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**SPORTS FOR DEVELOPMENT:  
From the Perspective of the Youth in Worcester**

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Master Thesis

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May 31, 2021



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From the Perspective of the Youth in Worcester**

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*“Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand”*

Nelson Mandela

## **Declaration of Authorship**

I, Natalia Ríos Pimiento, hereby declare that the Master thesis, entitled “*Sports for development: from the perspective of the youth in Worcester*” is the result of my research for the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degree in International Development Studies. I confirm the work herein is my own and that I have properly acknowledged all bibliographical references and quotations.

May 31, 2021  
**Date**

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and lines, representing the author's name.

**Signature**

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### Zásady pro vypracování

Abstract Sports for development and peace (SDP) is a growing sector that has gained the support of the international community, civil society, and governments around the globe. Recognized as a tool for crime prevention, education, empowerment, and peacebuilding, SDP programs have been implemented in South Africa using different sports such as football, rugby, basketball, athletics, among others. Through this research, we will analyze a non-profit association, Fit2Run, that supports underprivileged teenagers by training them and providing them with the necessary skills to find a meaningful life in athletics.

Methodology This research will be conducted using qualitative methods such as observation of the athletes and their life in the community; interviews with the athletes, the founder of Fit2Run, trainers, members of the community, and gang members if possible.

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## **Abstract**

There is an increasing literature on Sports for Development (SFD) that attempts to theorize, evaluate, and explain how sports can influence a variety of development issues in disadvantaged communities. However, most of the available evidence that suggest that participation in sports has a positive effect on health, education and social inclusion, do not target vulnerable youth population. Therefore, the importance of analyzing programs that target this group arises as a need to understand the significance that SFD have in the lives of vulnerable young people and their communities. Inspired by Ferguson's approach to development, the present thesis will inquiry *what does sports do in the context of development?* and *what does sports do in the lives of the youth (from vulnerable backgrounds) in Worcester?* The scope of this analysis is a Non-Profit Organization (NPO) called Fit2Run, that provides training in athletics to underprivileged youth in Worcester, South Africa, and the subjects of analysis are eight of its athletes, the trainer and community leader, as well as a former gangster. Using qualitative methods this thesis reaffirms that sports are associated to benefits like relaxation or stress and anxiety relief, however, is when the athletes talk about Fit2Run that development outcomes are recognized.

## **Keywords**

Sports for development, Youth, Worcester, South Africa, Gangsterism, Education.



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## 1. Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic I found myself locked in an apartment in France, taking the classes of my Master's degree online and going out only to buy groceries. I was living alone and was away from my family. Confronting myself with so much uncertainty produced anxiety and stress as never experienced before. During those days, finding strategies to find calm and relax my mind was crucial to deal with the 'new normal'. Although I have never been a sports person, during lock down I found in physical activity a way to stay active and it helped me to build a daily routine that gave structure to those days were staying in bed seemed like the best option. This personal experience and the reflection on the sports initiatives that I had the opportunity to see in my country, Colombia, that give hope to children from impoverished areas, led me to choose Sports for Development (SFD) as the topic of my thesis.

As a growing sector, SFD has gained the support of international organizations, the civil society, non-governmental organizations and governments around the globe. In post-apartheid South Africa sport was associated with the reunification project and, nowadays, there are many international and Non-Profit Organizations (NPO) that work with sports-based programs there, including soccer, rugby, cricket, athletics, among others. From them, I decided to select an NPO called Fit2Run to make my research. I chose this organization after reading *Steeplechase: personal reflections on Fit2Run's race of life*<sup>1</sup>, since I found remarkable the achievements they had with so little support from the sports governmental institutions and donors. This first approach to Fit2Run made me wonder how this NPO works and what does it mean for the vulnerable youth in Worcester, South Africa.

*[...] despite the unification of racially and politically divided sport governing bodies and promises of equal opportunities, the social and sporting realities of coloured and African young athletes remain compromised. [...] Despite showing exceptional athletic talent at an early age, young children from my school were lost to the competition by the time they reached their teens. It was in response to these observations that Fit2Run was established in August 2008 (Norman Ontong in Kaur & Ontong, 2021 87).*

Fit2Run was established and run entirely by volunteers who have been actively involved in education, community development and sports (Kaur and Ontong 2021). Norman Ontong, the co-founder, middle distance coach and manager of Fit2Run, explained me that their target population does not count with access to efficient training facilities or equipment and require guidance to reach their full potential. Through training athletics, the organization promotes a healthy lifestyle

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<sup>1</sup> From the book *Critical Reflections on physical culture at the edge of the Empire*.

that is gangsterism/drug-free, they encourage discipline, and dedication in these children and youth so that they can achieve better in all aspects of their life, especially in education.

Drawing from Ferguson's (1990), the objective of this thesis is not to 'rectify or correct' sports as a means for development, neither to advocate for the 'positive' or 'negative' impacts that sports have. The objective is to answer two questions (i) What does sport (athletics) do in the context of development? and (ii) What does sport do in the lives of the youth (from a particular background) in Worcester? To answer the questions, qualitative methods and a short-term ethnography are used, with the purpose of discover, understand, analyze, and interpret the meanings that sports have. The in-depth engagement with the Fit2Run since the first day of my arrival to Worcester, allowed for participant observation, interviews, and access to valuable information that is analyzed in the present document.

This thesis is divided into seven chapters including this introduction. The second chapter describes the methodology selected and explain in detail every step of the qualitative research and its limitations. The third is the Literature Review, that builds a strong theoretical foundation as the base of the research work, and in where I refer to different researchers, international organizations, and practitioners that have contributed to the research on SFD. The fourth is the theoretical framework, where I present how theoretical connections between SFD and social concerns raised during the field work such as Gangsterism and Education. The fifth is the analysis where three life-stories are presented as a means of understanding the significance of SFD for vulnerable youth in Worcester, focusing on Fit2Run programs. The sixth discusses the life-stories by drawing on the various answers of the athletes interviewed to have a more comprehensive panorama of what sports does in this specific context. In the concluding chapter, I conclude by saying that the sports-based program of Fit2Run, the training and the participation in other activities, encourage the kids to have bigger goals inside and outside the running track.

## 2. Methodology

This research was carried out by using different qualitative methods, emphasizing in a short-term ethnography (from March 19 until May 28, 2021). Understanding the qualitative method as explained by Ñaupas et al. (2014, 141), *‘It refers to characters, attributes, essence or non-quantifiable properties, which (...) could better describe and explain the phenomena, events and actions of a social group or of a human being’*. The planning stage of the research included a first approach to the existing literature related to sports for development and the history and context of Worcester, the town where Fit2Run works and, engaging with Vivanco (2016), I prepared *Field Notes* for my work. My goal in conducting ethnographic fieldwork was to garner information to comprehend the meaning that the community gives to Fit2Run. The interview guide was also redacted during this period, editing it over the course, and refining it after the first interview that helped me to identify which questions had to be redacted in a different manner. The different methodological elements comprising the methodology are described below.

### 2.1. Field work

Vivanco (2016: 18) argues that fieldwork is *‘an investigative approach whose goal is to produce in-depth and detailed descriptions and analyses of variables in the setting in which they occur naturally’*. Initially, I spent more time participating in and observing Fit2Run activities for understanding how its programs works, as well as the lives of the athletes participating in the programs and the context where their reality unfolds. Seim (2019: 2) argues that the *ethnographer exists as someone who not only takes from but also takes part in the microcosms she studies’*. Following this, I took an active role working as an intern in Fit2Run for almost three months (March to June). This helped me to comprehend what Fit2Run does, the methods they use and their understanding of the impact their programs have in the lives of their athletes. I also took part in the athletics training sessions participating in most of the competitions they had. I was involved in most of the activities related to the NPO, even some meetings with the parents, and community fundraising events. With the objective of recording my thoughts, interpretations, and analysis of the daily events, I wrote and recorded fieldnotes about the days I spent in Worcester.

### 2.2. Observation

Vivanco (2016: 53) affirms that *observing naturally-occurring situations, interactions, and everyday activities is one of qualitative fieldwork’s most important techniques*. In this sense, during the first month of fieldwork, participant observation was the main method used. Engaging in the every-day activities of the organization allowed me to create and maintain respectful and trusting relationships with the Fit2Run community, which included the manager, the volunteers, the athletes, their parents and the *‘friends of Fit2Run’* a group of people that supports its work. I

used *overt* participant observation, which meant that my identity was clearly indicated before my arrival to the field. The Fit2Run community was informed about the role that I had in the organization and the research I was going to conduct.<sup>2</sup> During the first weeks of observation, I realized that the older athletes (15-23 years old) felt more comfortable speaking in English than the younger athletes (10-14), which meant that it was more convenient to select the firsts to participate in the interviews as they would be able to express better in the research language.

### **2.3. Interviews**

I interviewed ten athletes through a semi-structured format and with varied duration from thirty minutes to two hours (Appendix 1).<sup>3</sup> The objective of these interviews was to obtain detailed experiences, thoughts, and feelings about their participation in sports and how they understand 'development'. This method of data collection was selected as it provides a flexible but structured technique of obtaining a rich set of data for analysis (Peesker et al., 2019, 322). Each interview started with an introduction of the researcher, explaining the reasons that brought her to Worcester, a brief presentation of the research project and its objectives. Then, an important clarification about that there were no right or wrong answers. After informed consent and permission were provided the interview was recorded and subsequently analyzed. All the participants authorized the use of their names, as a way of ensuring their voices were reflected and recognized. Every participant was allowed to ask questions before, during or after the interview.

### **2.4. Life-stories**

The purpose of the life stories is to describe what occurred in the lives of the individuals, to capture their interpretations of different events in their lives and, to reveal how they make sense of their own life, in that regard, there is an emphasis on the uniqueness of the participant within the context studied. Furthermore, the writing of three life-stories allowed to detail in different perspectives from the youth in Worcester. Although there is not a life-story for everyone interviewed, their insights, perceptions and thoughts are also included in the discussion chapter. Due to the proximity of the researcher to Sharlan Boer and Norman Ontong, they were the first individuals chosen. Initially the idea was to include as a third life-story the voices of the parents that are involved with Fit2Run, but an unexpected opportunity was presented during one of the interviews. While I was talking with Vernoschka Abrahams about the problems that the youth in Worcester face, like gangsterism, she told me that one of her cousins, Sirgio Mcleod used to be a gangster. Immediately I asked if it was possible to talk to him. After a week, I had the opportunity to meet him finding the third life-story. The story was also included because gangsterism was the

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<sup>2</sup> There was even an article on Standard, the local newspaper talking about my arrival.

<sup>3</sup> The interviews were carried out between March 28 and April 27, 2021.

most common topic mentioned during the interviews and the first 'development' issue identified in the preparation for fieldwork, thus, it complemented the picture of the reality in Worcester.

## **2.5. Note on language**

Although most of the persons that I interact with during my fieldwork spoke English, the interactions among themselves were always in Afrikaans, therefore, I was not always able to understand what they were saying. My analysis then relayed on the tone of the voice and the body language that the individuals were using. In these events I could only tell the character of the conversation, if there was a misunderstanding, if it was a motivational speech, or if it was casual conversation. It is worth mentioning that during the interview with Sharlan Boer, she was not able to say anything when I asked for the mean of development, therefore, during this first interview I discovered that the word 'development' may not be understandable for some athletes. Due to the importance of inquiring the meaning of the concept, in that specific interview I included its translation in Afrikaans '*ontwikkeling*'. After that, during the interviews with younger athletes, the use of that word was very helpful to get more elaborated answers.

## **2.6. Validation strategies**

As advised by Creswell (1997), this qualitative research engaged with two validation strategies. The first one was the in-member checking, where I requested the participants' view about how I presented and analyzed their life-stories. The second one was the prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field as explained in the participant observation section.

### 3. Literature Review

By questioning what does sport (athletics) do in the context of development? And what does sport do in the lives of the youth (from a particular background) in Worcester? we engage with Ferguson's approach to 'development'. The questions itself entails that instead of inquiring if Sports for Development (SFD) works or not I explore the significance and meanings of SFD in the mentioned context. The present chapter gives a brief explanation of the development concept according to different theories to acknowledge its complexity. After, I move towards the revision of the literature related to SFD to understand how researchers have approached this specific field and what are the general assumptions made. These two sections, (i) development and (ii) sports for development are analyzed separately to shape a sound theoretical framework<sup>4</sup> that guide the analysis and discussion of the final chapters.

#### 3.1. Development

Development is a central unquestioned value (Ferguson, 1990, xiii), a matter of life and death (Edelman et al. 2005, 1), a concept that has been continuously evolving. In its simplest definition, development is *the process in which someone or something grows or changes and becomes more advanced* (Cambridge dictionary).

For Esteva (2010, 1), the era of development started after the Second World War, with a speech given by the president Truman to consolidate the position of the United States of America in the international arena. On 1949 Truman said "... *We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas*". The use of the word 'underdevelopment' in that context, changed the meaning of development, although it was not the first time the word was used, this time it had greater relevance and since then development has connoted at least one thing: to escape from the undignified condition called underdevelopment (Esteva, 2010).

Over the years many theories have been created to guide the achievement of such 'development'. From the perspective of the modernization theory, development entails the transition from a 'traditional' to a 'modern' society. From the sociological approach, Levy (1967, as cited in So, 1990, 34) distinguished between relatively modernized societies and relatively non-modernized societies, this division is defined by the extent to which tools and inanimate sources of power are utilized. The modernization process is the result of the contact between those societies, and it occurs because the patterns of development show a universal tendency to infiltrate. If one society is catalogued as a relatively non-modernized, it would have the advantage of knowing exactly

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<sup>4</sup> The specific Theoretical Framework is featured in the next chapter.

where is going and borrowing the experiences from the relatively modernized society, it would not have to go through the whole process, it could avoid the unnecessary steps, and is most likely to receive assistance, *'those who have previously achieved in these respects are likely to offer or insist on assistance'* (Levy, 1967, as cited by So, 1990, 26). From the economic approach, Rostow developed his modernization theory as a process that involves five phases to achieve economic growth: Traditional society, Transitional society, Take-off, Drive to maturity, and High mass consumption. Due to the characteristics of the 'third world countries' it is highly possible that there is a lack of investment needed for the take-off. In this sense, Rostow proposes that the solution to this problem is the provision of aid to these countries in the form of capital, technology and expertise (So, 1990, 30).

According to this theory, development is a unidirectional and progressive process that changes societies in a way that they end up being more similar. The theory has been criticized as it assumes that the traditional values are not compatible with modernity and that the 'modernization' process is the same for every territory, insinuating that the 'underdeveloped' countries must follow the path of the United States of America or some European countries. It should not be expected that countries be 'developed' in the same way as the western countries as their history is different, for instance, they did not have to experience colonialism in the same way and era.

An alternative theory of development is the dependency theory. Dependency is understood as 'situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected' (Dos Santos, 1970, 231). In this sense, the same international structure that advocates for the development of the 'underdeveloped territories' might be the same conditioning their 'development' which aggravates the structural problems of their inhabitants. In the words of Frank (1969, 3) contemporary underdevelopment is the historical product of past and continuing economic, social and political relations between the satellite underdeveloped and the developed metropolitan countries. The author affirmed that some economies in Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico) experienced greater economic development when their ties to the developed nations were weak.

Starting with the understanding that there is not a perfect recipe of development for the whole world, and that the traditional values are not an obstacle, the 'post-development' theory aims to include a wider range of considerations and speeches from the indigenous, the afrodescendant communities, to hear the voice of the peasants, the youth and the women. With the consideration that 'development' has failed to those that attempted to rescue from 'underdevelopment' by placing them in a vicious circle of passivity and misery, some authors like Radhema (1997, p. 379) argue that is actually a blessing that the 'development' machine did not prove to be as



efficient as it was supposed to be, if proven its effectiveness, the environmental and inequality issues would be even worse.

In his book, 'the anti-politics machine' Ferguson (1990) analyzes the development apparatus in Lesotho and affirms that *'in tracing the political intelligibility of the 'development' problematic, the question of the truth or falsity of 'development' ideology is not the central one'*. Instead the author argues that is important to analyze the social consequences that it has by interrogating *'what do this ideas do?'* and *'how are they connected and implicated in larger social processes?'*.

Some understandings of 'development' have been covered in the literature review to shed light on the concept to which the research question refers to. However, is not the aim of this thesis to explain all the theories and conceptions around 'development'. The significance of mentioning some of them is to give a glimpse on the different approaches to a concept that, currently, is as undeniable as the concept god in the twelfth century (Ferguson, 1990, p.xiii).

Many drivers of development have been identified along with the evolution of the concept. During the last decades, sports have been labeled as an engine that can tackle different development issues such as poverty, conflict resolution, gender equity, and crime prevention. In the following section of the Literature review we will analyze some of the approaches to this field that has proven to be as controversial as development itself.

### **3.2. Sports for development**

Sports for development is a growing sector that has been increasingly researched, analyzed and evaluated in the last decades. According to Coalter (2010) this field has experimented rapid growth since the late 1990s. Although the International Platform on Sports and Development argues that sports have been used in an ad hoc way to accomplish development goals since 1920's. According to the platform the first interaction between the sports and development date back to 1922 with an agreement between the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) that established an institutional cooperation. The sector has gained the support of many international organizations that have included sports as part of their development projects, in the words of Levermore (2008) *"sport is being used increasingly by a variety of institutions as a vehicle to enhance existing development initiatives and/or reach areas that traditional development finds difficult to access"*.

The United Nations (UN) has recognized the power of sports though its inclusion in the development agendas. For the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the UN Office on Sport for Development and Peace (2010) recognized sport as a *"practical tool to assist in the achievement of the MDG"*. However, it also affirmed that *"sport does not have the capacity to tackle solely the MDG, it can be very effective when part of a broad, holistic*

*approach*". For its new development agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the UN launched a document that outlined the contribution of sports to each of the seventeen goals, with the objective to maximize its contribution to a better world. The role of sports is recognized by the 2030 Agenda as follows:

*Sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development. We recognize the growing contribution of sport to the realization of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives. (UN Resolution A/RES/70/1, paragraph 37).*

The affirmation of the role of sports made by the UN, as the most important actor in the international development sphere, has an impact in the support given by the governments, by non-governmental organizations and by the civil society. It might also have an impact on the number of initiatives related to SFD and the funds available for the implementation of such projects. Sanders et al. (2012, p.2) affirm *'sport is now prominent on donor agendas and has assumed a higher profile in development circles'*.

According to Bailey et al (2013), the benefits derived from sports are not only related to physical health, but there are also six different 'capitals' that have a positive relationship with sports namely: (i) Physical Capital; (ii) Emotional Capital; (iii) Individual capital; (iv) Social Capital; (v) Intellectual Capital; and (vi) Financial Capital. In each of these, the authors included specific outcomes that captures positive impacts on human capital development, for each outcome they assigned a weight of the evidence found. In the case of the Physical Capital, most of the outcomes have a solid evidence, like general motor skills, cardiorespiratory fitness, overall mortality, among others. However other forms of 'capital', like intellectual capital had most of their outcomes related to inconclusive evidence or lack of substantive research, like educational attainment, school engagement or processing speed (Bailey et al., 2013, p.294-295).

One of the positive outcomes of sports identified by practitioners is related to character building, an ongoing debate for Doty (2006). The origin of this belief that "sports build character", as for Reid (2007) may be in the work of Plato, specifically in the Republic. In his paper Sport and Moral Education in Plato's Republic, Reid explains that the goal of gymnastikê in Republic is virtue, excellence or aretê -something Plato believes to be a quality of the psychê (mind/soul) and not the body. Therefore, in Plato's Republic the guardians exercise their bodies to benefit their souls. In other words, the physical activity entails the movement of the body to train the soul. Existing literature provides a wide range of definitions that allows us to understand the field:

*The use of sport to exert a positive influence on public health, the socialization of children, youths and adults, the social inclusion of the disadvantaged, the economic*

*development of regions and states, and on fostering intercultural exchange and conflict resolution* (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011, p. 311, as cited in Spaaij et al. 2018,1)

*The intentional use of sport, physical activity and play to attain specific development objectives in low- and middle-income countries and disadvantaged communities in high-income settings* (SDPIWG 2008, as cited in Langer, 2020, 1)

The definitions provided follow the panacea logic (Guest, 2005, 1), where sport is the solution for different development issues such as gender equity, health, education, social inclusion, inequality, among others. In the words of Guest (2005), sport is the ultimate tool for improving lives, which can create dangerous expectations about the power of sport in addressing development matters. In this sense, several authors have highlighted the importance of rigorous evaluation of the interventions that have the aim of tackling different issues using sports. Hartmann (2002,1) claims that is necessary to know how those programs work.

Using a systematic map of the evidence on SFD effectiveness in Africa, Langer (2015) concludes that there is currently no available evidence that supports or refutes the suggestion that sport has a positive impact on development in the continent. In this sense, this research engages with Ferguson's work (1990), by asking what do the idea of sports for development does in the context of Worcester, rather than if there is a positive impact caused by sports on the youth or not or attempting to evaluate the sports-based program of Fit2Run. In a similar line, Kaur (2016) also engages with Ferguson's approach to development to analyze the sport and development nexus in the context of the farm workers from Western Cape, South Africa.

In a critical approach, and by recognizing the dichotomy in of the concept, Guest (2005, 2) proposes that sport could be understood as an empty cultural form, in which spots is a neutral practice that is 'filled in with meanings, values and ideas by the culture in which it takes place and the individuals who take part'. In this conception, it would be possible to include different meanings of 'development' as it would depend on the ideas that a specific population has about the notion. Therefore, sports for development in a particular society would depend on whether the individuals want to participate in the program or not, in the meaning that the activities have for them, in the manner in which the implementation is carried out, and in the interactions with other participants, the coach, the competitors and the organization implementing the process, and even in the interaction that such organization has with the sporting structures that exist in its context.

## 4. Theoretical Framework

The research question was approached in the light of Ferguson's thoughts (1990, xv), by asking 'what do these ideas do?' and 'what real social effects do they have?' These ideas in the context of this research refer to sports, more specifically athletics, the sport chose by Fit2Run to 'develop the youth holistically'. While conducting the fieldwork, two topics were consistently pointed out by the athletes, gangsterism and education. These two topics interrelate with each other and with subtopics like drug and alcohol consumption and school dropouts, which at the end of the day are the reflection of their daily socioeconomic struggles given by the place where they were born.

### 4.1. Sports for youth development

It can be said that international organizations, national governments, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) and policy makers at the local level are constantly building their policies or programs under the idea that the youth is the future of the world, therefore, it is highly important to offer support in the transition from the childhood to the adulthood especially to those individuals that due to their socioeconomic context are at higher risk.

As noted in the previous section, sport and development have been used in a multidisciplinary manner, thus the relation between both is not the exception. The number of projects using sports as a tool for youth development, specially targeting risk prevention and social integration of vulnerable youth population in different countries, has increased in the last decades.

The definition of youth changes according to the economic and socio-cultural settings. However, *The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 as youth without prejudice to other definitions by Member States* (Secretary-General's Report to the General Assembly, A/36/215, 1981). On the other hand, The African Youth Charter, defines youth as the population between 15-35, and the Department of Statistics of the Republic of South Africa also uses the same age range.

By engaging with the Organization Fit2Run, the target population of the research reflected the lives of the vulnerable youth in Worcester. Therefore, understanding the concept of 'vulnerable' appears to be relevant. According to Hermes et al. (2017, 1) when we talk about socially vulnerable youth we refer to a *'broad group, ranging from youth living in areas of low socioeconomic status to youth receiving residential care or nonresidential counseling'*. From another perspective, Vettenburg (1998, as cited in Super et al. 2018,2) state that the relationship between this group of young people and the institutions in their lives is characterized by an accumulation of negative experiences. These institutions can be divided into family domain; school domain; judicial system; and community. The negative experiences faced lead to distorted and disconnected relationships with those institutions and makes the vulnerable. Hermes et al.

(2017, 1) identifies in the existing literature the consequences that such disconnection may have, enlisting: feelings of incompetence, a lack of ambition, and a reduced chance for participating in meaningful activities such as sports.

Considering the environment in which development occurs as a set of *nested contexts ranging from families and peer groups (microsystems) to the culture and government (macrosystems)* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), if the vulnerable youth deal with negative experiences with the institutions in those systems, then its development would be negatively affected. In the specific context of the athletes of Fit2Run, their development occurs within the legacies of apartheid in the form of poverty, gang-violence, crime, and broken families (Kaur & Ontong, 2020, p. 88)

According to Super et al. (2018, p. 2) underlying the human capital model (explained the previous section), exists the assumption that optimal youth development can be achieved through the competencies, skills and knowledge acquired by participation in sports. Optimal development in youth *'enables individuals to lead a healthy, satisfying, and productive life as youth, and later as adults, because they gain the competence to earn a living and to engage in civic activities'* (Hamilton et al., 2004, p.1).

Fraser et al. (2005, p. 23) examine the positive and negative youth experiences and outcomes in sport. They find different studies related to physical development, psychological/emotional development, social development and, intellectual development. The studies mentioned by the authors exemplify that sport can be associated to contradictory effects. In the Physical development sphere, cardiovascular fitness and weight control are some of the benefits of physical activity which is a positive for the youth development. However, the involvement in sports has also been linked to sport-related injuries and eating disorders. The same dynamic applies for the other dimensions of development.

The possible positive outcomes on youth development increase the relevance of offering inclusive sport activities to vulnerable youth. However, it is important to consider that this population group participate less often in sport activities than its peers (Vandermeerschen et al., 2015). As cited in Super et al. (2018, p.2) consider that *'there is a great potential to engage these young people in a pedagogical and supportive setting, however, the relationship between sport participation and developmental outcomes amongst socially vulnerable youth is hardly investigated'*.

The aim of the sport for development programs, in this specific context, is to support the youth in the process of dealing with the stressors that increase the possibility of engaging with criminal organizations, teenage pregnancy, drug consumption, or school dropouts. In this sense the SFD sector claims to offer the youth the possibility of engaging with different sport activities to develop life-skills, some programs include a non-sports component in their projects and others claim that using sport those skills are automatically developed.

In the attempt of understand why a sports-based program represented a promising form of crime prevention, Hartmann (2002) identifies four models. The author calls the first model the Sports-as-character-building, which entails that the very act of practicing a sport cultivates virtues such self-discipline, self-esteem, fair play and hard work. The second model is sport-as-mobility, where Hartmann explains that sports is a direct vehicle for social incorporation and mobility, since there are better education opportunities as the athletes are often granted with scholarships. The third model, sport-as-social-control-model establishes that sport keeps the target population busy and provides them new moral codes. The last and fourth model, sport-as-a-hook, understand the role of sports as the tool to connect with the target population.

Guest (2005,5) uses the first three models identified by Hartmann (2002) and includes a fourth one: the vision of sports as building community and positive social relations that enhance development. The author questions if indeed sports build community and explain two opposite behaviors. In the first one the intense competition of the sport produces aggression and conflict, in this sense, 'Sport has started as many wars as it has ended' (Guest, 2005, 5). On the other hand, he reflects on the words of Kofi Annan and Nelson Mandela who claimed that sport bring people together, including the case of South Africa, where sport played a key role in unifying the country after apartheid.

#### **4.2. Gangsterism**

In the context of the athletes of Fit2Run, crime prevention is strongly related to avoid their engagement in the gangs that operate near them. According to the Western Cape Government, crime and violence associated with gangsterism have plagued the province for years, which is reflected on the National Annual Crime Statistics for 2017/18, where it is estimated that 83% of all gang-related murders in South Africa took place in the Western Cape.

Pinnock (1982) argue that the roots of gangsterism in the Western Cape province are in the Apartheid Regime that governed South Africa until 1994. The coloured and African families were relocated from the inner-city areas of Cape Town to the Cape Flats, where the houses were smaller and had lower living conditions, leading the young people to spend more time in the streets, because their houses were overcrowded (Wyk et al., 2005, p. 53). This contributed to the spread of gangsterism as most of the families lost the protective social network that they had built with the other families that have been living close for years, the extended families fell apart leaving the children and youth unprotected and exposed to a context where the gangs already existed.

A broad definition of gangs is given by the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (2007, p.5):

*"Youth gangs represent a spontaneous effort by children and young people to create, where it does not exist, an urban space in society that is adapted to their needs, where they can exercise the rights that their families, government, and communities do not offer them. Arising out of extreme poverty, exclusion, and a lack of opportunities, gangs try to gain their rights and meet their needs by organizing themselves without supervision and developing their own rules, and by securing for themselves a territory and a set of symbols that gives meaning to their membership in the group. This endeavor to exercise their citizenship is, in many cases, a violation of their own and others' rights, and frequently generates violence and crime in a vicious circle that perpetuates their original exclusion"*

In some extent, this definition indicates some of the reasons that lead youth to join a gang reflecting the theory of Vettenburg (1998) related to the accumulation of negative experiences with different institutions of their lives. From the Provincial perspective, the Western Cape Government considers that the reasons why youth join gangs are: (i) presence of gangs in their community; (ii) they have gang members in their family; (iii) there may be a history of sexual and/or physical abuse; (iv) growing up in poverty; (v) Conflict or instability in their home; (vi) Absent parents; (vii) Low self-esteem; (viii) Overcrowded living conditions; (ix) being enticed by the access to money, weapons and drugs; (x) A lack of success in some areas of their life, example school; (xi) they may see gangs as a substitute family; and (xii) Being pressured by gang members to join. In the following chapters we will see how some of these reasons are identified by interviewees when explaining why children end up in gangs.

In this sense it is highly important to find adequate strategies that can reach these vulnerable population that is at risk of engaging with gangsterism, regardless of the type of gang that the youth joint to, in most of the cases they end up engaging with criminal activities. The relevance of implementing crime prevention programs increases if we consider that once young people commit a crime, they are more likely to develop a pattern of offending (Assink et al., 2015), and that juvenile delinquency is often related with other undesirable development outcomes like educational damage (Kirk et al. 2013).

Spruit et al., (2018, p.689) relate the assumption that sport-based interventions prevent juvenile delinquency with the theory of social bonds developed by Hirschi (1969), because it states that *'individuals with stronger bonds to society are less likely to engage in delinquency, as delinquency may put these valuable bonds at risk'*. The authors explain how the four elements consider by Hirschi, *attachment, commitment, belief, and involvement* are enhanced by participation in sports. By becoming members of a team, the *attachment* to others may be strengthened; the youth are *committed* to a conventional activity which may result in the abstention of participating in deviant acts; as the participation in sport involves the knowledge

and acceptance of rules and norms, *beliefs* in society's values may be enhance; and their *involvement* in the training and competitions keep them busy to engage in other acts. These four elements were also mentioned during the interviews conducted and were identified in field work, especially *involvement*, as most of the athletes affirmed that athletics kept them busy and out of trouble.

From a similar perspective, Ekholm (2013, p.29) made a review of the literature on sport as a mean of crime prevention and found two categories of crime prevention are discernible, the averting-mode and the social-change mode. According to the article, the averting-mode works as a diversion as sport engages youth in other activities and they cannot engage in criminal activities and sports at the same time, this category is related to the elements *commitment* and *involvement* of Hirschi's theory explained above.

In this sense it is important to carefully handle the expectations on the sport-based program as a mean for crime prevention. It could *do* what has been mentioned above, but if we are to believe that sport is a neutral representation of culture and it can be filled with positive and negative values, then we should consider that the success of these kind of programs is mostly, as Hartmann affirmed, in the non-sport component.

### **4.3. Education**

Exploring education during the fieldwork revealed that Fit2Run not only provided physical education, specifically in training the youth on the different competitions of athletics, but also the possibility to access to a better education through scholarships granted to them for their talent as athletes, the encouragement to have a good performance at school, and emotional/social support that helps them developed other skills to deal with the different stressors of their lives.

Regarding school performance, Bradley et al. (2013) analyzed the Leaving Certificate scores of a secondary school in Ireland and found that there is a positive relationship between sport participation and academic performance. The authors suggest that '*participating in extracurricular school sport whilst studying for examinations can benefit academic achievement. Furthermore, participating in individual sports confers a further benefit to academic results because of the enhanced positive personality characteristics of conscientiousness and autonomy associated with these sports*' (p. 12). In the South African context, Du Toit et al., (2011) conducted a study in a group of primary school children to evaluate the relationship between physical fitness and academic performance, the authors concluded that '*there is a positive relationship between physical fitness and academic achievement, with more significant correlations found among girls than boys, and among older boys and girls*'. These results might be analyzed carefully taking into account other variables and contexts as we will observe in the life-stories included in this work,



for example, some athletes focused more in their trainings and the time devoted to school decreases.

Ruiz-Ariza et al (2017) studied the influence of physical fitness on cognitive and academic performance in adolescents, they consider that Cognitive Performance is *'affected by the inhibitory control and executive functions, which are the factors responsible for the maintenance of information in working memory, planning and mental organization, selective attention, and behavior control'* (Diamond, 2013; Haapala, 2013, as cited by Ruiz-Ariza et al. 2017, p.109) and that academic performance was related to the success in secondary school reflected on their grades. Through their study, the authors found that from 21 articles analyzed, most studies showed a positive association of physical fitness with cognitive and academic performance.

Education in the literature is also related to life-skills, defined as *'those skills that enable individuals to succeed in the different environments in which they live, such as school, home and in their neighborhoods'* (Danish et al., 2004, p.40). On the other hand, the World Health Organization (1996) defines life skills as *'the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life'*. Finally, from the perspective of the South African Government, *'Life Skills subject is central to the holistic development of learners. It is concerned with the social, personal, intellectual, emotional and physical growth of learners, and with the way in which these are integrated'* (Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement – CAPS, 2011).

According to Danish et al., (2004, p. 46) *'Life skills programs implemented in sport settings are designed to help the adolescent learn both sport and life skills'*, Therefore, it is necessary that the skills learned in the athletic realm are transferred to non-sport settings. Though a systematic review of Life Skill Development through sports programs serving socially vulnerable youth, Hermens et al. (2017) found that at least one life skill was enhanced, improvements in cognitive and social skills were more frequently than emotional skills. The authors conceived that emotional skills pertain *'to one's internal sense of well-being and self-worth'*, cognitive skills pertain *'to abilities such as self-regulation, decision making and impulse control'* and social skills pertain *'to skills that can be used in interpersonal relationships such as communication skills, conflict resolution, and prosocial behaviour'* (p.1-2).

## **5. Analysis through the life-stories**

Following life-stories are used to present and analyze the meaning that sport has in the lives of Sirgio Mcleod, Norman Ontong and Sharlan Boer. This thesis does not tell the complete three life-stories, instead, there were selected the parts that give a glimpse about what sports for development 'does' in the particular context of Worcester. Stories were written in a constant conversation with the participants and in 'their voices' to facilitate the reader's connection.

I start by presenting Sirgio's life-story to humanize the 'gangster', to understand the role that this story plays in the community of Worcester especially in Norman's imaginary. Fit2Run's sports-based program is conceived as a means of decreasing the likelihood that children from vulnerable backgrounds engage with this kind of deviant activities.

### **5.1. Sirgio: Leaving gangsterism behind**

My name is Sirgio Mcleod, I am 34 years old. I was born and grew up in Worcester. The following is my life-story, the story of how I got involved in gangsterism, how I ended up in jail and how today I want to build a different life. Telling my story allows me to share my experiences as a gangster in order to help others, especially children, to realize that choosing this path leads to more violence.

I remember loving sport in the first years of my life. This was the reason I was excited about going to school, I was so talented that I received a diploma for my excellent performance. Though I was remarkable in all the sports I practiced my favorite was Rugby. From an academic perspective I was very lazy I always felt that there was too much work to do with a lot of things to learn. Although my grades were not good, I did manage to finish primary school.

When I started high school, I found out I had stomach cancer. I was 11 years old when I was diagnosed. It was one of the hardest years of my life. I was in so much pain and underwent various treatments, going through a roller-coaster of emotions that also affected my mental health. Although I am one of the lucky survivors of cancer, my life changed after the surgery that saved my life. I never felt myself again. I could not do any sport. I felt that I was not fit anymore and that I would not be as good as I was before. I felt that now I could do nothing because my body was not going to respond, I felt broken. This led me to try other things that could make me feel better. I started to smoke, to drink alcohol and to do drugs, everything that you must not do I did in my quest to find contentment.

Starting to smoke led me to smuggle cigarettes in high school which I started to sell because I wanted to have my own money. In the beginning of my business, I was attack by others who robbed my cigarettes and sold them. That was my first encounter with violence. I did not know

violence existed, but after that I saw violence coming. So, I gathered some friends and we started to fight back the people that robbed us. We would hit each other with sticks.

Smuggling cigarettes in school brought me many problems. The principal knew what I was doing and started blaming me for all the bad things that happened in the school, it did not matter if I was involved in the problem or not, everything was my fault, my name was called every day and I had to go to his office. I tried to explain him that it was not me, but he would not listen. This situation kept repeating frequently until I was 14 years old. By this time, I had accumulated so much anger that one day I ended up hitting the principal with a wood stick, that was my last day of school, I was immediately expelled and I could not finish high school.

When I left school, me and my friends started a group named JCY<sup>5</sup>s with the objective to protect ourselves from the gangsters. If someone from our group was hurt then we would look for that person and we would get revenge. When we started the group, we were only a couple of boys but within years we became hundreds and now thousands. It is one of the most known gangs in Worcester.

Here it is very common to see people standing outside the shops waiting to steal money. When the kids go to those shops they are robbed, hurt, and hit by gangsters, sometimes they even use knives or guns. What happens next is that the boys do not tell their parents but instead they tell us, the gang from their neighborhood. They come to us for help and consolation. They do not reach their parents because they think that they must be strong because they are 'boys'. They come to us crying so we give them alcohol to help them feel better, to calm them; then we will right the wrongs and eventually that boy who was attacked by other gangsters end up being part of our gang.

The children, especially the boys come because they go through the same violent experiences that we went through. JCYs never recruits children. We even try to tell them to not join us but most of the times they do not listen. Another reason why they join the gang is because they do not want to go to school. Sometimes there are bullies and they are scared, sometimes they cannot handle the workload because they do not have support at home there is no one explaining them what they did not understand, so they fail, and they get tired of failing. Due to the context where they live the only option, they have is to join one gang.

One of the drugs we use is methamphetamine because we need to be awake all the time. If somebody hurt me, I don't want to sleep. I won't go to my house until I found him. When the sun

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<sup>5</sup> Sirgio did not explain what the acronym means but according IOL News South Africa, JCY's means Junior Cisco Yakkies. Information retrieved from <https://www.iol.co.za/weekend-argus/news/alleged-hitmen-will-see-trial-in-july-c498512d-01d8-4bdf-9a6f-37543a986942>

is coming up, he is going down. We do not allow people to hurt us or someone from our community. For example, if someone in our territory is robbed, we would find the thief, get the stolen things back and teach him a lesson. We are not going to wait around for the police do nothing, we will act on it.

The members of the JCYs have the name of the gang tattooed on their arm to recognize each other. I used to have it in my arm but as I am trying to build a new life I covered it with another tattoo. Occasionally the gang has meetings, we talk about the business and the enemy, the other gangs in Worcester. They are the enemy because they were the ones troubling us, hurting us, they started the violence against us, so we must stand up and fight back. We said we would fight until we get gray. The gangs shoot each other for territorial reasons, other people cannot come to their ground. Worcester is small, but you must watch where you walk, you cannot walk too far otherwise a gang could kill you. They would shoot you, they would take advantage of you, it does not matter if you belong to another gangster group or not, if you are in their territory then you belong to them.

I think that most of the gangs are created as a response to violence. They start doing drugs and when drugs are involved, they must find a way to get money. Then the drugs become their business and they start to make profits out of that violence that created them in the first place. From my experience, the money financing the gangs comes from drug trafficking, business and cars robbery, and contract killing. You must always remember, in the morning these guys go to work, as a normal person goes to work, they are looking for income. How else can they get their income if most of them did not manage to finish high school like me. If you do not have your degree, you cannot get a job. So, you find a way. There is activity in the underworld that the people from the upperworld will not notice. The people that are in the streets so early in the mornings, the ones that look like they are doing nothing, they are actually working, probably selling drugs or waiting for someone to rob.

As many members of the gangs, I went to jail for gun position, gunfire, drug trafficking, robbery, housebreaking, among other things. I was going in and out and spent approximately fourteen years of my life (from 2005 until 2019) in different prisons of South Africa. Inside the prison the gang the number<sup>6</sup> is the ruler, therefore each person must belong to one of them, either the 26, the 27 or the 28. The number is in every prison of South Africa and the gangs inside the prison have nothing to do with the ones outside. They are barbarians, they do not have mercy. There is a hierarchy inside the number that must be respected. You start by being a soldier and when you

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<sup>6</sup> Name of the famous South African prison gang

learn more things you will have a better position. These people will come to you, will ask you who you are, they will notice if you are scared because they can see right through you.

When I got out of jail two years ago, I decided I wanted to have a different life. The gangster life seemed like an option when I was young. I felt that I belong somewhere. It was a way to fight violence, to feel safe. I knew no one was going to steal from me or put a knife to my throat again because there will be retaliation. Now I realized that you cannot fight fire with fire. Now that I look back, I think I made terrible choices.

I am currently working for a local business. I am like a security guard, and I make sure that the gangsters do not rob the owners. Although I am not a gangster anymore, they are still afraid of me because they know what I am capable of. Sometimes I think that I could make more money if I go back to the gang, I could make R400<sup>7</sup> in 10 minutes by stealing a phone instead of working the whole day for R160<sup>8</sup>. But I want to do things right this time.

I see my cousin Vernoschka and I am so proud of her, coming from the same background as me she has accomplished so many things. She finished high school, studied accounting, and is currently working with a good company. I consider that athletics played an important role on her life, it gave her discipline, it taught her to work hard, and inspire her to follow her dreams. She had the support of Fit2Run, an organization that is helping the youth, protecting their minds, and taking them away from drugs and gangsterism.

With Sirgio's final words, we move forward Norman's life-story to understand, considering the possible project of life that the vulnerable youth in Worcester can choose, how Norman conceives Fit2Run's sports-based program that besides training the kids in athletics, provides them life-skills to succeed in their steeplechase race for a fulfilling life.

## **5.2. Norman Ontong: the pursuit of development through sports and education**

My name is Norman Ontong, I was born on November 8, 1962, I was the third son of a big family. As I was born in the years of Apartheid and lived in an area designated for coloured<sup>9</sup> people in Worcester. I never had contact with black or white people except in school where I would have a white teacher for English.

During primary school I was very shy but I was very motivated. I knew I had to study hard. My parents did not have to forced me or my siblings to go to school. While we were growing up, they told us that education was very important. That they were giving us the possibility to study, an opportunity that they did not have. They told us that they were part of the poorest population in

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<sup>7</sup> Approximately USD \$30

<sup>8</sup> Approximately USD \$12

<sup>9</sup> One of the racial groups from the Population Registration Act No 30 of 1950

Worcester and that thanks to their hard work they could give us a better life than the one they had. They wanted us to uplift the generation to a next level.

Since we were kids sports were in our lives. My father was a rugby player, he played for the Boland team. He was so good that people used to talk about him and his brothers. If I remember correctly, they represented Boland, the provincial team. Our parents taught us how to play various sports. We would have matches of cricket, soccer, and rugby in our backyard with many kids from the neighborhood. As soccer was very popular in our neighborhood, we organized matches with different neighborhoods, even the gangsters would join the team and play with us. We did not have a league or an official referee.

When I reflect on the word “gang” I think that back then it had a different meaning. It was about being a group. Of course, there were some gangs doing bad stuff, but others were not. For example, my siblings and I were a gang, but we were not doing bad stuff. We were only playing around the neighborhood.

I consider that the role of sports while I was growing up was to keep me in the right path. We grew up in a context where it was very common that kids dropped out of school. In some cases their families did not have enough money and struggled to eat properly or to pay the rent. Then they would try to make easy and fast money to help their parents. Fortunately, in our case we never failed a grade or dropped out of school. All of us finished high school and all of us became teachers.

My sibling and I put a lot of effort in our studies mainly because our parents were always motivating us. My father repeated very often that the only option for us, as coloured people, was to be a teacher. Because this would give us a better socioeconomic position. Coloured people could do different things, not as much as the white people because they had more money and opportunities, but not as little as the black people. We had more benefits. We could become policemen, warders or worked at state entities. But to be able to have those jobs you could not protesting against apartheid.

What I learn about politics back then is that the freedom fighters wanted liberation before education. But for me and my family education was very important, we also wanted liberation, so we tried to find a balance between both. In my last year of high school (1980) we only had school for the first quarter because there was a huge outbreak of violence and boycotting, people wanted to overthrow the apartheid government. They wanted to stop education because it was the education of the regime. It was a very difficult year because we had to study at home, there was no school. Many students were arrested, all the school freedom leaders went to jail. Not going back to normal classes was a strategy used to demand the government to release the kids that were in jail. In those years, me and my family joined SACOS, the South African Council on Sports,

that had the *slogan no normal sport in an abnormal society*, so me and my siblings we all played in the SACOS' side. We refused to play against the establishment.

During my teaching years I also played Rugby in the Villagers Club. I was the flanker and captain of the team for two years. My students looked up to me because I was a good teacher but also a good rugby player in a good club. I was also involved in sports by coaching different teams, supporting students, encouraging them to play as a team and encouraging them to believe in themselves and to train hard. In 1992 I became a professional accountant, which meant that my father's theory was correct. I had to work hard to achieve what I wanted. Discipline, dedication, desire, and determination led me to have a good life.

My participation in sports was not finished when I stopped playing Rugby on 1989. I decided to start training for road races and later I became a long-distance runner. It was 1990 when I decided I wanted to participate in a marathon and two ultramarathons, the Cape Peninsula Marathon (42.2km), the two oceans (56km) and the comrades (89km). I created a training program and decided I will only compete when South Africa becomes a free country. I was already thinking that the change was coming as there was more international support to our cause. It was 1994, the year of our first democratic elections, when I finally participated, I won silver medals in all three, which is not very common. These results show that I am not a *paloeka*, word in Afrikaans for a person that does not know what he/she is doing.

My years in the education sector showed me that many talented athletes were not able to achieve their potential as they did not come with financial support. I observed that the primary school athletics competitions were dominated by coloured and African athletes from underprivileged and/or rural backgrounds, whereas secondary school competitions were dominated by white athletes from privileged backgrounds.

Fit2Run was founded on 2008 by seven people who shared the same objective of providing support to children from vulnerable socioeconomic backgrounds to reach their full potential in athletics. The organization has been working for almost thirteen years and I have seen many of our athletes winning medals in local, regional and national competitions. I have seen them succeed not only in the athletics field but also in the personal/professional field. Some of the old athletes hold a bachelor's degree and have decent jobs. Our kids are very talented, it is not easy to win a medal as they have to compete against people that have better resources than them, that have better coaches, better nutrition, better medical aid, even a better background, in terms of context and even families.

In the years that I have worked with Fit2Run I have realized that the kids face five obstacles: gangsterism, teenage pregnancy, drugs and alcohol abuse, school dropouts and poverty. Therefore, besides providing them adequate training we also have workshops where we talk about

these topics and explain them how to overcome them. I, like my father, strongly believe in the power of education. Therefore, I encourage them to work hard to have a better future, just like I did. During their time with Fit2Run the athletes learn the four D's: determination, discipline, desire, and dedication, not only in the matters related to athletics but also in every aspect of their life.

I think that Fit2Run is like a safe haven for them. We make sure that they get scholarships and have access to better high schools. I want to see that they become better athletes and better people. I consider that a better person is not involved with gangsterism, is not affected by teenage pregnancy, is not doing drugs, or drinking alcohol, is not dropping school and is finding the way out of poverty. A better person also looks after other people as well. I hope that they create a new generation and that they will graduate out of poverty.

In this context is so easy for the kids to get involved in gangs because they are everywhere. Some of them were their friends years ago. Some of them have a lot of money so they offer money to the kids. Sometimes the circumstances at home are so bad that they want money to have something to eat or to help their parents. They start by robbing people, then they sell drugs and suddenly, they are part of the gang.

Another reason why is so easy for our kids to take the wrong path is because they see their parents doing those things, sometimes smoking or doing drugs. On the other hand, the drugs are accessible for them, they can find them right next to their house. It is easier than getting a candy, for a candy they must pay but the drugs are given to them for free by the gangsters. Then when they are addict to the drug they are requested to steal something in exchange for drugs.

None of our kids have gotten involved with alcohol but we had a couple of them years ago involved with drugs. I tried to help them and even looked for them one day that they hide in a place where drugs are sold. When I arrived, I could not find them. Other drug addicts helped me find them and gave them a talk about the importance of not using drugs and getting involved in that lifestyle. They even thanked me for helping them, for being there for them and for showing them a better way.

I strongly believe that our program has been successful in training underprivileged children in the "art of living" through a holistic approach that enhance and develop children physically, mentally and socially. I have seen how Fit2Run has changed the life of the kids that belong to the program. They are always so excited to come to the trainings and other activities, they enjoy the company of the other athletes and the coaches, they do not want to go back home, they even learned how to be leaders at school and influence positively other kids.



When I say ‘develop’, I mean the transformation that the kids have when they participate in the program. The comparison between who they were and had and what they are and have now. How they grow by becoming stronger (both physically and mentally), becoming better people, and being better educated. Reflecting on the word development I consider that is a very vague concept, it can mean many things, for me it would include growth, education, health and to have the freedom and capability to be who you want to be.

I believe that when we die our titles will not matter, what will matter is the difference you made in the lives of others. I escaped from the hardship of apartheid and changed my life through education. I know I cannot change the life of every person in South Africa, but what I can do is change the mindset of some kids in Worcester and that will change their lives.

Bearing in mind the insights from Sirgio’s and Norman’s life-stories the context where the lives of the athletes is unfolded is characterized. High gang activity, poverty, consumption of cigarettes, alcohol and drug at a young age, teenage pregnancy and school dropouts are some of the challenges that Sharlan has had to face. This last life-story shows how Norman’s and Sirgio’s worlds collide.

### **5.3. Sharlan Boer: A meaningful life through athletics**

I am Sharlan Boer, first daughter of Christeline Boer and Lesley Titus. My parents met when they were in high school and my mother got pregnant when she was 16 years old, therefore she could not graduate.

When my father was alive. I would spend a lot of time with him and even go with him when he was with the gang he belonged to. I remember that my father used to play soccer in the streets with some of his neighborhood friends and I would be his personal cheerleader. I do not remember much about my dad, but my grandmother on my mother’s side told me that for my father I was everything. He was very excited when he found out that he was going to be a father. He always wanted to spend time with me, and he loved me and treasured me until the day he died.

I was 8 years old when I saw my father dying in front of my eyes. I was playing in the street when I heard gunshots, scared I ran away towards my house. I did not know that my father was hurt but I found out later that night. When my grandmother put me in bed I could not sleep. I was frightened, I could still hear the gunshots in the streets, and I could not stop thinking about my father. Weeks after I could still hear those gunshots in my mind. It took me months to take that sound out of my head. A couple of years later I moved to Riverview flats with my mother and siblings, a neighborhood where the gang activity is frequent. Again, I had to listen to the sound of gunshots which brought back all the memories of that day. I am not scared when I hear gunshots anymore. The sound that traumatized me as a child has become ambient background noise to me.

I started practicing athletics in grade 5 (primary school), I was not interested in that sport, I thought “this is not for me”. Even though I had doubts, I kept running because I was winning all the coloured races. I was talented, but lazy, I did not like training, I thought it was too hard and had to walk far to train. I had to walk alone because no one would walk with me. In grade 7, one of my teachers entered me in a competition and Norman was there, I did not know him, but I had heard about the work that he does with Fit2Run so I asked him if I could join the club. I have heard that his athletes were participating in the ASA Championships and winning medals, so I wanted to be part of this group of remarkable athletes. I started training with them and discovered my passion for running.

Before Fit2Run I was living with my grandmother on my mother’s side. My mom lived in a small *bungalow* in the backyard of my grandmother’s house with her second husband and my two siblings. I was not comfortable living with them because they drank a lot of alcohol and fought, on top of that I would have to sleep on the floor because my mother, stepfather and siblings were sleeping in the same bed. All this meant that I would not get a good night sleep and my performance in the races would have been negatively affected.

Having lost my father at a young age and seeing my mother drink alcohol created a difficult life for me. Sometimes I must take care of my siblings because my mother was partying with some friends. My stepfather made the situation even worst. He abused alcohol and most of the time when he was at home he would be screaming at my siblings.

When my mother found out that I was training with Fit2Run, she told me “*you are training, constantly, What about your schoolwork?*”. However, my grandmother told me that it was my decision to choose what I wanted to do. With time I decided I needed to find a balance between the school activities and the athletics trainings. In the beginning I struggled a lot finding that balance. I was putting athletics first because I was excited about the competitions. I was giving 80% to athletics and 20% to school. I was so focused on athletics that I failed grade ten and had to repeat it. It was then when I realized that I had to put more effort in the school.

Although I have a good relationship with my mom, I do not reach out to her when I have a problem. In the past the answers that I have received from her include “*I do not have time for this non-sense*”, “*you are old enough you have to figure it out*”, “*I do not want to get involved in that*”, “*you should know what to do*”. Therefore, I had a lack of emotional support, a gap that was filled in by auntie Bernie (she is not a blood relative, but she is family for me), by my grandmother Denise, who has been more like a mother for me, and by Norman, who has been more than a coach for me.

Being part of Fit2Run means that most of my free time I am training. I also spend time with my teammates, and we have learnt to work together. We help organize training equipment and we

even built the running track that we now own. I have been able to train the little ones and have used my experience to teach them how to run properly as well as what exercises to do to have more endurance and more strength. I enjoy sharing my experience and the feeling that I am helping other children like me.

Running has taught me to motivate myself and motivate others. I believe that athletics has helped me escape from the troubles at home. Whenever things go bad, every time I argue with my mom, I just put on my tackies and run. Athletics is a stress reliever; it helps you to forget the bad things. Running has shown me places that I never expected I would get to see and has also given me friends. My life is better now.

I love running, I think it keeps me out of trouble. Most of the girls start to smoke, drink or get pregnant and cannot finish high school. I think that I am away from that path thanks to Fit2Run. Another problem faced by the youth in Worcester is gangsterism. The kids get involved by dropping packages that contain drugs which they get paid for and over the years they start to consume drugs and usually drop school. Since I was young, I was aware of the existence of gangs. Firstly, because my father was in one and also as my uncles are also involved in that world. I see it every day in the streets of my neighborhood. My family has dealt with gangs for years. When I was very young my uncles would steal from my grandparents' house. They would break in and take some things with them. The worst days were when they fought over food and drugs, usually I had to stop them by threatening to call the police. I think that drugs altered their consciousness. The other gangsters in the neighborhood have never hurt me, they are just smoking, doing drugs and drinking in the streets. All I see is that they are so young. They do not go to school, they do not want to work, I think they made their own choice to be a gangster.

I am currently working with Norman in his accounting company and volunteering at Fit2Run. I support management activities and others related to accounting in both organizations. Thanks to this opportunity I have acquired different skills, now I can properly use a computer, including programs like word or excel. Also, I have learned basic accounting concepts.

I am 23 years old and I want to keep working and training with Fit2Run. I have not been able to pass *matric*<sup>10</sup>, but I am planning to sit exams again, although I am not enthusiastic about pursuing a bachelor's degree. I am considering studying social work to be able to help other kids whose parents are not taking proper care of them. My coach always tells me that if I want to succeed in athletics, I must study hard. Whatever I decide to do must allow me to keep training because I want to have a successful life in athletics. I want to go to the Olympics and represent South Africa one day.

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<sup>10</sup> Grade 12, the last year of high school in South Africa

## **6. Discussion**

Sirgio, Norman and Sharlan life-stories illustrate how sports have different meanings for the youth in Worcester. This general assertion is supported by the information collected during the several interviews and observation processes carried out as the fieldwork of the present research. Although the way they reflect on the role of sports in their lives is different in each case and, as their understanding of sports impacts in their 'development' is not totally clear, it remains significant for the three of them. To that extent, sport, as proposed by Guide (2008), can be understood as a neutral practice that individuals fill in with personal values and ideas. Following sections present and discuss the main results of these analyzes, in light of the proposed research questions, and informed by the main insights drawn from the selected life stories. In some sections, direct quotes are included to provide a more vivid narrative to the text and, in general, to the analysis.

### **6.1. What sports do in the lives of the youth in Worcester**

Before his struggle with cancer, Sirgio was one of the kids that felt disconnected from school, he was overwhelmed with 'all the things he had to learn', however, the idea of practicing different sports and be recognized for the talent he had was the motivation to continue attending school. In his case, a health condition changed the way he related with himself and with his body, it changed his perception of what he could do, be or achieve, with the time he lost the motivation to practice sports even when it was an activity that he found enjoyable. In this sense, although sport acted as a 'hook' during his years in primary school, once he felt that his body was not going to perform in the same remarkable way, the only activity he could connect with at school disappeared. As he knew that practicing a sport was no longer possible, he looked for other type of activities that could 'make him feel better', thus, he started to consume cigarettes, alcohol and drugs.

He does not mention sport in the rest of his life-story until he talks about his cousin Vernoschka, and how proud he is for her accomplishments not only in the athletics field but in the personal and professional field, especially considering that she comes from the same 'background' as his. Sirgio's words suggest that he assigns certain impact of their common background in their 'development' as if they were born into circumstances set up for failure. Furthermore, in his analysis of Vernoschka's success, he identifies different outcomes and associates them with specific actors, he associates discipline and hard work with athletics, and the encouragement of a drug/gangsterism-free lifestyle to Fit2Run, an organization that in his words "helps the youth by protecting their minds". In the first case, athletics itself developed two skills in Vernoschka and in the second case a broader impact was generated not by athletics itself but by Fit2Run, the organization that Vernoschka belonged to.

Vernoschka spent around 10 years of her life training with Fit2Run, and although she is not participating in athletics competitions anymore, she still runs frequently, *'running helps you relax, even now when I come back from work the only thing that switches me off is when I go for a run, it helps me to deal with anxiety'* said Vernoschka during her interview. Sport is an activity that was supported by Vernoschka's family, they *'love when children do sports'*, because they consider that it helps them to make the right choices in their life. When Vernoschka reflected on the role athletics had in her life she associated the person she is today with the sporting activities she undertook weekly as a young athlete. For instance, she remembers that while her friends were partying and drinking on a Friday night, she was at home resting because she had races or early training sessions on Saturday mornings and when she was back in her house, she was too tired to participate in those activities. Vernoschka's perception is common to the boys' perspectives<sup>11</sup>, *'I think that my life is better now because of athletics, if it was not for it I would be smoking and focusing on the wrong stuff, Athletics gives you confidence and put your mind away from bad stuff, it helps you to not fall under that influence, some of my friends drink, but when they are drinking I am training with Fit2Run, we are busy, we are not at home doing the same stuff that our friends are doing'*. This suggests that in Worcester, youth involvement in athletics does not allowed them to engage with other activities that they qualify as negative like drinking alcohol.

From Sharlan's perspective, Sport has an emotional meaning as she relates her first sport experiences with her father, who used to play soccer. In this case, it is important to highlight that Sharlan's father was a gangster and although he was regularly practicing sports, he was still engaging with criminal activities that later lead him to his death. Here the definition of sport as a neutral practice raises again in the sense that it did not lead to any change in the lifestyle of Sharlan's father, his involvement in sport did not result in the abstention of participating in deviant acts.

Sharlan started training athletics when she was in primary school, but she thought that athletics was not for her. The only reason she kept participating in the races was because she was winning all of them which had a positive impact on her self-esteem. When she started training with Fit2Run and received the different support that the organization gives, she discovered her passion for running. Even Though she had been running for years, athletics became a life-project when she was training with Fit2Run. Running is an activity that Sharlan, loves, and in her case, it has a leading role in her life as her dreams and goals are tied to a life in athletics. For her, running acts as a stress reliever (similar to Vernoschka's thoughts), *'it (running) helps me to escape from the troubles at home, whenever things go bad, I just put on my tackies and run'*.

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<sup>11</sup> I refer to the two boys interviewed, Jueyren November and Lee-tin Syfers.

During most of the interactions I had with the athletes and coaches, the sentences '*sports keep me/them busy*' or '*sports keep me/them out of trouble*' were mentioned frequently. In fact, this was Sharlan's first comment on what athletics does in her life, and she defines trouble by explaining that most of the girls from her context start smoking or drinking, and some of them get pregnant at an early age, she also relates trouble with gangsterism. She thinks that she is not involved in any of those activities thanks to her engagement not only with athletics but with the other activities she does with the Organization and the support given by Norman who is 'more than a coach for her'. When she says '*my life is better now*', she expresses the significance that both, running and being part of Fit2Run, has in her life.

All the athletes expressed their passion for running and they associate some benefits to that specific activity. Running provides them the opportunity to distract their minds from daily stressors, it is a stress reliever, and it helps you to relax, as Sharlan and Vernoschka said respectively. But all of them reported that the benefits multiplied when they join Fit2Run, for example, in the interview of Lee-Tin and Jueyren, they explained how they pushed and tripped other athletes during the races, but when they joined Fit2Run they learnt the importance of fair competence and that respect, honesty and integrity make a true champion. In the words of Joanique, '*we do a lot more stuff than just running, Fit2Run teaches you to be more social and to improve your manners*'. Which means that participating in the sports-based program designed by Fit2Run enhances social relationships, community integration, and it provides them an arena for the development of social skills such as cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control. (Coté, 2002, as cited by Fraser, 2005).

On the other hand, coming from a family that has always been involved in sports, Norman was naturally drawn to engage with different sports. In his early years of life, he and his siblings practiced different sports in their backyard, sometimes even his parents would play with them. In Norman's case, sports represented an arena where the family bonds were reinforced through the practice of an enjoyable activity, such as sports. From the sociopolitical perspective, sport was the platform where he reflected his opposition to the Apartheid regime, first with his affiliation to the South African Council on Sports (SACOS), the sports wing of the internal liberation movement (Booth, 1997). And second, with his decision of not running the marathons until South Africa became a free country.

Norman's engagement with sport has been constant in his life, he was sportsman, he is the middle-distance coach, manager, and one of the founders of Fit2Run. When he reflects on his observations during his years in the education sector that showed him that many talented athletes were not able to achieve their potential. Nowadays, Sport is the 'hook', is the tool that allows Norman to connect with the children and youth from disadvantaged backgrounds in Worcester,

he considers that sports change the mindset of the kids and teaches them to have what he calls the four D's: determination, discipline, desire, and dedication, not only in the matters related to athletics but also in every aspect of their life.

## **6.2. What sports do in the context of Gangsterism**

### Perception of gangsterism for the youth in Worcester

Research participants identified gangsterism as one of the troubles that the youth in Worcester face. From Sirgio's perspective, gangs are created as a response to violence, he conceives the creation of their ganga as a defense mechanism and a strategy to protect their community.

In his book 'the number', Steinberg (2004) narrates the story of Magadien Wentzel, a prisoner with a lifelong career in Gangsterism. In the third chapter of the book when he is telling the story of Nongoloza and Kilikijan, the two original bandits of the prison gang, the number, he states:

“Nongoloza was not Robin Hood. He is closer to what Hobsbawm called 'the avengers'. 'They are not so much men who right wrongs' Hobsbawm tell us, 'but ... the exerts of power, their appeal is not that of the agents of justice, but of men who prove that even the poor and weak can be terrible". (Steinberg, 2004, p.42).

The description that Steinberg applies to the acts of the original bandit of the Number gang, offers a different perspective from Sirgio's, who affirms that the reason why they start the gang was to protect themselves from the violence around them. When talking about how the boys reach them when they have had an encounter with violence, he said that they contact them (the gangsters) and they write the wrongs right and when he tells how people reaches them when they are robbed he says 'we would find the thief, get the stolen things back and teach him a lesson, we are not going to wait around for the police do to nothing, we will act on it'. This shows how, in this specific case, the gangsters can be attributed with the noble role of protecting the community.

Gangsterism is part of the athlete's daily lives, although none of the athletes have been engaged in this activity, they know someone who is, a relative (like Sharlan and Vernoschka), a friend or a neighbor. They have normalized gang-violence because they have grown in areas characterized by high levels of gang activity, crime and substance abuse. In Sharlan's case she had to witness at a young age the gunfire that killed her father, and despite the traumatic grief that this loss created, she got used to the sound of gunshots because it is very common in the Riverview Flats. Having some members involved in gangsterism and seeing how they would even rob their own family, Sharlan considers that they have chosen that lifestyle and that the drug consumption influences that decision.

All the athletes said that the gangsters don't hurt them or treat them disrespectfully, all the opposite, athletes explained that the gangsters actually admire them and look after them. For instance, Meagan said in her interview that the gangsters from her neighborhood know her, they know what she does, and they encourage her to keep going they tell her *'do not forget us when you are in a better level'*. She considers that they are kind with her because she is always greeting them, *'I try to have a good relationship with them, but I do not get too involved because I do not want that other gangs think that I belong to a particular gang, then they would target me and hurt me'*, affirmed Meagan when she was explaining how she relates with the gangs.

For Norman, the word 'gang' does not necessarily have a bad connotation, he considers that a 'gang' is just about being a group, from his perspective, Fit2Run is a gang, the only difference with the more renowned gangs in Worcester is that they are having a positive impact on their community by helping the children to aspire to have a better life, to 'graduate out of poverty'.

#### Involvement of youth in gangsterism

Sirgio's life-story shows how a medical condition devastated his sports performance what led him to an early consumption of cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs to find consolation for the changes that his body had gone through. Due to this consumption Sirgio was enticed by the access to money, which at the same time led to smuggle cigarettes in high school. The circumstances that Sirgio went through increased his vulnerability, having a negative experience with the school institution that excluded him from activities that could helped him develop life-skills and character, resulted in his engagement with gangsterism.

Sharlan and Norman's considerations on how children get involved with gangsterism include other factors. Sharlan considers that they start by delivering parcels for pocket money and Norman considers that gangsterism gives them access to easy and fast money. He associated the need for money with two different reasons, the first one is given by the harsh socio-economic conditions in their household, what leads them to find ways to contribute financially to help their parents. The second reason is drug addiction, the easy access to drugs and influence of their friends that are already doing drugs lead them to try those substances, when the addiction is generated, the children start to look for ways to maintain the consumption, therefore they are requested to run some 'errands' for the gang such as robbing people.

#### What sport do in these contexts of gangsterism?

The vulnerable youth in Worcester coexist with gangsterism, in this sense the research participants reported that Fit2Run *'helps them to come out of their circumstances'* by *'providing them an environment where they can be themselves, they can enjoy themselves and they can feel safe'* with this affirmation, Joanique identifies an important characteristic of the sports-based program of Fit2Run, which is the creation of what Norman calls a 'safe heaven' an adequate, safe



environment, with positive relationships where the youth can develop positively. In the words of Ileana, *'Fit2run is an organization that uplifts the community, they give young girls and boys the opportunity to improve their living conditions'*.

*"I recount one of our encounters with a gang of five wanting to rob us. They attacked our transport and threatened us with knives, but upon recognizing some of our athletes, they changed their minds and decided to let us go. The incident (...) showed the indirect impact we have had on the broader community. (...) If there is any good news that has come out of these ghettos, it is in the form of the athletics achievements of these athletes"* (Norman Ontong in Kaur & Ontong, 2021).

The significance of this paragraph is the perception that the gang has of the athletes of Fit2Run, how they not only recognize and do not threaten their physical integrity, but also how they encourage them to stay in the athletics path. They are proud of how good these kids are doing, and they want them keep improving, in Meagan's words *'they don't push me down, they want me to be better'*.

However, the fact that none of the athletes had been involved in gangster activity show that Fit2Run's program also has its limitations. Although it has successfully maintained its athletes out of the gangs in Worcester it has not been able to connect with the vulnerable youth that was or is participating in gang activities.

### **6.3. What sports do in the education of the youth in Worcester**

#### Access to better quality education

Being trained by Norman, a man that strongly believes on the power of education means that the 'development' of the athletes will not only be focused on excelling their athletics skills. Conscious of the quality disparity in the schools of Worcester, Norman has helped some of his athletes to have access to a school with a high-quality education. Thanks to their remarkable performance in athletics, all the athletes interviewed, except for Sharlan, were granted a scholarship to study in one of the best schools in Worcester.

In this sense, Meagan recounts how being a good athlete helped her to have a better education, to study in a 'white school' and being able to participate in their athletics events gave her access to platforms where people could see her talent and sponsor her. *'Education in 'white schools' is better, they always insist in your academic performance and there are less children per classroom'*, explained Meagan.

#### Understanding the role of education in improving your life standards

During the activities the athletes have with Fit2Run they are exposed to frequent talks about the importance of education, and how education can help you to have a better life. In this regard,

Jueyren and Lee-Tin explained how they are constantly encouraged to focus on their studies and creating the possibility of pursuing a bachelor's degree in their mindset.

In this sense, some athletes affirmed that their participation in Fit2Run improve their grades at school *"I always passed my subjects on school but when I got involved with Fit2run my marks got even better. I took school more seriously because my coach Norman Ontong told me that if I want to pursuit a career in athletics I had to work hard and get certain marks to go to university"* said Ileana during her interview. Ileana, one of the first athletes that participated in Fit2Run's program, reflect the thoughts of Norman in the education regard. She followed the same path than Norman, she decided to become a teacher to be able to have a good job that later gave her the opportunity of continuing her studies.

Some athletes explained that thanks to Fit2Run they are considering acquiring a higher level of education. Sharlan for example, confess that although she is not very excited about having a bachelor's degree she is considering that option as her coach, Norman, always tells her that if she wants to succeed in athletics, she also has to study hard.

One of the arguments that Norman uses to emphasize on the importance of education is that in his case, being a coloured man in the South Africa of the Apartheid Regime, he was able to have better socioeconomic conditions thanks to all his successes in the academic field. As South Africa remains an unequal country, Norman tells his athletes that they need to work hard for what they want because they are not as privileged as other kids.

### Life-skills

Drawing the classification of life-skills in emotional, cognitive and social skills. (Hermes et al. 2017), what the athletes have described in the above sections implies that Fit2Run's sports-based program does have an impact on the tree types of life-skills. In the emotional pertain, their internal sense of well-being and self-worth was positively affected, this is exemplified by Sharlan when she says that her life is better now or by the belief that the athletes have about their capabilities in reaching their goals in and out the field. Secondly, the cognitive skills such as regulation and impulse control were also addressed, which is exemplify by Lee-Tin and Jueyren's story about how they use act in the races before joining Fit2Run. Finally, the social skills such as communication skills and prosocial behavior is exemplified by Joanique when she affirms that their manners have improved.

## **6.4. The meaning of development for the athletes**

### Approaches to the concept

Norman defines development as the transformation that the kids have when they participate in the program, the comparison between who they were and had and what they are and have now. How

they grow by becoming stronger (both physically and mentally), becoming better persons, and being better educated. For him, development is 'vague' concept, it can mean many things, for me it would include growth, education, health, to have the freedom and capability to be who they want to be and realize their dreams.

For the athletes, development means to be better, to learn new things, to experience new things, to have more opportunities. Joanique relates these opportunities to the access to a more 'prestigious' school that Fit2Run's athletes have, there they have the opportunity to compete against the best teams in the country. According to Meagan, they have heard the word development at school in economics, but their communities do not talk about development. For her it means that you have to 'upgrade' yourself, she said that 'Fit2Run developed them, they got out of their circumstances, they did not get involved in what is happening around them'.

#### Relation with sports

The relation that Norman made of Sports and Development entails the following logic: Sports keep the youth out of trouble, therefore they overcome the four of the five obstacles (gangsterism, teenage pregnancy, drugs and alcohol abuse, and school dropouts) and through education they are in the path of overcoming the fifth one, poverty. This means that they 'developed' themselves.

Although Sharlan does not recognize the word development, her life-story is, in some extent, she is the reflection of what Norman considers 'developed'. Sharlan avoid the path that the kids in her neighborhood usually take, she is not involved in any gangster activity, she does not consume drugs or alcohol, she has a healthy lifestyle, and she has not been affected by teenage pregnancy. She has also become an inspiration for the other kids in her neighborhood who admire her for the athletics achievements. She is still working with Fit2Run and hope to continue training, perhaps pursuing a bachelor's degree and become a coach someday, to be able to help others like Norman was able to help her.

## 7. Conclusion

This research illustrated how there is not a right recipe for the whole notion and understanding of Sport for Development, as well as for its significance in young people. *Sports* are experienced in different ways and filled with different meanings. *Development* reflects diverse ways of thinking within specific contexts. Therefore, as discussed in the present thesis and exemplified by the life-stories, sports 'does' different things for young development in Worcester.

The life-stories and interviews show how the vulnerable youth in Worcester coexists with gangsterism. When they enter Fit2Run, their reality and options changed and is like they live between two worlds. In the first one 'development' is an option since they have access to a better-quality school, they improve their grades, their aspirations are bigger, and they not only dream with going to the Olympics and represent South Africa but also about going to the university and being able to study something that allows them to 'give something back' to help other kids like them and to help their families. This is the more or less the story of Sharlen.

Back in the second world, when they are not in the running track, they live in impoverished neighborhoods where there is a lot of young people in the streets, involved with alcohol or drugs, and where their old friends are taking the wrong choices, among others, because they are constantly enticed by their peers to participate and engage in deviant activities. In this world they see a lot of Sirgios' stories through their windows.

In conclusion, the present thesis shows that Worcester athletes associate running with different benefits like relaxation or stress and anxiety relief, however, is when they talk about Fit2Run that development outcomes are recognized. This could be explained by the importance, as affirmed by Hartmann (2002), of the non-sport component. All the activities and motivational speeches, inside and outside the track, enhance the emotional, social and intellectual development of the athletes. In the case of Worcester, this is exemplified by the bigger goals that the athletes set for themselves since they are participating in the Fit2Run programs, such as participate in the Olympic games, graduate from high school, having a bachelor's degree, find a meaningful job that can allow them to help other kids that face the same difficulties as them, or becoming a coach and community leader in the future, like Norman!

## 8. References

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## Appendix 1. List of individuals interviewed

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Description</b>
Sharlan Boer	23	Female	Athlete
Meagan Swanepoel	19	Female	Athlete
Vernoschka Abrahams	24	Female	Athlete
Chenique Sas	16	Female	Athlete
Ileana Dreyer	24	Female	Athlete
Sirgio Mcleod	34	Male	Former Gangster
Joanique Horn	15	Female	Athlete
Norman Ontong	58	Male	Co-founder-Coach-Manager
Jueyren November	15	Male	Athlete
Lee-tin Syfers	15	Male	Athlete