantelle De Abreu (researcher) – 082 560 8920

Dr. Debbie Kaminer (supervisor) – 021 650-3901

If you have any worries about how the research was done, please feel free to contact the Department of Psychology at the University of Cape Town on 0216503900.

I have read the above and am satisfied with my

_____ _____

Signature of participant Date

_____ _____

Name of participant (printed) Witness

The interview will be recorded in order to help the researcher remember the information. After the researcher has listened to the recording and written it down, the recording will be destroyed. Information from the interview will be recorded anonymously.

I agree that the interview may be recorded.

_____	_____
Signature of participant	Date
_____	_____
Name of participant (printed)	Witness

Appendix 2

Semi-structured Interview Guide

Interview Outline

Demographic and background details

1. Where do you currently live?
2. Could you tell me a little more about what it's like?
3. Where did you grow up?
4. Could you tell more a little bit more about what that was like growing up in_____?
5. How many siblings do you have?
6. What do they currently do?
7. What do your parents do (work-wise)?
8. Up to what grade did you complete at school?
9. Are you currently studying now while playing professional soccer?

Identifying the Stressors

1. What do you think stress is? (Provide stress definition if needed "something in your environment that is requiring more of you to be able to handle the situation then what you currently posses")
2. What is stressful in your life?
3. What was it about _____ that made it stressful?
4. Can you tell me more about_____?
5. Can you tell me what you felt has been a stress in your life that is more personal, besides soccer or the club?
6. What are things that make you worried?