

**THE MAKING OF A CHAMPION: A CONSTRUCTED REALITY**

by

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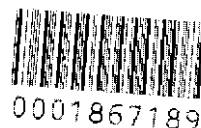
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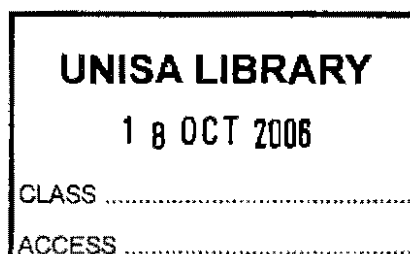
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For Sam and Honey



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## **SUMMARY**

This dissertation explores the construction and experience of the sports champion's reality. In studying reality and its construction, I became familiar with the post-modern perspective of reality and with theories such as systems theory, cybernetics, radical constructivism and social constructionism, which fall under the post-modern epistemological umbrella. The dissertation gives an exposition of my journey through this maze of theories, from a position of "knowing" how champions are made towards a more complex position of uncertainty and possibility. This is followed by an account of the qualitative research that I undertook, within a social constructionist framework, in which I used thematic discourse analysis. Finally, I interpret the discourses emerging from the analysis in order to demonstrate their operation or effect in the construction of a champion's reality.

## **KEY TERMS**

Reality; Reality construction; New epistemology; Systems thinking; Cybernetics; Constructivism; Radical constructivism; Social constructionism; Champions; Sports champions; Discourse analysis

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: MY REALITY

*"In the moment that you carry this conviction ... in that moment your dream will become a reality."* (Robert Collier in Davis, 1988, p. 4)

Is that how realities are constructed? Do all champions have dreams and the conviction that they will come true?

The impetus for writing this thesis emanated from my dream of becoming a champion on the women's professional, international tennis tour. My dream was to get a ranking among the top ten professional players in the world and many opportunities to achieve this goal came my way. But however close they came to my grasp, these opportunities somehow seemed to slide from my fingers.

I was playing among the very best players in the world. I beat them during practice and reached match-point situations in actual contests, but somehow this was just not enough to realize my dream. I became confused by my inability to perform at my optimum at the most critical moments, and for a long time I struggled with the fact that my dream had not become a reality.

I finally retired from the circuit after six years, and in the months that followed I often reminisced about my experiences on the world tour. I would analyze the dynamics between me and other players, significant experiences I had had and my perceptions about myself, my performance and the tour. I replayed my inner dialogue on the tour many times in an attempt to identify what had prevented me from realizing my dream. After much reflection and striving to be honest with myself, I realized that I had not really believed that my dream would ever become a reality. "How futile!" I thought. Dreaming about something without ever believing in its realization makes the dream redundant. For me, it is the belief that facilitates the realization, not the dream itself.

In my reminiscing, I became fascinated with the champions and the people around them. Their confidence was clearly portrayed in their attitudes and actions. The coaches

or parents of some champions boasted about their talents and expertise. The champions themselves projected belief in their ability and their status. This had a powerful effect on others. The performance of the opponents of those who held such inner confidence was at times crippled before the match even began because of their defeatist thoughts or negative mental constructions around facing a champion.

However, during the process of the study I undertook on reality and champions for the purposes of this dissertation, I arrived at the understanding that becoming a champion was not just about believing in a dream. There are many interacting factors at play on many interconnected levels of context in the construction of one's reality.

This study does not attempt to explore all these factors and levels; it is, nevertheless, an attempt to find a meaningful construction of how a champion's reality is constructed. The focus is on the construction of a champion's reality within the effects of the significant social discourses she perceives and is exposed to. In addition, I search for common discourses that seem to inform and support the reality of champions, and which serve to differentiate them from others.

In this dissertation sports champions are therefore at the centre of the discussion. The word "champion" is defined by Microsoft Bookshelf (1998) in a number of ways. The definition that is pertinent to this particular study is, "one that is clearly superior or has attributes of a winner." For the purposes of identifying a target sample, I have defined a champion as an individual who has achieved remarkably well in her particular sport. Because of these achievements, she is or was, at one time, rated as being one of the top ten in the world by the professional body for that particular sport.

The title of the dissertation implies that a champion is made by the manner in which she constructs reality. One of the definitions of "reality" put forward by Microsoft Bookshelf (1998) is: "The totality of all things possessing actuality, existence, or essence." Due to the importance of the nature of reality and how it is experienced in the context of this dissertation, I have devoted the whole of chapter two to my understanding of reality and of how it exists. The chapter begins with a discussion of a new way of thinking which affects the perception of reality and its construction. It then explores the theories of reality that began emerging from the new manner of thinking about the world.



Second order thinking is discussed in an historical context, beginning with General Systems Theory, moving on to the development of first order cybernetics, and proceeding to second order cybernetics. The chapter also elaborates on post-modern epistemology, and explains the theories of reality congruent with such an epistemological umbrella, namely radical constructivism and social constructionism.

The third chapter deals with the research design and methodology that are appropriate to a post-modern epistemological stance. The research design is social constructionist, with the texts of six interviews providing the data for analysis. The methodology is qualitative and thematic discourse analysis is utilised.

Chapter four contains the actual analysis of the data and the interpretation of the results. The last chapter summarizes the study and sets out the conclusions reached and the implications and recommendations flowing from these.

Before we begin constructing what is contained in this dissertation, I realize that in terms of my epistemology, there are an infinite number of ways in which this topic could be explored. Thus different explanations of the way in which the reality of a champion is constructed could be given. I am, therefore, writing from the position of social constructionist theory. From this position, what I author in my research may be meaningful and validating only for me, although I hope my research will be useful for the way in which the reader perceives his or her world. At least for me, the process of this research has helped me understand that sheer belief in a dream is insufficient for its realization.

## CHAPTER 2

### MAKING SENSE OF REALITY

*“What we know is generally considered to be the result of our exploration of the real world, of the way things really are.... How we know is a far more vexing problem. To solve it the mind needs to step outside itself, so to speak; for at this point we are no longer with facts that apparently exist independently of us in the outside world.”*

(Watzlawick in Segal, 1986, p. 7)

#### The New Way of Thinking

After you have read the above quotation, consider whether you have ever thought of stepping outside of yourself for the purpose of understanding how you know the world. Most of us probably still think in accordance with traditional, western, assumptions and ideas. According to this scientific, positivist epistemology, (epistemology being what Auerwald (1985, p. 1) calls a “set of immanent rules used in thought by large groups of people to define reality”), reality is understood as singular, stable and predictable, existing independently of the observer. It further assumes that, if we apply the proper methods, we can get an extremely accurate picture of what really happens in the world. However, according to the “new epistemology” of the latter half of the twentieth century, the act of observation may change the observed phenomenon (Atkinson, Heath & Chenail, 1991). Advocates of this new epistemology, say Atkinson et al. (p. 164),

argue that each angle or method of observation has its own bias or limitations, values cannot be separated from facts, the scientific enterprise has its own elitist agendas, and the methodology of conventional science, which involves reductionism and the separation of subject and object, has led to harmful unintended societal consequences.

The following is a discussion about reality and how it is constructed. From this, I hope to gain a better understanding of how a champion's reality is created and experienced. Bearing in mind these tenets of the new epistemology, I am aware that in

my discussion, and in my role as researcher, my assumptions about the topic have affected the information I have chosen to select and explore.

### A Discussion of Reality

An objective reality can be defined as the knowledge of an object independent of observation (Segal, 1986, p. 8). But there is no way of proving reality's existence if an observer is not there to observe it. Thus it becomes apt to question the reliability of the notion of objectivity. Language is a vehicle for the construction of this objective knowledge. According to Segal, it is language that generates the notion of objectivity. As Wittgenstein (cited in Segal, p. 8) maintains, human beings use language to observe, think and communicate. "Observers live in language the way fish live in water", says Segal (p. 8). Language distinguishes that which is true from that which is false. The word "objective" denotes knowledge of the thing itself, independent of observation. Objective knowledge is, thus, discovered rather than invented. Hence, argues Segal, when we discover something in reality, that "something" is said to be "true".

How can we know something without being there to observe it, or experience it? As this train of thought reveals, the concept of objective knowledge is seen to be contradictory when the process of attaining this knowledge is examined.

Von Glasersfeld (cited in Segal, 1986, p. 9) explains that the philosophers of ancient times defined knowledge as "that which depicts or explains something else". Knowledge is, therefore, a representation of the original phenomenon. If this explanation of knowledge is accepted, objective knowledge becomes an impossibility. The definition of "objective knowledge" is knowledge of an object independent of an observer, thus to know something of an object destroys the objectivity of the knowledge. As an illustration, let's say you want to judge the accuracy of a picture. You take another picture of the same object as a comparison, in order to obtain an objective view of the first picture. However, the mere observation of the second picture immediately changes your view from an objective knowledge of that picture to a subjective knowledge of it. So whether you judge the picture's "accuracy" by observing one or two pictures, you are stuck with the same problem – a subjective knowledge of both (Segal, 1986).

According to scientists, objective knowledge is that which is observed through the senses. This empirical knowledge is said to derive from the ultimate source of knowledge, our senses. This suggests that our senses provide us with certainty about what we are observing “out there” in reality. Scientists attempt to control the subjectivity of our senses or individual biases by using a community of observers to establish objective knowledge. Observations are called “truths” if, in an experimental situation, different observers reach the same conclusions at different times thereby replicating the experimental results. Scientists argue that such different observers, involved in the same experiment, have made a discovery (Segal, 1986). However, when we look at the definitions of empiricism and the meaning of “objective”, mentioned above, we find that empirical knowledge, just like all knowledge, cannot be objective. A scientific explanation based on empirical evidence needs the presence of the senses (the observer) in order for it to be empirical. It thus cannot be validated independent of observation, which renders it subjective.

This analysis of “objective reality” and “objective knowledge” has certainly blurred my perceptions of what I thought existed “out there”, and I find I am questioning my original assumptions about the scientific world and the possibility of the existence of one truth about anything.

The period from the end of the nineteenth century and to the beginning of the twentieth century was known as the “modern era”. During this period, scientists dominated the discovery of truth. It was believed that certain truths existed independently of us and such truths, if discovered, constituted reality. All knowledge that was discovered scientifically was said to be “true”, so that science had become our official confirmation of “truth” or reality. Before the emergence of post-modernism, our thinking relied on the assumptions of the modern era, which held that the knowledge of objective experts were the words of truth.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) claim that how we define “reality” and “knowledge” depends on specific social contexts. A Tibetan monk’s conception of a champion may be quite different from mine, as a South African psychologist. According to Berger and Luckmann (p. 16), there is a need for the study of the “sociology of

knowledge”, which is “concerned with the relationship between human thought and the social context within which it arises”, because knowledge can differ vastly from one society to another. The “sociology of knowledge” must confront not only the observed differences in human societies, but also the processes by which any body of knowledge comes to be established as “reality”. For Berger and Luckmann, reality originates from our thoughts and actions and is maintained by them as real. The hypotheses I propose on the making of champions concern the effect of the multiple realities that different athletes experience and create.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) go on to argue that the reality of everyday life is imposed on our consciousness in an urgent and intense manner. If we accept this statement as valid, it will be seen that it has important implications about the impact made by the interpersonal script in the daily life of a family, a culture and a society on a serious athlete’s fulfilment of a dream of excellence. Everyday life, say Berger and Luckmann (p. 51), is “life with and by means of the language I share with my fellowmen.” They maintain that because language is the most important sign system for human society, its expression is capable of “objectivation” (p. 49). This means that language manifests itself in products of human activity, which become evident to the participant in the activity, as well as to others, as elements of a common world. Language is capable of making present that which is spatially, temporally and socially absent from the “here and now”. An accumulation of experiences and meanings can become objectified through the expression of language. Berger and Luckmann (p. 54) hold that “through language an entire world can be actualized at any moment.” This also applies to thought processes and to conversations with oneself. Language is capable of transcending the reality of everyday life. It is “capable of not only constructing symbols that are highly abstracted from everyday experience, but also of ‘bringing back’ these symbols and representing them as objectively real elements in everyday life” (Berger & Luckmann, p. 55). For example, the “meaning” of a dream can be interpreted and integrated linguistically into daily life. The dream thus becomes meaningful, say these authors, in terms of the reality of everyday life rather than in terms of its own discrete, elusive nature. The way we use language plays an enormous role in our experience of everyday life. If an athlete is able to appropriately integrate her dream of becoming a champion

into the order of her daily life, the dream becomes more meaningful. The more meaning she attributes to the dream, the more “real” it can become. As asserted above, the daily life of society influences what is and is not experienced as “real”.

As I continue my exploration of reality, I feel as if I am looking through a kaleidoscope, whose multiple movements affect the picture that I see in it. However, I find that my vision, like the shapes of a kaleidoscope as it stops turning, is gradually beginning to settle.

According to Becvar and Becvar (1996), belief in the possibility of objective knowledge and absolute truth is frowned on in the present era of post-modernism. A number of scholars from a variety of disciplines have all challenged the assumption that reality exists independently of the observer. These scholars include anthropologist Gregory Bateson, psychologist-philosopher Ernst von Glasersfeld, psychologist Jean Piaget, psychiatrist and philosopher Paul Watzlawick, biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, neuropsychologist Warren McCulloch, physicist Erwin Schrodinger and mathematician, physicist, cybernetician and philosopher Heinz von Foerster, all of whom took the plunge of questioning the prevailing paradigm and thereby initiating the kind of thinking we now refer to as post-modern.

According to Von Foerster (cited in Segal, 1986) we construct reality rather than discover it. He says that it is erroneous to think that the subjective world of our experience, and the so-called objective world of reality, are two separate entities. He therefore suggests that it is a miscomprehension to think that we are able to match our experience with a world we assume exists independently of us. Although von Foerster says that we invent reality, he does not mean that we simply make it up in our heads. He does not deny the existence of reality. Whatever we perceive “out there” is not a figment of our imagination. The given “objectivity” in the world is apparent, but what we see is affected by who and what we are, as observers. Human beings have a consensual understanding of many things. For example, we all know that when wood is set alight it burns. We do not merely imagine that the fire burns the wood to ashes. Von Foerster (cited in Segal, 1986) does, however, argue that we do not have the capacity to use “objectivity” as the basis for scientific arguments. This explains the scepticism provoked

by scientists' substantiation of their expertise by calling their knowledge objective. For Von Foerster (cited in Segal, 1986) the observer and the observed are inextricably linked. In order to remove the contradiction embedded in the notion of "objective knowledge" necessary for an "ultimate science", as previously mentioned, the observer must take responsibility for what is observed.

Von Foerster presents the following puzzle (cited in Segal, 1986, p. 28) as a way of illustrating how the observer accounts for herself:

"THIS SENTENCE HAS. ....LETTERS."

To solve the puzzle the missing word has to be filled in. One answer is the word "thirty-one": the sentence contains thirty-one letters once the word "thirty-one" is added. However, there is more than one correct answer to this puzzle, as long as the answer takes itself into account. Try again! (The second answer is two more than the first answer.)

The purpose of the puzzle is simply to illustrate the fact that there is more than one answer to a problem (Segal, 1986). Traditional science searches for only one answer to its questions and therefore depends on mathematics for such singular solutions. The puzzle is an example of the system Von Foerster uses (described in Segal, 1986), which produces more than one answer to the problem. He advocates subject-dependent sciences, which promote the inclusion of the observer in the observations made, and which do not, therefore, usually produce singular answers. For the constructivist, certainty is not really lost, as we never really had it to begin with. An important implication of constructivism that becomes salient here is that, as Segal points out, our choice increases and our freedom in constructing our reality broadens. From this perspective, believing in a dream is only one facet of the kaleidoscope of reality that makes a champion.

In Von Foerster's paper, "Notes on an Epistemology for Living Things", he provides two ideas which serve to dispel the myth of an objective reality.

[Firstly,] observations are not absolute but relative to the observer's point of view (i.e., his coordinate system – Einstein's theory of relativity) and secondly, observations affect the observed so as to

obliterate the observer's hope of prediction (i.e., his uncertainty is absolute – Heisenberg's uncertainty principle.) (Cited in Segal, 1986, pp. 29-30)

Given these provocations to traditional, scientific thinking, we are now in a position to state confidently that a description of reality implies one who describes it, that is, one who observes it. What we need now is the description of the “describer”, or in other words, a theory of the observer (Segal, 1986). Since only living organisms qualify as observers, it appears that this task falls to the biologist. But the biologist is also a living being. She must thus take herself into account when formulating the theory. According to Segal (1986), this is a new state of affairs for scientific discourse. Evidently, the traditional viewpoint, which separates the observer from her observations, carefully avoided reference to the observer. Scientists obeyed the rule of separation because, under certain circumstances, when the observer included herself in her description of her observations, a paradox within her description resulted. This is illustrated by the paradox that one finds in the statement, “I am a liar” (Von Foerster, cited in Segal, 1986, p. 30).

No longer can we think that the observer involved in empirical research discovers knowledge, which represents the “real world”. Rather, what becomes apparent is the subjectivity of the researcher, and the likelihood that what she produces, however useful, is only partial images of reality. Rather than discovering reality, we create it. Reality is inevitably subjective, constituting a multiverse that is constructed through the act of observation (Becvar & Becvar, 1996).

Thus, we can distinguish two epistemologies, or ways in which we come to know the world: the epistemology of the observed system, endorsed by traditional science; and the epistemology of the observer, advocated by the constructivists (Segal, 1986). In accordance with traditional science, we confirm reality by matching our inner world with our outer world. The constructivists believe that objective reality is merely a correlation of our sensory experience. Constructivists argue that no findings exist independently of observers. Observing systems are only able to correlate their sense experience with themselves and each other (Segal, 1986).



“We have recognized the necessary connection of the observer with the observed, which leads to the examination of how the observer participates in the observed” (Keeney, 1983, p. 80). The focus of the discussion concerning knowledge and reality shifts from what we know to how we know, or rather how correlations take place. This manner in which we come to know the world is called epistemology. According to Keeney (1983), “epistemology becomes a study of how people or systems of people know things and how they think they know things” (p. 13). I am citing this definition, which is somewhat different from Auerswald’s (1985) definition, referred to earlier, because Keeney emphasizes our awareness of the process of defining reality, which is pertinent in the exploration of reality construction.

From the above statement, it is evident that the way we come to know reality was being questioned by post-modern thinkers. Our assumptions about what we know about the world and human beings were based on the Western perspective of Newtonian thinking, which characterized the era of modernism. Known as modernism, such a perspective dominated all research in the first half of the century. Modernism, still well respected in many of the hard sciences today, proposes that linear cause-effect thinking is appropriate and hence any problem is solvable if we find an answer to the question by asking “why?”. Modernism, or Newtonian thinking, into which the scientific epistemology discussed above fits, also asserts that the world is made up of subjects and objects. Therefore, reality exists outside of our minds. Meaning is derived from observing what is happening outside of us, without our observation having any effect on that meaning. Reality can be reduced to particular sequences or parts in order to make sense of it. Furthermore, modernism advocates that the world is determined in accordance with knowable law, and if these laws are discovered some absolute truths about reality will be revealed. “We as individuals are seen as reacting to reality rather than creating it”, as Becvar and Becvar (1996, p. 4) put it.

However, there has been a shift in thinking, as old ways of construing reality and knowledge have been questioned. “As von Glasersfeld notes, the history of Western philosophy is the history of brilliant failures” (Segal, 1986, p. 10). As new and complex global difficulties are emerging, our old ways of solving problems are proving to be useless. In order to adapt to these difficulties, “a new vision of reality with fundamental

changes in thought, perception, expectation, and values is necessary” (Capra, cited in Jennings, 1993, p. 104). “This will require us to give up our simplistic, quantitative science, and learn to think as nature thinks” (Bateson, cited in Jennings, 1993, p. 104).

The new way of thinking, referred to earlier, which is associated with the epistemology of Einsteinian physics, seemed to explain the loopholes evident in the modernists’ observation of reality, and the way they defined the concept of “objective” knowledge. As Auerswald (1985, p. 4) points out:

When New Science (Einsteinian physics) emerged from the study of the ‘inanimate’ universe, the Batesonian evolution emerged from the study of the ‘living’ universe, and the ecosystemic epistemology emerged from the study of a segment of the ‘living’ universe, namely, families in the context of socio-cultural systems.

Auerswald (1985, p. 4) illuminates the contrasting concepts of traditional scientific (Newtonian) thinking and the “new epistemology” of connectedness and interdependence, by means of a table, reproduced below:

Concepts of the New Epistemology	Concepts of Traditional Science
Assumes a monistic universe (both/and).	Assumes a dualistic universe (either/or).
Uses the concept of four-dimensional time-space	Space and time are treated separately.
Views linear clock time as a heuristically useful concept that does not, however, establish causative relationships between events.	Views linear clock time as real time in which one event is causative in relation to the next event.
Includes abstract ideas or mind as part of the field of study.	The field of study is mechanistic and separate from the studying mind.
Focuses on patterned events in four-dimensional context.	Focuses on the atomistic examination of entities in space, and progression of events in linear clocktime
Discards certainty. Truth is seen as heuristic.	Accepts certainty. Truth, therefore, is seen as absolute.

Adapted from Auerswald, 1985, p.4.

The theoretical platform upon which my study and research are built is the “new epistemology”. A combination of theories emerging out of the post-modern period, namely, second order thinking, constructivism and social constructionism, inform and support my analysis of how a champion’s reality is constructed. A brief discussion of General System Theory and first order cybernetics will follow as a basis from which second order cybernetics or second order thinking may be better understood.

### General System Theory

Systemic thinking arose from the development of General System Theory by Von Bertalanffy, and its application in a wide range of disciplines ranging from physics and information theory to biology and anthropology (Hoffman, 1981). Holism is one of the core concepts of General System Theory. Holism is pertinent to the understanding of systems as it ensures that the observer accounts for all parts as well as the interaction between parts, as the relationships amongst the parts demonstrates the important tenet that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Thus if we study each part in isolation, we do not gain a complete understanding of the whole, as the interrelationship between the parts also contributes to the understanding of the whole. Systemic thinking proposed an alternative to the unanswered questions which emerged out of the scepticism that arose in response to modernist thinking.

During this quest for more appropriate ways of thinking about reality and the world, a mathematician by the name of Norbert Wiener proposed the term “cybernetics”, in the early 1940s, as a name for the new way of thinking which informed the “new epistemology”. Cybernetics was different from General System Theory in that it was principally concerned with substance and form, instead of parts and wholes. Keeney (1982, p.155) defines cybernetics as the science of information, pattern, form and organization, and explains that it examines both parts and wholes in terms of their patterns of organization. Cyberneticians began studying and comparing inanimate machines with living organisms in an effort to understand and control complex systems. Cybernetics focuses on feedback mechanisms, information processing, and patterns of communication (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Keeney (1983) maintains that the two criteria for discerning a cybernetic system are the occurrence of a recursive process and the

existence of a feedback structure (i.e. the recursive process must involve self-correction). In terms of cybernetics, observation of and knowledge acquired from reality occur as a result of identifying and/or constructing patterns in and around that which is being observed (Keeney, 1983).

Early cyberneticians often punctuated events in one particular way (Keeney, 1982). That is, they did not take into account how they, as the observers of the events, would affect what was being observed. This manner of perceiving reality was referred to as simple or first order cybernetics.

### First Order Cybernetics

According to first order cybernetics, the observer is outside the system being observed. From this perspective, the observer has the capacity to analyze the dynamics of the observed system, and no consideration is given to reciprocal influence between the observer and the observed. In order to understand the information-processing patterns of the observed system, the observer studies the observed system in relation to its context (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). In the relationship between human systems and their environments, systems were seen as black boxes in which inputs (information) from outside the system were transformed by the system into outputs for the environment. "The characterization of a system as a black box thus belongs to the phenomenological domain of a system's interdependence with other outside systems" (Keeney, 1982, p.159). The rules of the system constitute the boundaries of the system. The extent to which the boundaries are open or closed is what determines the amount of information that is allowed into and out of the system. Each factor involved in the process of information exchange has an equal influence on any other, and therefore shares responsibility for the process. "Meaning is derived from the relation between individuals and elements as each defines the other" (Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p. 64). This concept is known as recursion or the reciprocal causality among elements in and between systems.

Systems receive negative feedback from the outside, which prompts a self-correction process to maintain the status quo or homeostasis of the system. Positive feedback is deviation-amplifying feedback, and implies a change or deviation from the status quo of the system. It is an error-activated process, whereby information about a

deviation from a previously established norm is fed back into the system, and is responded to in such a way that the difference is accepted.

If the system is allowing in either too much or too little information, the system is said to be in a state of entropy. In this case the identity and the survival of the system is threatened. An entropic system is tending towards maximum disorder and disintegration (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). However, when there is an appropriate balance between openness and closedness, that is, sufficient information is entering, the system is in a state of negentropy or maximum order.

Equifinality refers to “the tendency towards a characteristic final state from different initial states and in different ways based upon dynamic interaction in an open system attaining a steady state” (Bertalanffy, cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p. 69). Redundant patterns of interaction are characteristic of the end state, or equifinality, which best explains the system itself.

Equipotentiality denotes that regardless of the same initial conditions, resultant end states can vary. The concepts of equifinality and equipotentiality demonstrate the impossibility of making “deterministic predictions about developmental processes” (Simon, Stierlin, & Wynne cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p. 69). Hence, the focus is on the patterns of interaction in the here-and-now of the system, or on the level of process.

Purpose is only meaningful in the sense that the observer of the observed system invents it. Although it seems as if systems function for the purpose of reaching a goal, this is a linear perspective. On the contrary, a system does what it does in order to do what it does, and hence the best definition of it is itself. This tautological or circular reasoning does, however, beg the question of purpose. That is, why does the system do what it does? Nevertheless, the goal of a system can only be inferred by someone outside the system and therefore only at the level of first order cybernetics (Becvar & Becvar, 1996).

According to Keeney (cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p. 75), the “inadequacy of applying simple cybernetics to human phenomena, was that it failed to prescribe higher-order punctuations that connect the ... observer to the ... observed.”

## Second Order Cybernetics

Second order cybernetics views reality from a higher order of punctuation or a higher level of abstraction. The observer is not seen as passively observing the observed system without being accountable for what she sees. Instead, the observer is seen as participating in the process of observation. Thus, the observing system and the observed system blend into one another, eliminating any possibility of boundaries which separate the systems. Everything that occurs is perceived as a reference to oneself: "Whatever you see reflects your properties" (Varela & Johnson, cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p. 76). This assumption of second order cybernetics may be quite distressing in its assertion that everything we see we simultaneously influence. However, what seems to make the most sense about the understanding of reality from a second order perspective, is its fundamental inclusiveness. This accounts for the absolute diversity and uniqueness of each and every human system. Second order cybernetics thinks in terms of both/and, for example in terms of both linearity and recursiveness, both first order and second order cybernetics. Thus, "each is understood as an integral part of a complementarity comprising a larger whole" (Becvar & Becvar).

Contrary to first order cybernetics, second order thinking assumes that all human systems are closed. According to May (cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p. 77), "we can define ourselves as both subject and object but cannot get outside ourselves to observe the process of defining ourselves." Human systems are whole, closed systems. Thus, when an observer describes other systems, the descriptions are a function of the observer's self-reference (Varela & Johnson, cited in Becvar & Becvar). Reality is therefore punctuated in accordance with our own epistemological premises.

Thus what is asserted in this paragraph is based on the author's self-reference. This way of thinking about reality is paradoxical, since whether or not an assertion is true (for us) depends on how we choose to punctuate reality (Becvar & Becvar, 1996).

Closed systems are autonomous systems. According to Maturana and Varela (cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p. 77) the identity of a system "is specified by a network of dynamic processes whose effects do not leave that network". Although autonomous systems are closed, they are still interactive and change may occur through

interaction. If change occurs in a closed system it will only occur at the level of structure, while the organization of the whole is maintained. Therefore, interactions between autonomous systems must be referred to as perturbations, in contrast with the first order cybernetics concept of open systems into which there is input of information. Becvar and Becvar explain that structure, as Maturana has it, refers to the identity of the parts that constitute the whole, and the relations between these parts. Organization refers to these relations, which define a system as a unity and reflect its properties, without reflecting the identity of each part in isolation. Turning to the question of identity, they quote Maturana as follows (p. 78):

The identity of the system is determined by its organization and remains unchanged as long as this remains unchanged, regardless of whether the system is static or dynamic and regardless of whether the structure of the system changes or not.

The way in which closed human systems survive is a result of a process termed “autopoiesis”. This refers to the way the parts relate to and with one another, generating a unity with particular properties (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). This process of self-generation defines the identity of an autopoietic system and forms its boundary. The boundary distinguishes the system from the larger context. The boundary and the system depend on one another to form part of the unitary process of autopoiesis (Becvar & Becvar). Maturana and Varela (1987) describe an autopoietic unity as a system which “pulls itself up from his own bootstraps”, and becomes distinct from its environment through its own dynamics, in such a way that the system and its environment are inseparable (p. 46). An autopoietic or closed system does what it does in order to do what it does. Therefore, its product is always itself (Becvar & Becvar).

Second order cybernetic processes are, therefore, always processes of negative feedback, maintaining system behaviour. Positive feedback punctuations, which describe deviation amplification, are thus viewed merely as “a partial arc or sequence of a more encompassing negative feedback process” (Keeney, cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p. 78). Thus, perturbations in a system would be the effect of a negative feedback structure at a higher order of recursion.

Structural determinism refers to the limitations of a system arising from its structure. The system's structure determines the range of structural variations which can occur without loss of identity. The environment does not determine what a system does, but at best acts as a perturbing agent. The environment, therefore, provides the context, which is facilitative of what the system's structure allows it to do (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Thus a living system can become whatever its structure determines, as long as the choice is not limited by the environment (Bateson, cited in Becvar & Becvar, p. 79).

In order for living systems to survive they must fit with other systems in the context of larger systems, positioned together like the layers of a concentric circle. This mutual coexistence is called structural coupling. According to Varela and Johnson (cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p. 80) the extent to which a system thrives or dies is contingent upon the sufficiency of fit between and among systems. From this perspective, say Becvar and Becvar, the environment is not deterministic and change, which is "a process of structural transformation in the context of organizational invariance" (p. 80), is merely a response to the context. There is no singular purpose for change, thus no linear causality. Instead, the life of a living system is a process of non-purposeful drift within a medium. Becvar and Becvar therefore conclude that systems recursively evolve in response to one another.

However, despite the seemingly non-purposeful drift of living systems, second cybernetics proposes the epistemology of participation. This refers to the inextricable link between the observer and the observed, and the fact that the observer automatically affects, influences and participates in the observation. As Becvar and Becvar (1996, p. 81) maintain, "whether we are attempting to question, describe or attribute meaning, these are all interactive processes involving perturbation and compensation within a context." They go on to say that an understanding of reality is only possible from the perspective of the person doing the describing, questioning, or explaining. Therefore as a result of what the observer observes, she creates ways of coordinating her actions within a context.

In appreciating the participation of the observer, we realize that, as Becvar and Becvar put it (1996, p. 82), "each of us lives in and creates reality in a slightly different



manner based on our own unique combinations of heredity, experiences, presuppositions, and thus perceptions.” Human beings, say these authors, are living systems behaving in consensual domains produced through structural coupling in the context of a common language system. Observers in the process of observing inevitably interact with and thus create the consensual domain they are attempting to observe.

Second order cybernetics advocates a proactive perspective, which perceives human systems as co-creators of reality. A sense of freedom as well as control is gained by the notion that the world we live in is the result of a shared responsibility.

The post-modern era, which takes second order thinking as its basis, also provided the context for other theories to emerge, focusing on an epistemology that has a conscious awareness of itself. These theories, constructivism and social constructionism, illuminated the vital role of language in understanding reality from a post-modern perspective.

### Post-modernism

As mentioned earlier, post-modernism arose from the questioning of the objective knowledge proposed by modernist experts. Proponents of post-modernism, such as the constructivist, Von Foerster, whom I have already mentioned, explained the impossibility of the existence of objective knowledge and proposed that facts must be replaced by perspectives.

Post-modernism rejects the idea that the world as we see it is a result of hidden structures. It also does not believe in the possibility of an ultimate truth. It advocates that an understanding of the world is arrived at by considering the coexistence of multiple views and ways of life within a variety of situations. Post-modernism recognizes that the self is not an isolated, autonomous being, and that it is constructed in relationships. The emphasis is thus on relationships in terms of the manifestation of self (Gergen, cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996). It does not support the assumption that our world is dominated by one specific body of knowledge, where “the answer” can be found. It rejects “the notion that social change is a matter of discovering and altering the underlying structures

of social life through the application of a grand theory or metanarrative” (Burr, 1995, p. 14).

The post-modernist postulates that language is the means by which individuals come to know their world and that, in their knowing, they simultaneously construct it. The goal for the post-modernist is to “deconstruct ‘facts’ by delineating the assumptions, values, and ideologies upon which they rest and to consider ourselves and our constructions about life and living with skepticism and even perhaps humour” (Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p. 89).

### Constructivism

According to Becvar and Becvar (1996), constructivism, as proposed by Von Foerster, Maturana, Varela and others, represents the same perspective as second order cybernetics. Constructivism emphasizes the biological nature of the human system and thus explains more or less the same concepts differently. For the radical constructivists, “cognition is a biological phenomenon and can only be understood as such; any epistemological insight into the domain of knowledge requires this understanding” (Maturana & Varela, cited in Whitaker, 2000, p. 1). I shall elaborate briefly on constructivism in order to distinguish it from second order cybernetics.

According to constructivism, reality is shaped by the process in which a human system and its environment evolve together, and in this process ideas about the world are constructed within the nervous system. The nervous system limits what can be construed, through the fit between the human system and the environment. The nervous system plays only its own games. Perturbations on the outside provide the context in which those games unfold.

According to Maturana and Varela (1987), cognitive experience is a function of the individual’s biology. This is illustrated by the way in which we see colours. The identification of colours corresponds with neuronal activity in our nervous systems, not to wavelengths given off by the colour itself. It is the individual’s internal structure that determines the name of the colour, and not the object, which is the perturbing agent.

What we do (actions) makes up what we know, so in order to understand what we know we need to investigate the processes of our actions. The very act of investigating is also an action. Our being, doing and knowing are all intertwined (Maturana & Varela, 1987).

According to a constructivist view, the phenomenon of knowing does not involve the facts out there. Rather, the thing out there arises out of the human structure in terms of a description. One's perception dictates one's description and thus one's experience. The way in which a human being actively perceives creates her reality. The action of perception and the experience are therefore inseparable. Thus, say Maturana and Varela (1987), every act of knowing brings forth a world. They point to the aphorism, "all doing is knowing and all knowing is doing" (p. 26). Action in a physical sense is not really what is meant here. What the aphorism refers to particularly is the act of perception. Human perception takes place through language. Language is our distinctive way of being humanly active. According to Wittgenstein (cited in Segal, 1986), "language is itself the vehicle of thought" (p. 31). For Maturana and Varela (1987), language facilitates the circularity between action and experience.

Knowing is an action of the knower, and thus depends on what the knower is, that is, the knower's organization. We need to understand the nervous system in terms of the way in which it organizes the living being through processes of cognition. Cognition allows for the functioning of the living being within its environment (Maturana & Varela, 1987).

As observers, we are used to describing behaviour as if it were the result of an external perturbation. Maturana and Varela (1987) maintain, however, that behaviour is a structure-determined reaction to an internal representation of what a system is coupling with out there. The external representation from the context is only one message. This message is then correlated with messages coming from the organism. The resultant behaviour, say Maturana and Varela, is a consensus of all of these messages.

Maturana and Varela (1987) maintain that the nervous system continuously transforms itself in line with the transformations in the environment, as a result of the way it interacts with the environment. The observer sees this transformation as learning.

However, what is actually happening is that the neurons in the organism, and the environment with which the organism fits, are evolving through their structural coupling in order to continue operating (i.e. conserve their adaptation). Systems learn by interacting with one another in a given context. Interaction is a recursive process of mutual influence/adaptation within a range determined by the structure of the respective systems. Such a structure exists as a result of the continuous structural coupling of systems and their interactions for conservation and adaptation (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Thus we arrive at an understanding of ourselves as describers and observers of a world that we, with the help of a nervous system, bring forth in our coexistence with others (Maturana & Varela, 1987).

According to Maturana and Varela (1987), consciousness constitutes the organization and coherence of reflections. Language is essential for this experience called “mind”. As living beings we exist in language, while we drift in a domain of perturbations, regardless of the characteristics of the domain. The nervous system functions with operational closure. Thus at all levels, the living being is organized to generate internal regularities. This generation of internal regularities also functions at the social and linguistic levels. As living systems, we operate in what Maturana and Varela call consensual domains generated through structural coupling. We experience the operational coherence of language and consciousness. Thus the “mind” is not within the brain, but in the realm of structural coupling. Since we exist in language, it is through our social discourse, say Maturana and Varela, that we generate our domain of existence, in which we conserve our identity and adaptation. So, if language does not reflect the outside world, it cannot be used as a tool to reveal the world. These authors hold that it is only by languaging that the act of the behavioural coordination, which is language, brings forth a world.

This discussion of constructivism ends with language as the major point of departure. During the era of post-modernism the role of language in the construction of reality has moved to centre stage. This brings me to a discussion of social constructionism.

## Social Constructionism

According to social constructionism, reality is constructed via the social interpretation and intersubjective influence of language, family, culture and the totalizing discourses that organize society. "Social constructionist inquiry is principally concerned with explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live" (Gergen, 1985, p. 266).

Berger and Luckmann (1966) assert that reality is socially constructed and it is important to analyze the process through which this occurs. Any conception of "reality" needs to be seen in the specific social context in which it has been created. They add that the reality of everyday life presents itself to the individual as an intersubjective world, that is, personal experience comes to be defined through social interaction. According to Gergen (1985), knowledge is not viewed as an external reality, but as the social construction of people living in relation to one another.

For the social constructionist, language is crucial. Wittgenstein (cited in Gergen & Kaye, 1993) argues that words get their meaning, not through their capacity to describe an objective reality, but through their use in social interchange. Meanings evolve in conversations between individuals. Human activity occurs in the understanding that is created through social construction and dialogue (Anderson & Goolishian, 1993).

Social constructionism has drawn its assumption from a multiple of disciplines. Burr (1995) points out that this makes it difficult to define social constructionism. There is no one feature that can be used to identify a social constructionist's perspective. The following is an exposition, derived from Burr, of the key points which she says one must assume in order to see "reality" through the lenses of a social constructionist (p. 3-5).

**1. A critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge.** Social constructionism challenges the view that conventional knowledge is based on an unbiased, objective observation of the world. It cautions us to examine our constructions of how the world appears and what these constructions or labels mean to us as human beings. Burr (1996) maintains that social constructionism prompts us to ask: what impact do the meanings derived from labels have on the manner in which we live our lives?

**2. Historical and cultural specificity.** Our understanding of the world depends on specific histories and cultures. Ways of understanding are also a result of particular cultures and historical periods. Social and economic arrangements dominate particular cultures at particular times and directly affect our understanding of the nature of things.

**3. Knowledge is sustained by social processes.** In the social interactions of our daily lives, our versions of knowledge become fabricated. Therefore what we regard as the “truth” is the result of the goings-on between the people that we are constantly engaging with.

**4. Knowledge and social action go together.** Each construction we make yields a different action. Therefore particular constructions of the world can foster and sustain a pattern of social action.

Burr (1995, p. 5-8) further describes how the features of social constructionism highlighted below can be characterized as the way in which reality is constructed:

**Anti-essentialism** refers to the idea that the world is a consequence of social processes. Thus, “there are no ‘essences’ inside things and people that make them what they are” (Burr, 1995, p. 5). Hence, social constructionism does not mean that our surroundings affect our perceptions, or that our biology is a product of our environment. These suggest that our constitution can be derived from an essential process or factors. Social constructionism assumes an unfixed, multiple manner of understanding anything. Thus anything lacks essence.

**Anti-realism** refers to the idea that knowledge is not a direct perception of reality, but that it is, rather, a construction of our own versions of reality as a society between us (Burr, 1996). As Burr indicates, “all knowledge is derived by looking at the world from some perspective or other, and is in the service of some interests rather than others” (p. 6). According to Gadamer (cited in Gergen, 1999), we perceive reality from a horizon of understanding. This means our prejudgements inform how we question reality as well as the answers we choose to use. In order to expand our horizon of understanding we engage in dialogue. In this dialogical relationship, the new meaning that emerges is placed “in relation to the whole of one’s own meanings” (Gadamer, cited in Gergen, 1999, p. 144).

**Historical and cultural specificity of knowledge** refer to the idea that whatever we know about human nature in the here and now is bound to that characteristic time period and culture. History provides extensive evidence that cultures change over time, while they also differ markedly from place to place (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). Descriptions of human nature must be studied bearing in mind that current forms of social and psychological life are created in the context of a specific time period and culture. Therefore the processes of how such a life emerges must be given close attention (Burr, 1995). If we trace our discourses' histories, the identification of their conditions of emergence and their changes over time will arise (Willig, 1999).

**Language as a precondition for thought** refers to the idea that the way we think, and the categories and concepts that we use, are a direct result of a framework of meaning that is provided by language. The categories and concepts we use are acquired by all people as they learn to use language, and they therefore share them every day with everyone who lives according to that specific culture and language (Burr, 1995). Thus, the concepts that are utilized to understand the world are "social artifacts, products of historically situated interchanges among people. From the constructionist position, the process of understanding ... is the result of an active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relationship" (Gergen, 1985, p. 267).

**Language as a form of social action** refers to the idea that "when we talk to each other our world gets constructed. Our use of language can therefore be thought of as a form of action" (Burr, 1996, p. 7). Language is integral to meaning for human beings. For instance, Anderson and Goolishian (1988) state that

a problem exists only if there is a communicative action .... A problem exists only if it is described and understood by people in concerned ... communication with each other .... If there is no language concern or complaint there is no problem. (p. 388)

Knowledge is inextricably linked to, and emerges as a product of, activity and purpose. Thus, say Nightingale and Cromby (1999, p. 5):

We actively seek to explore aspects of our world, in particular ways, for particular purposes, and in so doing create knowledge which we

then take as “truth” about the world. But other activities carried out for other purposes might have produced alternative “truths”.

Austin (in Gergen, 1999) amplifies the “performative” character of our language. For example, the expression, “I now pronounce you man and wife”, is a meaningful utterance which may be conceptualized as a “speech act” (Searle, in Gergen, 1999, p. 35), that is, an action which accomplishes something within the interpersonal world. According to Gergen, psychological discourse of language is also performative, and performance is relationally embedded. The expression of action is related to a cultural history. For instance, performance carries a history of relationships, manifesting them and expressing them. Performances are also implicitly or explicitly expressed or manifested in relation to someone. Therefore we are “inhabited not only by a history of relationships but as well by the relationships into which they are directed” (Gergen, p. 133).

For Goffman (in Gergen, 1999) language is not only verbal; it also includes all our gestures, dress, body markings, personal possessions and so on. The manner in which people present themselves and what they stand for is also a component of non-verbal language which is communicated to a recipient. We are constantly giving off signs and signals that define who we are to others.

Social systems can be understood as having meaning derived from observed patterns of social organization ... . Systems can be described as existing only in language and communicative action. In this view organization and structure are the ongoing results of communication exchange, and, therefore are locally determined through dialogical exchange ... . We live and take social action in a multiverse of worlds of descriptions. (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988, p. 375)

As mentioned earlier, the constructivists explain that language is human action and assert that by languaging we bring forth a world.

According to Anderson and Goolishian (1993), meaning is created and experienced by individuals in conversation and action with others and themselves. This assumes that human action takes place in a reality of understanding that is created through social construction and dialogue. We give meaning and organization to our experiences and to our self-identity in the course of these transactions. Therefore, both



language and activity go together as each shapes the other in the “taken-for-granted” reality of our socially organized “everyday life” (Berger & Luckman, 1966, p. 53).

**A focus on interaction and social practices** refers to Bateson’s “ecology of minds” (in Anderson & Goolishian, 1988, p. 378). Bateson explains that the mind is not in someone’s head, but manifests, rather, in interaction. Hence, reality is understood as a multiverse of meanings created in dynamic social exchange and conversational interaction. In conversation, say Anderson and Goolishian, language creates knowledge through the hermeneutic processes of communicative action.

Symbolic interactionism, which, according to Gergen (1999), originated from Mead’s work in social psychology, focuses on the concept of social role, implying that social life is played out in accordance with the roles we acquire, invent or are forced into. Thus, if we look ahead into the future there are a variety of scripts that we may end up playing out, depending on the social and interactional processes that may facilitate a particular script. “From this perspective, thinking, knowing, believing, and self-understanding, all have their origins in social interchange. Mind, in effect, is inseparable from social process” (Gergen, p. 124).

**A focus on process** refers to the idea that knowledge is not seen as something that people have or do not have, but rather as something that people do. Thus in terms of social inquiry the emphasis has shifted from questions about the nature of people to a consideration of how certain phenomena or knowledge occur between people in interaction (Burr, 1995). The notion of process is clearly implicit in Anderson and Goolishian’s (1988) description of the resource for change. For them, it “is not ‘in’ the unconscious or any other psychic structure. This resource is not ‘in’ the cell or the biological structure, nor is it ‘in’ a social structure such as a family” (p. 381). The process is therefore a domain where the dynamics of the way we do things indirectly co-create and co-develop the systemic realities around which we have meaning for each other, and through which we continually reorganize our mutual living.

As human beings we may indirectly co-create and co-develop realities. However, this indirect relationship with the processes and dynamics which constitute the divine nature of the workings of the universe is more powerful than we think. Chopra (2001)

uses Lamarck's theory of evolution to illustrate the human being's power to construct reality. Lamarck, according to Chopra, proposes that intention orchestrates evolution. For example, the giraffe's intention was to eat the green leaves on the top of trees, so its biology evolved to make this possible. Thus, giraffes have very long necks. For Chopra, our inner dialogue reflects our inner power. Therefore, the thoughts and intentions we construct in our heads determine the extent of the power we have in the creation of our realities. Chopra maintains, further, that one's spirit is a field of awareness that connects everything with everything else instantly. In terms of this assumption, we are connected to the greater life force, which we had always thought we do not participate in.

Bateson's (1972) explanation of reality also indicates our connection with, and participation in, the web of life. He viewed the mind as inside the body and the "mind", so to speak, of reality and nature as one and the same thing. According to Keeney (1983), Bateson defined "mind" as a cybernetic system, where it represents an aggregate of interactive parts that exhibits a feedback structure. From such a perspective, the complexity of such systems or minds ranges from simple feedback to a feedback that permeates each and every system conceivable to the human mind. Keeney says that Bateson termed the interwovenness and interconnectedness of "mind" the "ecology of mind". The larger mind, of which the individual mind is only a subsystem, is immanent in the total interconnected social system and planetary ecology (Bateson, 1972). It is in this ecology that Bateson (1979, p. 77) discovered the "pattern that connects", that is the great tapestry of the web of life. Science has offered chaos theory to demonstrate that disorder lies at the heart of nature, but, says Chopra (2000), chaos theory postulates the chaos effect, which explains the interconnectedness of pattern. For example, a butterfly flapping its wings in South Africa may effect the creation of an earthquake in Japan (Capra, 1991).

Mind, in Bateson's view then (Keeney, 1983), is not something that exists inside the skull; rather it extends far beyond the perimeter of the human body and reflects the many parts of the natural world outside of man. According to Keeney, wherever there is feedback, mental characteristics will be evident. To illustrate this, consider the "mind" of a blind man walking across the street – his "mind" would include his walking cane or guide dog. The cane or dog is perceived as an active part of the feedback process that

guides the man. Mary Catherine Bateson (in Keeney, 1983) proposes substituting the word “mind” for the word “system”, enabling one to see that mind becomes a property, not just of single organisms, but of the relations between them, including systems consisting of man and man, or man and animal, or man and plant. Bateson (1979) thus suggests that there is a wider knowing than the knowing of a single organism and that this wider knowing conglomerates the starfishes and the sea anemones and the redwood forests and the human communities. In erasing the boundary that separates human beings from nature, Bateson produces the ultimate premise for illustrating the closeness between what we are and what happens outside of ourselves – the pattern that connects is a meta-pattern, a pattern of patterns, which eliminates the dichotomy between mind and nature. The construction of reality is thus more of a collaborative effort. It is a process in nature with which we are closely connected.

Becoming more conscious and in harmony with nature in the creation of our realities would contribute greatly to the knowledge of the making of a champion or of any specialized reality, for that matter. This consciousness and harmony can be perceived as a mysterious, esoteric topic that does not seem to be acknowledged in the academic literature on the construction of the reality of human beings. Nevertheless, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation, so let me turn to the more concrete issues, such as text, discourse and analysis, which will give us some better insight into the realities of champions.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### Focus of the Study

I am curious about what champions have experienced and do experience in their particular realities. Is there something unique about a champion's reality compared to that of an ordinary athlete? A "champion", in the context of this dissertation, is "one that is clearly superior or has attributes of a winner" (Microsoft Bookshelf, 1998). The definition of "reality" I use is "the totality of all things possessing actuality, existence, or essence" (Microsoft Bookshelf). In accordance with these definitions I believe the questions that I ask in this study of sports champions' realities can be extrapolated to champions in all aspects of life. Perhaps this assumption can be investigated in a later study. For the purpose of this research I ask a number of questions about sports champions, such as the following:

- What is significant about the ecologies that certain athletes are immersed in, which facilitates the construction of a champion's reality?
- Do the social discourses to which champions are exposed form a pattern or theme, which informs or supports their excellence?
- What role does language play in the construction of a champion's reality?
- Does the discourse of belief in self, belief in your dream, and others' beliefs in you, foster a champion's reality?
- What special qualities do these athletes have in common, which make them champions?

#### Who Contributed to the Study?

The sample of people who contributed to my study was drawn from the population of those who have either won a world championship, or who have (or had) a ranking within the top ten in the world. These people are difficult to interview as current champions are often travelling the world and are accustomed to receiving payment for

such interviews. The impossibility of making any such payment was made clear, once an interview date had been set up.

Due to the nature of the topic, personal questions were included in the interview and thus consent for the use of the interviewees' names in the published document was requested and granted at the start of each interview. There were no ethical reasons why this population should not be studied. In fact, this study should contribute positively to those interested in achievement and sport. The interviewing process, involving as it did the narration of the participants' personal stories in relation to their accomplishments, may even prove to have been therapeutic for the participants themselves. The study covered six champions, whose individual stories are analyzed later in this dissertation. Thematic discourse analysis serves to deconstruct the making of each champion in his or her particular reality. The following participants were persuaded to tell me their stories:

Wayne Ferreira is 29 years of age. He was born in South Africa and is a tennis champion. He has been playing the A.T.P. (Association of Tennis Professionals) World Tour for 12 years and he is still participating. His world ranking at the time of the interview was 17. Wayne's best achievement in the singles on the A.T.P. men's World Tour was a ranking of 6.

Maria Mutola is 28 years of age. She was born in Mozambique and is an athletics champion. She has been competing internationally for 14 years and is still participating. At the 2000 Olympic Games she won the gold medal in the 800 metres women's middle distance race. This is her best achievement so far.

Brian Mitchell is 40 years old. He was born in South Africa and is a boxing champion. He competed for 6 years, winning numerous world title fights. Currently, he is retired from boxing and trains potential boxing champions at his gymnasium. Brian's best achievements were winning the W.B.A. (World Boxing Association) Junior Lightweight world title in 1986 and the I.B.F. (International Boxing Federation) Junior Lightweight world title in 1991.

Reg Park is 73. He was born in the United Kingdom and was a champion body-builder. He competed in international competitions for 16 years. He has now retired from professional body-building but works as a personal fitness and body-building trainer. Reg

won the Mr. Universe world body-building contest three times (in 1951, 1958, and 1965).

Herman Chalupsky is 36 years old, was born in South Africa and is a canoeing and paddle ski/kayaking champion. Herman began a successful career in canoeing during his teens. At the age of 21 he and his older brother, Oscar, won the largest international canoeing event in Spain. As Herman grew older he switched to ocean kayaking. In the last few years, Herman has won 8 out of 10 of the world championship ocean kayaking events. Ocean kayaking is currently a sideline for Herman. He is now concentrating on his property-broking business, for which he has high aspirations.

South African tennis champion Amanda Coetzer is 29 years old. She has been playing on the W.T.A. (Women's Tennis Association) World Tour for 12 years. She is currently still participating and her world ranking at the time of the interview was 12. Amanda's best achievement was a ranking of 5 in the W.T.A. world rankings.

### Research Paradigm

Maione (1997, p. 3) defines a research paradigm as "a set of assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge, and the goals and aims of the research process." Radical constructivism and social constructionism are paradigms which contribute to the understanding of how we, as human beings, experience reality. These paradigms fit with my assumptions of reality and how it can be researched. Investigating a champion's reality is the focus of this study. According to Denzin and Lincoln (in Maione, p. 3), "the constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (i.e., there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and subject create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures". Social constructionism emphasizes the importance and potency of the role language plays in the construction of reality.

As a researcher operating from a second order and social constructionist perspective, I attempted, throughout the process of my research, to be sensitive to my role as a co-participant in the creation of meaning in the process. I was also aware of the influence the meanings co-created in the research process would have on me, both as a

researcher and as a person. I further assumed that meaning is embodied in language, and in the analysis of the text of the interviews, I was aware that meanings were being perceived and constructed. The tradition that I followed in the research process is appropriate to the qualitative approach to research, which I undertook in as natural a setting as possible (an interview situation). This tradition is based on the tenets of the “new epistemology” (Auerswald, 1985) outlined in chapter 2.

### Literature Review

In my review of the literature I investigated the following topics related to my study: reality and its construction; qualitative research; sports champions; and the ecologies of sports champions.

I began my review by studying a new way of thinking, proposed by Atkinson et al. (1991), for construing reality and hence for doing research. This information influenced the research tradition and epistemological stance I adopted for my investigation. I also studied Auerswald’s (1985) “new epistemology”, systemic thinking and cybernetics (Keeney, 1982) as forming part of the new way of thinking about reality and the way in which it is experienced. A study of Segal’s (1986) argument about the impossibility of an objective reality led to reviewing the literature on second order cybernetics (Becvar & Becvar, 1996), as well as constructivism (Maturana & Varela, 1987). Adopting a more social stance to reality, Berger and Luckmann (1966) explain the need for the study of the sociology of knowledge, which introduces the paradigm of social constructionism and the importance of language in the construction of reality (Burr, 1995). I included Anderson and Goolishian (1988) in my study as they write about human systems as linguistic systems and the implications of language in reality.

Thinking from the modernist or Newtonian tradition (Becvar & Becvar, 1996) was reviewed and contrasted with post-modernism (Burr, 1995) or the “new epistemology” mentioned above. Related to the post-modern way of thinking is Bateson’s (1972; 1979) explanation of mind, nature and reality. This line of thinking took me to Chopra’s (2000) and Capra’s (1991) explanations about human beings’ position in the greater scheme of things.

The above-mentioned literature covered the key concepts around reality and its construction. A review of the literature on champions revealed a lack of research on the ecologies in which champions construct their realities. The literature I found on this topic included extracts from Hemery's *Sporting Excellence: What Makes a Champion?*, written in 1991. Related literature included quantitative studies on average and superior athletes by Vanek and Cratty (1970), which focused on discovering common characteristics in the attitudes, preparation, and performance of the superior athlete. Jennings (1993) writes about how to direct energy flow into success, and describes the attitudes and methods of sports champions and what they do and think in order to perform at their peak.

#### Data Collection

This is a qualitative study and thus the data has been collected in the form of the spoken and written word. Firstly, consent was given by four interviewees to record my interviews with them and then to publish the transcriptions as well as the analysis of the text. In all cases, I made transcriptions as soon as possible after conducting the interviews, usually on my return home. It was not possible to record the fifth interview, so a report of the information received was documented immediately after the interview. The sixth candidate was overseas playing tennis at the French Open at the time she was approached. An arrangement was made for her to e-mail her responses to the questions asked in the interview for analysis and publishing. The analysis stage includes only extracts from the data collected. However, all data collected is attached to the dissertation as appendices.

The first interview was with Wayne Ferreira. I had to travel to Nelspruit, where he was playing the Davis Cup for South Africa against Yugoslavia. I was quite nervous, as it was my first interview for this study. Although Wayne used to play tennis at my house and we were friends until I retired from the international tennis circuit at the age of 21, I had not seen him in 7 years. I had arranged the interview with him telephonically and he had sounded pleased at the prospect of seeing me, and keen to participate in what he regarded as a most interesting study. I had told Wayne that the interview would take



approximately 45 minutes, but he seemed to be enjoying it so much that we continued to talk for an hour and a half.

In order to gain access to other champions, I told everyone I knew and met of the topic of my dissertation. I also spoke of the necessity of interviewing only those sports champions who fulfilled my criteria (as outlined earlier). During this networking process, a friend of mine told me her mother had just sold Maria Mutola a house. My friend said she would speak to her mother in order to see what she could organize through her mother. The next morning my friend's mother phoned to say I had to go to Maria's new house in Bryanston at once. Maria presented as extremely relaxed and easy-going. We sat on the stairs of her newly purchased, unfurnished house and I recorded the interview.

I also contacted Brian Mitchell through a friend, who spoke to Brian about my research. We arranged to meet at Brian's gym in Turfontein, Johannesburg. At first he seemed in a hurry to finish the interview, and fiddled a lot. However, after I had asked a couple of questions, he answered at length and seemed to be enjoying the type of questions being asked. After the interview Brian showed me the ring where the potential boxing champions train.

Reg Park is a personal fitness and bodybuilding trainer at the gym where I train. He is a very friendly man and was only too happy to help me out. He too, enjoyed the interview (which I recorded), especially when he spoke of his childhood and his fond memories of his grandparents.

Sitting in a GP's waiting rooms one day, I began talking to one of the other patients. We talked about our respective occupations and he was very excited to hear about the topic of my thesis. He offered to set up an interview with a close friend of his, Herman Chalupsky. I contacted Herman and managed to arrange a trip to Durban with my fiancé, who happened to be going for business. Herman was a gentleman. He seemed quite an unemotional man, but still answered the questions enthusiastically. At the end of the interview, I realized that the pause button on my recorder had been depressed so that, although the machine appeared to be operating, nothing had, in fact, been recorded. I kept my composure and did not make Herman aware of this catastrophe. I thanked him

profusely and immediately drove to the place where I was staying, in order to write a report of the interview.

Like Wayne Ferreira, Amanda Coetzer had been close to me in my childhood and up until I gave up professional tennis. I was therefore keen on reconnecting with her as one of my interview candidates. I found out that she was competing in Europe so I e-mailed her my story. She returned my mail immediately, excited to hear from me. She said she would mail her answers to the interview questions just before the start of the French Open, and two weeks later I did, indeed, receive her interesting answers via e-mail.

### Epistemology for the Analysis

To quote Maione (1997, p. 4) once more, “an epistemological stance refers to a set of assumptions about the world, knowledge, and human behaviour.” An epistemology guides the research and determines how the researcher interacts with his data. The modernist tradition or Newtonian epistemology would have it that the researcher or scientist is separate from the data. From this perspective, the researcher believes that he is able to see the data objectively and that empirical observation will draw out absolute truths and causal relationships from the data.

I have used the post-modern epistemology throughout this research process. This implies a constructivist or second order stance, which comprehends the notion that meaning is constructed by an observer (researcher) and is context dependent. Throughout my study I was aware of the interaction between myself and the data. I attempted to construct meanings from the data, using myself as a research instrument. From this perspective, I did and do not draw an arbitrary line between myself and the data, but have rather considered myself part of an interaction that includes me and the data. My intention was not to find any absolute truths, but to see what patterns I could discover, through analyzing my data at various levels, that would make sense to me in illuminating how champion's realities are created.

### Method of Analysis

The purpose of data analysis has to do with creating meaning or sensemaking (Chenail & Maione, in Maione, 1997). In order to construct meaning I need to utilize the appropriate tool of analysis to draw distinctions from the data. “There are,” say Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p. 154), “many forms of constructionist analysis, but all share the aim of revealing the cultural materials from which particular utterances, texts or events have been constructed.” In analyzing data, therefore, the social constructionist attempts to link accounts to action.

For the purposes of this research, thematic discourse analysis is used to analyze the necessary data. Parker’s working definition of a discourse is “a system of statements which constructs an object” (in Burr, 1995, p. 48). A discourse is a vehicle through which particular truths are constructed. As defined by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p. 154), discourse analysis is “the act of showing how certain discourses are deployed to achieve particular effects in specific contexts.” The analysis tool, thematic discourse analysis, enables me to distinguish thematic discourses in the texts of the champions interviewed for the purpose of exploring the impact these discourses have had on their lives. As previously explained, post-modern thinking postulates that human beings experience reality through language. Language helps to construct reality. Therefore, as Terre Blanche and Durrheim point out, for research purposes, language itself should be the object of study. However, the meaning of language for a constructionist should not be confused with the linguistic definition of language. Linguistics is concerned with the technical aspects of language use and structure, whereas constructionism, according to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (p. 149), “is concerned with the broader patterns of social meaning encoded in language.” These broad patterns include all representations of reality (e.g. a dissertation), practices (e.g. playing sport), and physical arrangements (e.g. one’s place of abode), which constitute a system of signs or language. These authors maintain that such signs construct particular versions of the world by providing a framework through which we can understand objects and practices, as well as understand who we are and what we should do in relation to these systems.

The focus of research from this perspective is to uncover the ways in which the social world is constructed to appear “real”. By means of the analysis of the

conversations and texts I have collected on champions, I attempt to uncover the ways in which a champion's "real" world is constructed. As a constructionist/constructivist researcher, I scan the texts of the interviews with the champions for the emergence of thematic discourses which I feel are related to individuals' success in their ecology, as well as common themes which make or have made these particular individuals champions. As researcher, I was a participant-observer during the interviewing process. Accordingly, I see the meanings derived from the interviews not only as co-constructions between the interviewer and the interviewee, but also as products of what Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) refer to as a larger social system for which individuals act as relays.

Documentary sources are also used as sources of data collection. Thus, the report of the interview with Herman Chalupsky and the e-mail from Amanda Coetzer are appropriate, even though they are not transcriptions of live interviews. For constructionist analysis, a document carries meaning independent of what its author's intentions were. A document is simply a point of intersection for social meanings (or discourses) and is no more distant from what "really happened" or what somebody "really felt" than an interview (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

The text for each champion is analyzed vertically for themes constituting a pattern or discourse which fosters a champion's reality. That is, a vertical analysis is conducted within their experience of various ecological systems and/or discourses that they are exposed to. The second level of analysis is horizontal, and here common themes are linked to one another across the ways these champions experience reality. Common discourses may emerge from such a comparative analysis.

### Credibility of the Study

Credibility is important in all forms of research. How a researcher establishes credibility is based on her epistemological assumptions. In quantitative studies, modernist researchers use notions of validity and reliability to verify their experimental research (Salner, cited in Maione, 1997). The various terms used to make quantitative studies more credible include: transferability, dependability, confirmability, authenticity criteria and trustworthiness (Maione). However, in qualitative studies the researcher is more likely to share the responsibility of credibility with the consumer of the research

(Atkinson, Heath, & Chenail, cited in Maione). For example, the qualitative researcher will build into the study means whereby the reader can assess for herself the credibility of the study.

In this qualitative study I, as a human being, am the research instrument: this renders researcher bias inevitable. However, as long as I openly disclose my preconceptions and assumptions that may have influenced data gathering and processing, I can actually be an asset in the research process. As Green (cited in Maione, 1997, p. 6) states, "it is precisely the individual qualities of the human inquirer that are valued as indispensable to meaning construction."

In order to establish credibility for this study, I would like to state my assumptions and preconceptions about reality and champions. I take the view that reality is constructed via the social interpretation and intersubjective influence of language, family, culture and the totalizing discourses that organize society (Burr, 1995). As observers of reality we perceive behaviour as if it were the result of an external perturbation. However, I believe that behaviour is a structure-determined reaction to an internal representation of what the person is immersed in out there. The external representations, or messages from the context, are then correlated with messages coming from the person's nervous system. The resultant behaviour is a consensus of all of these messages. The external representations from the context constitute the various ecologies and, in turn, the social discourses that we are exposed to. If a consensus or pattern of messages from the context fits with the messages coming from the organism, a reality representing this pattern is created. I also assume that the pattern of discourse evident in a person's life enables that person to fit into his ecological system, and simultaneously conserve her identity, which is socially constructed via language.

Another preconception of mine is that the discourse of belief plays a major role in the construction of reality. Thus in the introduction to this dissertation I assume that absolute belief in one's capacity to become a champion, together with the belief of significant others (constituting one's ecology), can create the reality of a champion. Of course, the above assumption takes into consideration the necessary structure (physiology) of the athlete and the appropriate context or ecological systems by which

she is surrounded. During the course of the research it becomes evident that I question the discourse of belief in the creation of reality and begin to perceive such a preconception as simplistic. Despite my own assumptions, I use thematic discourse analysis in an attempt to discern discourses emerging from the text which can account for the co-construction of a champion's reality.

Another way in which I address the credibility of my study is by the visibility of my data. All the text used in the analysis is attached to the document as appendices. Because they are allowed access to the original data, readers can judge the accuracy of my claims and see how I drew distinctions in the text, while construing their own idiosyncratic realities provoked by the information provided by the subjects.

Let us now embark on the promised interactional analysis of the data.

## CHAPTER 4

### **THE REALITIES OF CHAMPIONS: THEMATIC DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

The aim of this analysis is to explore how a champion's reality is constructed. As a social constructionist researcher, the general focus of my analysis is to reveal the thematic material from which the text or talk of the champion studied has been constructed. Accordingly, I analyze how the talk of a champion is used to manufacture experiences, feelings, meanings and other social facts (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). In the first phase, or vertical analysis, I scrutinize the text of each champion in order to distinguish discourses operating in the text. These discourses elicit an activity in the text, which has an effect on the construction of reality, and I identify the discourses for the purpose of understanding their impact on the construction of a champion's reality.

The actual analysis of the text is done by means of special tools devised specifically for discourse analysis. Such methods, or tools, as they are termed by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), include the extraction from the text of binary oppositions, recurrent terms, phrases, metaphors, human subjects, the "author" and the "listener" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim). In order for a social constructionist researcher to identify discourses and discern their effects efficiently, it is necessary to strike a critical distance from the text. Thus, although I am immersed in a culture which enables me to recognize discourses in the text, performing the analysis requires me to extricate myself (to a degree) from the culture in which I live in order to reflect on that culture (Terre Blanche & Durrheim).

Only the first few pages of the actual process of analysis performed on the text for each champion suffice to illustrate how the information was organized and the analysis carried out. It should be noted, however, that the entire interview was analyzed in this way. This sample, as it were, of the analysis, is set out in tabular form at the beginning of the discussion of each champion. In the sections on results, which appear below the table in each case, the tools of analysis serve to extract the discourses from the entire text, and are individually identified and discussed. The effect of these discourses on the construction of a particular champion's reality is then explained. Let the analysis begin!

## Phase One: Vertical Analysis

*Wayne Ferreira*

Text of interview with Wayne Ferreira ( <i>I</i> = interviewer; <i>W</i> = Wayne)	Process of Analysis
<i>I</i> : Can you tell me of any special talent that any family members had or have?	Interviewer probes for uniqueness in system.
<i>W</i> : Not really, they were all pretty ordinary.	Lack of differentiation implied.
<i>I</i> : Is there any family theme or ethic or attitude that you think was passed down to your family from the families of the previous generations?	Coherence and legacy explored.
<i>W</i> : Old-fashioned.	Conservatism, narrow parameters indicated.
<i>I</i> : Were you close to your brothers and sisters?	Looking for alliances.
<i>W</i> : I was close to my sister when we were growing up. Now I am more close to my brother.	Omits comment on current relationship with sister. Possible binary opposition; <u>close-distance</u> is evoked. Indicates alliance with brother.
<i>I</i> : Not to your sister?	Probe for description of relationship with sister.
<i>W</i> : Not much, no. My brother is living in the States so I can call him more often. He lives in Utah. I don't see my sister too much. We had a bit of a falling out a few years back.	Again omission of relationship with sister. Eventually, distant relationship with sister confirmed.
<i>I</i> : That's a pity hey! Ja, that is a pity.	Interviewer as "listener" taking on therapeutic role.
<i>W</i> : Yeah, but shit happens.	Indicating acceptance of distance in relationship with sister.
<i>I</i> : And your parents, how's your relationship with them?	Looking for alliances, mood of relationship with parents.
<i>W</i> : I get along really well with my Mom, but my Dad, uh, we get along but we have our ups and downs.	Alliance with Mom, acceptance of difficulties with Dad.
<i>I</i> : OK, any of your grandparents, were they involved in your sport?	Looking for cross-generational alliances.
<i>W</i> : No, none of them. My one Gran used to	Absolutely no involvement with grandparents



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come and watch, but she was never involved.	emphasized. Binary opposition; <u>underinvolvement-overinvolvement</u> implied.
<i>I:</i> Your brother and sister, do you think they were supportive of your tennis, or was there competition?	Looking for type of involvement regarding sport.
<i>W:</i> My sister was not at all. I think she was a little jealous, she hated the fact that I did well. Um, my brother was a little bit ... also ... not that supportive when I was younger, but he also wanted to play tennis. But when he realized he wasn't going to make it, when he went to college, then he supported me a lot more. There was always that competition between us.	No involvement with sister and strained involvement with brother.
<i>I:</i> So there was competition among all the siblings?	Probing for complexities in sibling relationships.
<i>W:</i> Yeah, to an extent. I think my sister was just jealous that I did not really do much, that is, focused on anything, like schoolwork and still did well.	Differences between Wayne and his sister indicated. Reasons for differences, such as Wayne's special talents described.
<i>I:</i> Ja, I remember that you were provincial badminton, cricket, tennis.	Confirming Wayne's uniqueness.
<i>W:</i> Soccer and squash.	Emphasizing it.
<i>I:</i> Shoo! How would your family describe your role in the family, when you were growing up?	More emphasis. Life script explored.
<i>W:</i> They would be better to ask that. I think they looked at me in a weird way because I always had to do so little to get by. I never studied or practised and always did well and they did not like it at all. Both my brother and sister were pretty intense and serious and I was the exact opposite. I think they looked at me as a lazy, lucky person.	Family perceived uniqueness.  Describes special qualities  Differentiation indicated. Label = "lazy, lucky".
<i>I:</i> And your parents, also?	Confirming label or life script.
<i>W:</i> I think they looked at me as one of those people who was just good at everything. They never really forced me to do anything. They	Confirms lucky part, "good at everything". Facilitates such a script.

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were just really supportive of whatever it was that I wanted to do.

*I:* So how did they react to your wins, losses and practices? Did they get angry if you lost?

Exploring parents' relationship to sport.

*W:* Not at all. They got angry if I behaved badly on the court. They cared if I lost, but just because they were supportive. They both love watching, they get real intense and nervous, but they don't get upset if I lose.

Indication of disciplined upbringing.  
Healthy, supportive relationship regarding sport implied.  
Recurring term; intense in description of siblings and parents.

*I:* What would you say, then, your parents believe are the important things in life?

Coherence and family themes explored.

*W:* I think for my Mom the important things are her kids. She finds it very hard to let loose, to let us go away. She always wants to be involved and take control of our lives. And I got a bit tired of it, I split her out a bit. When I started travelling and moved off and started to live with my girlfriend, it was very hard for her to let go. And my Dad also tries to have a little bit of control on the financial side, I guess he's trying to be supportive by making sure that I do the right things with my money. But he wanted a little too much involvement. He has a little bit too much with my brother.

Enmeshment implied

Controlling parental relationship implied.  
Need for differentiation acknowledged.  
Recurring theme of differentiation.  
Recurring theme of enmeshment.  
Controlling parental relationship.

*I:* It makes sense because he's an accountant, so he would want to get involved in that.

Interviewer as "listener" taking on therapeutic role.

*W:* I wasn't sure if it was for a control issue or just personal help and caring. I think he overstepped the boundary into a control issue. It was his way of keeping in control of me.

Reference to psychological discourse.  
Interviewee as "author" taking on role of client in therapeutic relationship.

*I:* Parents are often like that.

Interviewer as "listener" taking on role of therapist or psychologist.

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### *Results of Analysis*

*Binary oppositions.* The first binary opposition found in the text, namely pretty ordinary-talented, is indicative of the theme of **differentiation**. In the text, Wayne refers

to his family as “pretty ordinary”, but he acknowledges that he himself is talented. A **discourse of differentiation** is operating in the text. The following are examples:

*I:* Can you tell me of any special talent that any family members had or have.

*W:* Not really. They were all pretty ordinary...

*I:* How would your family describe your role in the family, when you were growing up?

*W:* They would be better to ask that. I think they looked at me in a weird way because I always had to do so little to get by. I never studied or practised and always did well and they did not like it at all. Both my brother and sister were pretty intense and serious and I was the exact opposite. I think they looked at me as a lazy, lucky person.

Another binary opposition that is active in the text is that of closeness-distance. This evokes a **discourse of enmeshment** and a **discourse of differentiation**. Both discourses are evident in Wayne’s relationships with his siblings and with his parents. This dynamic is illustrated when Wayne avoids a direct answer to the question about whether he is close to his siblings. The implication is a distant relationship with them. He eventually admits to a distant relationship with his sister. His connection with his brother is maintained via a telephone, which in this context also evokes the image of distance. The binary opposition of closeness-distance, illustrating the **discourses of enmeshment and differentiation**, is shown in the following examples:

*I:* Were you close to your brothers and sisters?

*W:* I was close to my sister when we were growing up. Now I am more close to my brother.

*I:* Not to your sister?

*W:* Not much, no My brother is living in the States so I can call him more often. He lives in Utah. I don’t see my sister too much. We had a bit of a falling out a few years back...

*I:* What would you say, then, your parents believe are the important things in life?

*W:* I think for my Mom the important things are her kids. She finds it very hard to let loose, to let us go away. She always wants to be involved and take control of our lives. And I got a bit tired of it. I split her out a bit. When I started travelling and moved off and started to live with my girlfriend, it was very hard for her to let go.

And my Dad also tries to have a little bit of control on the financial side, I guess he's trying to be supportive by making sure that I do the right things with my money. But he wanted a little too much involvement. He has a little bit too much with my brother.

In the latter quotation the binary opposition of closeness-distance is evident in Wayne's relationship with his parents.

Wayne's emphasis of no involvement with his grandparents, compared with his relationship with his parents (always involved), seems to elicit the binary opposition of never involved-always involved. Such a binary opposition operating in the text contributes to a **discourse of enmeshment** in the context of Wayne's nuclear family. The following are examples.

*I:* OK, any of your grandparents, were they involved in your sport?

*W:* No, none of them. My one Gran used to come and watch, but she was never involved,

*W:* I think for my Mom the important things are her kids. She finds it very hard to let loose, to let us go away. She always wants to be involved and take control of our lives ...

And my Dad also tries to have a little bit of control on the financial side. I guess he's trying to be supportive by making sure that I do the right things with my money. But he wanted a little too much involvement. He has a little bit too much with my brother.

Wayne made it very clear that he wanted to be different from the people in his neighborhood, suggesting a binary opposition of did nothing-did something. A **discourse of differentiation** is evident in the following examples.

*I:* What type of neighbourhood did you grow up in? Can you describe it?

*W:* It was a typical neighbourhood in the south of Johannesburg. Not a rich neighbourhood – I'd say low to middle class. The people in the South did nothing. This motivated me to get provincial colours for as many sports as I could, so I was doing something – not like them.

*Recurrent terms, phrases, metaphors.* The following phrases contribute to a **discourse of differentiation** within the context of Wayne's family: "exact opposite", "the different one", "different from the rest", "relaxed", "nonchalant". Terms such as;

“intense”, “serious”, “nervous”, are used recurrently to describe Wayne’s family members, which implies their non-differentiation.

Recurrent themes of “holding on” and “letting go”, which contribute to the **discourses of enmeshment and differentiation** are illustrated by the following phrases: “let loose”, “go away”, “split her out”, “involved”, “control”, “too much involvement”, “moving away”, “losing control”, “moved in”, “chance to travel”. Wayne uses these terms to describe the dynamics between the parental subsystem and the child subsystem. The following text is included to illustrate the dynamic between the **discourses of enmeshment and differentiation**.

*I:* What would you say, then, your parents believe are the important things in life?

*W:* I think for my Mom the important things are her kids. She finds it very hard to let loose, to let us go away. She always wants to be involved and take control of our lives. And I got a bit tired of it. I split her out a bit. When I started travelling and moved off and started to live with my girlfriend, it was very hard for her to let go. And my Dad also tries to have a little bit of control on the financial side, I guess he’s trying to be supportive by making sure that I do the right things with my money. But he wanted a little too much involvement. He has a little bit too much with my brother ...

*I:* So they just have to come to terms with the nonchalant, lackadaisical you. You’ve done very well for having been that way.

*W:* There was always that control issue, say if I had a girlfriend, my Mom not being that happy would say that I was ruining my life, as they wanted me to focus on the tennis. But I just did not listen to them and it worked out fine. I think now they are starting to lighten up a bit. Before, they gave me a hard time for quite a long time for getting married...

*I:* How did their attitudes and beliefs affect your tennis?

*W:* I started travelling young, but I kept coming home and I would ask their advice for everything and they would make sure everything was fine. The problems all started when I met my wife and I moved in with her. I was the youngest and I think they realized they were losing control and that was hard for them.

A **discourse of confidence** is demonstrated by the following phrases: “good at everything”, “a lot of talent”, “I think there was (a significant relationship) I think it was with myself”, (which influenced his success), “mentally believing that I was good”, “I

feel more confident”, “I can be the best in the world”, “I feel a lot more confidence within myself again”, “never doubted myself”. The following are some examples quoted directly from the text containing a **discourse of confidence**.

*W:* I think they looked at me as one of those people who was just good at everything...

*I:* So in your life, growing up, was there any significant relationship that you had, that you feel affected or influenced your success?

*W:* Honestly I could say no. Although, I think there was, I think it was with myself.

A **discourse of doubt** is also operating in the text. The following phrases portray such a discourse: “doubting myself”, “I doubted my ability”, “I doubted myself”, “I was not confident within myself”. The following examples from the text illustrate the dynamic between a **discourse of confidence** and a **discourse of doubt**.

*I:* What would you say are significant attributes that facilitated your success?

*W:* I think I have a lot of talent. Mentally believing that I was good and that I had nothing to lose, that was a big attribute, but it was also a downfall.

*I:* Why do you say that it was a downfall?

*W:* For a while I did not do so well, so I started doubting myself, if I was at all that good. Before, I never doubted myself. When I went on to a match I always thought that I would win. Then when I was ranked in the top ten, and playing guys in the top ten, I started thinking, “G-d this match is hard, these guys may be better than me.” I started being negative and losing a lot of matches. So when I started off it was a good thing; and then when I was good and in the top ten, for a while it started being a bad thing.

*Human subjects.* Family is referred to many times in the text. The words “sister”, “brother”, “mother”, “father”, “wife”, “son”, and “grandparents” are mentioned. Reference to parents is also made often. The text is informed by a familial and a parental discourse. Those people that constitute Wayne’s neighborhood are also significant in this text, evoking a cultural discourse.

*The “author” and the “listener”.* The “author” of the text seems to be a client in a therapeutic relationship, expressing the dynamics in the various contexts of his life

through **personal**, and at times **psychological discourse**. The “listener” seems to be a therapist, owing to **therapeutic discourse** used as a response to the **personal and psychological discourse**. The following examples illustrate the impression of the “author” and the “listener” in the text.

*W:* I wasn't sure if it was for a control issue or just personal help and caring. I think he overstepped the boundary into a control issue. It was his way of keeping in control of me.

*I:* Parents are often like that.

*W:* I was moving away and they feared they were losing control over me and they were finding a way and that was their best way. Even today they still have control over my brother through finances. I guess they enjoy it as they still feel a part of his life.

*I:* It is probably their way of staying connected to you. The content of finances perhaps does not mean much to them.

*W:* Yeah, I am in a different position than my brother financially. I don't need any financial help. So there is no way of them having control over me.

*I:* They have to find different ways to stay connected to you.

*The effects of discourse.* According to the text, a discourse of differentiation seems to have been an activating factor in Wayne's reality as a champion. In the context of his family, the discourse of enmeshment seems to have stimulated Wayne's need to individuate and differentiate from his family. The discourse of differentiation appears to have been isomorphic at the level of his community system. He expressed his need to excel in sport, in a neighbourhood which apparently never excelled at anything. Wayne's need to differentiate was acted on when he began travelling on the international tennis circuit. He moved away from his family at a young age. A discourse of differentiation can be seen as creating the reality of a champion, as a champion is different from the rest in the sense that he is better than the rest. The theme of differentiation can also be related to confidence discourse in that such confidence in oneself may facilitate differentiation. A differentiated person would usually be someone who acknowledges all parts of himself for the purpose of development or maturation. The discourse of doubt operates in the text as a realistic and holistic assessment of the self in the context of continual optimum performance as a champion. The personal and psychological discourse functioning in the text may be linked to Wayne's insight into his life as a result of a process of

differentiation. The therapeutic discourse facilitates awareness and improvement, a necessary process in the reality of a champion.

The parental discourse evident in the text is related to a discourse of support that Wayne experienced in the creation of his champion's reality. The family discourse is significant in the sense that his life script or interactional process within the family can be perceived as isomorphic to his interaction in other contexts, such as the international tennis circuit.

*Maria Mutola*

<b>Text of interview with Maria Mutola</b> <i>(Interviewer: I; Maria: M)</i>	<b>Process of Analysis</b>
<i>I:</i> In this family, do you know your grandparents at all?	Interviewer explores previous generation, cohesiveness.
<i>M:</i> Not very well, I was young at the time. I grew up in a very difficult time in Mozambique when the war was very intense, so I couldn't travel much and my grandparents lived in other provinces. So I couldn't get involved with them like other kids, so I don't remember them much. But I did meet them. I also left Mozambique at a young age to live in the US.	Justifying lack of involvement with grandparents. Recurrent reference to "I": discourse of the self.
<i>I:</i> So when did you leave Mozambique?	Clarifying information.
<i>M:</i> 1990, I was about 17.	
<i>I:</i> Were there any special talents in your family?	Exploring uniqueness.
<i>M:</i> I think so, because my brother played basketball and my father used to love football a lot. My brother played for the Mozambican national team.	Acknowledges talented male family members.
<i>I:</i> Do you know if your grandparents had any special talents?	Exploring legacy.
<i>M:</i> No, but I know that they were farmers on both my father and my mother's side.	Associates legacy with farming.



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<i>I:</i> Did you know what they farmed?	Exploring theme of legacy.
<i>M:</i> At the time they had like 150 cows and the farm was so big they used to grow vegetables like coconut trees and mango trees. They were big time farmers. Now my family own the farm.	Pride in family legacy.
<i>I:</i> Shame, your dad must have been quite young when he passed away?	Commenting on genogram information.
<i>M:</i> He wasn't young. I'm coming from the second marriage of my father. So my mother was about 15 years younger than my Dad. So my Dad was 67 or 68.	Self discourse.
<i>I:</i> Do any of your sisters have any special talents?	Exploring women in the family.
<i>M:</i> In sports nothing. But they braid hair and business. Like my one sister has a hair salon and my other has a store and a bar. So they are into business.	Acknowledges their talents.
<i>I:</i> So they are businesswomen. Are they married?	
<i>M:</i> Ja, they are all married. One of them is divorced now.	
<i>I:</i> Who would you say you are closest to in the family?	Looking for alliances.
<i>M:</i> I think the second sister. She is Johanna and she is the one who owns a salon. I can say when I went to the US I was of a young age and I could not speak English, and it was very difficult for me and I wanted to go back home. And she was the one who actually encouraged me to stay because I was on a scholarship. She said that if I go back home, what am I gonna do, just go back to a Portuguese school. So she said, "Stay there for two or three years and if you don't like it then you come back." So she kept talking to me on the phone and encouraged me to stay and after one year I just started to like it and I did not want to go back home.	Acknowledges alliance.  Alliance played significant role.  Recurrent reference to "I": self discourse.  Discourse of support of significant other.

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<i>I:</i> So she played quite a significant role in your life in terms of your sport, because if it wasn't for her, you might have just been a regular kid in Mozambique.	Confirming significant impact of alliance.  Self-other dynamic.
<i>M:</i> That's true, but before my sister got involved there were other people important in my life. This guy who is a poet in Mozambique, Jose Craveverinha, used to watch soccer and he saw me sprinting on the field. He is very well-known in Mozambique. He is the one who came to talk to me about running and I switched sports from soccer to track and field.	Emphasis on role of significant others. <u>Self-other</u> binary opposition.
<i>I:</i> So you used to be a good soccer player?	Exploring talent.
<i>M:</i> Ja, I would say so. An all right soccer player.	Humble answer, possible binary opposition: <u>humility-conceit</u> .
<i>I:</i> So he saw your talent on the field and encouraged you to start?	
<i>M:</i> Yeah, to do track.	Avoids acknowledging talent: humble discourse.
<i>I:</i> Were your parents supportive of your athletics?	Exploring parent-child dynamics.
<i>M:</i> Ja, very much. They always support me. And I remember my father saying back then, to do whatever it takes to become better in whatever I do.	Discourse of support of significant others. Possible role model, self-other dynamic.
<i>I:</i> Did he say that when you were very young or when you were becoming good?	Exploring role of father.
<i>M:</i> When I was becoming good. When I was very young he did not talk much about it, but when I was becoming good he made sure I had everything I needed. Back then it cost a lot of money as I had to take transport like taxis to go and train.	Facilitated improvement.
<i>I:</i> So did you get the feeling that he felt that you could be great?	Exploring relationship.

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*M:* It's a little bit hard to say that, but I know that he saw something in me that I could be great. Because my father's goal was to see me succeed in school as well. He cared about sport, but not much. But he knew if I did well in sports, I could get scholarships. That he spoke of all the time. I could get a scholarship and go overseas to study and for sports as well.

Humble discourse.

Possible alliance.

*I:* So for him education was more important.

*M:* Ja

*I:* And sport would be your way of getting into a university in the States. Would you say that it was very important in your family to achieve in things?

Exploring family values.

*M:* I left home at a fairly young age. But I would say that it was important to achieve because always when I won a race, I would come home, they always congratulate me and tell me, "good job!" and that inspires me a lot.

Family discourse is significant.

*I:* What about if you lost, how would they react?

*M:* The same thing. They always say, "never mind you will do better next time." Whether I lost or won they always did more or less the same thing. They would say whether you lose or you win it doesn't matter. But when I went to the US and met my coach it was a different story (giggles).

Unconditional family support.

Discourse of significant others.

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### *Results of Analysis*

*Binary oppositions.* The **discourse of significant others**, thus a binary opposition of other-self, seems to permeate the text. A curiosity about the self is therefore brought to the fore. A **discourse of self** is also evident. A dynamic between self and other seems to be at play. It is assumed that the **discourse of significant others** is meaningful in creating

a reality in which the **discourse of the self** emerges. The following examples illustrate the **discourse of significant others**.

*I:* Who would you say is the closest to you in the family?

*M:* I think the second sister. She is Johanna and she is the one who owns a salon. I can say when I went to the US I was of a young age and I could not speak English, and it was very difficult for me and I wanted to go back home. And she was the one who actually encouraged me to stay because I was on a scholarship. She said that if I go back home, what am I gonna do, just go back to a Portuguese school. So she said, Stay there for 2 or 3 years and if you don't like it then you come back." So she kept talking to me on the phone and encouraged me to stay and after one year I just started to like it and I did not want to go back home.

*I:* So she played quite a significant role in your life in terms of your sport, because if it wasn't for her you might have just been a regular kid in Mozambique.

*M:* That's true, but before my sister got involved there were other people important in my life. This guy who is a poet in Mozambique, Jose Craveverinha, used to watch soccer and he saw me sprinting on the field. He is very well-known in Mozambique. He is the one who came to talk to me about running and I switched sports from soccer to track and field.

In the next quotation the binary opposition of other-self is dynamic. The **discourse of support from significant others** seems to facilitate a **discourse of the self**. The following examples illustrate such a dynamism.

*M:* Ja, a lot of Americans came to talk to me, to get me to the US, because they saw that 2.04, at that age, is very fast. All those people were telling me that if you train hard enough by the time you are 20 you can do this and that. So I told myself probably they are right and I start believing it.

In the following quotation the emphasis has swung towards the self:

*M:* You have to train hard to be good, you have to believe you are going to win, and you have to make sure that nobody else, you got to be selfish. For example, you got to think that I am the one who the others are out to beat. Instead of saying that I want to beat that one, you have to think that all the people are saying about you. But I know that other people can win as well, but you have to go there with a very positive attitude.

*I:* So basically, you go into a race thinking that you are the best and everybody is looking to beat you. You are not looking to beat everybody else?

The term “selfish” demonstrates that when it comes to winning, which constitutes a champion’s reality, the self is the focus rendering its power. The **discourse of support from significant others** can contribute to the **discourse of a powerful self**, or a **discourse of self-reliance**.

The text shows Maria’s strong sense of humility. However, the **discourse of humility** by a champion evokes the binary opposition of conceit, or rather in Maria’s case, the **discourse of a powerful self or self-reliance**. This is illustrated by the following.

*I:* So you used to be a good soccer player.

*M:* Ja, I would say so. An alright soccer player ...

*I:* So did you get the feeling that he felt that you could be great?

*M:* It’s a little bit hard to say that, but I know that he saw something in me that I could be great ...

*I:* What would you say are your significant attributes, the qualities that you have that make you a champion?

*M:* I think it is everything combined, you have to be at the right place at the right time, but also you have to prepare yourself for the event.

The following examples from the text encapsulate the dynamic between humility and conceit. A **discourse of humility** interplays with a **discourse of a powerful self**:

*M:* The neighbourhood that I grew up was a poor neighbourhood actually. But the people were very close and very friendly and everybody knows everybody. All the kids would play together – even today, the people that I grew up with, we are still friends. Almost all of them, so I call them once in a while, they call me. But we always try to see each other ...

*M:* Instead of saying that I want to beat that one, you have to think that all the people are saying about you. But I know that other people can win as well, but you have to go there with a very positive attitude.

*I:* So basically, you go into a race thinking that you are the best and everybody is looking to beat you. You are not looking to beat everybody else?

*M:* Exactly, exactly!

*I:* So you are actually very confident.

*M:* Yeah, you have to be, but sometimes things are not that way. But you have to be confident. You know sometimes you go into a race thinking that I am going to win this and I have to win this, but things don't go your way, they go someone else's way. But there's nothing we can do about it. But I think I have to go to a race with a winning mind.

*Recurrent terms, phrases, metaphors.* The **discourse of support** and the **discourse of significant others** is predominant in the text. The following phrases illustrate such discourses: "encouraged", "significant role", "other people important in my life", "they always support me", "we have a good relationship", "talk to my family, talk to my coach, close people only", "played a big role in my life and he always encouraged me", "a lot of Americans came to talk to me", "thank G-d every time you win", "he always believed in me".

Some examples of the above phrases in the context of the text include:

*M:* I think the second sister. I can say when I went to the US I was of a young age and I could not speak English, and it was very difficult for me and I wanted to go back home. And she was the one who actually encouraged me to stay because I was on a scholarship ...

*I:* So she played quite a significant role in your life in terms of your sport, because if it wasn't for her you might have just been a regular kid in Mozambique.

*M:* That's true, but before my sister got involved there were other people important in my life...

*I:* Were your parents supportive of your athletics?

*M:* Ja, very much. They always support me ...

*Human subjects.* The **discourse of significant others** is very strong when looking at the human subjects in the text. The poet, his son (Maria's coach), the Americans, Maria's sister and father, all play a significant role in contributing to her champion's reality. **Family discourse** is also operating in the text, as there are many references to family, not only by the interviewer but also by the interviewee. The references to the Mozambique athletic team, as well as Maria's hometown friends in Mozambique, contribute to a **cultural discourse** in the text.

*The “author” and the “listener”.* The author sounds like a fortunate person who has an optimistic outlook on life. For example: the author states that what makes her a champion “is everything combined, you have to be at the right place at the right time ... there is no reason to change (coaches) if everything looks good.” A **discourse of optimism** underlies the text.

However the “listener” seems to be listening for uniqueness in the text, for example the magic such a champion possesses. The “listener” emphasizes, “What would you say are your significant attributes, the qualities that you have that make you a champion.” **Champion discourse** operates here.

*The effects of discourse.* The discourse of support and the discourse of significant others seem to have been and are major contributors in guiding Maria to the champion’s reality she experiences today. The role of significant others appears to have facilitated contexts for Maria in which a champion’s reality could be realized. The support she received from her family and the significant roles her father and sister played in her life seem to be isomorphic to the different contexts in which others played significant roles in Maria’s life, outside of her family system. The encouragement she received from others seems to have elicited a strong belief in herself and stimulated an effective discourse of self in terms of becoming a champion. Although coming from the humble discourse of her Mozambican way of life and culture, in the context of an intense discourse of support from significant others, Maria’s champion’s reality became characterized by a powerful discourse of self. The cultural discourse as well as the strong supportive discourse may be facilitative of Maria’s discourse of optimism, which probably plays a major role in contributing to the remarkable reality of a champion.

*Brian Mitchell*

<b>Text of interview with Brian Mitchell</b> <i>(Interviewer: I; Brian: B)</i>	<b>Process of Analysis</b>
<i>I: Were your parents married?</i>	Information gathering on genogram.
<i>B: My Mom and Dad were divorced when I was 5 years old and I am an only child. I grew up with my Mom and I spent the first 5 years of my school life at boarding school.</i>	Stipulating difficult family circumstances.
<i>I: Did you know your grandparents?</i>	Looking for legacy.
<i>B: I met them, but I did not have a relationship with them.</i>	
<i>I: Were they of South African origin?</i>	
<i>B: My Dad's father was of Scottish origin and my Mom's father was Jewish, but their spouses were South African.</i>	
<i>I: Did your family members have any special talents?</i>	Looking for uniqueness within nuclear family.
<i>B: My father was a South African boxing champion in 1962.</i>	Significant role model.
<i>I: How was your relationship with your father, did you see him often?</i>	Looking for alliances.
<i>B: I did not see him as a child. My relationship with my Dad was later in my life when I became a boxing champion. I would take him overseas with me to support my fight. That kind of thing.</i>	Acknowledges no relationship, at first. Stipulates event when relationship started.
<i>I: How come, if your relationship wasn't so close when you were young, that you followed in his footsteps?</i>	Exploring father-son dynamic.
<i>B: Psychologically it was always in the back of my mind. I wanted to do like my father. I wanted to be a boxing champion. From a young child it was always my dream to follow in my Dad's footsteps. And he wasn't there to</i>	Psychological discourse. Idealizes father, desires related to father. Binary opposition: <u>idealize-disparage</u> . A struggle is evident, subtle disappointment



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support me. My Mom supported me, but she wasn't keen on boxing. You know, I was a 9-year-old child, but that was all I wanted. But that's the only reason I became a champion. I just pursued it.	towards Dad. Determination and desire at very young age.  Synonym for pursued: persevered – a struggle, a fight. Exploring family values.
<i>I:</i> Would you say there was unconditional love in your family or was it based on achieving something or accomplishing something?	
<i>B:</i> I would say it was unconditional love with my Mom. I was an only child, so she spoilt me. Not financially, we weren't financially secure. And she supported me throughout my young sporting life.	Specifies relationship with Mom. Implication: perceives conditional love from Dad.  Financial struggle – fighting metaphor. Discourse of support.
<i>I:</i> What was her attitude towards your boxing, for example did she make sure you trained?	Exploring mother-son dynamic.
<i>B:</i> Ja, she supported me, but I did a lot on my own. You know, I wanted it. A lot of the top sportsmen weren't pushed by anyone, they were pushed by themselves. And I wanted to be the best, to achieve and I kept pushing myself to be the best.	Discourse of support. Desire, determination.  Fighting metaphor.
<i>I:</i> Would you say not having a father was an adverse circumstance when you were growing up? Do you feel you lost out?	Looking for interpersonal process with father.
<i>B:</i> You know, what I always feel in life, what you haven't had you don't miss. I was a 5-year-old kid and I did not have a relationship with my Dad, so I got used to that was what life was. My mother put a roof over my head, she clothed me and put shoes on my feet and that was it. So no, I didn't miss my father as such. When I grew up and I started to look at other kids, then I suppose I thought it would be nice to have a Dad around. And today I'm a father of 3 kids, and I'm also divorced. Now I see how much I give my children, so I could have had a relationship with my Dad.	Justifying lack of relationship.  Ambivalence, supports binary opposition: <u>idealize-disparage</u> .  Acknowledging difficulty.  Regrets lack of early relationship.

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### *Results of Analysis*

*Binary oppositions.* The binary opposition of idealize-disparage is operating in the text. A **discourse of idealization** seems to be evident in Brian's relationship with his father. A subtle ambivalence is conveyed when Brian talks of his relationship with his father. Thus a **discourse of disparagement** may be underlying the text, which may have been a significant factor in Brian's desire to be a boxing champion. The following examples illustrate this dynamic.

*I:* How come, if your relationship wasn't so close when you were young, that you followed in his footsteps?

*B:* Psychologically it was always in the back of my mind. I wanted to do like my father. I wanted to be a boxing champion. From a young child it was always my dream to follow in my Dad's footsteps. And he wasn't there to support me ...

*I:* Would you say not having a father was an adverse circumstance when you were growing up? Do you feel you lost out?

*B:* You know, what I always feel in life, what you haven't had you don't miss. I was a 5-year-old kid and I did not have a relationship with my Dad, so I got used to that was what life was. My mother put a roof over my head, she clothed me and put shoes on my feet and that was it. So no, I didn't miss my father as such. When I grew up and I started to look at other kids, then I suppose I thought it would be nice to have a Dad around. And today I'm a father of 3 kids, and I'm also divorced. Now I see how much I give my children, so I could have had a relationship with my Dad.

*Recurrent terms, phrases, metaphors.* It is certainly significant that Brian is a boxing champion, as a fighting metaphor permeates the text. A **fighting discourse** is evident in many contexts in Brian's life. It is as if life was or is a fight, for Brian. The following phrases allude to the fighting metaphor: "I kept pushing myself", "I just pursued it", "we were battling", "the harder I worked the easier life would become, or my sport", "a lot of fighting, a lot of animosity between girls and boys", "people ganged up against each other", "I worked so hard".

Some examples of the above phrases in the text include:

*I:* What was her attitude towards your boxing, for example, did she make sure you trained?

*B:* Ja, she supported me, but I did a lot on my own. You know, I wanted it. A lot of the top sportsmen weren't pushed by anyone, they were pushed by themselves. And I wanted to be the best, to achieve and I kept pushing myself to be the best ...

*I:* Would you say, if you doubted yourself, was there anything specific that you did to resurrect your confidence?

*B:* Just trained harder, everything around training. What you put into your life you get out of it. I knew that the harder I worked the easier my life would become, or my sport.

*I:* Did the kids in the area play sport together?

*B:* At that stage, there was a lot of fighting. A lot of animosity between the boys and girls, gangs, a lot of gangs. People ganged up against each other. But I was OK because I was one of the main guys.

The following recurrent phrases illustrate that a **discourse of respect** is operating in the text: "manners was important", "my Mom and my Dad are quite respectful people", "manners was a big thing and respect for your parents", "they all respected me", "you earn respect", "people respect what I did", "I get so much respect for it now".

Examples of the above discourse in the context of the text are the following.

*I:* What did you think was important in life for your Mom?

*B:* Manners was important, in my upbringing. And the good things I suppose, she wanted me to get an education, although I left in standard 8 ...

*I:* How would you describe your parents' self-esteem, your Mom and your Dad respectively?

*B:* I think my Mom and my Dad are quite respectful people.

*I:* OK, I'm just going to take you back to your school life. At school, was there any specific relationship that you had, let's say with a teacher who encouraged you? Or while you were growing up, was there any relationship that you had with someone who really supported and encouraged your boxing?

*B:* I had an uncle, my Mom's brother, who was also a boxer. He used to take me to the amateur gym. And he supported me, but not really teachers as such. Boxing being a man's sport, you get a lot of support from everybody, when they know you are a good boxer. You know, like I was one of the small guys at high school, but I never had any problems with anybody because they all respected me. The nice thing about boxing, where you are successful – or any sport, I suppose – everybody wants a pat on the back. So you earn

respect, I suppose, when you are good at something. I think that's what I enjoy most about life, even up until today. Is that people respect what I did. I worked so hard in my life and I get so much respect for it now, you know, it's wonderful.

*Human subjects.* Family discourse can be identified in the text. Both the interviewer and the interviewee mention Brian's mother and father, and Brian refers to his uncle and aunt. The trainers mentioned in the text are significant, as the context in which they are referred to contributes to the fighting discourse operating in the text. A human subject Brian refers to is a promoter, Rodney Berman, and the manner in which Brian speaks of him supports the discourse of respect.

*The "author" and the "listener".* The "author" seems to be a person who is enjoying taking stock of his life and expressing his conclusions about the experiences he has had in his life. In an example illustrating this, the "author" says, "So if there was one person, it would be him without a doubt." I suppose this may contribute to a **therapeutic or psychological discourse** underlying the text. The "listener" seems to be a person attempting to receive as much information as she can from the "author". For example, she says, " Well, I've asked you everything I need to ask." A **discourse of interest or learning** is evident here.

*The effects of discourse.* It is evident in the text that Brian is aware of the early effect that the relationship with his father had on him. Both discourses of idealization and discourses of disparagement in the context of Brian's relationship with his father may have contributed to the hunger that inspired Brian to become a boxing champion. The fighting discourse to which Brian was exposed in the many contexts of his life also affected his perseverance in his champion reality. The discourse of respect that was instilled in him as such an important aspect of life seems to have stimulated his need to gain respect by working hard to become good at boxing and ultimately a world champion. Family discourse also played an instrumental role in supporting Brian's champion reality. The therapeutic or psychological discourse underlying the text is significant in the sense that it has been therapeutic for Brian to experience psychological benefits, such as respect and confidence in his life, as a result of a champion's reality.

*Reg Park*

<b>Text of interview with Reg Park</b> <i>(Interviewer: I &amp; Reg: R)</i>	<b>Process of Analysis</b>
<i>I:</i> Did your grandparents have any special talents?	Exploring legacy.
<i>R:</i> I don't think so.	Hesitant.
<i>I:</i> What was their occupation?	Information gathering.
<i>R:</i> On my mother's side my grandfather was a miner. On my father's side my grandfather was a jack-of-all-trades. I did not bother with that side of the family very much.	Allied with mother's extended family.
<i>I:</i> Did your parents have any special talents?	Looking for uniqueness.
<i>R:</i> My father was a very good salesman.	Positive connotation of father's career.
<i>I:</i> And your Mom, did she stay home with you or did she work?	
<i>R:</i> She was the chairman of the household board.	Positive connotation of housewife. Positive discourse emerging.
<i>I:</i> So she was a housewife, I like the way you use the word chairman. When did you come to South Africa?	Positive discourse commended.
<i>R:</i> I came here in January 1959.	
<i>I:</i> So you grew up in England. To get a better idea of your family – would you say you were closer to your mother or your father?	Looking for alliances.
<i>R:</i> Equal.	No alliances.
<i>I:</i> Could you describe their self-esteem, respectively? Would you say they were confident people?	
<i>R:</i> My mother was very competent. There's a difference between competence and confidence. Perhaps not confident. She started off, as a young girl, as a kennel maid, and then joined the ambulance service during the war. A very competent woman. She paved her driveway at 65 years of age, carrying 45 slabs of slasto. My father had a very good appearance. He ran away from home at 16 and joined the guards.	Confidence discourse.  Positive connotation. Admires mother. Discourse of admiration.
<i>I:</i> Why did he have to run away from home?	
<i>R:</i> I believe his father was quite a tyrant. That's	

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possibly why I didn't want much to do with them. The bearing that he had was influenced by the 16, 17, 18 formative years, terribly upright. You could see the guy had been military trained, when he was in his 80s. Very tidy, very methodical, wore clothes very well and people liked him. He was a nice, outgoing, gregarious man without being over the top. He created a good impression.

Positive description of father's disposition.

Discourse of admiration.

Admires father.

*I:* Do you think his methodicalness, his discipline had any influence on you.

Looking for role models.

*R:* It influenced me enormously. If you walked into my office you would see.

Father a role model.

*I:* Do you think it affected your discipline, because as a champion you have to be disciplined.

*R:* I never thought about it in that respect, from a recently early age, when I focused on something I went for it. At school I was *victor ludorum*, and even though I wasn't a senior yet I was captain of the house team.

Positive discourse.

*I:* While we are on that point, were there any other sports that you were good at?

*R:* Soccer. At 14 I was the youngest to play in the school first team. At 18 I played in the Leads under 18 team – with 100 000 population, it's quite an achievement.

Self-admiration.

*I:* So you were a good sportsman?

*R:* Track and soccer.

*I:* How would you describe your parents' style of child-rearing.

Exploring family dynamics.

*R:* Well it's rather strange, because you see, I was born in 1928 and things were very tough, there was a depression worldwide. My mother was holding down a job, my father was holding down a job, just to make ends meet. So they sent me to my maternal grandparents who virtually brought me up. I found it confusing, because I would call my grandparents "Mum" and "Dad", and then when my parents came to see me I did not quite know what the connection was.

Grew up in context of difficulty. An atmosphere of pessimism. The binary opposition of pessimism is optimism, which may have been a major contributing factor to the positive discourse.

*I:* So at what age did you go and stay with them?

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R: About 1 or 2 years old, because of circumstances, and I'm sure it was the same for a lot of people. As I got older I distinguished them by calling my grandparents "Little Mum and Dad", and my real parents "Big Mum and Dad".

I: How would you then describe your grandparents?

R: A great deal of love, and there were three sisters, two sisters of my mother's, and they always gave me a great deal of affection. My maternal grandfather I felt a great deal of affection for. I thought he was a beautiful man. He never complained, he worked down on the mine. He overcame TB, which in those days was quite a feat. At 15 he started mining and at 18 he joined the army. In the First World War he was literally gassed, which he survived, and went back to work on the mines. I think he had a great constitution. He was a simplistic person who accepted his way of life. He never complained about it. He seemed content with what he was doing. He had a garden with some pigs and racing pigeons. He was a very humble guy. He influenced me enormously by his quietness. I mean, he would get up at 4 o'clock in the morning to do a 6 o'clock shift in Yorkshire, where it was snowing like hell. He would go into the kitchen and fry himself bacon and eggs. Then walk a couple of miles to the mine and work an eight-hour shift. Then he would come home, and there were no baths in those days, and he would wash with no hot water. I had a great deal of endearment for him. He was the guy who was putting bread on the table for me. I like to believe that I was sensitive, as a very young boy, to the effect that I knew what he was doing to put bread on the table for me and I would try to help him. I would carry a bucket of water and corn for him to the garden, and the handles were just the metal, carrying a bucket in each hand about 300 yards was quite something for a youngster, 7, 8, 9, just to help him. I am actually pleased that I was brought up in the humbleness of a mining village. It influenced me enormously.

Legacy may be love and admiration.

Admires grandfather.

Positive discourse.

Extremely difficult circumstances

Admiration.

Grandfather as role model.

In awe of grandfather, a discourse of admiration.

Discourse of admiration

Self-admiration.

Acknowledges the context of difficulty.

Acknowledges effect of such a context.

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### *Results of Analysis*

*Binary oppositions.* Reg grew up during the time of the 1928 Great Depression. Such a context of pessimism may elicit the need for attributing positive connotations to situations as a method of survival, suggesting a binary opposition of pessimism-optimism, and a positive discourse does, in fact, permeate the text. The following are examples.

*I:* So when did you begin to believe you were the best?

*R:* From there I entered the Mr Universe after two years of training, which is kind of ridiculous you know, it was 1950, two years and entering the world tournaments. Here I was, beaten into second place, by a fellow called Reeves. Even though I lost I thought I was better than him. So I said that's all right, I'll come back next year and win. Nobody's going to put me down. I knew I was going to win it. I did. I forget to tell you after this 1950 Mr Universe, I won M. Europe and then I went to live in America.

*R:* Oh, it's all mental training, without even knowing it. I just set it up in my mind.

*I:* How did you do that?

*R:* It was like the four-minute mile. Someone said to me that a weightlifter had just bench-pressed 500 pounds. I was in Bristol two weeks later, and I was on the stage. I went up to 490 and someone said to me, "Reg, why don't you take 500?" And I thought, if a heavyweight can do this then I can. It never entered my mind that I couldn't do it.

The binary opposition of positive is negative. Due to the predominant **positive discourse**, a **negative discourse** may be underlying the text. In the context of pessimism during the Great Depression, it can be surmised that people embraced **positive discourse** for fear of being destroyed by the negative alternative. Hence a **negative discourse** underlying the text may be understood as a fear of destruction of the self. For example, during the interview I asked Reg about his fears and doubts, and his avoidance of any **negative discourse** is clear in his replies:

It never worried me if I got beaten. It wasn't the end of the world. I wasn't destroyed. I was still Reg Park.

Other examples include:



*R:* If you meet with success and disaster in the same mode, then you are laughing at everybody else. That quotation came from a poem by Kipling, called "If". I was brought up with it.

*I:* So where do your anger and sadness go?

*R:* I put it into perspective, and I make a positive out of it. I also talk to my wife. My wife is my wife, girlfriend, lover, sister, soul mate. And I hope that I am that to her in a male sense.

**Confidence discourse** is active in the text. The binary opposition is a **discourse of diffidence**, which can be extended from the underlying **negative discourse of a fear of destruction of the self**. It can be assumed that if confidence in oneself is not fostered, diffidence can lead to destruction of the self. The **discourse of confidence**, which is dominantly operative, is illustrated in the following.

*I:* Well, as a champion I have found that one must be confident that you are the best but at the same time acknowledge that getting beaten is always a possibility.

*R:* I knew I was the best. When I first saw a Mr Universe I said that I would be better than him ...

*I:* So in order to take control you had to know your weaknesses. So do you think the significant attributes to your success are knowing yourself, belief in yourself?

*R:* I'll tell you about an experience. In 1961 I got a cable from Rome: come to Rome for a film test for the film Hercules. So I sent a telegram back saying: "Send a ticket, put me in a five-star hotel, with a hundred dollars a day, and I'll come." So I arrived there and they put me up in a magnificent hotel. They asked me if I had ever filmed before and I said "No". I met a guy called Burt Nelson, who started the Method School in New York. He was reading the script out. He said to me, "The Method School is very simple, if the script determines that you must be angry, then be angry. Think of things that make you angry. If you should be funny, think of things which are funny." So I said, "Well, I'm Hercules. I don't have to think of it, I am it." I did the test and there was a gym nearby, and I was having a workout. They phoned me from the studios and said, "We are going to see the film test, do you want to come along?" And I said, "No, not particularly." And it kind of threw them, and they said, "Why?" And I said, Well, why did you bring me here?" And they said, "Because we think you are Hercules." And I said, "Fine, I'm working out, I *am* Hercules."

*Recurrent terms, phrases, metaphors.* A **discourse of admiration** is operating in the text. Such a discourse can be identified particularly in Reg's descriptions of his very

early years. There are many recurrent phrases in the text which clearly illustrate such a discourse: “a great deal of love”, “gave me a great deal of affection”, “my maternal grandfather, I felt a great deal of affection for”, “he was a beautiful man”, “he never complained”, “he overcame TB which in those days was quite a feat”, “he had a great constitution”, “he was a very humble guy”, “I had a great deal of endearment for him”, “I was sensitive, as a very young boy, to the effect that I knew what he was doing to put bread on the table for me and I would try to help him”. The latter quotation illustrates self-admiration, which contributes to a **discourse of admiration**.

More examples include: “a very good salesman”, “chairman of the household board”, “a very competent woman”, “very tidy, very methodical”, “she was the most beautiful woman in the world, more beautiful than Elizabeth Taylor, and a great cook”.

The recurrent phrases in the text which obviously portray a **discourse of confidence** are the following: “I knew I was the best”, “I knew I was going to be the best in the world and I was there for 15 years”, “you’ve gotta have the sureness”, “it never worried me if I got beaten...I was still Reg Park”.

*Human subjects.* Both the interviewer and the interviewee refer to family members, which demonstrates a family discourse in the text. It is evident that Reg devotes a lot of time to his grandparents in the text, especially his grandfather. A discourse of role models seems to be operating, as Reg emphasizes how both his father and his grandfather “influenced (him) enormously”. The interviewer asks about “idols” and Reg names Grimick, the 1948 Mr Universe champion, as well as Reeves, which strengthens the role model discourse.

*The “author” and the “listener”.* The “author” implicit in the text seems to be an expert in his field of bodybuilding, but his character is brushed with humility. The “author’s” stance contributes to the discourses of confidence and diffidence. The “listener” seems to be knowledgeable in her field of champions and psychology, but is intrigued by the “author”. Psychological and expert discourses are operating here. The following examples help create the impression of the “author” and the “listener”.

R: No, I knew I could be the best. Is that egotistical?.

I: No not at all.

R: Tell me, Toni. I don't care.

I: Well, I interviewed Wayne, Brian, and both of them said that they were the significant person in their lives that influenced their success ...

I: And your Mom, did she stay home with you or did she work?

R: She was the chairman of the household board.

I: So she was a housewife. I like the way you use the word chairman ...

I: It intrigues me that you see deeper than just achievement.

R: Human relationships are the most important things in life.

*The effects of discourse.* A discourse of admiration and a positive discourse seem to have been active during Reg's early years. The love and admiration that emanated from his nuclear and extended family provided a context in which he appears to have learned about love and admiration of the self. Such an experience may be a facilitating factor for the discourse of confidence that clearly contributes to Reg's champion's reality. The intensely positive discourse that Reg embraces, which may have been a way of coping in an extremely negative context, such as the Great Depression, has proved to be a beneficial factor in Reg's journey towards accomplishment. The hidden discourses of diffidence and negativity may serve to temper Reg's intense positivity and confidence, fostering in him a realism necessary for a champion's reality. The discourse of role models seems to have also fostered in Reg the realistic characteristics for the creation of a champion's reality. The discipline he learned from his father and the humility he learned from his grandfather have both contributed to creating Reg's champion reality.

<b>Text of e-mail interview with Amanda Coetzer</b> <i>(Interviewer: I; Amanda: A)</i>	<b>Process of Analysis</b>
I: Are your parents still married?	Information gathering.
A: Yes.	
I: How many children in your family?	
A: Four.	
I: What would you say your parents believe are the important things in life?	Looking for significant family theme.
A: Family, duty/work, ethics, respect for other people, faith in God and enthusiasm for life.	Interesting family theme.
I: Describe your relationship with your mother and father respectively.	Exploring parent-child dynamic.
A: A little bit difficult in a few lines, but very healthy and good relationships with both.	Acknowledges importance of these relationships.
I: How would you describe your mother and your father's self-esteem, respectively?	
A: Both have good self-esteem, in my opinion. I was raised in a more traditional family, where the father is the head of the household, the breadwinner, and my mother never worked or earned her own money; but despite that I think she has taken pride in raising her children - a sign to me that both have good self-esteem.	Positive dynamic. Exploring confidence discourse. Positive about parents' self-esteem.
I: How would you describe the style of your parents' child rearing?	Exploring parent-child dynamic.
A: I would say we were brought up liberally and not very strictly in the context of the environment that I grew up in (small town, Afrikaans society etc).	Child rearing fostered an open family context in relation to the environment.
I: Is there sibling rivalry in your family?	Exploring sibling dynamic.
A: Not really.	Uncertain.

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<i>I:</i> Were your siblings supportive of your sport?	More information on sibling dynamic.
<i>A:</i> Yes, very much.	Supportive sibling dynamic.
<i>I:</i> Do other members of your family have any special talents? If so what are they?	Exploring uniqueness in family.
<i>A:</i> They have mostly focused on academics.	Acknowledges some talent.
<i>I:</i> How would you say your family would have described you when you were growing up, and/or how would you describe your role in the family?	Looking for life script.
<i>A:</i> The most competitive.	
<i>I:</i> Are there other great achievers in your parents' family histories, for example your grandparents?	Looking for family legacy.
<i>A:</i> No.	
<i>I:</i> What was your parents' attitude towards your sport and your ability?	Exploring dynamic around champion reality.
<i>A:</i> They were always very supportive, shown a lot of faith in my abilities. They never pushed me but always provided encouragement and cushioned support when things did not go well.	Supportive discourse. Confidence discourse. Facilitative context Extremely supportive: image of cushioned support illustrates a discourse of buoyancy or adaptability.
<i>I:</i> How did their attitudes and beliefs about you make you feel?	Exploring impact of parental dynamic.
<i>A:</i> One of their favorite things that they used to say to me before a match, growing up and even still today, is to go out and see what you can do - to go and test my own abilities, that always made me feel good.	Implies consistency. No expectation, creating a facilitative context. Self-measurement, self-exploration: discourse of the self.

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### *Results of Analysis*

*Binary oppositions.* There were no binary oppositions that were perceived to be of significance.

*Recurrent terms, phrases, metaphors.* The theme of facilitation occurs in the many contexts of Amanda's reality, and a **discourse of facilitation** is therefore operating.

The following terms have the effect of making each context easier: “enthusiasm for life”, “supportive”, “faith in my abilities”, “encouragement”, “liberally”, “go out and see what you can do”, “most of the time exciting, a lot of things to explore and experience out there”, “so what, lighten up a bit and just try to have fun”, “whenever I feel the need to”.

The following portrays some of the above terms in the context of the text in which a **discourse of facilitation** is evident:

*I:* How would you describe the style of your parents’ child rearing?

*A:* I would say we were brought up liberally and not very strictly in the context of the environment that I grew up in (small town, Afrikaans society etc) ...

*I:* What was your parents’ attitude towards your sport and your ability?

*A:* They were always very supportive, shown a lot of faith in my abilities. They never pushed me but always provided encouragement and cushioned support when things did not go well ...

*I:* How did their attitudes and beliefs about you make you feel?

*A:* One of their favorite things that they used to say to me before a match, growing up and even still today, is to go out and see what you can do - to go and test my own abilities, that always made me feel good ...

*I:* As far back into your childhood as you can remember, what did life look like for you?

*A:* Most of the time exciting, a lot of things to explore and experience out there.

The **discourse of adaptability** is also active in the text. The following phrases show that such a discourse is evident in the contexts of Amanda’s reality: “excited about wins, sympathetic and kind about losses”, “I was competing with the best whatever level I found myself in, then you look to the next level, and work your way into that, etc”, “the ability to adapt and learn”, “now that I have travelled all over the world, it becomes more and more difficult to describe the South African culture and the culture I grew up with.”

Some examples illustrating the above phrases in the text are the following:

*I:* How did they (Amanda’s parents) react to your wins, losses and practising?

A: Excited about wins, sympathetic and kind about losses. Over the course of my career they have probably cautioned me more about practising too much rather than too little.

Amanda's parental system adapted easily to the unpredictable context of sports competition.

I: When did you begin to believe that you could compete with the best in your sport?

A: I always knew that, but that is speaking relatively. Looking back it always seems like I was competing with the best of whatever level I found myself in, then you look to the next level, and work your way into that, etc.

It seems as if Amanda is able to adapt her ability to the high levels of elite sports competition.

The following phrases reveal a **discourse of confidence**, which is operating in the text: "both have good self-esteem", "shown a lot of faith in my abilities", "I was quite good", "I always knew that ... I was competing with the best of whatever level I found myself in." The following are some examples in the context of the text, which illustrate a **discourse of confidence**.

I: How would you describe your mother and your father's self-esteem, respectively?

A: Both have good self-esteem, in my opinion. I was raised in a more traditional family, where the father is the head of the household, the breadwinner, and my mother never worked or earned her own money; but despite that I think she has taken pride in raising her children - a sign to me that both have good self-esteem ...

I: What was your parents' attitude towards your sport and your ability?

A: They were always very supportive, shown a lot of faith in my abilities. They never pushed me but always provided encouragement and cushioned support when things did not go well ...

I: When did you begin to believe that you could compete with the best in your sport?

A: I always knew that, but that is speaking relatively. Looking back it always seems like I was competing with the best of whatever

level I found myself in, then you look to the next level, and work your way into that, etc.

*Human subjects.* The interviewer and the interviewee co-create a **family discourse** that is operating in the text. **Parental discourse** is emphasized in the way Amanda volunteers information about sayings of her parents that she finds memorable. An example from the text illustrating the significant **parental discourse** is the following.

*I:* How did their attitudes and beliefs about you make you feel?

*A:* One of their favorite things that they used to say to me before a match, growing up and even still today, is to go out and see what you can do - to go and test my own abilities, that always made me feel good.

Other references in the text to human subjects imply the **discourse of the role of significant others**. Amanda refers to the significance of “countless people” who contributed to where she is today in terms of her champion’s reality.

*The “author” and the “listener”.* In the case of this tool of analysis it might be of importance to note that this particular text was co-constructed over the e-mail. The “author” in this text appears to be a researcher looking for the specific factors which would create a champion’s reality. Such factors could constitute a **champion discourse** that is operating in the text. The “listener” is a champion who seems to respond quite spontaneously to the “author” without too much concern for what the “author” may be wanting from the particular questions asked. The attitude of the “listener” contributes to a **discourse of confidence** and a **discourse of adaptability**, as may be seen in the following example from the text:

*I:* When did you feel that this dream was going to become a reality: after a match, tournament or during a particular time in your life?

*A:* I can’t really answer that, because in the same way I answered the previous question, I seem to just live in the moment or situation that I am in. So in some ways the dream became a reality a long time ago and in other ways I still have not completely fulfilled the dream.

The sense of spontaneity from the “listener” implies flexibility in responding to that particular moment with confidence.



*The effects of discourse.* A prominent discourse identified in the context of Amanda's family appears to be a **discourse of facilitation**. The language used, especially by Amanda's parental system, seems to have created a reality for Amanda that was, in a sense, made easier for her to experience. For example, one might find life easier if one is enthusiastic about experiencing it, ("an enthusiasm for life") as well a "liberal" attitude towards experience. In the context of performance, the discourse of facilitation can alleviate the pressure around the consequences of performance, facilitating the fulfilment of potential. Amanda's potential or talent was, therefore, not compromised, contributing to the peak performance necessary for a champion's reality. A **discourse of facilitation** may facilitate the emergence of a **discourse of adaptability**, which is clearly present in Amanda's reality. Amanda even comments that her ability to adapt and learn is one of the significant attributes that have contributed to her success. **Confidence discourse** is a significant underlying discourse in the text. It is clear that such a discourse is evident in the context of Amanda's family, which also contributes to the development of her characteristics of adaptability and self-confidence, so necessary for the unpredictable, pressurizing situations that constitute a champion's reality. A discourse of confidence effectively creates Amanda as the "listener", painting her reality as a champion in a very sure and spontaneous manner, limiting the co-construction of the author's assumptions about the creation of a champion's reality. This process may be isomorphic to other interactions demonstrating the power of Amanda's intentions in the co-construction of reality. Despite this presence that Amanda may portray in creating her champion's reality, **family discourse**, **parental discourse** and **people discourse** co-created in the text convey a strong **supportive discourse** which has played a major role in contributing to Amanda's champion reality.

Text of reported interview with Herman Chalupsky	Process of Analysis
<p>Herman's parents were still married when his mother died two years ago from breast cancer. According to him the most important thing in life for his parents was discipline. He said that his parents were very strict and quite distant. "Our family was not like other families, no hugging and kissing. Being of German origin it was normal to be like that." Herman's grandfather on his father's side played a role in his sport. Grandfather Chalupsky built kayaks and his son, Herman's father, was the first Springbok canoeing champion, and won the biggest international canoeing race in Spain, in 1968. Herman added that he, partnered by his brother Oscar, won the same race in 1986. All the siblings were canoeists. However, there was enormous competition between Herman and Oscar, the eldest brother. I asked Herman to describe his relationship with his mother and father respectively. He said that he admired and respected his father and described his mother as the loving one and the one who kept the family together. His parents were both strict and they placed considerable emphasis on discipline.</p>	<p>Information gathering.</p> <p>Family theme: discipline.</p> <p>Family process: distant, binary opposition close.</p> <p>Lack of unconditional positive regard. Justifies distance. Grandfather: role model.</p> <p>Father: role model. Father, a champion.</p> <p>Canoeing involves family members. Sibling rivalry, competition associated with family theme.</p>
<p>As far back as Herman can remember, life was about achievement. He reported that his parents never forced him to achieve, but that his father gave him incentives. For example, his father offered the children rewards if they achieved well at their sports.</p>	<p>Cold relationship. Warm relationship. Recurrent term, authoritarian child rearing.</p>
<p>Herman swam, played waterpolo and canoed, and excelled at all of them. At 9 years of age he won a lifesaving competition, and it was at this time that he began dreaming of becoming a champion lifesaver. He enjoys his sport, but admits to hating the training at times. At the age of 15 Herman competed in a canoeing tournament against the best South African seniors. It was at this time that he felt he could compete with the best in his sport.</p>	<p>Recurrent term.</p> <p>Fits with family theme of discipline: discourse of achievement. Father-son relationship based on achievement. Interpersonal process characterized by rewarding achievement. Implication conditional positive regard.</p> <p>Discourse of achievement. Discourse of achievement.</p>

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I asked Herman what qualities had made him a champion. He believed that his mental strength and hard work constituted the recipe of his success. He described mental strength as focusing on being strong throughout the race. He said that he would always think that he was going to win the race, and do anything he could to stay ahead. Even if he was dying of exhaustion, he would do everything he could to stay ahead. He said if he doubted himself he would tell himself that he was going through a bad patch, but he would know that he would get through it. He knew that if he wanted to win he couldn't doubt himself. Herman uses the confidence in himself, the feeling that he is the strongest and that he has trained the hardest, as a way of coping under pressure.

Discourse of discipline relating to conditional positive regard.

Discourse of achievement.

Discourse of discipline.

Discourse of discipline.

Discourse of achievement.

Discourse of discipline.

Discourse of discipline relating to conditional positive regard.

Discourse of doubt.

Discourse of confidence.

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### *Results Analysis*

*Binary oppositions.* Distant-close is a binary opposition that is active in the text. Although Herman describes his family as distant and cold, evoking a **discourse of distance**, a **discourse of closeness** underlies the text. Perhaps the specific contexts in which a **discourse of closeness** is implicit foster connection and warmth among family members. The following examples from the text demonstrate that a **discourse of closeness** underlies the text.

Grandfather Chalupsky built kayaks and his son, Herman's father, was the first springbok canoeing champion, and won the biggest international canoeing race in Spain, in 1968. Herman added that he, partnered by his brother Oscar, won the same race in 1986. All the siblings were canoeists.

In the above it is significant that all the family members, except for Herman's mother, were connected in the context of canoeing. Herman's mother had other connections with the family. She was described as "the loving one and the one who kept

the family together.” It is interesting that Herman’s mother, who did not appear to be involved in canoeing, is described with language that implies a **discourse of unconditional positive regard**. However, the binary opposition to this discourse, a **discourse of conditional positive regard**, seems more dominant in the text. An example from the text includes the following.

He reported that his parents never forced him to achieve, but that his father gave him incentives. For example, his father offered the children rewards if they achieved well at their sports ...

*Recurrent terms, phrases, metaphors.* The following recurrent terms and phrases illustrate the **discourse of discipline**, which is active in the text: “discipline”, “very strict”, “they were both strict and placed considerable emphasis on discipline”, “mental strength and hard work”, “he has trained the hardest”.

Here are some examples of the above phrases, drawn from the text, illustrating a **discourse of discipline**:

According to him, the most important thing in life for his parents was discipline. He said that his parents were very strict and quite distant ...

He believed that his mental strength and hard work constituted the recipe of his success. He described mental strength as focusing on being strong throughout the race.

A dominant discourse in the text is a **discourse of achievement**. The following terms and phrases substantiate such a discourse: “won the biggest international canoeing race”, “life was about achievement”, “rewards if they achieved”, “compete with the best in his sport”, “going to win the race, and do anything he could to stay ahead”, “most successful property brokers”, “he loves the feeling of achievement”.

Examples of the above in the context of the text, portraying a **discourse of achievement**, are the following.

As far back as Herman can remember, life was about achievement. He reported that his parents never forced him to achieve, but that his father gave him incentives. For example, his father offered the children rewards if they achieved well at their sports ...

His goal is for his company to be the most successful property brokerage in Durban. He says that he loves the feeling of achievement.

An interplay between the **discourse of doubt** and the **discourse of confidence** occurs in the text. Although the text conveys that Herman is confident in himself, his experience of doubt is also evident. The following examples illustrate these discourses as well as the dynamic between them.

He said if he doubted himself he would tell himself that he was going through a bad patch, but he would know that he would get through it. He knew that if he wanted to win he couldn't doubt himself. Herman uses the confidence in himself, the feeling that he is the strongest and that he has trained the hardest, as a way of coping under pressure.

*Human subjects.* **Family discourse** is co-created in the text as all members of the nuclear family are mentioned, as well as the grandfather. Regarding the significance of the human subjects in the text, a **discourse of role models** appears important in the construction of Herman's champion reality. His grandfather, father, brother and girlfriend are all reported as having greatly influenced Herman's success.

*The "author" and the "listener".* In the text it appears that the collusion between the "author" and the "listener" creates a **discourse of achievement**. The "author" appears to be exploring the different contexts in life that contribute towards a champion's reality, which is characterized by achievement. But for the "listener", it is the sole concept of achievement that contributes to the varying contexts of life.

*The effects of discourse.* It is evident from the text that Herman experiences his family as cold and distant. Hence, a discourse of distance may have been a context in which Herman was motivated to find places of connection or warmth. This place of connection may have been in the activity of canoeing, as a discourse of closeness is implicit in this context. Herman's father and grandfather, as well as his siblings, were involved in canoeing. In the context of sport Herman would receive positive regard if he achieved. A discourse of conditional positive regard therefore also seems to be a dynamic that kept Herman motivated to train hard and achieve. The discourse of discipline, a dominant family theme, contributed to the behaviour necessary for creating Herman's

champion reality. In terms of role model discourse it is obvious that both his father and grandfather played significant roles in influencing Herman's success. The discourses of doubt and confidence are necessary in the process of competing and are expressed in a manner that contributes to Herman's champion performance. The overarching discourse of achievement in the context of Herman's life in general, a discourse fostered by the interaction of the above-mentioned discourses, appears to be a major motivating factor in the creation of his champion's reality.

### *Concluding Observation*

The process of vertical analysis brings out clearly the complexity and uniqueness of the making of a champion. The discourses identified in each individual text are quite evidently different and varied. Even if common discourses occur, their function and the way in which they integrate with reality are different from champion to champion.

Although these differences are very apparent, the possibility of identifying such common discourses in the making of a champion is precisely what is explored in the next phase.

## **Phase Two: Horizontal Analysis**

### *Contexts*

By the end of phase one in the process of thematic discourse analysis, the researcher has engaged in a detailed reading of each text. Various discourses that operate in each text have been identified by means of specialized tools for thematic discourse analysis, namely; binary oppositions, recurrent terms, human subjects, and the "author" and the "listener". The effects of the active discourses are integrated to paint a picture of the process of the creation of each individual's champion reality. Phase one may be seen as a vertical method of analysis.

In phase two a reading of each text is performed in the context of the other texts included in phase one. During this stage, a broad or horizontal method of analysis of the different texts is undertaken with the aim of identifying common or related patterns of discourse as well as variation in discourse. The context in which such patterns of

discourse occur is taken heed of, in an attempt to explicate the broader context within which the text operates.

It is crucial to note that in social constructionist research everything is part of everything else, and therefore isolating a text from its surroundings is not a valid proceeding. However, in the case of analysis, delineating the boundaries of text by identifying a context is done purely for practical reasons (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). This delineation is based on the researcher's assumptions and constructions of where such a fluid concept as context ends and begins. Such a definition of context clearly limits the study and is discussed later as part of the critique in the following chapter.

The following table is a summary of the discourses identified in the vertical and horizontal phases of analysis.

	VERTICAL ANALYSIS							
	Common Discourse	Related Discourses	Wayne	Maria	Brian	Reg	Amanda	Herman
H O R I Z O N T A L  A N A L Y S I S	Support	Family		Significant others	Idealization	Positive	Facilitation	Distance
		Parental	Differentiation					
		Support/role of significant others	Enmeshment	Self	Disparagement	Negative	Adaptability	Closeness
		Support	Confidence	Support of significant others	Fighting	Confidence	Confidence	Unconditional positive-regard
		Role models	Doubt	Powerful- self	Respect	Diffidence	Family	Conditional positive-regard
		Closeness	Family	Humility	Family	Fear of destruction of self	Parental	Discipline
		Confidence	Parental	Support	Therapeutic	Admiration	Role of significant others	Achievement
		Powerful-self	Cultural	Family				
		Respect	Therapeutic	Cultural	Psychological / Interest	Family	Champion	Doubt
		Positive						
	Confidence	Champion	Personal	Optimism	Learning	Role-models		Confidence
		Expert						Family
		Achievement	Psychological	Champion		Psychological		Role models
	Doubt	Humility				Expert		
		Disparagement						
		Diffidence						
		Fear of destruction of self						
		Facilitation						
	Hard Work (Identified in context of other texts)	Doubt						
		RELATED PHRASES	It's my effort.	I could train harder	Work hard	Ate, slept and trained	Work harder	Trained the hardest



The horizontal analysis of the six texts allows a common pattern to emerge, which seems to be characteristic in the construction of a champion's reality. Related discourses active in the texts of all the champions studied constitute a common pattern of three main discourses: the **discourse of support**, the **discourse of confidence**, and the **discourse of doubt**. The fourth common discourse, the **discourse of hard work**, was identified only from the horizontal method of analysis, as it operates in each text and is recurrent across the board.

### The Pattern in a Champion's Reality

#### *Discourse of Support*

In text one (Wayne Ferreira), family discourse and parental discourse function as a supportive discourse in the construction of the champion's reality. Wayne acknowledges his brother's renewed support of his career. He mentions how his early marriage to his wife helped him on the international tennis circuit. The text clearly conveys the constant, intense support and guidance of Wayne's parents in the creation of his champion's reality.

In text two (Maria Mutola), the discourse of support, and the discourse of the role of significant others in the co-construction of her champion's reality, predominate in the text. Family discourse also functions as support. Maria's sister and father gave her remarkable encouragement. The poet, his son (her coach), as well as the encouragement of the Americans, all played meaningful roles in informing and supporting Maria's champion's reality.

In text three (Brian Mitchell), family discourse definitely created a context of support. Brian mentions the support of his mother, the effort made by his uncle to give him transport to the gym, as well as the inspiring, religious letters from his aunt, which all have their place in supporting the reality of a champion.

In text four (Reg Park), family discourse represented a different source of support. The love and admiration Reg grew up with in the context of his family, as well as the "enormous" influence his grandfather and father's character traits had on him, contributed significantly to Reg's champion's reality.

In text five (Amanda Coetzer), family discourse, and more especially parental discourse, serves the function of support. Amanda also mentions the influence of significant others in the co-construction of her champion's reality. Amanda's sisters were very supportive of her tennis career, while her parents seemed to create a context which facilitated Amanda's growth into a champion.

In text six (Herman Chalupsky), family discourse and a discourse of closeness played a supportive role. A discourse of closeness was reinforced in the context of sport. Such a context was thus encouraging and supportive. Herman's father's offering of incentives for achieving at sport, as well as his own success, motivated Herman's champion's reality. Also the competition between Herman and his brother functioned as a constant inspiration to succeed.

#### *Discourse of Confidence*

For Wayne, a discourse of confidence has been part of his daily life since childhood. Wayne succeeded at every sport he attempted. His parents believe that he is just one of those people who is "good at everything". His siblings perceive him as a "lazy" but "lucky" person. Wayne is confident that he could "be the best in the world" if he just put in the effort.

The poet, Jose Craveverinha, was confident of Maria's athletic ability and encouraged her to switch from soccer to track. The poet's son coached her and led her to her first Olympic Games in 1988. Maria's sister was confident that Maria would adjust to living in America and therefore urged her to be patient with the nostalgia she experienced. The discourse of powerful self emerges remarkably from a context of humility, as Maria learns that to be a champion "you have to be confident ... you got to think that I am the one who the others are out to beat."

According to Brian, his parents are respectable people but they did not have the confidence that he "projected over the years". However, the discourse of respect that Brian grew up with fostered his desire to earn respect for his fighting ability at school and in his neighbourhood. A discourse of confidence is conveyed in his talk of the respect he received and still receives for his ability as a boxing champion.

The love and admiration Reg felt in his family implies that such a discourse was instilled in Reg himself. As a result, Reg clearly portrays a positive attitude and confidence in himself as a person, and in his abilities. The intensity of such confidence contributes to the co-construction of Reg's champion's reality.

Amanda's parents projected a confidence in her abilities. They would even caution her on practising too much. The discourse of facilitation that appears to have been dominant from early in Amanda's life created a context from which confidence discourse emanated. Her adaptability also supported the learning of confidence discourse in her reality as a champion. The attitude Amanda appears to portray, as the "listener" in the text, demonstrates her self-assurance in the construction of her champion's reality.

The discourses to which Herman was exposed in growing up, such as the discourses of discipline and conditional positive regard, contributed to the all-important discourse of achievement, which seems, for Herman, to be the purpose of life. Thus, "if he wanted to win he couldn't doubt himself." It is apparent that Herman would always think that he was going to win the race. Confidence, for Herman, is a necessity for winning and therefore for living the reality of a champion.

### *Discourse of Doubt*

Despite the fact that the texts studied concern the making of champions, the discourse of doubt and related discourses are evident in every text. The function of a discourse of doubt in the creation of a champion is discussed in the following chapter, which deals with the findings of this study. The following examples do not include all the related discourses of doubt. They include the most obvious illustrations of the experience or acknowledgement of doubt in each champion's reality.

Wayne acknowledges that he has doubted his ability, as well as his commitment to the sport. He maintains: "everybody goes through bad patches."

Maria says that she knows that other people can win as well. She reports, "sometimes you go into a race thinking that I am going to win this and I have to win this, but things don't go your way, they go someone else's way."

For Brian, “if you don’t doubt yourself then you are not human. Then your brain is functioning on another planet.” He admits, “Ja, you doubt yourself.”

Reg believes that “arrogance is ignorance”. He says, “you got to analyze your weaknesses.” Reg says he was not “gifted genetically” and confesses that “food (was his) weakness”. However, he was never worried if he got beaten: “It wasn’t the end of the world. I wasn’t destroyed, I was still Reg Park.”

The discourse of facilitation in Amanda’s reality implies that doubt is acknowledged. Amanda’s parents are realistic about performance; they facilitate a context in which doubt is acknowledged, as they are kind and sympathetic about losses. Amanda’s adaptability to context also implies her acknowledgement of doubt.

Herman acknowledges the unpredictability of peak performance. His strategy, when he experienced doubt, was to tell himself “that he was going through a bad patch, but ... that he would get through it.” He knew, as well, “that if he wanted to win he couldn’t doubt himself.”

#### *Discourse of Hard Work*

Each champion voluntarily (that is, without questions directly prompting information about hard work or training in the interview) referred to hard work as part of his or her champion’s reality. Thus the discourse of hard work emerged across the larger body of text.

According to Wayne, performance that characterizes a champion’s reality is all about his effort. Wayne says that if he puts in the effort, he moves close to or into the top ten ranking in the world. Wayne says that is where he deserves to be and where he has been for most of his career. Wayne remarks, “And even now I think it makes me believe that I can be the best in the world just because I put in the effort to do it.”

After Maria’s first experience of the Olympic Games, she felt that she was young and that if she could “train harder”, she would go to the next Olympics.

Brian makes references to hard work throughout the text. Brian loved his training and pushed himself in training. According to him, “if you work hard you become good and if you are good you enjoy it.”

Before Reg's first competition he lived like a hermit, and all he did was "ate, slept, and trained". Reg began his training outside, in temperatures of minus five degrees centigrade. He would train "seven nights a week".

Amanda's parents would have to warn her about practising too much rather than too little. If she experienced doubt, she would "set out to work harder".

The context of discipline in which Herman grew up facilitated learning how to work hard. Herman believes his hard work is a quality that contributes to his success. He says the knowledge that "he has trained the hardest" helps him to cope under pressure.

### Summary

The horizontal analysis brought out a common pattern in the texts of the champions interviewed. The pattern includes four main discourses, *a discourse of support, a discourse of confidence, a discourse of doubt, and a discourse of hard work*. The implication is that such a pattern operates in the making of a champion.

## CHAPTER 5

### MAKING SENSE OF A CHAMPION'S REALITY

#### Summary of Study

In the introduction to this dissertation, I refer to the fact that I had initially assumed that the discourse of belief is so powerful that if one believes absolutely in the dream of becoming a champion, it will become a reality. My study of theories on reality and its construction demonstrates that the discourse of belief has its place in creating reality, but that the process of reality construction is far more complex than merely making and holding on to a resolute conviction.

A new way of thinking about reality, at the start of post-modernism, uncovers its multiple complexities. Reality becomes analogous to the different views seen through a kaleidoscope in terms of its relativity and uncertainty, and the active role that the observer plays in its construction. Such revelations have made me aware of the effect I will have, as the observer, on the entire research process and the conclusions of this study. Nevertheless, through this endeavour I intend gaining a better understanding of champions and of how they construct their realities.

In my earlier discussion of reality, I showed that language is the vehicle for observation. Without language human beings cannot observe. Further, as human beings, we must be present with that which is under observation in order to observe. From this the impossibility of objectivity becomes evident, since by definition, "objectivity" means independence of the observer from the observed. Thus, in the gaining of knowledge, objective observation by human beings is a contradiction (Segal, 1986).

Berger (1976) speaks of the "sociology of knowledge" and the language of daily life. He explains the powerful nature of language in the social context of everyday living. For Berger, a dream must be integrated into the language of daily life for it to be experienced as real. The language of every day is layered with many levels of discourse, and it is therefore beyond the scope of this thesis to attempt the complex process of integrating a dream into such a tapestry of discourses. The implication here, however, is

that dreams can play a role in the creation of reality. What is dreamed in the mind has significance in terms of what occurs in reality, owing to our relationship with the dynamic of reality construction. The dynamics of such a connection between mind and nature is dealt with by Bateson (1979), Capra, (1991) and Chopra (2001), and a deeper examination of these dynamics is put forward as a recommendation for further research.

The focus on language began only at the initiation of the post-modern era. At this time many proponents of post-modernism began challenging the modernist or traditional way of thinking. For example, von Foerster (in Segal, 1986), a constructivist, demonstrated that all observation of knowledge is subjective. He proposed that the given “objectivity” of the world is apparent, but what we see is affected by who and what we are as observers. When observing reality the observer must account for himself, as it is impossible to separate the observer from the observed. Therefore, reality constitutes a multitude of subjective constructions created via the act of observing.

The nodal point of having a better understanding of reality seems to be a matter of how we know, and not of what we know. The manner in which we come to know the world provoked the shift from modernism to post-modernism. A new way of knowing the world, which came to be known as the “new epistemology” (Auerswald, 1985), seemed to fill the gaps evident in traditional scientific thinking of the modern era. The epistemology on which this dissertation is based is derived from this new epistemology. A combination of the theories proposing the exploration of reality from such an epistemology was used.

From an historical perspective, General Systems Theory asserted the importance of systems thinking and of a holistic approach to the way individuals experience the various systems constituting their ecology. Systems theory focused on the effect of extra-psychic factors on the individual’s experience of reality, and not only on the intrapsychic factors studied by traditional thinkers. This alerted me to the major role of the various systems and contexts in which an individual lives, in the construction of a champion’s reality. Cybernetics also embraced systems thinking, but examined, as well, information feedback, pattern, form and organization in and amongst the interconnected parts of systems and subsystems. The infinite variety and complexity of such processes in the

organization of systems, and in living systems *par excellence*, prompted the concepts of equipotentiality and equifinality, which illustrated to me the unpredictable, unique nature of the developmental processes involved in a champion's reality. Second-order cybernetics gave me an appreciation of the notion of the participant-observer and the notion of a shared responsibility in the co-construction of reality. This demonstrated the proactive role an individual plays in the creation of a champion's reality. Radical constructivism assumes similar concepts to second-order cybernetics, but emphasizes the importance of biology as a function of cognitive experience, and the dynamics of the structure of the individual in the context of his environment as a limiting factor in the creation of reality. This assumption is especially verified in the making of a champion. Radical constructivism sees language as crucial for human reality, but for social constructionism, language in perception and action is the main constituent in human beings' construction of reality. Social constructionism assumes that the totalizing discourses that organize society and the subsequent intersubjective interpretation of these, construct reality (Gergen, 1985).

Social constructionism is the paradigm that informed the design of this research. Thus, in the exploration of a champion's reality, the focus was on the discourses that emerged from the language used by champions in an interviewing context. In concluding this research process, social constructionism cautions me, as researcher, to examine my constructions about the reality of champions and its construction, as these are merely labels that have emerged from the interaction between my perceptions and the dynamic social process of history, culture, social action and social dialogue (Burr, 1996). The findings from the analysis of the texts and this entire research process are characteristic of one perspective of a kaleidoscope of perspectives. However, what is important is that I give meaning and organization to the data by making sense of champions' realities through my language. The conclusions, as mentioned, are therefore significant in terms of my reality, and hopefully will resonate with some realities of those who read this text.



## Findings and Constructions

In this discussion of the findings from the analysis of how a champion's reality is constructed, I begin with the research questions posed, which motivated the study.

The first question dealt with the significance of the athletes' ecologies, which facilitated their champion realities. The vertical analysis showed that the athletes grew up in vastly different ecologies. The organization and characteristics of their family, cultural and social systems were all entirely different. No common pattern was found that could have been proposed as serving a significant function in the construction of the champions' realities. However, a finding in the vertical analysis which is clearly apparent for some champions and more subtly so for others, is the significance of their family systems. It is evident that each individual's process of interaction within the family system motivated and developed the process of developing champion perceptions, behaviour and experiences in contexts outside the family system. Therefore, the champion's manner of interaction on the process level, in his specific sporting contexts, is isomorphic, or a reflection of the interactional or interpersonal process in the family system of origin.

Is there a pattern of social discourse relating to champions, which informs and supports excellence? An answer to the second question was found in the horizontal analysis of the texts. The common pattern of discourses relating to a champion's reality appeared to be discourses of support, confidence, doubt and hard work. From the literature study on the construction of reality, my personal experience and my interaction with the champions and the texts, I have arrived at the following conclusions about such a common pattern in the making of a champion.

A discourse of support is necessary for a champion to adapt and conserve his identity as a champion in the context of the difficulties that are present in the development and experience of a champion's reality.

The discourse of confidence relates to the third research question, on the role of the discourse of belief in constructing reality. The texts convey that all the champions have confidence or belief in themselves and their abilities. The discourse of support

implies that others believe in the champions, and such a supportive context facilitates confidence and belief in oneself. The role played by belief in a dream in the creation of reality is dealt with in the discussion of Berger's (1976) assumptions in chapter two, and from the above it is evident that the discourse of belief has its part to play in the making of a champion.

The presence of a discourse of doubt seems out of place in the context of champions. However, it is the extent to which, and the manner in which, the discourse of doubt manifests and the way it is managed that foster a champion's reality. According to systemic thinking, all parts of a system serve a function and thus all parts are necessary to constitute a whole. Doubts, as part of the emotional subsystem within a self-system, that surface in a champion's reality imply his humanness. Doubts may serve to motivate or protect the champion. The importance of every part in the systemic reality of a living system means that feelings of doubt cannot be glossed over or denied. If doubts are ignored, they are likely to surface at times when one does not want them to occur (Jennings, 1993). Champions appear able to accept all parts of themselves, positive and negative, and thus acknowledge the discourse of doubt in their realities. In doing so, they attain a more meaningful, psychological, systemic balance. The true champion is able to acknowledge his humanness (Jennings, 1993).

The last discourse in the pattern of discourses that was evident in the champions' realities, a discourse of hard work, is related to the last research question involving the special qualities that champions have in common. These qualities have been extrapolated from the process of thematic discourse analysis. Champions all **work hard**. It is evident from the texts that they are all aware of the consequences of hard work. They are all prepared to put in the effort in order to achieve the results. The well-known saying of the famous world champion golfer, Gary Player, sums up the importance of this quality: "The harder I practise the luckier I get."

The quality of **resilience** is implied by the prominent discourse of support present in the champions' realities. Resilient people are able to access and utilize their resources so that they can adapt to change as well as initiate change. The discourses of confidence and doubt operating in their realities illustrate that champions are prepared to

**acknowledge all the parts of the systems in which they function and of which they are made up, and to develop all parts of themselves, which contributes to a diverse balance within their self-systems. Absolute emphasis on one part, be it positive or negative, to the exclusion of other parts which are all necessary for the diverse balance, renders a person rigid, less adaptable and less resilient and resourceful. This quality of being able to maintain a diverse balance, which champions possess, suggests that they fulfil the criteria for health, where “health in individual ecosystems refers to a ‘vital balance’ of diverse forms of experience and behaviour” (O’Conner & Lubin, 1984, p.28).**

### **Critique**

The advantage of the qualitative methodology utilized in this study is that I was able to elicit a more hands-on, intimate perspective from the interviews as well as from the discourse analysis. The close connection I established with the champions through the interviewing process, as well as the relationship with the data that I developed through the countless scrutinies of the texts, place me as researcher in a position of credibility to analyze and interpret the realities being explored.

In terms of the disadvantages, I am very aware that, being a human, I bring the bias of my experiences, values and assumptions to the analysis and interpretation of the data. I cannot, unfortunately, bracket the agenda that I bring, and the questions asked in the interviews, as well as the discourses perceived, may all therefore have served to build my reality of what I believe exists in the making and experiences of a champion. Constructing a position on how I perceive the making of a champion is inevitable, and in order to verify such a stance I have attempted to use methodologies and theories which serve to anchor my findings as valid.

### **Recommendations and Implications**

In chapter two I allude briefly to the assumptions of Bateson (1979), Capra (1991), and Chopra (2001) about the human being’s relationship with the universe. These authors perceive humans as microcosms of a greater macrocosm. An example of such a relationship is seen in the isomorphic process occurring between the champion’s

interaction with his family and his related interaction with external systems. The implication of the interconnection between the microcosm and the macrocosm is that a different perspective and a greater understanding of the macrocosm may enlighten us, as the microcosm, on the construction of reality. Therefore, deeper examination of the dynamics of the relationship between humans and nature in the creation of reality is recommended for further academic research.

The implications of this study expand our language systems about the way we perceive reality. Reality and its construction, from a post-modern perspective, foster an openness and acceptance of difference, as well as a greater sense of confidence and self-reliance in one's contributions to and creation of one's own reality.

On a personal level, the research process was an enormous growth experience. I began the study in absolute awe of champions, looking to find omnipotence in who they are as people as well as in their sporting abilities. I perceived them as superior beings, very different from the rest of us. During the process of the six interviews, I arrived at the realization that such a perception of champions was my own construction, and that they were fallible and doubtful, just like me.

The implications of the study also show that there is no special recipe for the making of a champion. Nor do champions have extra-sensory perception or the ability to do magic. However, they have grown up in ecologies which in unique ways have informed and supported champion excellence. Hard work, resourcefulness, resilience and the ability to strike a realistic balance between confidence and winning, doubt and failure, have helped construct their realities as champions.

*"These, then, are my last words to you: Be not afraid of life. Believe that life is worth living and your belief will help create the fact" (William James, in Davis, 1988, p. 7).*

## APPENDIX A

### STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

(Used for e-mail interview)

*Focus:* To ascertain what are the ecologies that inform and support excellence. (Ecology includes family, friends, culture, society and differing environments that surround us in life.)

#### Understanding a Champion's Reality

Name:

Sport:

Best world ranking:

Best achievement:

Age:

Tel. no:

**Please note: All the information obtained in this interview will be published for the purpose of a master's thesis in psychology. If you are not willing to have your name published, please indicate at the end of your answers that your name must not be shown together with the information.**

## **FAMILY**

**Are your parents still married?**

**How many children in your family?**

**What would you say your parents believe are the important things in life?**

**Describe your relationship with your mother and father respectively.**

**How would you describe your mother and your father's self-esteem, respectively?**

**How would you describe the style of your parents' child-rearing?**

**Is there sibling rivalry in your family?**

**Are there other great achievers in your parents' family histories?**

**What was your parents' attitude towards your sport and your ability?**

**How did their attitudes and beliefs about you make you feel?**

**Are you aware of anything in your family that was passed down from previous generations (e.g. a theme, an attitude, a family ethic)?**

## **INDIVIDUAL**

**As far back into your childhood as you can remember, what did life look like for you?**

**Do you feel you had something to prove in life? If so what, and to whom?**

**Did you always enjoy your sport? At any point in your life, did you stop loving it?**

**Was it your dream to become a champion?**

**When did you begin to believe that you could compete with the best in your sport?**

**When did you feel that this dream was going to become a reality?**

**What are significant attributes about you specifically which you would say facilitated your success?**

**It is clear that as a champion you cope well under pressure. What goes through your mind when you are under pressure?**

**Do you use specific methods, which help to lessen the pressure? If so, what are they?**

**Do you ever doubt your ability and if so how often?**

**Do you have any method that you use, which serves to resurrect your confidence?**

**Was the school that you attended very strict?**

**Would you have described yourself as a leader at school?**

## **SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS**

**Did you experience any relationships/friendships during your life that you feel influenced your sport/success?**

**Did the person/s you had a relationship/friendship with believe you would become a champion?**

**Was there a teacher at your school who seemed to boost your confidence in the way you conducted yourself at school?**

## **CULTURE AND SOCIETY**

**Do the values that your family stands for reflect the values of either your culture or society, or both?**

**Do you feel society values achievement in sport?**

**How would you say the international boycott against South Africa during apartheid affected your success?**

Were your ancestors from South Africa? If not where were they from?  
Are you aware of their reasons for coming to South Africa?  
What would you say is your culture?  
Is your family either spiritual, or traditional in terms of the rituals of an organized religion, or both?

#### LIVING AND FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

What type of neighborhood did you grow up in?  
Was there a sense of community in the neighbourhood?  
Did you live with your nuclear family?  
Describe the financial circumstances of your family?  
Did both your parents work? What did they do?

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer these questions. I sincerely appreciate your contribution to the research on the making of champions.

I WISH YOU THE BEST OF LUCK FOR ALL YOUR ENDEAVORS IN THE FUTURE.

Toni Gaddie

## **SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**

(Used for live interviews)

*Focus:* To ascertain what are the ecologies that inform and support excellence. (Ecology includes family, friends, culture, society and differing environments that surround us in life.)

### **Understanding a Champion's Reality**

Name:

Sport:

Best world ranking:

Best achievement:

Age:

Tel. no:

**Please note:** All the information obtained from this interview will be published for the purpose of a masters thesis in psychology. If you do not wish your name to be published together with the information indicate this at the end of the interview.

### **FAMILY**

#### **1. Draw a family genogram including parent's families of origin**

- children and their ages
- occupations of members, talents
- cultures, differing neighborhoods, cultures of origin
- depict important family themes
- circular questioning about relationships:

Who is closest to whom?

How did parents react to wins, losses, practicing?

Were your siblings supportive of your sport?

Did any grandparents get involved in your sport and what role did they play?

How would your family describe your role in the family?

Would you agree with them?

Would you say your parents gave you unconditional love, or was the provision of their love based on specific behaviours?

- take note of non-verbals: tone, posture, articulation, openness

#### **2. Keep the following questions in mind**

What would you say your parents believe are the important things in life?

How would you describe your mother and your father's self-esteem, respectively?

How would you describe the style of your parents' child-rearing?

Are there other great achievers in your parents' family histories?

What were your parents' attitude towards your sport and your ability?



How did their attitudes and beliefs about you make you feel?

#### INDIVIDUAL

As far back into your childhood as you can remember, what did life look like for you?

At what age did you begin your sport?

Did you always enjoy your sport? At any point in your life did you stop loving it?

Was it your dream to become a champion?

When did you begin to believe that you could compete with the best in your sport?

When did you feel that this dream was going to become a reality?

What are significant attributes about you specifically which you would say facilitated your success?

It is clear that as a champion you cope well under pressure. What goes through your mind when you are under pressure?

Do you use specific methods, which help to lessen the pressure? If so, what are they?

Do you ever doubt your ability and if so how often?

Do you have any method that you use, which serves to resurrect your confidence?

Was the school that you attended very strict?

Would you have described yourself as a leader at school?

#### SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS

Did you experience any relationships/friendships during your life that you feel influenced your sport/success?

Did the person/s you had a relationship/friendship with believe you would become a champion?

Was there a teacher at your school who seemed to boost your confidence in the way you conducted yourself at school?

#### CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Do the values that your family stands for reflect the values of either your culture or society, or both?

Do you feel society values achievement in sport?

How would you say the international boycott against South Africa during apartheid affected your success?

Is your family either spiritual, or traditional in terms of the rituals of an organized religion, or both?

#### LIVING AND FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

What type of neighborhood did you grow up in?

Was there a sense of community in the neighborhood?

Did you live with your nuclear family?

Describe the financial circumstances of your family?

Thank-you very much for taking the time to participate in this interview. I sincerely appreciate your contribution to the research on the making of champions.

I WISH YOU THE BEST OF LUCK FOR ALL YOUR ENDEAVORS IN THE  
FUTURE.

Toni Gaddie.

## APPENDIX B

# TRANSCRIPTIONS OF INTERVIEWS

### Transcription of live interview with Wayne Ferreira

#### Demographic data

<b>Name</b>	Wayne Ferreira
<b>Age</b>	29
<b>Place of abode</b>	California, U.S.A.
<b>Sport</b>	Tennis
<b>Best achievement</b>	Ranked no. 6 in the world
<b>Date of interview</b>	25 April 2001

#### INTERVIEW

##### **Key**

**INTERVIEWER: I**

**WAYNE FERREIRA: W**

I: Can you tell me of any special talent that any family members had or have?

W: Not really. They were all pretty ordinary.

I: Is there any family theme/ethic/attitude that you think was passed down to your family from the families of the previous generations?

W: Old-fashioned.

I: Were you close to your brothers and sisters?

W: I was close to my sister when we were growing up. Now I am more close to my brother.

I: Not to your sister?

W: Not much, no. My brother is living in the States so I can call him more often. He lives in Utah. I don't see my sister too much. We had a bit of a falling out a few years back.

I: That's a pity hey! Ja, that is a pity.

W: Yeah, but shit happens.

I: And your parents, how's your relationship with them?

W: I get along really well with my Mom, but my Dad, uh, we get along but we have our ups and downs.

I: O.K, any of your grandparents, were they involved in your sport?

W: No, none of them. My one Gran used to come and watch, but she was never involved.

I: Your brother and sister, do you think they were supportive of your tennis, or was there competition?

W: My sister was not at all. I think she was a little jealous, she hated the fact that I did well. Um, my brother was a little bit also - not that supportive when I was younger, but he also wanted to play tennis. But when he realized he wasn't going to make it, when he went to college, then he supported me a lot more. There was always that competition between us.

I: So there was competition among all the siblings?

W: Yeah, to an extent. I think my sister was just jealous that I did not really do much, that is, focused on anything, like schoolwork, and still did well.

I: Ja, I remember that you were Provincial badminton, cricket, tennis.

W: Soccer and squash.

I: Shew! How would your family describe your role in the family, when you were growing up?

W: They would be better to ask that. I think they looked at me in a weird way because I always had to do so little to get by. I never studied or practised and always did well and they did not like it at all. Both my brother and sister were pretty intense and serious and I was the exact opposite. I think they looked at me as a lazy, lucky person.

I: And your parents, also?

W: I think they looked at me as one of those people who was just good at everything. They never really forced me to do anything. They were just really supportive of whatever it was that I wanted to do.

I: So how did they react to your wins, losses and practices? Did they get angry if you lost?

W: Not at all. They got angry if I behaved badly on the court. They cared if I lost, but just because they were supportive. They both love watching, they get real intense and nervous, but they don't get upset if I lose.

I: What would you say then your parents believe are the important things in life?

W: I think for my Mom the important things are her kids. She finds it very hard to let loose, to let us go away. She always wants to be involved and take control of our lives. And I got a bit tired of it. I split her out a bit. When I started travelling and moved off and started to live with my girlfriend, it was very hard for her to let go. And my Dad also tries to have a little bit of control on the financial side, I guess he trying to be supportive by making sure that I do the right things with my money. But he wanted a little too much involvement. He has a little bit too much with my brother.

I: It makes sense because he's an accountant, so he would want to get involved in that.

W: I wasn't sure if it was for a control issue or just personal help and caring. I think he overstepped the boundary into a control issue. It was his way of keeping in control of me.

I: Parents are often like that.

W: I was moving away and they feared they were losing control over me and they were finding a way and that was their best way. Even today they still have control over my brother through finances. I guess they enjoy it as they still feel a part of his life.

I: It is probably their way of staying connected to you. The content of finances perhaps does not mean much too them.

W: Yeah, I am in a different position than my brother financially. I don't need any financial help. So there is no way of them having control over me.

I: They have to find different ways to stay connected to you.

W: I was always the different one in the family, my brother and sister are pretty similar in the way they do things. I am the exact opposite. That was so hard. I was always so different from everybody in the family. Most of the times they did not understand me because I was so different from the rest.

I: So they just have to come to terms with the nonchalant, lackadaisical you. You've done very well for having been that way.

W: There was always that control issue, say if I had a girlfriend, my Mom not being that happy would say that I was ruining my life, as they wanted me to focus on the tennis. But

I just did not listen to them and it worked out fine. I think now they are starting to lighten up a bit. Before, they gave me a hard time for quite a long time for getting married.

I: Shew! Tennis isn't everything.

W: Yeah, but I was only 23, still in the prime of my tennis career.

I: Only 23, I did not know that.

W: And it worked out fine. She was a great help. I think I would have done a lot worse if I were not with her. They don't understand that, but now I'm at the end of my career, I have a child, I have a wife, so they've started to lighten up a bit.

I: Ja, and it at least gave you some responsibility. Have you been that responsible in your life?

W: I was always responsible, but in a nonchalant way and they did not understand that.

I: Describe your parents' self-esteem respectively?

W: My mother is the type of person who is always trying to make a situation better. My Dad may say something mean and she will try to make it better. I don't think her self-esteem is very high. My Dad, I don't think he has a huge self-esteem.

I: How did their attitudes and beliefs affect your tennis?

W: I started travelling young, but I kept coming home and I would ask their advice for everything and they would make sure everything was fine. The problems all started when I met my wife and I moved in with her. I was the youngest, and I think they realized they were losing control and that was hard for them.

I: And they were losing control of the child who was top at everything he touched.

W: Well, not at school. My brother did very well at school and he was head boy. I did not do as well at school, but I was good at the sports side.

I: As far back in to your childhood as you can remember, what do you think life looked like to you and felt like to you?

W: Life was just to see how much I could do in a day and to have fun. I would go to school a quarter to seven in the morning and play sport until school started, and then after school, continue to play sport until five o'clock in the afternoon. In standard seven, when we had to choose subjects, people would ask me what I wanted to do with my life and I did not care to think about it. I just wanted to play sport, or I did not want to do anything.

I: You gave up school the same time as me, not so?

W: Yes, I did standard nine by correspondence and then did not continue.

I: So, what did you feel? Did you know that you were going to make it on the circuit so you were not worried about school?

W: Well, I went to the Air Force for two and half years. I did not know I would make it, I just did not really care for school. I did not believe that I would be as good as I was, but I always thought if I had a chance to travel for a long enough time, to make enough money, or to do well enough, then I would go back to studying later.

I: O.K. When did you start playing tennis?

W: At six.

I: Did you always enjoy it?

W: No, I only started playing tennis seriously at thirteen. Up until then I did everything. I played cricket, soccer, badminton, squash, and golf. Tennis wasn't my favourite. But it was the only one that was an individual sport. I liked being in control, without having to count on the other players. Plus, I hated school so much and I did not want to study. So I asked my Mom which would be the sport that I could get away with the least amount of school work, and she said tennis, because there was a lot of traveling. Playing for the national team, overseas, I would get eight weeks off school.

I: Was it ever your dream to become a champion?

W: Yes, for the longest time it was my dream to become a soccer champion, but it wasn't tennis. When I started high school I had to play for club and I started to lose interest.

I: In terms of tennis, when did you know you could compete with the very best?

W: Probably when I was seventeen. I played a challenger in Johannesburg and I got a wild card. I played a guy, Scott Davis, who was ranked thirty-five in the world and I beat him in the first round. So I thought, "If he is ranked thirty-five, those up there can't be that good."

I: So it was that experience of winning?

W: Ja, playing someone that was really good.

I: What would you say are significant attributes that facilitated your success?

W: I think I have a lot of talent. Mentally believing that I was good and that I had nothing to lose. That was a big attribute, but it was also a downfall.

I: Why do you say that it was a downfall?

W: For a while I did not do so well, so I started doubting myself, if I was at all that good. Before, I never doubted myself. When I went on to a match I always thought that I would win. Then when I was ranked in the top ten, and playing guys in the top ten, I started thinking, "G-d this match is hard, these guys may be better than me." I started being negative and losing a lot of matches. So when I started off it was a good thing and then when I was good and in the top ten for a while, it started being a bad thing.

I: I remember at one stage you were in the top ten and then you dropped to about forty. So do you think this was that time?

W: That also had to do with having knee surgery, and I did not play for a long time. Then I came back and mentally it is a struggle when you don't feel that good. I also had family problems that I kept worrying about. Tennis is such a hard sport that if you are not fully focused and one hundred percent concentrating on what you are doing, it is hard to do your best.

I: It is clear that as a champion you can cope well under pressure. So what goes through your mind when you are under pressure?

W: People have always criticized my nonchalant attitude and that I'm very relaxed. Personally I think that has been a big factor in my success, because I don't get nervous, pressured or uptight. I think being relaxed and saying, "do your best" and not putting so much pressure on, I think has helped me a lot.

I: I agree. When you are out there is there anything specific that you think to yourself or do when you are under pressure?

W: I've varied with various things throughout my career. In the beginning I did not do anything because it came so easy. Then the patch when I did not do so well, it was very hard for me because I was not confident within myself. Now I feel a lot more confident within myself again and I am enjoying playing again. I think what I try and do, for me, the most important thing is to give one hundred percent and play as well as I can. Whether I'm up or I'm down, I try to keep at the same level and compete well; and when I'm down, just the concentrating and the focusing bit, really trying to compete. Because I get very lazy and I get narfy and I don't really run so much. So I try to focus on moving and running more than I should and just trying to be more energetic. Especially when I'm



down, because I start losing, because I get lethargic. So I have to do extra to play the way that I should.

I: Was that the first time you doubted your ability, when you got up to the top ten?

W: Ja. Well I played for so many years and things were so easy. In the time that I got to the top ten, I was never injured. Then I had the knee problem, which kept me out for a while and then I had problems with my racquets, I didn't like them and I struggled to find a racquet that I liked. And plus a little bit of the family problems. All of those things, mentally, were really hard for me to deal with. There was so much going on all at one time. Plus I had had it so easy up until then. I doubted my ability, if I could win and I doubted myself if I actually cared. I lost a lot of enthusiasm and inner drive. For a while there, I did not really care to even play tennis.

I: So what do think resurrected your confidence. Did you do anything specific?

W: There were a couple of reasons. I got really tired of losing to people who I believed were worse than me. I said to myself ... at the beginning of last year, I was actually thinking of quitting. I was ranked forty and I was not competing as well and plus I had a baby. So I was thinking, why travel, it is not worthwhile. Then I decided to put in an effort and try as hard as I can and give it about two years for myself, because I would hate to give up tennis at that stage and have regrets. Even though I had had a good career, I would still have regrets, because for two years I did not really put in an effort, and I hated tennis, and I hated a lot of things. So I decided I was going to give it a good go for two years, so that when I retired I could be proud that I gave it an effort. And last year I finished thirteenth. This year I broke my finger, so it has been a bit disappointing. But if I put in an effort like I did last year I could be close to top ten. And that's where I deserve to be, and that's where I've been most of my career. And even now I think it makes me believe that I can be the best in the world, just because I put in the effort to do it.

I: So your ranking or how you are playing is definitely a reflection of how much you put in?

W: It's my effort. But it's so hard to get motivated, I mean this is my thirteenth year on the tour. It is very hard to get motivated every year to do it. And everybody goes through bad patches. Even my worst was a catastrophe, and it was only fifty, and most guys would die to be fifty. There is a big difference between being thirteen and fifty and I have

to work a lot harder to be thirteen. So it made me realize a lot last year. I can actually quit tennis now and I would be happy with what I have done.

I: Going back to your school days? You went to Parktown Boys?

W: I went to King Edwards for standard six and Parktown for seven and eight and one semester of nine.

I: So in your life, growing up, was there any significant relationship that you had, that you feel affected or influenced your success?

W: Honestly I could say no. Although, I think there was, I think it was with myself.

I: What would you say your culture is?

W: I am definitely South African.

I: Do you think that your South African culture influenced your values?

W: It certainly influenced my parent's values and the way they brought us up, which I do not agree with. As I said my parents were very old-fashioned and they believed that children must be seen and not heard. This is not the way I want to bring up my son. Disagreeing with them or expressing my anger towards them was just not allowed. When I met my wife, I was surprised how she and her family handled family problems. They would discuss things without their being an enormous blow up. Whenever I had a problem with my family, if I tried to express myself, it would always end up in a huge fight. I have realized that the way I used to lose my temper on court, for no apparent reason, usually happened if there was tension with my wife or my parents.

I: So instead of expressing your anger about what upset you in your relationships, you would take it out on the court. Maybe as a young child, growing up, sport was the way you expressed yourself, as your parents inhibited expression of your emotions, especially anger.

W: Yeah, could be. I went to two sports psychologists to help me with my tantrums and my lack of motivation on court when I was losing, and they did nothing. They told me to breathe and pump my fist to motivate me, but it felt pathetic.

I: Ja, I'm sure it felt superficial, and these things they were telling you to do were not addressing the underlying source of your anger.

W: What helped me as a person, as well as my tennis, was when I went to see a psychiatrist. I was having problems in my marriage and wanted to make it work. So I

went on my own to see this psychiatrist. This person asked me about my childhood, my parents, and my upbringing. He never discussed my relationship with my wife, which was actually what I went for. We worked out that my difficulty with expressing myself had a lot to do with my parents' not allowing me to express my anger. I am learning to express myself much better with my wife, and my tantrums on the court have lessened.

I: Perhaps the tantrums and the non-caring about winning was anger and bitterness towards your parents about their hold on you? How would you say the international boycott against South Africa during apartheid affected your success?

W: It made things difficult, because some countries we would not even consider going to, as they would not allow us in. But it was also a great feeling when the sanctions were lifted, and I was one of the first players to play tournaments in those countries.

I: Is your family either spiritual, or traditional in terms of an organized religion, or both?

W: My family is Christian, but they are not religious and I am not religious at all.

I: What type of neighborhood did you grow up in? Can you describe it?

W: It was a typical neighborhood in the south of Johannesburg. Not a rich neighborhood. I'd say low to middle class. The people in the South did nothing. This motivated me to get provincial colours for as many sports as I could, so I was doing something - not like them.

I: Was there a sense of community in the neighbourhood?

W: Yes, it was very friendly. All the kids knew one another and we would play sport together after school.

I: What were the financial circumstances of your family while you were growing up?

W: I would say they were okay, not poor, but not very wealthy.

I: Well Wayne, I asked everything I wanted to ask. Thank you very much for taking the time to answer my questions. I really appreciate it.

W: It was my pleasure. What more could I do for an old friend?

## **Transcription of live interview with Maria Mutola**

### **Demographic data**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Maria Mutola</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Place of abode</b>	<b>Bryanston, South Africa and Oregan, U.S.A.</b>
<b>Sport</b>	<b>Athletics 800m</b>
<b>Best achievement</b>	<b>Gold medal, 1992 Olympic Games</b>
<b>Date of interview</b>	<b>4 May 2001</b>

### **INTERVIEW**

#### **Key**

**INTERVIEWER: I**

**MARIA MUTOLA: M**

**I:** In this family do you know your grandparents at all?

**M:** Not very well, I was young at the time. I grew up in a very difficult time in Mozambique when the war was very intense, so I couldn't travel much and my grandparents lived in other provinces. So I couldn't get involved with them like other kids, so I don't remember them much. But I did meet them. I also left Mozambique at a young age to live in the U.S.

**I:** So when did you leave Mozambique?

**M:** 1990, I was about 17.

**I:** Were there any special talents in your family?

**M:** I think so because my brother played basketball and my father used to love football a lot. My brother played for the Mozambican national team.

**I:** Do know if your grandparents had any special talents?

**M:** No, but I know that they were farmers on both my father and my mother's side.

**I:** Did you know what they farmed?

M: At the time they had like 150 cows and the farm was so big they used to grow vegetables like coconut trees and mango trees. They were big time farmers. Now my family own the farm.

I: Shame, your dad must have been quite young when he passed away?

M: He wasn't young. I'm coming from the second marriage of my father. So my mother was about 15 years younger than my dad. So my dad was 67 or 68.

I: Do any of your sisters have any special talents?

M: In sports nothing. But they braid hair and business. Like my one sister has a hair salon and my other has a store and a bar. So they are into business.

I: So they are business women. Are they married?

M: Ja, they are all married. One of them is divorced now.

I: Who would you say you are closest to in the family?

M: I think the second sister. She is Johanna and she is the one who owns a salon. I can say when I went to the U.S I was of a young age and I could not speak English and it was very difficult for me and I wanted to go back home. And she was the one who actually encouraged me to stay because I was on a scholarship. She said that if I go back home, what am I gonna do, just go back to a Portuguese school. So she said stay there for 2 or 3 years and if you don't like it then you come back. So she kept talking to me on the phone and encouraged me to stay and after one year I just started to like it and I did not want to go back home.

I: So she played quite a significant role in your life in terms of your sport, because if it wasn't for her you might have just been a regular kid in Mozambique.

M: That's true, but before my sister got involved there were other people important in my life. This guy who is a poet in Mozambique, Jose Craveverinha, used to watch soccer and he saw me sprinting on the field. He is very well known in Mozambique. He is the one who came to talk to me about running and I switched sports from soccer to track and field.

I: So you used to be a good soccer player.

M: Ja, I would say so. An alright soccer player.

I: So he saw your talent on the field and encouraged you to start.

M: Yeah, to do track.

I: Were your parents supportive of your athletics?

M: Ja, very much. They always support me. And I remember my father saying back then, to do whatever it takes to become better in whatever I do.

I: Did he say that when you were very young or when you becoming good?

M: When I was becoming good. When I was very young he did not talk much about it, but when I was becoming good he made sure I had everything I needed. Back then it cost a lot of money as I had to take transport like taxis to go and train.

I: So did you get the feeling that he felt that you could be great?

M: It's a little bit hard to say that, but I know that he saw something in me that I could be great. Because my father's goal was to see me succeed in school as well. He cared about sport but not much, but he knew if I did well in sports, I could get scholarships that they spoke of all the time. I could get a scholarship and go overseas to study and for sports as well.

I: So for him education was more important.

M: Ja

I: And sport would be your way of getting a into a university in the States. Would you say that it was very important in your family to achieve in things?

M: I left young, at a fairly young age. But I would say that it was important to achieve because always when I won a race, I would come home they always congratulate me and tell me good job and that inspires me a lot.

I: What about if you lost, how would they react?

M: The same thing they always say, "never mind you will do better next time." Whether I lost or won they always did more or less the same thing. They would say whether you lose or you win it doesn't matter. But when I went to the U.S and met my coach it was a different story (Maria giggles).

I: How would you describe her?

M: She's a lady also and we have a good relationship. But when I first began living alone in the U.S. I didn't know about eating habits and things like that. I used to eat everything I want for example. My coach she used to look in my refrigerator and take out all the junk food. She did not allow me to be free, you know to eat whatever I want. And now

she can be proud because she can come to my house and she does not have to look in the fridge to see what food I have, because she knows that I can take care of myself.

I: There seems to be quite a few relationships in your life that have supported your success. Your sister, the poet and your coach?

M: Also the poet's son, actually, became my first coach back in Mozambique. They were both involved in athletics and they knew a lot about it. So his son could tell a good athlete when he sees one.

I: As far back into your childhood as you can remember, what was life like for you or feel like for you?

M: Life in general, I think was to have fun like other kids. To go school and come back and play sport. I always played sports, since I was 6 years old. I did swimming, I played handball.

I: Were you good at all these sports?

M: I was good at handball. Swimming was a little bit difficult because it was a little bit expensive.

I: Was it always your dream to become a champion?

M: I could say so, in athletics. In 1988 I won the Mozambican National Championships. And from this I had goals to go to the 88' Olympic Games and try to win. Because at this time I did not have any idea how the other athletes run time wise. I just felt that if I can win here then I can win at the Olympic Games. But the story didn't go that way though.

I: It didn't go that way?

M: Ja, it was very tough and I was very young. I was about 13 or 14. So I went to the 88' Olympic Games and I thought I was going to win because I hadn't raced internationally.

I: And you still thought that you would win the gold medal. How did you do?

M: I did not do well. There were heats first and I came 7<sup>th</sup> in my heat. Then I knew that I have to work hard. But I did quite an incredible time for my age. I ran 2:04.

I: So when did you begin to believe that you could compete with the best?

M: I think after this experience. I felt that I was young and that I could train harder and at the next Olympics, I will go.

I: So you already had the next Olympics in your mind?

M: Ja (giggles).

I: What would you say are your significant attributes, the qualities that you have that make you a champion?

M: I think it is everything combined, you have to be at the right place at the right time, but also you have to prepare yourself for the event. You can't take it easy and 2 months before the event start training, like I used to do back home in Mozambique. For the Olympic Games in 4 years you have to start training 2 years before.

I: So you prepare well, but what I want to know is, are there any specific qualities, like hard work or positive attitude?

M: It is hard work and a positive attitude, it's got to be both. You have to train hard to be good, you have to believe you are going to win, and you have to make sure that nobody else, you got to be selfish. For example, you got to think that I am the one who the others are out to beat. Instead of saying that I want to beat that one, you have to think that all the people are saying about you. But I know that other people can win as well, but you have to go there with a very positive attitude.

I: So basically, you go into a race thinking that you are the best and everybody is looking to beat you. You are not looking to beat everybody else?

M: Exactly, exactly!

I: So you are actually very confident.

M: Yeah, you have to be, but sometimes things are not that way. But you have to be confident. You know sometimes you go into a race thinking that I am going to win this and I have to win this, but things don't go your way, they go someone else's way. But there's nothing we can do about it. But I think I have to go to a race with a winning mind.

I: Has there been any time where you have doubted yourself before any race?

M: No, no only if I am injured or sick. Like at the '96 Olympic Games in Atlanta, I had pneumonia so I knew I was going to face a difficult time, even though I managed to win bronze. But I knew it won't be easy.

I: That's amazing!

M: Ja.

I: It is clear that as a champion you cope well under pressure, so what actually goes through your mind when you are under pressure?



M: A lot of things, a lot of things. My pressure is probably even bigger because, you see, the athletic team from Mozambique, they are hoping for me, one person to win. If I lose it then that's it. I try to, especially two days before, for the Olympic Games or a championship, I try not to get phone calls from journalists, and try to talk to my family, talk to my coach, close people only. Just to keep that pressure off a little bit. But it is difficult when you have a difficult time sleeping. But, I think every year you get more experience and then you know how to deal with pressure, and you get used to it. Then you say, well, the pressures they won't go away, but at least you learn how to deal with it. You correct the mistakes that you have made, you know, to go to sleep on time, or two days before the race I won't go to the village or get involved or be seen. So I learned a lot of things over all those years.

I: You learn what works for you and then you do that?

M: Ja, ja.

I: You say you never doubt your ability, has there been a time when you may be feeling unconfident and you have done something to make yourself feel better?

M: Actually I try to read, I read a lot, or watch T.V. But not my sport, like cartoons or play video games.

I: So you take your mind off the pressure.

M: Ja, do something different, that helps me a lot.

I: The significant relationships that have supported your success. These people, do you get the impression that they felt you would be great or a champion?

M: I think so. To tell you the truth I think the poet thought that I can do this. I mean he played a big role in my life and he always encouraged me. I remember even when I was young he told me, if you dedicate yourself hard enough you can be an Olympic champion, win a gold medal, you can be a world champion one day. But for me, I did not believe it, because I was young and I did not know the significance of it, you know being an Olympic champion. But as time passed on and I grew up a bit, I started to understand what he was talking about.

I: Do you feel that when you first experienced the best, at the 88' Olympic Games, did you feel that you were actually not so far away from the rest?

M: Ja, a lot of Americans came to talk to me, to get me to the U.S. because they saw that 2.04, at that age is very fast. All those people were telling me that if you train hard enough by the time you are 20 you can do this and that. So I told myself probably they are right and I start believing it.

I: Would you say your Mozambican culture values achievement?

M: Ja, they do.

I: Is your family spiritual or religious?

M: Very religious (giggles), very religious. Before my father passed away, he was the one who created this church. An English or American church that came to Mozambique, he created it in Maputo. So he used to go to church 4 or 5 times a week.

I: Are you religious or spiritual?

M: Very spiritual. I pray a lot, before my race I pray a lot. I go to church whenever I can.

I: Do you think that it has had any influence on your success?

M: I think it does a lot, it plays a big role. My father always told me you got to believe in G-d, you got to pray, thank G-d every time you win. So it is very important in my sport.

I: It sounds like you were very close to your father. You seem to speak about him with admiration. Would you say you were closer to your mother or your father?

M: I was closer to my father than my mother, I can tell you that. I always, for some reason, I think it was because I was the youngest, spent a lot of time with my father, even though my father worked and my mother worked. But my father had more time to spend with me, for some reason, and I became very close to my father. He used to take me places, like church, and when there was a special occasion, he used to take me.

I: It sounds like the things he said really stayed in your mind?

M: Ja, some of them did. I mean a lot of things did.

I: So do you think he had a significant influence on your success?

M: Yes, he did, like I said my father encouraged me a lot and he always believed in me, and he always supported whatever I do. And I admired the man very much.

I: The neighbourhood that you grew up in, can you describe it for me? Was it poor, supportive?

M: The neighbourhood that I grew up was a poor neighbourhood, actually. But the people were very close and very friendly and everybody knows everybody. All the kids would

play together, even today the people that I grew up with, we are still friends. Almost all of them, so I call them once in a while, they call me. But we always try to see each other.

I: To take you back a few years, did you get a university scholarship in the end?

M: Actually I first finished high school in the U.S. and then I got a scholarship to Oregon University.

I: Who gave you the scholarship?

M: The Olympic Solidarity, because they have scholarships to give to young promising athletes from Africa in all sports, especially individual sports. So I was lucky to get one.

I: You received it at the '88 Olympics?

M: Yes.

I: Did you get a degree in the end?

M: Yes, I got a degree in business.

I: And your coach now?

M: She is the same coach since I moved to the U.S. She was a teacher at my high school in Eugene, Oregon and she still lives there. She also coaches other American athletes. So I have been with her ever since. I just like her and I like her training programme and things have been working well for me. So I say there is no reason to change if everything looks good.

I: Are you still planning to run for a long time more?

M: My plan is to go up until the next Olympic Games, to be serious until then and then we will see?

I: Are you married?

M: I have a boyfriend in the U.S.

## **Transcription of live interview with Brian Mitchell**

### **Demographic data**

<b>Name</b>	Brian Mitchell
<b>Age</b>	40
<b>Place of abode</b>	Johannesburg, South Africa
<b>Sport</b>	Boxing
<b>Best achievement</b>	Two-time world champion (WBA lightweight champion 1986 and IBF lightweight champion 1991)

### **INTERVIEW**

#### **Key**

**INTERVIEWER: I**

**BRIAN MITCHELL: B**

I: Were your parents married?

B: My Mom and Dad were divorced when I was five years old and I am an only child. I grew up with my Mom and I spent the first five years of my school life at boarding school.

I: Did you know your grandparents?

B: I met them but I did not have a relationship with them.

I: Were they of South African origin?

B: My Dad's father was of Scottish origin and my Mom's father was Jewish, but their spouses were South African.

I: Did your family members have any special talents?

B: My father was a South African boxing champion in 1962.

I: How was your relationship with your father, did you see him often?

B: I did not see him as a child. My relationship with my Dad was later in my life when I became a boxing champion. I would take him overseas with me to support my fight. That kind of thing.

I: How come if your relationship wasn't so close when you were young that you followed in his footsteps?

B: Psychologically it was always in the back of my mind. I wanted to do like my father, I wanted to be a boxing champion. From a young child it was always my dream to follow in my Dad's footsteps. And he wasn't there to support me. My Mom supported me, but she wasn't keen on boxing, you know I was a nine-year-old child, but that was all I wanted. But that's the only reason I became a champion. I just pursued it.

I: Would you say there was unconditional love in your family or was it based on achieving something or accomplishing something?

B: I would say it was unconditional love with my Mom. I was an only child so she spoilt me. Not financially, we weren't financially secure. And she supported me throughout my young sporting life.

I: What was her attitude towards your boxing, for example did she make sure you trained?

B: Ja, she supported me, but I did a lot on my own. You know I wanted it. A lot of the top sportsman weren't pushed by anyone, they were pushed by themselves. And I wanted to be the best, to achieve, and I kept pushing myself to be the best.

I: Would you say not having a father was an adverse circumstance when you are growing up? Do you feel you lost out?

B: You know what I always feel in life, what you haven't had you don't miss. I was a five-year-old kid and I did not have a relationship with my Dad so I got used to that, that was what life was. My mother put a roof over my head, she clothed me and put shoes on my feet and that was it. So, no I didn't miss my father as such. When I grew up and I started to look at other kids, then I suppose I thought it would be nice to have a Dad around. And today I'm a father of three kids, and I'm also divorced. Now I see how much I give my children, so I could have had a relationship with my Dad.

I: What did you think was important in life for your Mom?

B: Manners was important, in my upbringing. And the good things I suppose, she wanted me to get an education, although I left in standard eight.

I: Because of the boxing or because of what?

B: It was boxing and it was finances in the home. We were battling. My Mom was working. I wanted to be a tradesman, and I managed to find a very good job as a tool and dye maker, which I did for five years.

I: At this time your Dad was not supporting you at all?

B: No, he wasn't in my life. He was living in Durban.

I: Did you have contact over the phone?

B: Ja, he always phoned.

I: How would you describe your parents' self-esteem, your Mom and your Dad respectively?

B: I think my Mom and my Dad are quite respectful people.

I: Are they confident people?

B: Not really, not like me. Not the same self-esteem that I projected over the years. But you know it changes. My life fortunately went from strength to strength, but as a youngster and as a teenager I was always very shy. I used to blush if anyone just looked at me and I kind of outgrew that. Just got more and more confident in life.

I: What would you say gave you confidence?

B: Boxing was the biggest confidence booster for me because I was successful at what I was doing, you know, I would be the boxing champion at my club. Ja, my sport gave me a lot of confidence.

I: What type of mother was yours, would you say strict, permissive etcetera?

B: There was give and take because I was a bit spoilt being an only child, and coming from a divorced family. So there was a bit of both. She was not too strict. She let me get away with a lot of things. But manners was a big thing and respect for your parents and that kind of thing.

I: When your Dad found out that you were keen on boxing, what was his attitude towards it?

B: He was very excited about it.

I: So he encouraged it. Did that inspire you?

B: Yes it did, and as I said, in my later years I took my Dad overseas a few times with me and brought him back into the soul. We built up quite a good relationship.

I: How did that feel like for you, because he hadn't been in your life for a long time?

B: No, it was great. And then I was a grown man already. And as I said you can't miss what you don't have. You can't miss being rich, if you have never been rich. Because you go with the flow, you can't miss a BMW if you don't have one. You can look at it and say it would be nice. And that is how I look at life.

I: Oh, very true.

B: Very basic from that point of view. A lot of people aren't. They say they want this and they want that and that - want everything. But you got to be happy with your lot. You got to work towards, but you got to be happy with your lot, once you've settled into a stage.

I: I wonder if you can take yourself to as far back as you can remember in your childhood. What would you say life was to you, what did it look like to you, what did it feel like to you?

B: I was a happy person. I always enjoyed life. Life never really got me down. I had a fun life. And when I look at my life, I had a much better life than my children have today, even though they spend hundreds and thousands of Rands in the shopping centers on fancy clothes and video games.

I: Yours was simplicity.

B: Ja, it was basic we even never had television. I think it was a more enjoyable life for me. It was more personal, you know, one on one with each other, playing with games, with sticks. Our guns were sticks. So personally, I had a great life as a child.

I: What age did you start boxing?

B: Nine years old.

I: And did you play other sports?

B: I played rugby in high school and I was a very good runner, cross-country.

I: Were you an all-rounder?

B: No, I wouldn't say all round. I was okay at running and rugby, but not really good at other sports. You see boxing took up so much of my time. Another thing I can say without a doubt in life is that even if you are good at all sports you must focus eventually. I think that time it's the parents fault, because if a kid is good at all sports, they push him to do everything. Whereas you must focus on one particular sport and hang in there from about a teenager, otherwise you lose it.

I: Would you say you always enjoyed boxing or were there times that you hated it and wanted to stop?

B: I think fortunately I did enjoy it. You got to enjoy what you are doing. There's a lot of talented boxers who hate what they are doing and they don't really succeed to the top level. But you can't always enjoy it all the time. But if you're good at something, make yourself good, if you work hard at something and become good. You know it's all a big picture, if you work hard you become good and if you are good you enjoy it.

I: Like a vicious circle?

B: Ja, it's a vicious circle. You know guys are talented but they don't want to train, then they go to the gym and they hate the training and the sparring because they get tired. Whereas, I loved my training and I pushed myself in training and then I enjoyed going to the gym because it became easy for me.

I: Was it a dream of yours to become a champion and, if so, from when?

B: Ja, I always dreamed of becoming a champion because my Dad was a South African champion. So I always had these great dreams, but I wouldn't say from being a young guy. I couldn't foresee that yet.

I: When did you actually feel that you could compete with the best in the world?

B: Probably when I got to 21 and I won the South African professional title, then I realized that I could compete with the best in the world, and I wanted to be the best. I was mature enough now, I had grown out of the boyish stage, grown into a fully-fledged man.

I: What are your specific attributes that you would say facilitated your success?

B: I think my temperament was good for life, and worked for me in boxing. I had a good mind for the game; that was the compliment that I got from the boxing media.

I: What do you mean by a good mind?

B: I was good under pressure. I had the right temperament for under pressure. You know it is a one on one sport and you got to have the right temperament otherwise you blow it. I didn't ever get cross. Obviously I would get upset if things weren't going my way, like everybody does. But I wouldn't get mad, I would just stay focused and bide my time.

I: You say you were good under pressure. Are there any things that you would think of under pressure, or what you would do?



B: I just always stayed focused on my goal, and my goal was to win, to be the best and to win. And to get through the actual fight. In a fight I took it round by round, and I just stayed focused. The fight has got to come to an end.

I: To stay in the moment, do you mean?

B: A world title fight is a fifteen rounder. That's forty-five minutes of boxing, and fifteen minutes of rest, so it's an hour's work. So I would build up my whole life towards one hour. And in that one hour, which is the most important hour of your life, kind of thing, as a world champion defending or fighting for a world title, that's all that counts. Nothing else mattered in my whole life. Nobody outside the ring, at ringside, family problems, death, you know the worst.

I: So you were able to cut off everything around you?

B: I cut off everything and I focused on that one hour being in the ring and that was my best quality.

I: Your method, you would say, is to focus on exactly what was going on for that hour. And you prepared yourself for that hour. In your preparation did you do anything specific that helped you mentally?

B: The mental preparation?

I: Ja.

B: You know that the easiest thing to prepare yourself mentally is when you have done the physical work, if you've actually physically got into the gym every single day for 4 hours or whatever, running on the road. That prepares your mind, your body prepares your mind.

I: So when your body knows it has worked hard then your mind is going to follow through?

B: Ja, that's the simplest way that I motivated myself. Ja, it's like a child going to do a school exam or test, like we all have to do in our lives. If you've done the homework, when you get in there you can't wait to fill in out the questions. It's exciting.

I: Ja, true.

B: When if you haven't, it's your worst nightmare. And it's even worse in professional boxing. If you haven't prepared and you are going to get in a world title fight, can you

imagine how you feel? Your nerves, your whole mind is wrong. You can't get focused. But if you are prepared, you're like a race horse, you can't wait to get out of the stables.

I: Okay! That sounds good. Now have you ever doubted your ability?

B: I think everybody does. If you don't doubt yourself then you are not human. Then your brain is functioning on another planet. Ja, you doubt yourself, and the scariest thing about boxing is that you can fight a guy one hundred times and he challenges you, let say as an example for the hundred and first time, you think to yourself, why is this guy challenging me now a hundred and one times? Maybe this is my night to get beaten. Maybe he has got something up his sleeve. So you always doubt yourself, but once again if you have prepared well, it takes the doubt out of the flame.

I: Would you say, if you doubted yourself was there anything specific that you did to resurrect your confidence?

B: Just trained harder, everything around training. What you put into your life you get out of it. I knew that the harder I worked, the easier my life would become, or my sport.

I: Okay, I'm just going to take you back to your school life. At school was there any specific relationship that you had, let's say with a teacher who encouraged you? Or while you were growing up, was there any relationship that you had that really supported and encouraged your boxing?

B: I had an uncle, my Mom's brother, who was also a boxer. He used to take me to the amateur gym. And he supported me, but not really teachers as such. Boxing being a man's sport, you get a lot of support from everybody, when they know you are a good boxer. You know, like I was one of the small guys at high school, but I never had any problems with anybody because they all respected me. The nice thing about boxing, where you are successful - or any sport I suppose - everybody wants a pat on the back. So you earn respect I suppose, when you are good at something. I think that's what I enjoy most about life, even up until today. Is that people respect what I did. I worked so hard in my life and I get so much respect for it now, you know, it's wonderful.

I: So that makes you feel good, even up until now. How was your uncle significant to your success?

B: He would take me to the amateur gym, transport me and encourage me and support.

I: Because your Mom was obviously working?

B: Ja, and she was not keen on it in the beginning. But once she saw that I was enjoying it and I was achieving, then she got excited with me.

I: Okay. We are nearly finished. What would you say is your culture?

B: English speaking Jewish Dutchman with a Scottish surname.

I: Okay, that's amazing. So you are very mixed.

B: I grew up English, but there were a lot of Afrikaners in my neighbourhood, in Malvern. Most of the guys who boxed were Afrikaans.

I: Can you describe the neighborhood that you grew up in?

B: I suppose if I say low class it would be undermining them, it was middle class. My Mom had a house and she worked at the bank as a switchboard operator. And the people in the area were all working class, tradesmen. No upper class people.

I: Did the kids in the area play sport together?

B: At that stage, there was a lot of fighting. A lot of animosity between the boys and girls, gangs. A lot of gangs. People ganged up against each other. But I was okay because I was one of the main guys.

I: So it served a function to be a boxer in your kind of neighbourhood?

B: No it did, very much so.

I: Your religion; are you religious at all, spiritual at all?

B: Yes, I am, I don't really go to Church as such. But I am a firm believer in the Jesus Christ.

I: And when you were boxing, were you a believer?

B: Ja, and I think, in fact, when I was boxing, I used to go to Church every Sunday. I spent more time on religion actually and I was more committed too. Whereas I'm not a practising Christian today, I don't find it enjoyable going to Church. It suited my purpose at the time. Today if I think about maybe it's kind of that I was using religion.

I: Using it for your winning?

B: Using for my mental strength as well. Not really guilt, but just that it was good to go to Church and pray. I suppose I am still religious today, I just don't go to Church.

I: Do you feel it helped your success?

B: Ja, I like to believe it did.

I: So did you ever pray to win, or before you went in to the ring?

B: Pray to win, no, that would be nice. But I prayed a lot before my fights. An Auntie who was very religious, in Pretoria, she used to write to me long religious letters, scriptures from the Bible, which I enjoyed reading and addressing them before the fights, that made me feel good as well.

I: One last question. The international boycott against South Africa, did that affect your success at all?

B: It was a negative affect as far as I was not allowed to fight in the country. I could fight in South Africa, but I wasn't allowed to defend my world title.

I: The World Boxing Association wouldn't allow it?

B: That's right, but I probably earned more money fighting around the world because I got paid in dollars. But I would have liked to have the defended title in my own country. I am a born and bred South African. I lived in America, while I was fighting, and a lot of people thought I emigrated there, but I am still here.

I: Before I forget, did you have the same coach for a long time or did you have many coaches?

B: I had many coaches.

I: There wasn't any specific guy who really believed in you and you stuck with him the whole time?

B: No, I would like to think that I was that specific guy for myself. I taught myself a lot. I think I gave a lot of credit to a lot of trainers because I worked so hard. A lot of managers ripped me off as well. At the end of my career I managed myself and I did a good job of it. But actually at the end of my career, from about 1987, Rodney Berman, a promoter, was very instrumental. My last seven or eight world title fights he promoted. He taught me now to invest my money, he was my lawyer and my advisor and my boxing promoter. So if there was any one person, it would be him, without a doubt.

I: Shew, that is a true compliment to him. Well, I've asked you everything I need to ask. Thank you very much

B: It's a pleasure, Toni.

## **Transcription of live interview with Reg Park**

### **Demographic data**

<b>Name</b>	Reg Park
<b>Sport</b>	Body-building
<b>Best world ranking</b>	No. 1
<b>Best achievement</b>	3 times Mr Universe
<b>Age</b>	73
<b>Date of interview</b>	15 May 2001

### **INTERVIEW**

#### **Key**

**INTERVIEWER: I**

**REG PARK: R**

I: Did your grandparents have any special talents?

R: I don't think so.

I: What was their occupation?

R: On my mother's side my grandfather was a miner. On my father's side my grandfather was a jack-of-all-trades. I did not bother with that side of the family very much.

I: Did your parents have any special talents?

R: My father was a very good salesman.

I: And your Mom, did she stay home with you, or did she work?

R: She was the chairman of the household board.

I: So she was a housewife, I like the way you use the word chairman. When did you come to South Africa?

R: I came here in January, 1959.

I: So you grew up in England. To get a better idea of your family would you say you were closer to your mother or your father?

R: Equal.

I: Could you describe their self-esteem respectively. Would you say they were confident people?

R: My mother was very competent. There's a difference between competence and confidence. Perhaps not confidence. She started off as a young girl as a kennel maid, and then joined the ambulance service during the war. A very competent woman. She paved her driveway at 65 years of age, carrying 45 slabs of slasto. My father had a very good appearance. He ran away from home at 16 and joined the guards.

I: Why did he have to run away from home?

R: I believe his father was quite a tyrant. That's possibly why I didn't want much to do with them. The bearing that he had was influenced by the 16, 17, 18 formative years, terribly upright. You could see the guy had been military trained, when he was in his 80s. Very tidy, very methodical, wore clothes very well and people liked him. He was a nice, outgoing, gregarious man without being over the top. He created a good impression.

I: Do you think his methodicalness, discipline had any influence on you?

R: It influenced me enormously. If you walked into my office you would see.

I: Do you think it affected your discipline, because as a champion you have to be disciplined?

R: I never thought about it in that respect, from a recently early age when I focused on something I went for it. At school I was victor ludorum, and even though I wasn't a senior yet I was captain of the house team.

I: While we are on that point, were there any other sports that you were good at?

R: Soccer. At 14 I was the youngest to play in the school first team. At 18 I played in the Leeds under 18 team with 100 000 population, it's quite an achievement.

I: So you were a good sportsman?

R: Track and soccer.

I: How would you describe your parents' style of child rearing.

R: Well, it's rather strange, because you see, I was born in 1928 and things were very tough, there was a depression worldwide. My mother was holding down a job, my father

was holding down a job, just to make ends meet. So they sent me to my maternal grandparents who virtually brought me up. I found it confusing because I would call my grandparents Mum and Dad, and then when my parents came to see me I did not quite know what the connection was.

I: So what age did you stay with them?

R: About one or two years old, because of circumstances and I'm sure it was the same for a lot of people. As I got older I distinguished them by calling my grandparents "Little Mum and Dad", and my real parents "Big Mum and Dad."

I: How would you then describe your grandparents?

R: A great deal of love, and there were 3 sisters, 2 sisters of my mothers, and they always gave me a great deal of affection. My maternal grandfather I felt a great deal of affection for. I thought he was a beautiful man. He never complained, he worked down on the mine. He overcame T.B., which in those days was quite a feat. At 15 he started mining and at 18 he joined the army. In the First World War he was literally gassed, which he survived and went back to work on the mines. I think he had a great constitution. He was a simplistic person who accepted his way of life. He never complained about it. He seemed content with what he was doing. He had a garden with some pigs and racing pigeons. He was a very humble guy. He influenced me enormously by his quietness. I mean he would get up at 4 O'clock in the morning to do a 6 O'clock shift in Yorkshire where it was snowing like hell. He would go into the kitchen and fry himself bacon and eggs. Then walk a couple of miles to the mine and work an eight-hour shift. Then he would come home, and there were no baths in those days and he would wash with no hot water. I had a great deal of endearment for him. He was the guy who was putting bread on the table for me. I like to believe that I was sensitive as a very young boy, to the effect that I knew what he was doing to put bread on the table for me and I would try to help him. I would carry a bucket of water and corn for him to the garden, and the handles were just the metal, carrying a bucket in each hand about 300 yards was quite something for a youngster 7, 8, 9, just to help him. I am actually pleased that I was brought up in the humbleness of a mining village. It influenced me enormously.

I: How do you say it influenced you, you didn't take things for granted?

R: When I came to this country I saw similarities between the miners and the Blacks in South Africa. I would open my gym at five in the morning and I would see the Blacks going to work. And I have a great deal of compassion for them.

I: When did you go to live with your parents?

R: When I was about six they got a home together and circumstances were such that I could go back. I went to school there.

I: If I had to ask for one word that describes what was passed down to you from your grandparents' family, as well as one word from your parents' family, what would they be?

R: From my grandparents, humbleness, and from my parents, responsibility.

I: That makes sense.

R: In what respect?

I: Well, as a champion I have found that one must be confident that they are the best but at the same time acknowledge that getting beaten is always a possibility.

R: I knew I was the best. When I first saw a Mr Universe I said that I would be better than him.

I: But before a competition did it ever cross your mind that someone might come up and beat you?

R: My first competition I ever entered I knew the others were better than me, at the time when I decided to enter. So for 3 weeks I lived like a hermit, and all I did was ate, slept and trained. Because I had taken such drastic measures to get into shape in such a hurry, I wasn't sure whether I would win.

I: So when did you begin to believe you were the best?

R: From there I entered the Mr Universe after 2 years of training, which is kind of ridiculous you know, it was 1950, 2 years and entering the world tournaments. Here I was beaten into second place, by a fellow called Reeves. Even though I lost I thought I was better than him. So I said, "That's alright I'll come back next year and win. Nobody's going to put me down." I knew I was going to win it. I did. I forget to tell you after this 1950 Mr Universe, I won Mr Europe and then I went to live in America.

I: At the time when you started winning, were there any times when you doubted yourself?



R: No, never. In fact, I side-tracked, instead of doing body-building per se, I went into weight lifting. And I was the second guy in the world to bench press 500 pounds and the other guy was the world weight lifting champion, and that didn't surprise me either.

I: Do you think that you were so gifted genetically?

R: I wasn't gifted genetically.

I: So where does it come from?

R: I wanted to be the best in the world. Even as a kid my grandparents had paintings of a Greek wedding a couple of thousand years ago, a man with a toga next to a woman in a white flowing dress. As a 5, 6 year old I said I want to look like that guy.

I: Would you say it was always your dream to be a body-builder?

R: I think it was fated.

I: Why do you say that?

R: I could have been a football player. It was just fated, when I look back. It's like personal training now, one career stopped and the other opens. I get so much satisfaction out of training people now.

I: Motivating them?

R: I hope I do, because I kind of represent what I stand for. I did shows all over the world.

I: What was your parents' attitude when you first started?

R: Very supportive. When I saw the Universe I started to train in my parents' backyard in minus 5. I used to wear 2 tracksuits and socks. Seven nights a week, I was at college and I would train after college. I did a one-year business administration course that the army paid for.

I: Did your parents encourage you to compete?

R: That was all me.

I: During your competitive time, was there anyone who was your idol?

R: Grimick, the 1948 Mr Universe champion, and Reeves who came second. They were my two idols.

I: Was there any coach or significant relationship with somebody who knew you could be the best?

R: No, I knew I could be the best. Is that egotistical?.

I: No, not at all.

R: Tell me Toni, I don't care.

I: Well I interviewed Wayne, Brian, and both of them said that they were the significant person in their lives that influenced their success.

R: I knew I was going to be the best in the world and I was there for 15 years. Even today I could beat them if I wanted to.

I: And the training in those days was not as scientific as it was today.

R: Not in my case. I analyzed it all totally. I knew about body typing. I read it all, British Medical Journal and all the body-building magazines I could get hold of. All anatomical and physiological books. I became a student of body-building. I had to know my weaknesses, what body type I was and what I needed.

I: So had the confidence and knowledge.

R: You got to have the knowledge. You got to analyze your weaknesses. And you got to know that arrogance is ignorance.

I: Did you do any mental training?

R: Oh, it's all mental training, without even knowing it. I just set it up in mind.

I: How did you do that?

R: It was like the 4 minute mile, someone said to me that a weightlifter had just bench-pressed 500 pounds. I was in Bristol 2 weeks later, and I was on the stage. I went up to 490 and someone said to me, "Reg, why don't you take 500?" And I thought, if a heavyweight can do this then I can. It never entered my mind that I couldn't do it.

I: That's an important point.

R: That's everything! I believe all achievers in all spheres of life have the same attitude.

I: I've got a quotation from Arnold Schwarzenegger which says, "Everything that the mind of man can conceive, the mind of man can achieve, so long as they believe 100%."

R: You've gotta have the sureness. But it may come across as conceit and that's what worries me.

I: There is a fine line between confidence and arrogance. But what I've found with the people that I've interviewed is that they acknowledge that they have weaknesses and they work on them.

R: Sure, my food is my weakness. I never dieted in my life. I just relied on my metabolism.

I: So you were lucky?

R: No. I trained it to that condition. I trained so hard in order for my metabolism to speed up. I learned how to speed up my digestion system through breathing.

I: So in order to take control you had to know your weaknesses. So do you think your significant attributes to your success are knowing yourself, belief in yourself?

R: I tell you about an experience. In 1961 I got a cable from Rome: "Come to Rome for a film test for the film Hercules." So I sent a telegram back saying, "Send a ticket, put me in a 5 star hotel, with \$100 a day, and I'll come." So I arrived there and they put me up in a magnificent hotel. They asked me if I had ever filmed before and I said "no". I met a guy called Burt Nelson, who started the Method School in New York. He was reading the script out. He said to me, "The Method School is very simple. If the script determines that you must be angry, then be angry. Think of things that make you angry. If you should be funny, think of things which are funny." So I said, "Well, I'm Hercules. I don't have to think of it, I am it." I did the test and there was a gym nearby, and I was having a workout. They phoned me from the studios and said, "We are going to see the film test, do you want to come along?" And I said "No, not particularly." And it kind of threw them and they said, "Why?" And I said, "Well why did you bring me here?" And they said, "Because we think you are Hercules." And I said, "Fine. I'm working out. I am Hercules."

I: So are you telling me, in a nutshell, that you have to act and believe that are something to be something? So if you want to be a champion, you have to act and believe that you are a champion in order to be champion.

R: Let me just finish this story. So I said to them, "If good it's good, if it's bad it's bad, whatever I'm a realist." And they were blown away. They saw the test and said it was great and that I must come in and sign the contract. I finished up doing six films there.

I: Is that so?

R: I also was sent a telegram to be the guest poser at the Mr and Miss U.S.A. And they paid me the same money as the winners. On March the 4<sup>th</sup> this year (2001), I got a life time achievement award in America at the Arnold Classics Show. It was on the Internet

the next day and I was on the plane and this guy turned round and said, "Congratulations." And I said, "What for?" And he said, "For your life time achievement award." I said, "Thank you. Where are you from?" And he said "Tokyo."

I: Wow!

R: Wow, you see, can you imagine what happened to me! It was a big, big show in Columbus, Ohio and it's a 5000 seater and the hall is sold out in September for March. When Arnold gave me the award 5000 people stood up. It was mind blowing. Ja, it was great.

I: You sound so confident, but surely you had fears and doubts?

R: It never worried me if I got beaten. It wasn't the end of the world. I wasn't destroyed. I was still Reg Park.

I: So you are quite secure about who you are?

R: Yeah, sure. Sport was always an expression of who I was. With body-building I was expressing myself. I wasn't only about winning.

I: So, if you think back, where did this security come from?

R: From my own philosophy, my own assessment of life.

I: What was that philosophy?

R: Enjoying every minute. Life is so short, Toni.

I: Okay, and when did you decide on that?

R: When I started thinking, 21, 22. I read philosophy and everything else, when I was a kid. I used to read philosophy books at competitions, and people were blown away by this. I like people who are nice people, I pick up vibes very strong.

I: Yes, you are very sensitive and in tune with yourself.

R: I can tell people who don't care for me, got hang-ups with me, sincere with me. And I got that from the mining village. There was a lot of hardship and everybody pulled together.

I: And your grandparents didn't cover up emotion. You were allowed to express yourself?

R: It was there for me to see. I remember thinking please don't let me work down a mine.

I: So this mining culture had an enormous impact on you. To end off, what was interesting for me is that when I asked you what your greatest achievement was, you said, “ I got married.”

R: Yes, best thing that ever happened to me, she was the most beautiful woman in the world, more beautiful than Elizabeth Taylor, and a great cook.

I: It intrigues me that you see deeper than just achievement.

R: Human relationships are the most important things in life.

I : Is that why winning is not everything to you?

R: If you meet with success and disaster in the same mode, then you are laughing at everybody else. That quotation came from a poem by Kipling, called IF. I was brought up with it.

I: Can you do that?

R: Yeah, sure.

I: So where do your anger and sadness go?

R: I put it into perspective, and I make a positive out of it. I also talk to my wife. My wife is my wife, girlfriend, lover, sister, soul mate. And I hope that I am that to her in a male sense.

In a message dated 5/10/01 4:33:39 AM Pacific Daylight Time,  
tongad@webware.co.za writes:

<< TYPE THE ANSWERS UNDERNEATH EACH QUESTION.

### FAMILY

Q. Are your parents still married?

A. Yes.

Q. How many children in your family?

A. Four.

Q. What would you say your parents believe are the important things in life?

A. Family, duty/work ethics, respect for other people, faith in God and enthusiasm for life.

Q. Describe your relationship with your mother and father respectively?

A. A little bit difficult in a few lines, but very healthy and good relationships with both.

Q. How would you describe your mother and your father's self-esteem, respectively?

A. Both have good self-esteem in my opinion. I was raised in a more traditional family where the father is the head of the household, the breadwinner, and my mother never worked or earned her own money, but despite that I think she has taken pride in raising her children - a sign to me that both have good self-esteem.

Q. How would you describe the style of your parents' child rearing?

A. I would say we were brought up liberally and not very strictly in the context of the environment that I grew up in (small town, Afrikaans society etc.).

Q. Is there sibling rivalry in your family?

A. Not really.

Q. Were your siblings supportive of your sport?

A. Yes, very much.

Q. Do other members of your family have any special talents? If so what are they?

A. They have mostly focused on academics.

Q. How would you say your family would have described you when you were growing up, and/or how would you describe your role in the family?

A. The most competitive.

Q. Are there other great achievers in your parents' family histories, for example your grandparents?

A. No.

Q. What was your parent's attitude towards your sport and your ability?

A. They were always very supportive, shown a lot of faith in my abilities. They never pushed me but always provided encouragement and cushioned support when things did not go well.

Q. How did their attitudes and beliefs about you make you feel?

A. One of their favorite things that they used to say to me before a match, growing up and even still today, is to go out and see what you can do - to go and test my own abilities, that always made me feel good.

Q. How did they react to your wins, losses and practising?

A. Excited about wins, sympathetic and kind about losses, over the course of my career they have probably cautioned me more about practicing too much rather than too little.

Q. Are you aware of anything in your family that was passed down from previous generations? (Theme, an attitude, a family ethic.)

A. Fairness, doing the right thing, and good work ethics came from my grandparents too.

### INDIVIDUAL

Q. As far back into your childhood as you can remember, what did life look like for you?

A. Most of the time exciting, a lot of things to explore and experience out there.

Q. Did you always enjoy your sport? At any point in your life did you stop loving it?

A. Yes, I have always enjoyed it.

A. But sometimes travelling is difficult, and sometimes you get tired and lose some of the enthusiasm. But I can honestly say there has never been a point where I felt that I truly disliked what I was doing.

Q. Did you play other sports in your childhood? Would you say you were good at them?

A. I did athletics. I worked hard and thought I was quite good.

Q. Was it your dream to become a champion?

A. No, I always liked winning a lot though.

Q. When did you begin to believe that you could compete with the best in your sport?

A. I always knew that, but that is speaking relatively. Looking back it always seems like I was competing with the best of whatever level I found myself in, then you look to the next level, and work your way into that, etc.

Q. When did you feel that this dream was going to become a reality - after a match, tournament or during a particular time in your life?

A. I can't really answer that, because in the same way I answered the previous question, I seem to just live in the moment or situation that I am in. So in some ways the dream became a reality a long time ago and in other ways I still have not completely fulfilled the dream.

Q. What are significant attributes (qualities) about you specifically which you would say facilitated your success?

A. Competitiveness and the ability to adapt and learn.

Q. How would you say you perceived yourself a person growing up?

A. I considered myself pretty fortunate and I was content with what I had and who I was, but somehow I liked achieving and competing and trying to become better at whatever I was focusing on.

Q. Was this perception of yourself consistent or did it change?

A. Consistent.

Q. It is clear that as a champion you cope well under pressure. What goes through your mind when you are under pressure?

A. The less the better.

Q. Do you use specific methods, which help to lessen the pressure? If so, what are they?

A. Focus on the moment, block everything out, compete.

Q. Do you ever doubt your ability and, if so, how often?

A. It all depends on what I set out to do, how high I aim.

Q. Do you have any method that you use, which serves to resurrect your confidence if you do experience doubt?

A. Most of the time and in the past, when in doubt I would set out to work harder, but there were also moments where I just had to say, "So what, lighten up a bit and just try to have fun."

### SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS

Q. Did you experience any relationships/friendships during your life that you feel influenced your sport/success?

A. I would certainly not be where I am today without the help and encouragement of countless people.

Q. Did the person/s you had a relationship/friendship with believe you would become a champion?

A. I don't know.

Q. Did any experience at school have any impact on your sport?

A. Not one particular experience, no.

### CULTURE & SOCIETY

Q. What would you say is your culture?

A. Now that I have travelled all over the world it becomes more and more difficult to describe the South African culture and the culture I grew up with.

Q. Do you think your culture has influenced your values?

A. Yes.

Q. How would you say the international boycott against South Africa during apartheid affected your success (positively/negatively)?

A. I know that South Africa's return to Olympics etc., was a very positive influence in my game, but I don't particularly remember the opposite affecting me that much.

Q. Were your ancestors from South Africa? If not where were they from?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you aware of their reasons for coming to South Africa?

A. No

Q. Is your family either spiritual, or traditional in terms of the rituals of an organized religion, or both?

A. Yes

Q. Are you either spiritual or religious, or both? If so when do you pray?

A. Yes. Whenever I feel the need to.

#### LIVING & FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Q. Describe the type of neighborhood that you grew up in (e.g. friendly, dangerous, poor etc.).

A. Small, friendly. Most people knew each other.

Q. Was there a sense of community in the neighbourhood?

A. Yes.

Q. Describe the financial circumstances of your family?

A. I grew up with more than everything I needed.

Q. Did both your parents work? If so what did they do?

A. No. My father is a lawyer, mother a housewife.



## **Report of interview with Herman Chalupsky**

### **Demographic data**

<b>Name</b>	Herman Chalupsky
<b>Sport</b>	Ocean Kayaking
<b>Best world ranking</b>	Rated no. one in the world by peers
<b>Best achievement</b>	Won 8 out of 10 world championships in the last 5 few years
<b>Age</b>	36
<b>Date of interview</b>	24 May 2001

**Due to a problem that occurred with the audio cassette the following data are set out as a report of a live interview.**

### **REPORT**

Herman's parents were still married when his Mom died 2 years ago from breast cancer. According to him the most important thing in life as far as his parents were concerned, was discipline. He said that his parents were very strict and quite distant. "Our family was not like other families, no hugging and kissing. Being of German origin it was normal to be like that." Herman's grandfather on his father's side played a role in the sport he chose. Grandfather Chalupsky built kayaks and his son, Herman's father, was the first Springbok canoeing champion, and won the biggest international canoeing race in Spain, in 1968. Herman added that he, partnered by his brother Oscar, won the same race in 1986. All three of the siblings did canoeing. However, there was enormous competition between Herman and Oscar, the eldest brother.

I asked Herman to describe his relationship with his Mother and Father respectively. He said that he admired and respected his father and described his mother as the loving one and the one who kept the family together. His parents were both strict and they placed an immense amount of importance on discipline.

As far back as Herman can remember, life was about achievement. He reported that his parents never forced him to achieve, but that his father gave him incentives. For example, his father offered the children rewards if they achieved at their sports.

Herman swam, played waterpolo, canoed, and he excelled at all of them. At nine years of age he won a lifesaving competition, and it was at this time that he began dreaming of becoming a champion lifesaver. He enjoys his sport, but admits to, at times, hating the training. At fifteen Herman competed in a canoeing tournament against the best of South African seniors. It was at this time that he felt he could compete with the best in his sport.

I asked Herman what were the qualities that made him a champion. He believed that his mental strength and his hard work constituted the recipe of his success. He described mental strength as focusing on being strong throughout the race. He said that he would always think that he was going to win the race, and do anything he could to stay ahead. Even if he was dying of exhaustion he would do everything he could to stay ahead. He said if he doubted himself he would say to himself that he was going through a bad patch, but he would know that he would get through it. He knew that if he wanted to win he couldn't doubt himself. Herman uses the confidence in himself, the feeling that he is the strongest and that he has trained the hardest, as a way of coping under pressure. Herman believed that the competition from his brother contributed a lot to his excellence. He reported that Oscar and him would compete intensely with one another in training as well as in races. The strong competition with one another pushed them ahead from the rest in their sport. Oscar has also excelled in swimming, waterpolo, canoeing, as well as winning world championships numerous times.

For Herman, his relationships with his father, his brother, and his twelve-year relationship with his girl friend have had a great deal of influence on his success. The

Chalupsky family is of a South African culture and of Roman Catholic religion. Herman is not religious or spiritual. However, his younger brother is very religious, and Herman said that is a reason why he, Walter is not good at canoeing. "Walter prays for all of us", joked Herman.

Herman described the neighbourhood he grew up in as a regular middle class, Durban Westville neighborhood. The family was quite closed off from the neighbourhood. There was not a sense of community, for Herman. He described himself as the non-conformist in his family. He said that all his siblings are married with kids and he is the second eldest. His father was a crane engineer and his mother a hairdresser and they battled financially. Whenever his father made money he bought the boys the very best equipment for their sport. Herman has great financial aspirations. His goal is for his company to be the most successful property brokerage in Durban. He says that he loves the feeling of achievement.

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