

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Women's participation motivation in rugby, cricket and netball body satisfaction and self-identity

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Award date:
2002

Awarding institution:
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Women's Participation Motivation in Rugby, Cricket and Netball: Body Satisfaction and Self-Identity

Volume Two

Katrina Marie Russell

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
University's requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

February 2002



C O V E N T R Y
U N I V E R S I T Y

Coventry University in collaboration with
the Rugby Football Union for Women

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Chapter 5 Sporting Identity

5.1 Introduction to the qualitative work

This chapter is the first of four concerned directly with the empirical findings from Stage Two of the project: 30 qualitative interviews conducted with female rugby players, cricketers and netballers. The central tenets of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, 1996a) argue for a consideration of the perceptions and meanings attributed to an activity or an action by those involved. This chapter, and the following three, reflect and interpret the sporting experience of these 30 sportswomen. The investigation of women's experiences of sport occupies a significant presence within the sport psychology and sociology literature, notably work based on the social construction of gender through sport (see for example Messner, 1988; Messner & Sabo, 1990, 1993; Theberge, 1993) and the development of the lesbian stereotype in particular sporting activities (Griffin, 1992; Jefferson Lenskyj, 1998; Krane, 1996; Veri, 1999). There is, however, a more limited recognition of the perceptions and meanings given to women who choose to participate in non-traditional sporting activities. Notable exceptions include work on the experiences of female boxers (Halbert, 1997), bodybuilders (Choi, 2000), footballers (Pirinen, 1997; Scraton et al., 1999) and rugby players (Wheatley, 1994; Wright & Clarke, 1999). This thesis sets to redress this imbalance. At the time of writing there has been a limited presence of female rugby players, cricketers and netballers in the sport psychology literature and even less that address the similarities and differences of those sporting experiences. The following chapters aim to provide a much needed insight into this area.

Each chapter has a focus on a slightly different aspect of female sporting experience. These are broadly based around sporting identity, perceptions of femininity, the functionality of the body and the overall impact sport has on the rest of women's lives. Although there are a number of themes running through the thesis, such as the construction of sexuality and the impact this has on individual experience, it is clear that there are a number of differences that arise from each sport group. Each chapter attempts to highlight the influence of sporting experience on these aspects and to discuss how they interrelate in constructing female sporting experience.

Throughout all the data chapters: 'Sporting Identity'; 'Femininity'; 'Functionality'; and 'Impact of Sport', the notion of physicality is explored. Here physicality is used to define these women's experiences during physical activity. Although the concept of physicality has been problematised because of the lack of definition and meaning (McDermott, 1996) it is used here simply to emphasise how women use their bodies within a sporting context and how meanings are formulated through that physical experience. In addition, the relationship physicality has to the permanence of sport in women's lives will be identified.

5.2 Introduction to the chapter

This first chapter focuses on the theme of sporting identity and how women's participation in rugby, cricket or netball may influence that identity development and how it is sustained. Within the first section, 5.3, 'Sporting Personality', the focus is on respondent's views of the relationship between their own perceptions of the 'type' of woman who chooses to play rugby, cricket or netball and those of casual observers and friends. The development of a sporting personality is further explored within

section 5.4, 'Sporting Attributes', in which attributes are identified that set these athletes apart from other non-sporting women. 'Team Identity', the final section within this chapter is considered with a focus on the influence physicality has on the development of friendships and trust both within and outside the sporting arena.

The following sections reflect many of the similarities exhibited between all three sports, for example, on topics such as the empowerment experienced through competition. It is also evident, however, that there are a number of differences both within and between the sporting groups on how being physical impacts on friendship formation. What follows is an exploration of how women in rugby, cricket and netball talk about their sporting experiences and how different factors can influence their continued participation. The meanings attributed to the respondents are explored from a social constructionist perspective (e.g. Sparkes, 1997) with a recognition of some of the feminist work undertaken on the stereotyping of female sport participation. This analysis will highlight not only the meanings given to sporting experience, but how the construction of gender stereotypes and body perceptions are formulated through that experience. It should be noted at this stage that the quotes utilised are illustrative of respondent accounts and neither all accounts nor complete accounts are included. At times these reflect common responses to research questions, whilst others indicate a unique interpretation of sporting experience.

5.3 Sporting Personality

5.3.1 Introduction

In this section the perceptions women who play rugby, cricket and netball have of themselves in relation to the 'type' of woman you would need to be in order to play

that sport are discussed. These women reflect on how the psychological dimensions of their personality are often just as crucial to success as their physical capabilities. There are also recognitions and explanations as to the development of perceptions and stereotypes of sport observers and a clear recollection of school influences on sporting identity development.

5.3.2 Psychologically being able to 'take knocks'

The importance of psychological qualities in the playing of each sport and in particular the notion of being able to 'take knocks' was one of the most prominent themes identified. For rugby, in particular, this factor is highlighted through the ability to cope with the physical aspects of the game through psychological qualities.

For example:

I think you actually have to be quite hard psychologically...not necessarily off the pitch but I think once you step on the pitch...well you've got to be able to take the knocks, y'know...sooner or later somebody's going to land on you...squash you, stand on you...I think it is just part of your personality that you accept that's what's going to happen and you just think, I suppose you just think 'well, y'know I'm better than that and I can..I'm stronger than that and it doesn't matter'..I suppose, I mean we've had girls come up training who've been perfectly big and perfectly strong and quite fast and when they actually started doing like contact work and tackling practice...they just haven't liked it (Ruth¹¹: Rugby)

You have to be able to take the knocks and it's all about the ability to get up after being knocked down and to be able to cope with those knocks. You basically need to be able to come back after being bashed. It's a mental skill as well. Rugby doesn't tend to attract people who aren't hard (Rhonda : Rugby)

The rugby players see themselves as quite unique in this respect, recognising that they do have to embrace the physical nature of their sport in order to be successful. They are also aware, however, that some women, regardless of size do not, or simply

¹¹ The names of all respondents have been changed to protect their identity. To help in the identification of sport, however, all rugby players have names beginning with R and S, all cricketers with C and D and all netballers with N and M.

cannot cope with the contact. Rugby is seen to be very aggressive and physically demanding and in essence they are not 'hard' enough. It is quite clear from the comments made by these rugby-playing women that this is a major factor involved in their continued participation. From a social constructionist perspective, and in particular the work of Goffman (1963), this particular body idiom is shared by all rugby players and would certainly appear near the top of the hierarchy of approved rugby playing characteristics. In this way the presentation of the rugby playing self is supported and maintained by a perception of being 'hard' enough. This perception of being 'hard' enough was one of the factors related to the identity of women playing rugby that would not have been accessed by utilising a questionnaire. This aspect was not considered within any of the questionnaires employed and was not initially a question planned in the development of the interview schedule. Only by listening to the experiences of the rugby players in this study was this factor brought to the fore and subsequently included in all other interviews.

It would appear that for the rugby players there is a connection between perceptions of self and motivation to participate. Consistent with social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981), the behaviour of these athletes suggest that they choose to participate in this sport which then goes some way to reinforce their self-perceptions of competence and helps to form a social identity. Furthermore, rugby players are motivated to see themselves as different from, and better in comparison to other people and groups (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Sparkes, 1997). What is unique here is that the perceptions and differentiations are constructed through the notion of physicality and not other socially derived behaviours.

For these women being tough and 'hard' is essential to their success and status within the team. Equally the sensation of recognising themselves as 'hard' enough does impact on feelings of physical competence and self-efficacy. In the most basic of terms this means that a rugby players' perception of herself as 'hard', accompanied by a successful performance enhances her belief that she can cope with the physical contact involved and increase her perception of her ability to complete the task next time. This is discussed in more detail later within the section corresponding to sporting attributes.

Both cricketers and netballers also demonstrate a reliance on a player's ability to take the knocks in competition, the focus does, however, err away from pure physical force. Danny and Delia (two cricketers) comment on the psychological aspects of coping with competition at International level where 'sledging'¹² occurs:

I mean psychologically I think you have be really tough, I mean when you're out there it's like there's 11 players who want to get you out...and especially at International level...y'know it gets harder...I mean you hear stories of..Fiona Daniels [an England cricketer] yeah when they played the Australians who walked out to bat and there was a little love heart on the crease and err it just said 'Bye Bye' on it, I mean that's intimidation (Danny : Cricket)

I think it's a feeling of knowing that this is down to you now, you can't..not so much blame anybody else...it's more of a challenge knowing that it's like 11 people out there against you and knowing if you can come through that (Delia : Cricket)

One of the more distinct aspects of the game of cricket is that it is highly individualised. The cricketers work as part of a team but in essence do compete one to one whilst batting and bowling. Through the cricketer's accounts it became clear that

¹² Sledging is a form of verbal attack aimed at the batter in order to intimidate and influence their performance; it also serves to motivate the fielding team.

there was a sense of difficulty between managing the roles of batswoman as sole competitor and batswoman as team-mate:

...you can play it individually when you're at the wicket or when you're bowling or even when you're fielding but you're working...as a unit as well, so you've got that team support around you but...you only get one chance at...in particular batting...you can achieve...for your own self but also that it can become very much a big team thing as well (Deb : Cricket)

This issue is discussed in more depth in section 5.5, 'Team Identity'.

For netballers the situation of coping with physical contact in a psychological manner was evident on a number of occasions but was not as great a discussion point as it had been for the rugby players. Nancy's account is typical of the majority of netballers:

I think you have to be very mentally strong at...the higher levels you play...just because of the contact...in the game, you've got to be able to take the knocks...and then not to give it back (Nancy : Netball)

The difference shown between the sporting groups on the topic of being tough and hard enough to play the sport may simply be a reflection of the differing levels of physical contact involved. Being able to take the 'knocks' and cope with physical contact was regarded as a psychological advantage helping the rugby players to distinguish themselves as different, 'harder' and tougher than other sportswomen. Being the type of woman who can cope with the prospect of being 'squashed' and trampled on certainly would impact on their success within rugby. Many rugby women also reflected on a reckless or adventurous side of themselves, rejecting perhaps what was traditionally expected of them. These factors contributed greatly to their participation in the sport:

I think probably the type of woman who's going to get into playing rugby is got to be slightly rebellious...against what people expect because it's...not something that is generally what society expects

women to do...go and trample all over each other in mud...in wet and cold, y'know it's still girls were meant to be girls, most girls are still dragged up to be girls aren't they to be honest? (Ruth : Rugby)

...acknowledging that it's potentially a dangerous sport umm but they're willing to, I don't know I suppose it's why women do bungee jumps...and abseil down tall buildings or something...you've got to have a sense of spirit and be a bit reckless and [have a] sense of adventure (Susan : Rugby)

In terms of sensation seeking the rugby players may be exhibiting similar behaviour to that of other risk sports such as climbing and skydiving. Although rugby has been classified as medium-risk (Zuckerman, 1983), there are results which suggest that these participants are higher sensation seekers and thrill and adventure seekers than low-risk sports such as running and golf (Potgieter & Bisschoff, 1990). The adrenaline 'buzz' which results from participation may well be an important factor in determining their enjoyment and continued participation in the sport. As cricketers and netballers did not reflect similar ideas of recklessness or adventure, an explanation of their enjoyment may be found within the sports themselves. The level of physical contact required in each of the sports is very different. Rugby encourages behaviour more likely to result in injury than non-contact sports such as cricket and netball (Robinson, 1985; Straub, 1982) and so may attract those individuals who are not concerned by this aspect of playing.

5.3.3 Sport choice and participant mix

Cricketers noted that the mix of women in their sport was different to that present in many rugby teams and highlighted that, for many women, it had become a second choice sport:

I think there's a bit of a mix...it's a broad spectrum from people who are quite confident...and arrogant and up front...you need confidence in cricket...so you've got those sort of people but it does, and...from

watching other women's sports, for example, rugby, you don't seem to get the other end of the spectrum where people are quite introvert and shy but I think you do get that in cricket (Clare : Cricket)

...what you find is there are two types: there's often the hockey player or an athlete who does a another sport...then there's the people who often don't play any other sport at all...so you get quite often two quite divergent groups in, y'know within a single squad...it's much more female athletes who want another sort of thing to occupy their time in the summer (Cath : Cricket)

Initially the choice to participate in cricket may have been related to the traditional split in sporting seasons between hockey in the winter and cricket in the summer (a number of women did discuss that they had played hockey previously to taking up cricket full time). Participation may have been triggered by a need to 'fill up' time during gaps in their sporting calendar. As cricketers became more competitive changes occur with the introduction of winter nets and a greater commitment by players. This does then become associated with a struggle to maintain the level of fitness required whilst having other commitments:

...at International level...that's what we do...we get tested every month on our fitness...not everyone is successful...and to ask them 'oh right we want you to go out on five runs this week and get two training, y'know two weight sessions in and you need to go and do two nets' it's like 'well I just don't have the time' and it doesn't matter how dedicated you are at...the end of the day you have to say 'well actually I love my cricket but I need to pay my rent or I need to pay my mortgage' (Cath : Cricket)

This is discussed similarly in section 5.4.5, 'A drive to achieve', when this attribute of having an inner drive to achieve success even in the face of many obstacles is considered.

There was a recognition on the part of cricketers and netballers that they felt they were and had less aggression in comparison to rugby players. There was also an

awareness that there were occasions and individuals who were seen as aggressive and as physical as any other sportswoman. Denise discusses the benefits of playing cricket in this sense:

I don't know...it's good because it's not too aggressive but...you can still be on the field aggressive diving and shouting and things but it's not as physical as say something like football, rugby...there's no chance of catching me in a scrum or anything like that but it gives you [a] chance to do that but it's still sort of quite....it's still girly in some ways I suppose because you still umm it's not [based on] physical contact (Denise : Cricket)

Maria, a netballer highlights this similarity in perception from a netball point of view:

I don't think it draws a particular type of person...it's perhaps a slightly more, you're going to hate me for saying this now, it's not such a physical game as hockey is it?...because it's a non contact sport...perhaps netball is a bit gentler, having said that (laugh)...there are some rough netballers and there's some tough games (Maria : Netball)

So what we find here is a recognition of how their own perceptions of another's sporting activity helps to define the personality or 'type' of the participants in their own sport as different. We find that there is parity between presenting the self as a rugby player, cricketer or netballer and being regarded as such by other sportspeople. Goffman (1963) would argue that this self-classification enables each sportswoman to internalise the label given to her by her team-mates and perceive it as a valued attribute. Being able to differentiate the 'types' of people who would choose to play rugby, cricket or netball is certainly one area in which the inclusion of interviews was of great benefit. The respondents were given an opportunity to describe the process through which women identify themselves as different from one another indicating that this occurred in different ways. Having the opportunity to explore this issue in detail certainly adds to the level of understanding in sport-based research.

It is important to note here the use of the word 'girly' by Denise. This term asserts the negative image of certain sporting women (in this instance not rugby players or footballers) as not as physical or as capable in the sporting arena. As becomes clearer within Chapter 6, 'Femininity', this distinction between 'girly' and 'non-girly' women is utilised by many sporting women in a derogatory way which is comparable with how men have used the term to devalue women's sporting talents, as in the term 'throw like a girl'.

Taking this into consideration we can also find evidence to suggest that, for the cricketers in particular, the connotation of their sport as a 'second choice' may be linked to the sensation of being regarded as a second-class citizen within the sporting world:

...no matter what people think, unlike hockey or to a certain extent soccer...you are very much a second class citizen as a female cricketer...in terms of how people see you because very few people have their own ground. Whereas y'know often a women's rugby club...is associated to a particular ground...we don't really have that so you, that's why in many ways why it draws a different type of clientele (Cath : Cricket)

This association with a different 'clientele' or 'other' within sport is also reflected by one of the rugby players who recognised that all the rugby women she knew were in some way non-conventional:

...one of the things that's become really obvious to me recently...is that you don't get many married women playing rugby, you don't get many people in permanent relationships playing rugby because I think it's very demanding...if you did a survey of the people at XXX you'll find that most of them don't work in nine to five jobs, a lot of them still live at home, not many of them have conventional jobs and conventional relationships..in fact not any of them (Sue : Rugby)

For both these sporting groups there is a feeling of being different because of the practical characteristics of participation. For the rugby players this could be an

extension of the fact that rugby was deemed as something that many of these women were not expected to do and so were already regarded as non-conventional in that sense. What is not clear from the research on which this thesis is based, however, is the relationship between sport choice, employment and relationship status. This is certainly one area for future work.

One other consideration that reflects the ability to choose a sport was noted by some of the older netball players who recognised that for them this was their only choice at school. Taking this into consideration it would be hard to know if these women were netball women by discrimination or simply netball women by virtue of circumstance:

I think probably in my generation because, obviously I was like born in 1963 sort of, in those sort of sixties I think there wasn't really anything else for women...and I think that's probably why I went into say the netball side of it, there wasn't even like at school where you played like mixed sports like with the boys, like the football like they do now...they didn't have that, it was like the girls did the netball and the boys did football (Nicola : Netball)

There were women in both cricket and rugby who were of a similar age to the netballers, but who did not feel restricted because of a lack of choice at school. This should be considered alongside the length of time many of these women had been playing. For the netballers in this age group continuous participation experience was in the 25-30 years level. This was at least double any level of experience exhibited by the rugby players or cricketers many of which came to the sport much later in life. Perhaps this need to justify why they chose to participate in netball over another sport could be a reflection of fear of retribution by the interviewer. The respondent may have felt that I was curious as to why she would choose a sport that I did not play and so wanted to explain in absolute terms that removed herself from the decision making process. This may demonstrate a form of social desirability from the respondent,

highlighting one of the dangers evident in interview research in which a respondent could provide information that she feels the interviewer wants to hear. It was clear, however, that in this instance Nicola, although recognising the limitations of her sport choice had continued to participate at a later age when other opportunities would have been available.

All of the comments made in relation to sportswomen's perceptions of themselves as rugby players, cricketers or netballers indicate the complex process of choice and adherence to a sport. It is evident that these women do perceive themselves to be different than other athletes in relation to the psychological qualities needed and social expectations of girls to go into those sports. The next series of responses deal directly with how the sportswomen perceive other people see them. In this section there is an exploration of how stereotypes are formed and embedded in certain ideals concerning the acceptability of activities for women and the respect given to them as physically active individuals.

5.3.4 Perception of personality by others

There is a clear distinction made between the sports in terms of how reckless or adventurous other people perceive them to be. Only rugby players commented on how other people perceived them to be 'reckless' and 'mad' and this is strongly linked to how the players themselves regarded their choice of activity. There is no conflict between how they as rugby players perceive their decision to participate and that from other observers:

I find there's people who think you're completely mad to play rugby
and can't, y'know can't get round
Kate: men and women?

yeah oh yeah both definitely oh more women yeah because men have all played at school really (Suzie : Rugby)

I suppose it's respect...and I don't mean that in a really sort of like the Godfather respect or anything like that...in a sort of the nicest possible way that they think 'oh she's gutsy, y'know she's up for, not necessarily adventure but she's up for, y'know physical contact, y'know she's not afraid, she's confident and she's, yeah gutsy'...and reckless but measured risk sort of person (Susan : Rugby)

These statements confirm the findings previously presented in the chapter, demonstrating that the perceptions of others confirm the athletes' own thoughts on their risk-taking behaviour. This suggests that an individual who participates in rugby not only regards themselves as more adventurous than other sportswomen, but also that other people who see them play rugby regard them in this way. From a social constructionist perspective this finding would support the notion that individuals construct their identities and that these identities are in some way predetermined by the interactions they have with other people. Being recognised or perceived as a risk taker are constructs of the way in which the sporting culture of Britain determines the nature of sports such as rugby and the character of the women who play rugby.

Not being recognised as physically capable to play rugby may also reflect the notion that in order to play women's rugby you have to be 'mad' because your body should not be able to cope with the physical side of the game. This does not appear in any of the comments from the cricketers or netballers. What is interesting to note is that both the cricketers and netballers call attention to the physical differences between them and rugby players in order to establish and define what and who they are. The rugby players distinguish themselves purely through recognition of the talents needed to play the sport rather than a comparison of the disparity in their and other sporting

needs. Sharon describes the most common reaction by others when they discover she plays rugby:

I think because you're small they don't.. 'oh you don't look big enough to do that'...but that's, y'know the normal reactions....I think it's because of your physical size, they think 'oh you couldn't possibly do that' and also I suppose because I am quite softly spoken and I think I am aggressive and I have got a terrible temper but it, y'know I don't let it show very often...and I think they're surprised because they probably think 'oh yes you've got to be aggressive and you don't look the type to be aggressive like that and you're like an angel' and stuff (laugh) (Sharon : Rugby)

This perception of her unsuitability as a rugby player, based on the assumption of her femininity, i.e. being like an angel and being small, can be said to challenge heterosexual logic. That is, by participating in a masculine sport such as rugby, she too should be considered as masculine and therefore physically the same size as many male rugby players, i.e. tall and big. The contradiction arises when the sport requirements do not match the expected physical appearance of the player, as was also found in relation to female boxers (Halbert, 1997). This aspect was further explored in relation to female footballers (Kolnes, 1995) by suggesting that women are caught in a Catch 22 situation. Either the women look too masculine (having short hair and a muscular body) and are, therefore, labelled as lesbian, or too feminine and are subsequently perceived to be physically incapable of playing that sport.

For Deb, a cricketer, this has less to do with size or shape and more about the physical dangers involved in playing rugby. Confirming the idea that rugby players have to be 'hard' enough to play the sport:

I think if I played women's rugby...I think more people might..might say things like 'oh aren't you frightened of getting hurt?'...but I think with cricket they don't think it's..it's perceived to be a particularly violent or contact sport (Deb : Cricket)

This distinction between the expected physical appearance of a rugby player, cricketer or netballer and the actual is strongly associated with the notion of sports as a 'girly' or 'non-girly' activity. The following section focuses on this particular aspect.

5.3.5 Sport as 'girly'

There is an indication that for many women in sport, and in particular the rugby and cricket women in this study, participation is not considered 'feminine'. There are a number of factors, which influence this particular perception including the recurring notion of an activity as 'girly'. This term is used negatively to describe the poor quality of female performance. There are comparisons to be made both within the world of female boxing and wrestling. One of the most common stereotypes within boxing is to identify a woman as a 'Foxee boxer', a woman perceived to be a stripper not a boxer (Halbert, 1997). Young (1997) also finds evidence for this when female wrestlers are asked if their participation meant being involved in mud wrestling; this activity being regarded as a sexual performance for the pleasure of men and not as a professional or committed activity. These definitions serve to delegitimise their status as an athlete, perpetuating the belief that women cannot and should not participate in the 'real' version of that sport. This issue is fully explored within the following chapter.

For Cheryl and Deb, the definition of a sport or sportswoman as 'girly' has strong connotations for the physical appearance of that woman and the activities she would want to participate in:

...most of the people on the cricket scene are not overly girly...particularly

Kate: why do you think that is?

some of them they wear make-up and stuff and they're married with kids and all that kind of thing...but I think if somebody's feminine then cricket isn't seen as a feminine activity anyway it's still a boys sport, it's still a male sport and y'know if...you're playing cricket as a female you are already challenging that image so, y'know people that want to look feminine or want to be seen as being feminine and girly wouldn't touch it with a barge pole (Cheryl : Cricket)

I think a lot of people still find it quite quirky that women play cricket...I suppose...there's always some that think that they want to be men or want to do what men do (Deb : Cricket)

The term 'girly' is used here to indicate a number of things. Firstly the term is used to define a certain type of woman. One who is not into traditional male sports, one who is feminine and one who, if they value keeping that label and subsequent image associated with being a girl, (i.e. not a lesbian) should stay away. This may demonstrate a peculiarity in the stereotyping of lesbian women. It may be the case that lesbians who are defined as 'butch' (women with very short hair, who dress similarly to men; see Esterberg, 1996 for details on other visual cues) receive fewer problems with access to lesbian only clubs and support than 'femme' (women who appear traditionally heterosexual) who may be treated as an outsider by members of her own group. This is particularly interesting when we note the comment in Cheryl's quote above in which the term 'scene' is used to describe the cricket environment. Are we to suppose that the institution of a scene within cricket excludes these 'girls' in the same way that 'butch' lesbians exclude 'femme' lesbians? Esterberg (1996) suggested that even lesbian identities are constrained in some way: are made and remade within the "boundaries of convention" (Esterberg, 1996 p. 261). It would appear that both cricketers and lesbians define acceptable physical appearance depending on the 'convention' the group upholds. At no time do we find here any conflict or anger about why 'girls' should stay away from cricket. Rather there is an

acceptance of the assumptions placed on the cricket group through media and assumptions about women in sport in general. This distinction among the sportswomen concerning the construction of 'acceptable' physical appearances demonstrates the strength of Goffman's (1963) hierarchy of agreed body idioms that are used to judge others and ourselves. Even though there is resistance to expected sporting behaviours there are a number of accepted physical characteristics which are judged to be valuable. It is clear that the interview material has provided a rich source of information from which to fully explore the contradictions and tensions exhibited by the women in this study on a topic inaccessible in a more standardised way. Future considerations of this topic would certainly benefit from completing further interviews rather than a structured questionnaire. The contradictions noted here and the tension between accepting and rejecting traditional ideals of femininity are fully explored in Chapter 6, 'Femininity' and Chapter 7, 'Functionality'.

Cricketers are not the sole keepers of the 'girly' label, in fact netballers exploit this term a great deal when reflecting on how observers perceive their sport. All of the netballers included within the study noted how the main difficulty for netball to develop respect within the UK was through the assumption that netball was purely a school sport. This meant that it was played by 'girls', was not as good as basketball and, therefore, not worthy of attention:

I find a lot of men find that netball is a sissy sport...they're not good enough to play basketball, it's a big comparison with basketball... 'what's the point in netball you can't run with it, you can't bounce it, you can't move with the ball'...and I think that they just think it's for people that aren't good enough to play basketball (Nancy : Netball)

...whoever I talk to about netball whether it be, well especially men...they always say 'ohh no girly sport...did it at school' and,

y'know didn't realise that it was actually continued out of school
(Nanette : Netball)

I think everybody, unless their involved with the sport imagine a
netball player as navy blue knickers and a school girl" (Maria :
Netball)

The conclusion of this assumption for netballers is that their sport is not valued because it is played at school by girls who cannot or do not have enough skill to play basketball. Adult netballers inherit this legacy by continuing to be regarded as 'girl like' and therefore overtly feminine. This trivialisation and marginalisation of women's sport serves to promote the ideal that men's sport is far superior to that of women's and relegates their performances as second best (Griffin, 1992; Jefferson Lenskyj, 1994, 1998; Koivula, 1999; Kolnes, 1995; Pirinen, 1997).

5.3.6 Self and athletic identity

In addition to these perceptions there is a more generic ideal developed by some sportswomen to be seen as athletic and sportslike. This can be recognised in the utilisation of an exercise schema (Kendzierski, 1994) whereby an individual develops tactics, such as wearing sports clothing and engaging in topics of conversation that display a sporting knowledge, ultimately creating a sporting identity. Taking this into consideration there is evidence to suggest that these women are displaying the characteristics of an exercise schematic. These are people who describe themselves in terms of being an exerciser, being physically fit and 'in shape', and rate these characteristics as important to their self-image (Kendzierski). This aspect of developing a sporting persona is explored further within section 5.4, 'Sporting Attributes', but an indication here of how an individual can start to develop and support such an identity through action is provided. Here Cheryl discusses how this

process occurs through combining and supporting her self-presentation alongside the acceptance of other people's perceptions:

I usually traipse in a tracksuit or whatever...so again sport is a big part of my image but I'm a sport psychology lecturer so some of them say that they assume I wear that because I teach sport psychology...if people are going to talk to me generally they'll...talk about football or...they do talk about sport a lot but I initiate a lot of that anyway and then they see me walking out with a squash racket or a hockey stick or a cricket bat (Cheryl : Cricket)

And later

...if it's warm I'll wear shorts because usually if..if I've been training..if I've been out on the bike or whatever my legs will be fairly well toned and I always think that creates an impression of somebody who is athletic...I don't pose but I like to try and make people think that I'm sporty even if that's not particularly at the time (laugh) (Cheryl : Cricket)

For Cheryl and others there is an indication that the presentation of the self as athletic is important even if they themselves do not feel very active at that time. What is important is how Cheryl sees herself in the context she finds herself in at any one time. The self-categorisation theory (Turner, 1987) attempts to explain this form of behaviour. Developing on from the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981), Turner argues that the way in which we see ourselves depends on the categories with which we define ourselves. This is ultimately determined by the social context of a given situation. As such, Cheryl categorises herself as an athlete and is seen as an athlete because of the social context she is in at that moment. Being recognised as a *sport* psychologist presupposes that she is sporty adding to her 'value' as a lecturer. She is active in the maintenance of this categorisation by choosing to wear sport specific clothing and conducting conversations based on sporting knowledge. Cheryl demonstrates the role the body takes in mediating not only her sporting identity but

also her social identity as a lecturer (Goffman, 1963). Such activities demonstrate the value of such an image to both personal and work lives.

One area in which the presentation of the self becomes recognised and is formed through interactions with others is the experience of school. Within school and specifically the experience of sport within the confines of PE lessons the foundations of sporting identity are laid. Here the presence of those individuals who are successful at sport and an individual's relationship to that person does have an impact on the future sporting participation of adults. It also demonstrates how the importance of sporting ability at school can have dramatic implications for early social development.

5.3.7 School experiences and the development of the 'sporty' image

Recognising the importance of school experiences in identity development is not novel. Investigating how sporting activities at school are remembered does allow for a greater understanding of how sport might impact on later adult development. Certainly there does appear to be a relationship between the purpose of sport and how individuals wish to be remembered after high school. Studies have consistently shown that a majority of males preferred to be remembered as athletic stars, whereas females selected the roles as leader in activities and brilliant student most often (Holland & Andre, 1994, 1999; Kane, 1988). Following this line it is interesting to note that the women interviewed for this study revered those who were good at sport suggesting that they too wanted to be remembered as sporty rather than academic. The following quote is typical of all the comments on this area:

...to be very academic was to be like really sort of square and boring...and spoddy and...y'know and it was like 'oh, y'know he's

really clever and like really sad' and...y'know 'oh she's really good at sport and y'know that's really good that's a cool..a cool thing to be...whereas being academic wasn't cool but being good at sport was cool (Ruth : Rugby)

This positive reaction to 'sporty' people at school was enhanced through the unquestioning acceptance of friends because of sport involvement, regardless of any other attributes. It was also indicated that romantic relationships might have developed through the friendship networks based around sporty girls and sporty boys. Again we see the development of 'other' in relation to accepted behaviours and a recognition of explicitly delineated roles between the academics and sport groups. There also appeared to be very few individuals who could manage to belong to both groups:

...well you always knew in a particular year didn't you...that there was a group of girls that were always in the netball team, they were always in the hockey team, they were always in the athletics team, they always played tennis but I don't think it made us any different and then you've got the academics haven't you, you've got the Boffs and how nice to have been both...it was just the sort of..not an unwritten rule but..nobody was unfriendly about it but I mean you must have been in a class at school where you think oh, y'know the Boffins and you knew that they'd always be like in the top ten...in the exams and you'd always be in (laugh) in the bottom ten (Maria : Netball)

This distinction between sporting excellence and academic performance appears to be a false dichotomy. Recent research does suggest that those individuals who were involved in a physical activity intervention programme did show an increase in academic performances, although this was not the case for all schools involved (Almond & Harris, cited by Biddle & Mutrie, 2001). Yet the perception of the stupid athlete or thick jock certainly starts at an early age and continues well into university careers. Denise discusses this point as she reflects on her recent move to University:

...everyone at college has the sporty label as a sports student

K: and what sort of goes along with that label then?
...umm generally because like not thick but you get the sort of, I don't know just have to turn up, play a bit of sport and they've got a degree, like right little jock and that sort of stuff (Denise : Cricket)

All of the women in the Stage Two of the fieldwork recognised that they did have a certain standing and respect because they were good at sport. Some mention how that impacted on application forms with teachers being able to refer knowingly about that person's activities. Others discussed the standing among peers, which developed through award ceremonies and media attention:

I was recognised for playing a lot of sport and even outside of school I played for a lot of clubs and stuff and was quite successful in that so they'd announced it at school that I had done such and such, like I won awards at school for all the sports...I won sportsperson of the year and stuff so you got, I mean the teachers in our school were very supportive of your extra-curricular activities...and so they'd encourage it for the younger people in school as well, in that way I was quite well known amongst the school for being athletic (Rhiannon : Rugby)

...everybody knew me as an athlete, I mean 'cos I swam at the time as well I used to biathlons and I used to get into the nationals at that point in time and people knew about that, so yeah that was my..that was my image, as a sportswoman (Cheryl : Cricket)

I had an England trial and there was a lad in our year as well that had a football trial and we were sort of known as the two...like sporty people...and everyone knows me as like sporty, I think that's..that's it really they just always think of me as...really active (Nancy : Netball)

It is also important to recognise that the way in which these women interpret their early sport experiences is set within an historical context. The school systems they belonged to help to construct the demarcation of academic and sporty individuals. As we find later in Chapter 8, 'Impact of Sport', perceptions of the value of sport does change as gender divisions become accentuated. At this particular stage, however, we can recognise a split between children who were either academic or sporty. There is also a point at which this acceptance changes as these women move through college

and university education. Here they want to fight against the image of the 'thick jock' and be recognised as an intellectual as well. We see how respect and standing at school was a clear reflection of the physical talent exhibited by these women. Sport for them was valued, providing an avenue for acceptance and self-worth at a stage when many young people can suffer from a lack of social support. It is clear that the perceptions these sportswomen have of themselves are based on the physical enjoyment experienced through competition and beating opponents. Recognising and accepting that others' perceptions can impact on their enjoyment should also be noted. Later in Chapter 8, 'Impact of Sport', it is highlighted that although sport was valued by peers this was based on strict gender lines. There is an investigation into how the expected performances for girls and boys was very different, one that made it extremely difficult for those boys who were not considered physically talented. It is clear that gender stereotypes are formed at a very early age and impact on experience for a lifetime. The next section within this chapter relates to sporting attributes and how these women believe that sport creates chances and success in other areas of their lives.

5.4 Sporting Attributes

5.4.1 Introduction

This section focuses on the qualities exhibited by the sport participants through and as a result of their sporting performances. There is a clear indication of how performance leads to a self-belief, one that is on both a physical and social level. Through discussing notions such as empowerment through play these women suggest that physical sensations permeate all aspects of their lives and positively influence coping strategies outside of competition. The section also discusses how sport, for

these women, accentuates a sense of purpose or drive which guides their lives. Again there are notable similarities between the sport groups on these factors, but it also highlights some of the more interesting differences that are demarcated through physicality.

5.4.2 Demonstrating and enjoying physical power

The sensation of physical power and the experience of overcoming an opponent was discussed by all sport groups. This was differentiated, however, through the increase/decrease of intensity level indicated by the need to be physical within each sport. For rugby players there are many recollections of the enjoyment and thrill of hurting someone else, beating an opponent (literally) through sheer physical prowess.

In this first quote Susan describes how tackling made her feel:

I mean when you...tackle somebody when you go into somebody...there's definitely stuff there about being better than your opposite number and...particularly for me being tall and well built, if I see a player in the opposition who is big like me...it's a challenge, y'know...you want to get them..you want to knock them over, you want them to go to ground, you want...to tackle them so hard that they might not want to get up or might not be able to get up and that's a great feeling...you can't beat it. I'm not interested and never have been in like avoiding contact, I would relish contact (Susan : Rugby)

For Rebecca there is a similar sense of enjoyment through being physically powerful, recognising that this is not necessarily a 'nice' characteristic to display:

I enjoy that aspect of rugby the fact that it's physical, I enjoy the contact which is a bit horrible but I mean it's nice to munch somebody up in the scrum...I used to think that that was really horrible to like doing that but y'know at the end they always give as good as they get...but it's nice it's kind of, you feel a bit commanding and a bit nasty (Rebecca : Rugby)

There was also a recognition of the differences between certain positions on the rugby team. This related to the level of physical bravery involved in completing that role and provides an insight into the team dynamics of a rugby team:

...if you really think the other team are much better than you it's really difficult, I think you've got to have a lot of self belief in yourself and your team-mates and you've got to really believe...that you're better, I think...the further forward you are in the...game as well, forwards especially like front row and stuff I think you've really got to believe that you're better than you're opposite number...and that you can give as good as you get else you just don't want to be on the pitch anymore...you've really got to want to be better than the other person and you've got to, I suppose you've got to...not mind if you've got to give a lot as long as you feel you're like you're beating you're opposite number...I'm not sure that's quite the same maybe in the 3/4's...it's not the close contact is it...it's not the like eyeball to eyeball stuff (Ruth : Rugby)

These remarks detail how the physical sensation of hurting an opponent is a strong motivational force in the continued participation for many of these women. Additionally we do see the subtle references among rugby players in terms of who is the toughest on the team and certainly the remarks from this group indicate that the forwards/pack had the edge over the 'wimps' of the backs. Although the rugby players clearly regard themselves as far more physical than other sportswomen there is also an internal system of recognition and value.

This is not to say that cricketers and netballers do not experience a similar drive to be better than their opponents physically. In particular cricketers refer to the 'gladiatorial' aspects of their game as a unique experience. Clare's comment is typical of this description:

...it's about the individual competition...it's almost gladiatorial...when you're batting and you've got a fast bowler steaming in at you and you don't know if...it's gonna...send you a beamer at your head, which she did do this season, or whether she's going to pitch it short and try and bounce you...and it's that having your technique right and the

confidence right and let her steam in then smacking the ball back to the boundary it's..it's everything (Clare : Cricket)

The sensation has its focus on the one to one aspect of the cricket game, driving to overcome the woman at the other end of the wicket and not allowing physical intimidation to occur in a similar way to rugby players. The competition described is as intense as that related by the rugby players but more on a psychological level than a physical one. Again it is clear that the one to one aspect of the cricket game greatly influences the perception of the cricketers' performance as gladiatorial.

Netballers also demonstrate a need to be better than their opposition perhaps driven by a personal sense of achievement as described by Maria rather than as a more innate drive to hurt someone as suggested by the rugby players:

...if I played badly and we've won it's still not the same feeling because every time you go on a netball court you want..this sounds terrible..I've always wanted to be better than everybody else on the court and that's probably why I made it to where I did...I don't know it's just a personal thing I just wanted to have everybody say 'what a fantastic player you are' I suppose at the end of the day, even though I didn't consider my self to be a big head it's still a lovely feeling when people said 'oh you had a great game today' and you wanted that every time (Maria : Netball)

This reflects the assumption that physicality is not truly a part of the netball game. As noted earlier there is an assumption that netball is a more feminine sport, with less aggression and force used to play. Perhaps this players' sense of achievement as an individual transcends the demonstration of physicality. Self-esteem develops through the reflection of supporters' praise. In this sense Maria's competence as a netballer is enhanced through the recognition of her talent by others. A similar form of feedback from coaches has been shown to develop an individual's sense of efficacy and

persistence in tasks that are challenging (e.g. Allen & Howe, 1998; Black & Weiss, 1992). A similar effect can be shown here.

It is difficult to separate how and why it is important to overcome opponents apart from the obvious need to win. What these remarks do show, however, is that the intensity of discussion concerning this topic levels out with the degree of physical contact needed in order to win. It is not surprising then that the rugby players discussed this issue far more than both cricketers and netballers and with such an impassioned description of hurting other women.

Although other researchers (Hargreaves, 1994; Wheatley, 1994) have found that rugby players enjoy the physicality of their sport there is little indication as to the extent of this sensation. Young (1997) goes as far to argue that women involved in rugby and other physically demanding activities redefine the philosophies of that participation. In his study, women who played rugby reported being driven by a sense of wanting to be highly competitive in the physical sense but recognised that they did not "want to end up killing each other" (p. 301). The findings from the research on which this thesis is based, however, contradict this point. It also suggests that the idea, put forward by a number of sport sociologists (notable Duncan, 1990; Messner & Sabo, 1990; Whitson, 1990), that sport provides the last domain where men can legitimately hurt one another is not a unique male experience. This research demonstrates not only the existence of women who want to hurt and prevent women from 'getting up again' but also that they do recognise the opportunity provided by rugby to inflict physical harm without retribution. Both Susan and Sharon recognise this aspect of the game and also provide a justification of their actions through

comparison to male aggression deemed as 'uncontrolled'. So what we have, for these women, is a legal and controlled demonstration of aggression that sets them apart and subsequently above men who were supposedly out of control:

...it's a great way to let off aggression and steam if you've had a shit week at work (sorry)...you can let all your aggression out on the pitch and that is legitimate, y'know you're not like getting like, y'know men on a Friday night getting drunk and starting fights it's..it's controlled, channelled aggression that you can draw on throughout the week (Susan : Rugby)

...it's a legitimate way to actually hurt somebody and get a, y'know and then that gives you a kick...without getting arrested for it (laugh) (Sharon : Rugby)

This denial of the aggressive qualities of female sports participants perhaps reflect societies reluctance to accept the aggressive nature of women in general, and sporting women in particular. As previously discussed, Sabo and Messner (1993) argue that the prevailing model of masculinity in twentieth century culture emphasises aggression, dominance and physical strength. Femininity on the other hand encompasses ideals of passivity, dependence and physical frailty. When reflecting on the rejection of women as aggressive sport participants it can be argued that the definitions of acceptable behaviours assumed by women within Western societies help to relinquish responsibility for demonstrations of bodily harm. It is clear that social expectations of the aggressive qualities of women have been constructed and reconstructed by the women who play rugby to suit their own needs. This finding would have been difficult to ascertain using only structured questionnaires. Certainly, the Participation Motivation Questionnaire did indicate the importance of team membership and fun to the women in this study but lacked the scope to explore and understand how women interacted whilst in those environments. This factor becomes clearer when reflecting on the relationship between team members in section 5.5,

'Team Identity or Aspects of Loyalty'. In connection with this outward expression of physical power and aggression is the relationship found between physical capabilities on the pitch/court with physical competence outside of sporting arenas.

5.4.3 Physical confidence on and off the pitch/ field /court

Having physical confidence from overcoming opponents on the pitch/court certainly reflects on levels of physical self-efficacy when placed in alternative physical challenges. Many women noted how the sensation of 'feeling fit' and 'strong' helped them to cope with potentially dangerous situations outside of sport. Susan talks of her ability to deflect potentially aggressive situations through a combination of her physical presence and an attitude of confidence developed through her knowledge of other situations where she did overcome opponents:

...it makes you more confident definitely in other areas of your life because you know that physically you can handle yourself...I know I'm strong, I know I'm tall...I know that if I got into a situation..off the rugby pitch that was confrontational in any way...and it's not that you're looking for trouble, you know that when it comes you can handle it...physically or you'd certainly have a good try anyway...because of my height and build people would probably not...start trouble, particularly women, y'know another women would probably think...'I wouldn't mess with her', even if I was really puny, y'know..because you're sort of more imposing just because you're bigger...I suppose equally able to diffuse aggressive situations by..not responding but just having the physical presence to say 'y'know come on, y'know don't be stupid' (Susan : Rugby)

At the end of Susan's interview, she recounted an incident in which she tackled (literally) a man she saw trying to get into her car. After discovering that the car was actually not hers she recounted how she had not even thought about the danger of the situation before deciding that she could confront this man. What is clear from this remark is how strongly a perception of physical and psychological belief in one's own physical ability can impact greatly on activities external to sport. Similar

findings to this can be found in relation to female wrestlers (Sisjord, 1997) who also demonstrated feelings of physical confidence at the possibility of being attacked. Physical confidence does not only refer to the ability to repel attackers. McDermott (2000) found that women who took part in wilderness canoeing felt a general level of confidence increased through the experience of 'being' physical for the first time. This reflected more the ability to overcome 'self-imposed physical limitations' rather than physically defeating another person (McDermott, 2000).

In addition to their own perceptions of physical competence comes a recognition that other people then come to regard them as physically capable to deal with any situation that involves physical activity. Mary recounts a time when being placed in a new physical situation (that of skiing) her behaviour was directed by an assumption that her previous physical activities would ensure her success and expertise in this alternative environment:

I didn't really pick up on the fact until I went skiing for the first time at half term with uni friends and...there was about three of us who had never done it before and I was like 'oh God haven't done this before' and I was quite nervous and they were like 'oh well you know you're sporty you'll be ok wherever' and one of the other girls that hadn't done it before doesn't play sport...there was no way they would take her to the top of a slope and say 'go on just do it', whereas I think they'd have been quite happy to take me to the top of the slope and literally push me and think 'right yeah you'll be, you'll be fine, you can do it'...I do think, not necessarily for the netball per se, definitely not, it's more because of general sport that I do feel that err I am seen differently to friends who don't play sport, in that way...I think it's a positive thing, I'm quite happy that I'm known in that way...but it is a case of I get left to my own devices a lot more when you're out, taking care of myself. They would rush to rescue one of the girls stuck on a stepping stone in the middle of a river...I think they give me a lot more independence...I think it is a case of...just being a bit fitter and a bit physically stronger you are more capable in certain situations (Mary : Netball)

The absence of cricket references to the same recognition of physical capability transference may point to a number of issues. Firstly, as discovered at Stage One of the research process, fitness was not regarded as a high priority for cricketers as a motive to participate in that activity. Many cricketers laughed at the idea of any physical qualities needed in order to play cricket with the caveat that at International level this was not always the case:

...just to play cricket you don't actually need an awful lot...you need to be able to stand up...pretty much and hold a bat...and that's it, however, at the other end of the scale ideally if you're looking to..to England standard..you know you're looking at umm speed...agility in the field umm and strength, so it varies (Clare : Cricket)

Secondly, the main focus of the game for cricketers was based more on the psychological qualities needed to succeed rather than any true physical power. The game concentrated on the technical skills involved in bowling and batting and not necessarily on the brute force utilised by many rugby players and netballers. Subsequently the cricketers may not see or recognise any difference in other people's behaviour towards them on this aspect because they do not emphasise the physical requirements needed to perform.

5.4.4 Impact on self-identity

Moving away from the purely physical aspects of each sport there is an appreciation of the impact on social self-belief that performance can bring to each woman. There is a recognition of how tasks within the sporting environment come to impact on decision making and self confidence in a social arena. These issues are fully explored in Chapter 8, 'Impact of Sport', but it is useful to demonstrate here how self-belief develops through performance situations. The following remarks are representative of the comments made by the respondents:

I am very confident at speaking in front of a lot of people...at decision making and having the attitude of well that I'd rather make a bad decision than just sit back and not make a decision at all. Umm a down side of that is that I can't just actually sit in a room and be quiet now (Rachel : Rugby)

...when I played, y'know used to worry about every single thing... think over the last few years just say being at uni as well and just meeting new people, just learnt to relax a bit and realise that I can actually play...and so now when I get on there there's I feel, y'know at least I think if there's a boundary saying 'oh well yeah I've done this much but I don't know if I can go to the next step, now everything is open to me say 'well if they can do it there's no reason why I can't at least try and do it (Nicki : Netball)

These women are talking about an ability and a confidence to be heard and listened to, to be understood and valued. Markula (1995) also found similar attributions with her work on female athletes. Here the women recalled how confidence came from sporting activities rather than as a contributing factor to participate initially. Attributing such qualities to sport, however, is problematic. Identifying a causal relationship between any long-standing activity that has progressed alongside many other developmental stages is too difficult a task to assess here. What is evident though is the importance these women place to such activities in terms of developments in confidence, decision-making and acceptance of self. Other qualities such as a sense of purpose, a drive to achieve and commitment are also highly valued by these sportswomen.

5.4.5 A drive to achieve

Assessing a drive to achieve something through sport clearly illustrates how and why sport impacts on their lives and lifestyles. This attribute was seen as a personality trait in itself rather than as a consequence of participation:

...it gives you motivation to do other things I think. I couldn't just sit around and not do anything like just watch TV...'cos I get so bored and

I think playing sports gives you this drive...and it gives me motivation to do other things...I mean I think that people who play...a sport umm obviously they have some kind of determination and umm some kind of drive to achieve something and if you have that in playing sport I think you'll have it in your day to day life 'cos you have that frame of mind...you have a drive to achieve or to win whichever and I think that's a good and healthy thing in day to day life 'cos you get on with things and if you set yourself goals and go and do them (Rhiannon : Rugby)

I'm naturally competitive, I'm competitive in sport and that's crossed over to academia because what...I thought really was well, y'know 'sod you!, I'm going to show you anyway'...I'd love to go back to them and sort of stick two fingers up and go 'look where I am...y'know I'm a university lecturer and look where you are' sort of thing...and that's what I've got from sport really, just the will power that strong will to just carry on when people doubt you (Cheryl : Cricket)

I'd hate to be the sort of person that didn't have like a goal or something to aim for...and if you're going to start something to finish it, I'd hate to be one of those women, y'know didn't ever finish anything that you set off...and I think hopefully it will move onto my children as well because I just want them to be a bit competitive in what they do (Nicola : Netball)

Not only do we need to recognise how important playing sport is for these women but it is also clear that they distinguish themselves from other non-sporty women on this particular aspect. There is defiance from Cheryl indicating that perhaps for her a past experience drove her further into sport, ultimately proving herself to others. Nicola clearly indicates that she did not want to be one of those 'other' women who never completed anything. The resistance shown by some of these women is very powerful because it directs the researchers attention to how these sportswomen have utilised and gleaned sporting experiences to benefit themselves in some way. For one rugby player this is taken to the extreme in her belief that who she is as an individual is determined by her being a rugby player. In this way she sets herself apart from other women and other rugby women because of her commitment to the game and her career within it:

...there is no-one else here that can do the job that I do. Even in England terms I don't think anybody works as hard as me. I need to work to continue doing my best because no-one else can get the blame if I don't succeed...it gives me a sense of purpose of who I am. When people ask me who I am and what I am I can say that I'm an international rugby player and I like that. I find that I need a role and this is mine, there is something within women who play rugby that is important for them..to have a strong role and rugby can give that to them (Rhonda : Rugby)

For Rhonda 'herself as a woman', and 'herself as a rugby player' are so interconnected that to separate one from the other is not possible. Although this may be considered an extreme view, many of the women who talk about their drive to achieve recognise that there are sacrifices to be made in order to compete. For some this is leisure time that could be spent with family, for others holiday time taken in order to play a match. It is clear that these women do not take their participation lightly and value their time spent competing even more because of it. Suzie, a rugby player describes her own experience:

...it is such a full on sport I think you get more out of it as well because you have to put much more in, you have to be much more committed I suppose especially at the level we play now in that you have to, y'know you have to make the sacrifices like, y'know I have to umm take days off work to play or there's people with families that have to miss spending time with their families and stuff to play and so you have to..you have to put a lot in to get a lot out I think (Suzie : Rugby)

5.4.6 Awareness of prejudice

Many of the women interviewed were aware of the prejudices that permeate throughout women's participation in sport. Many wanted to challenge the assumptions made concerning talent in addition to recognising a number of the constraints under which many have to work and subsequently compete. Cath demonstrates this point clearly when discussing the differences between women and men in the cricket world:

they [women] have to be much better...and I think part of it, certainly at International level is because the press...is on you to say 'well it's not like the England men' or it's 'not like the South African men' or whatever it is, you have to be a bit better, you have to be able to hold your head high and say...actually 'cos considering I also teach full time and I have 15 children and...a husband and blah, blah, blah that y'know I also play International cricket, y'know I think I'm doing pretty well (Cath : Cricket)

Clearly there are issues surrounding the value of women's time and expectations of performance that are not matched by a commitment from governing bodies to provide elite athletes the opportunity to really show what they can do. Taking aside the issue of commitment to the sport and the sacrifices made in order to participate in them, there has been very little discussion about the issue of fun through sport. All the women interviewed did discuss how they enjoyed participating and the value of that participation in terms of friendships. There were very few women, however, who explicitly talked about fun as the main reason for their participation in the sport. To some extent this does reflect the level at which the sport was played. Michelle talked a great deal about her perception of what it was that continued to draw her to play netball at an age when many of her peers were not. She related how important it was to her and her team-mates that fun should always be the focus of competing regardless of outcome:

...if you do it for the attitude that we do it for I don't think there is a negative aspect...I think if you're going each week and saying 'we've got to win' and then you don't win and you come home and you're racked off for the rest of the day and you're taking it out on your family because you didn't win that would be a negative aspect, it's the wrong reason for playing...we don't play for that reason so you can't really have anything negative come out of a game when you're just going and playing because you enjoy it, not necessarily for the result...as long as we go and it's fun then you can't take anything negative away from it really (Michelle : Netball)

For many this ethos of the purpose of sport should be exalted as the way to go, unfortunately this occurs little in the world of competitive sport and among the

women who were interviewed for this research. Jefferson Lenskyj (1994) does discuss the development of the Notso Amazons Softball League in Toronto which was solely based on feminist principles seeking to reclaim sport in the interests of pleasure. Here the women-only recreational league sought to provide a safe and less competitive environment for female participants. Taking an attitude of fun into a league structured on competition and winning is difficult, but to maintain this as a personal attribute is admirable. For this netballer and her team-mates this was the focus of their participation and one which contributed more to her persona as a sportswoman than any other. When recording the development of a sporting identity with discussions on power and of status as an athlete it is sometimes poignant to be brought back to the purpose of physical activity as an avenue of pleasure rather than as a means to an end.

So far in the discussions relating to identity development and how the sporting frame of mind comes to such prominence for many sportswomen the influence of the team in that process has not been addressed. How physicality impacts on friendship development and trust are essential to this understanding alongside a recognition of how friendship networks differentiate between sport and non-sport groups. In the following section there are a number of factors which could influence how team dynamics might impact on perceptions of friendships and acceptance of behaviours.

5.5 Team Identity or Aspects of Loyalty

5.5.1 Introduction

This section of the thesis draws on the relationship between playing, friendship and physicality. For some women the collection of like-minded women produced

friendships that out lasted any competitive drive. For others the role the body took whilst playing influenced greatly perceptions of trust and acceptance within a group. Ultimately the way in which women interact with each other through their experiences of sport demonstrates the power participation in an organised activity can have for many women. These findings support the results from the Participation Motivation Questionnaire (PMQ) in Stage One, demonstrating the importance team membership is for all respondents in this group. What is clear, however, is that although the PMQ did identify the importance of team membership, there was no explanation of how this presented itself or how individuals within a team let each another know how important they were to each other. The consideration of loyalty as an aspect of team membership, identified through the interview analysis, provided one of the richest sources of thesis material.

5.5.2 Loyalty and 'body on the line'

One of the most striking issues to emerge from the interviews was to do with that of physical contact in rugby and how it affected the development of friendships within the team. All of the rugby women interviewed recognised and exalted the influence on friendships through the process of putting their bodies 'on the line' for each other. Nothing more exemplified a commitment to team-mates than this whereby someone was prepared to risk great injury for the sake of protecting another member of the team. The following quote by Susan demonstrates eloquently the force behind this belief:

...in the pack there's real team spirit and y'know just like in the changing rooms afterwards and getting in the bath together and singing songs and the whole thing, there is the sense that they're not just people that you play a game with, they are friends...and certainly people that you care about even if it's only for 80 minutes...I suppose there is a sense of that yeah because you..I mean everybody's seen it,

how many injuries you can pick up playing rugby at any level whether you're a man or a woman so there is a sense of protection and may be that's something women are better at than men, well I think definitely that they are so we will look out for one another and it's sort of a sense of camaraderie and like you're putting yourself on the line, you could end up with a broken neck you could end up being in a wheelchair for the rest of your life...or dead even, y'know whatever it could be you...and you don't want that to happen to anybody you care about...y'know you want to protect them and...I think that's mutual..I've certainly felt it (Susan : Rugby)

A sense of protection was another issue that arose among many of the women interviewed. There was a connection made between the building of trust and acceptance of each other. This is rooted in the equality among players in that anyone and everyone would risk themselves in the same way:

It's a very close natured team sport, you need a lot of trust because you are basically putting your body on the line for someone else, you need to be completely honest on the pitch when you play, there is a very strong camaraderie that stems from the fact that you have to be willing to put yourself on the line for your team-mates and expect the same from them. You get a lot of muscular problems that can result in injuries so being in a team and being a team player is very important. Players have to be very honest with each other when it comes to injuries and inner problems. They just say what they need to say and then we get on with it, it's best to get it out into the open. We have a very open atmosphere at the club and we have a sort of system in place to deal with that. We have no inner politics going on, which is good and means that we are able to concentrate on the rugby which is what we're here to do. The team means protection really, we all trust each other and this creates a system of protection for everybody. We need to have excellent communication and to be able to trust one another's abilities as well. It's the idea that if you can trust someone else's abilities you know that they will be there to protect you from getting bashed just as much as you will protect them from getting hurt if you can (Rhonda : Rugby)

This belief in each other is very powerful as the trust needed in order to fulfil your role within a team is enormous. The women interviewed were extremely animated when discussing this aspect of teamwork and how that influenced the team performance and friendship networks. Neither cricket nor netball could mirror the

development of friendships through this level of physicality and for rugby players there was nothing more instrumental to team satisfaction than the trust and commitment to each other demonstrated by acts of bravery.

Perhaps because of this the rugby players also felt that they accepted each other far more than their male counterparts. This was reflected in social settings where there were fewer instances of peer pressure to stay out all night and drink because of the recognition that women had additional responsibilities. This is clearly seen through Ruth's remark and elaborates on the disparity between the value given to women's and men's leisure time:

I think there is a culture that goes with rugby...definitely but I think women's rugby is much more forgiving...I think there's a definite like loud, beer drinking, slightly crude or risqué or whatever...you like to put it...culture that goes with rugby and...I think that's extremely evident and you just have to take part in that...whereas I think in the women's game it's.. 'cos you do get very close to people because you are literally sometimes putting your body on the line for your team-mates, y'know you're throwing yourself on the ground...to be stamped all over, y'know it does I think make you're team-mates much closer to you than in maybe other team sports...and there is a big side of it of like socialising and all the rest of it...but I think it's, because maybe it's just not so established and a lot of women have a lot more other responsibilities, y'know we've got women who are married and have children and, y'know they've got other things to worry about and look after whereas I think a lot of men who play rugby can like walk out the house on Saturday morning and...don't have to worry about anything until they like stagger home at one o'clock on Sunday morning....I think there's a lot more acceptance amongst women like 'yeah well, y'know we'd love to go but if you can't always well that's fine (Ruth : Rugby)

It appears that for men their role as partner/father does not intrude on their participation in sporting activities demonstrating a clear demarcation of domestic roles. It also demonstrates that men are not expected to 'put first' in the same way

women do. These accounts add another aspect to the comment previously noted by Cath on the gap between expected performance and available resources.

5.5.3 Loyalty through being 'other'

The camaraderie built through both physical risk and social acceptance are but two reasons why the rugby players felt they had such a closely-knit team. Friendship through the perception of being the 'other' within society was also highlighted as an important aspect of the development of trust within rugby. Having to justify their choice in playing rugby, largely because of the lesbian stereotype associated with this activity, was frustrating for all the women interviewed. This was heightened by the assumption that playing rugby was a statement about one's life and not a reflection of the enjoyment of the sport. Wright and Clarke (1999) also note that the media have often used the *absence* of statement making by female rugby players as a tool to assure their male readers. The assurance is based on highlighting that women want to play rugby for rugby's sake and not as a feminist statement, i.e. participating in rugby because of a love of the sport and not to simply prove that they could. The admission as a feminist ultimately coming to mean lesbian (Griffin, 1992). Sue explains below:

I liked the loyalty and I think one of the reasons it became created is because you were different and there was a sense of defensiveness I think, in retrospective. I mean at the time if you would have said that to me I would have said 'no! I'm really proud to play rugby', which I was but there was..you almost had to be aggressive with it as well in order for people not to take the piss...you needed to be loyal...you needed to prove to people that you played rugby and you enjoyed it and we played hard and we worked hard at enjoying ourselves...I think that definitely the loyalty came from being kind of different...and people assuming that you were lesbians or something (Sue : Rugby)

And later

...people assume that you're making a massive statement about your life because you play rugby, that you're trying to prove

something...and the only reason I play rugby is because...I enjoy it, I like the game, I like getting dirty, I like the aggression..I'm an aggressive person on the pitch but not off...I like the girls, I like the people..the people who play the game on the whole are nice people...and that's why I play rugby. I don't play rugby to make a statement about my life, don't..don't play rugby to make a statement about the fact that I can play a man's sport so there!...don't play rugby because I can say I'm not homophobic and I can get in the shower with a bunch of lesbians

Kate: yeah (laugh)

do you know what I mean?...I don't do it for any other reasons than that I enjoy the game and I like the people who play (Sue : Rugby)

Sue had found loyalty among women because of her label as an 'outsider' and 'other'. Group identity was based on defending themselves against those who assumed knowledge of the reasons behind team membership. At this point we find a connection between perceptions of being 'other' and a result from Stage One of the research. Both cricketers and netballers had significantly higher scores on the lovability scale than rugby players. This could subsequently impact on feelings of self-worth and the establishment of being 'other' within the sporting world. It may be that rugby players experience prejudice far greater than cricketers in their rugby environments because of the homophobic and misogynistic assumptions associated with rugby (Schacht, 1996). As previously discussed (section 4.9, 'Multidimensional Self-Esteem Inventory'), the experience of such negative treatment could affect their perceptions of being loved in general.

With this in mind, the issue of lesbianism is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, 'Femininity', but it is sufficient to say here that the perception of 'other' for both players and observers rests clearly at the assumption of women in sport as equating to an admission of lesbianism.

2

5.5.4 Loyalty through sociability

Loyalty was also explained through the social connections made between team-mates and the support delivered through this aspect. For cricketers, in particular, there was a real sense of the social nature of the sport as key to friendships, as opposed to the physical aspects offered by the rugby players. The cricketers discussed the wide age ranges that most teams appeared to have and how this impacted on team relationships. Since teams tended to spend so much time together off the pitch as well as on it¹³ social activities were geared around inclusion rather than simply heading to the pub to get drunk, as perceived to be the activity of rugby players. Cath remarks on how this demographic influences the team's behaviour after a game:

...cricket is a very sociable game it's a paradoxical game in as far as it's a team sport that relies on absolute individual performances and individuals where they are much more isolated than I think they are in rugby or...football or whatever but it is the social side of things, y'know there's always the focus on going out with the team afterwards and taking the opposition out...which is often less the case I think in soccer...and I think..club level because you play with anything from 14 year old up to a..a y'know 65 year old it, much more so than in the case of a another sport is that you have a massive wide social cross-section (Cath : Cricket)

Again indications of the differences in the sport of cricket were highlighted through which the cricketers perceive themselves as isolated from other team sports and also recognising that the team is still a collection of individuals. Cricket was regarded as different to hockey in many respects because of the sociable nature of the game and the people who play it. The level at which the sport is played may influence the structure within the team but for the most part it appeared to indicate that competition was different than in other sports:

...it's more sociable I think than any other sport that I've ever played to be honest...it's a sport that's completed at a slightly more sedate pace if you like, when you're fielding you're stood around a lot, as you

¹³ A 50 over match, for example, could easily last 4-5 hours.

change to a different position you run past the wide wicket and you always have a chat with whoever...there's lot of scope for talking and discussing and socialising, although you, y'know obviously you concentrate on the game but I think it provides more of a social element than most other sports I've come across 'cos generally speaking you don't have time to, if you're playing hockey or whatever you don't have time to have an in-depth conversation..when you're waiting to go out to bat and you're chatting to the other people in the batting line up (Cheryl : Cricket)

The social aspects of the game were highlighted a number of times with many women referring to Cricket Week in which teams from all areas come together for a festival of cricket. Cricket Week was seen as a microcosm of how cricket was played and experienced throughout their clubs. In this sense cricketers are able to differentiate themselves from other sports in relation to how sociable they are and use this as an asset when discussing reasons to continue playing. Here we see, as the rugby players demonstrated earlier, an example of the motivation used to define their group as different and ultimately better than other sport groups (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Sparkes, 1997).

Some cricketers did, however, stress that age diversity within teams can often lead to difficulties and generational clashes on certain topics. Many of the cricketers noted how social groupings were formed around age differences within their clubs, often causing disharmony. This factor was particularly evident when discussing the introduction of trousers as an option of performance wear. This issue is explored in more detail within Chapter 6, 'Femininity', but Clare (34 years old) describes the situation within her club:

...there's quite a mixture in the team now in terms of there's...sort of a lot of people my age, but then there's a lot of people who are coming through that are like 17, 18...so I would say that there are two groups really that socialise, the young ones tend to socialise amongst themselves and the older ones...I don't like it when there's

disharmony in the team...there's quite a big divide...it's almost been split into the younger generation and the sort of the older generation...do you see what I mean? And I..I can't be doing with it..I can't be doing with the politics of cricket (Clare : Cricket)

Because of the individualised nature of cricket this may impact on how and why the teams focus more on the social aspects of friendship than the more performance related topics discussed by many rugby players. Having to almost compete against team-mates within a club could direct individuals to focus on social relationships as a means to prevent further disharmony. Cheryl points out that the continuous notation of scores and bowling deliveries can make team work a difficult goal to reach:

...it's supposed to be a team sport but for most people that played it at our level it was about...individual things, it was highly competitive for getting the most wickets or getting the best batting average...so it was very much an individual sport within the team...cricket's so notated it's untrue, everything's recorded...so it's highly individualised so the nature of the sport it self wants to make you compete individually and I think that's what makes it unique and that's why there a problem with it at elite level, y'know you try and tell somebody to play as a team when they're getting individual feedback all the time (Cheryl : Cricket)

In considering the social activities that might take place after a sporting occasion another distinction between the sporting groups was illustrated. For netballers there was a clear feature of their netball friendships that were separate from any other friendship network they might be part of.

5.5.5 Loyalty through distinct friendships

The netball group became to be considered as sole providers of support and enjoyment, one which protected and excluded others and in particular men from intruding upon. Both Nicki and Nicola mention how their netball friends appear different to other groups in relation to the purpose of an evening on the town. Both

described how the search for men, for a romantic encounter, was not as a priority as it might be for other friendship groups and this impacted on their sense of unity:

I think it's just when a bunch of women get together and they just get rid of the men really...a lot of my friends basically when they go out all they're concerned with is..is men, when they go out, y'know 'oh who am I going to pull tonight' and all that...but umm when I go out with the netball lot, y'know it's sort of like, this idea we don't need that just there we just have a good time no matter what...if anything happens anything happens but, y'know you just know that when you go out with them that you're guaranteed a good night (Nicki : Netball)

...tell you what which we probably do do a lot really is..is the fact that we stick together as a group of girls and...we're not interested in going in search [of men]..all we want to do is have a drink and have a laugh...and I think that's the difference like if girls haven't got, the ones that go out and they haven't got a sport or whatever, we're quite happy having a drink, having a bit of a laugh and then going home, but I think they have to have something, an aim

Kate: and what do you think...what's their aim?

probably just to pull at the end of the night...we haven't got that sort of aim, we don't need that to make it a night for us really (Nicola : Netball)

For the netballers interviewed there was a real sense of being 'one of the girls' as Nicki called it. Men and the search for men were regarded as superfluous in this situation because it was about being one of the team, focusing on friendship and not romantic liaisons. This factor might be more apparent within the netball group purely because of size. There are only seven members in a netball team as compared to 15 for rugby and 11 for cricket. Perhaps within the other two sports, sub-groups form around positions or age groups (as indicated by cricket) and the intensity of a smaller group in netball could direct their behaviour towards a search for safety. As Nicola goes onto describe:

I just feel comfortable with it...we've got a quite good rapport with the girls that play there, we've got quite a nice social life as well...I think that helps a bit as well really because whenever you have a problem or anything, if something did go wrong they always seem to take you out and you feel part of 'the girls' really (Nicola : Netball)

The netballers also refer to themselves quite often as 'the girls', regarding it as a term of endearment rather than as a tool of ridicule when discussing their physical talents. This acceptance and embracing of such a term can be difficult to qualify when considering how other groups use it to devalue their sporting activity. In a similar fashion to how other groups take on board terms of prejudice such as 'queer' and 'dyke' the netballers may take ownership for the team and utilise it for their own purposes. Jefferson Lenskyj (1994) points to this collective embracement of terms when the Notso Amazon Softball league teams choose their names such as 'Dykes on Spykes'. Perhaps the netballers at least see themselves as distinct from other groups preferring to be thought as 'girls' rather than any other derogatory term such as 'dyke' that the other two sports were privy to. It is clear that the connotations of such terms are more powerful for 'queers' and 'dykes' but the process involved in acknowledging the term and utilising it for the groups' purposes could be an important part of the development of a netball identity.

This shows a similarity between the sporting groups on their ability and success to distinguish themselves on a number of levels. For the rugby players this is based on physicality, for cricketers on sociability, and for the netballers on the exclusion of others. In terms of how this might impact on identity development as a whole it is clear that the tremendous effect on team membership for rugby players, through putting their 'bodies on the line' cannot be ignored. For them the protection and trust developed through playing such a physical sport and relying on team-mates for support is rooted within this characteristic. For the cricketers the sense of community and sociability of the sport lends greatly to the perception of their sport as far more friendly than activities such as hockey and football. These women embrace the

generations within their sport, recognising that this can influence the delicate politics within a team. This community spirit may also be influenced by the highly individualised nature of cricket. Players might make more of an effort to develop friendships off the field because there is not as much interaction during the game as in other sports. Netballers develop strong friendships through a mutual understanding of what it means to be 'one of the girls'. An exclusion of non-sporty women and men from their social group enables the team to focus on reciprocal support and value as a woman and a team-mate.

5.6 Summary

This chapter has considered sporting identity on a number of levels. Through exploring their own perceptions of the type of woman who would choose to play rugby, cricket or netball an insight into what truly influences participation was found. The concept of physicality as an influencing motive was evident for all sports but clearly more prominent for rugby players. This particular aspect was mirrored by observers of women's rugby in that they perceived them as reckless and adventurous. In considering this characteristic it was not surprising to find that women rugby players relished the contact within their sport, sought it out on the pitch and valued the commitment of other team-mates because of it. For them this contributed immensely to the sense of protection and trust essential to performance.

All sports recognised certain attributes amongst themselves that promoted a sense of purpose and drive to their lives that perhaps was missing in other women who did not compete. The perception of physical competence outside the sporting arena were clearly noted by both rugby players and netballers. The influence of school and a

recognition that sporting ability far outweighed academic qualities as a valuable attribute is important for rooting the development of a sporting identity at an early age.

The team may have the strongest influence for some individuals because of the closeness and support provided by their friendship networks. For the rugby players again the influence of physicality lends greatly to their perception of trust and protection, relying on each other and valuing the performance of others in dangerous situations. This loyalty is enhanced further through a definition and recognition of themselves as 'other' within sporting circles. For the cricketers the social aspects of the game influence how they spend their leisure time and interact with other sporting groups. Recognising the diversity in ages within some teams also impacts on how non-competitive situations function and develop around joint goals of friendship and support. This is exacerbated, however, because of the individualised part of the game in which competition for places does not foster team spirit. Belonging to the 'girls' and separating social activities between sporting and non-sporting friends are two ways in which netballers distinguish themselves from other sports. Developing a strong bond through mutual understanding and acceptance is probably aided by the relatively small membership and is directed by the exclusion of any social activity that involves other people and in particular men.

The use of both social constructionist and feminist literature to interpret the interview data has clearly provided an appropriate framework for analysis. It has been demonstrated that the way in which individuals construct and reconstruct their identities are not only based on the historical contexts of an event but also that the

presentation of the self is determined by the shared vocabularies society judges behaviour on (Goffman, 1963; Shilling, 1993). It has also been shown that the way in which interactions are managed and maintained are directed by the role the body takes in mediating social encounters and the presentation of self as a sportswoman. In particular, the construction of rugby women as 'hard' and the definition of acceptable physical appearance certainly benefited from utilising this approach to analysis.

In reference to the quality of the material presented here, it is important to highlight the use of both the questionnaire and interviews in this process. As indicated throughout this chapter there are a number of similarities and comparisons made between results from the three questionnaires and the interview accounts. What is also important to recognise is that although the questionnaires provided an insight into the experience of sporting women, this was limited. Exploring the concepts defined at Stage One through interviews has allowed for a far greater understanding of women's sporting experiences and the interrelationship of team membership, sporting personality and physical power.

How these factors might influence the perception of femininity for themselves and other people are discussed in the next chapter. The next chapter focuses explicitly on the assumptions made, through participation, on sexuality and performance capabilities and how these women attempt to reconcile these tensions.

Chapter 6 Femininity

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is the second of four exploring the development of a sporting identity within female rugby players, cricketers and netballers. The focus of this chapter rests on the subtle, and often not so subtle, relationship between a woman's sporting activities, and her perceptions and definitions of femininity. There is also a debate about how and why sexuality comes to bear such a strong influence on women's sporting experiences. Throughout this chapter the focus of much of the research is on the level of physicality exhibited by these sportswomen and how this contributes to the development of stereotypes. The construction of femininity and how social processes come to determine our understandings of female sporting experience are key to this section. This chapter also explores the impact of traditional notions of what is and what is not a 'woman's sport' and what this comes to mean for these sportswomen.

In the first section, 6.2, 'Perceptions of Femininity' are explored, focusing on how sexuality is defined by both the sportswomen themselves and by observers. An attempt is made to explain the development of lesbian stereotypes and how assumptions made may impact on social encounters with other women and men. At times this is directed by a recognition of the physical ability needed to participate in rugby, cricket and netball and comparisons made to male competitors. This particular issue is investigated within the next section 6.3, on 'Physical capabilities' in which definitions attributed to physicality considered to be valuable are compared to those used as a tool of ridicule. In this way the development of the images of sportswomen are explored. The issue of whether to wear a skirt or a pair of trousers for the

cricketers is examined in detail within the final section, 6.4, of this chapter, 'Skirts or Trousers'. This is a unique exploration into the complex relationship between performance and acceptable appearance.

This chapter lays the foundation for a further consideration of the relationship between physical appearance and performance by examining the role of the body in sporting experience. As such some of the points covered within this chapter do overlap with and should be considered alongside that of those reflected upon in chapter 7, 'Functionality'. This chapter examines in greater detail the differences experienced by women on and off the pitch/field/court. Both this and the next chapter seek to explore and clarify the interrelated concepts of physical power, physical appearance and the development of homosexual stereotypes and heterosexual normality within rugby, cricket and netball.

6.2 Perceptions of Femininity and the Lesbian Stereotype

6.2.1 Introduction

This section deals directly with how sportswomen perceive their own femininity. This may occur through the reflection of their own sporting activities and social practices in addition to recognising how other people view them. Here femininity is described as the expression of 'being a woman' determined by the individual in question. Just as "masculinity' does not exist except in contrast with 'femininity'" (Connell, 1995 p.68), femininity would not exist except in contrast to masculinity. There is a recognition that what femininity might mean to a researcher, rugby player, cricketer or netballer might be unique to each group. It was an aim of this study to allow the respondents to determine the definition of their own femininity in relation to their

sporting and life experiences. This may signal traditional notions of acceptable behaviour for women or identify alternative ways of conveying who and what they can achieve as women. It could also refer to the way in which women's physicality has been interpreted and presented as passive and weak by male hegemony (Sabo & Messner, 1993). The section is predominately concerned with the development of the lesbian stereotype within women's sport and assesses the impact this may have on their participation and enjoyment. The relationship between physical power and the assumption of being 'butch' is examined, as well as why many women feel they have to justify their choice of sport. This section acknowledges how and why stereotypical images of rugby players, cricketers and netballers develop, and as such is greatly informed by both social constructionism and feminism. Similarly, how and why governing bodies are seeking to alter that image is also explored. The reluctance of some male participants to accept women within their sport domain may highlight the relationship between perceptions of physical ability and the subsequent value of women as sport participants. The section continues with an examination of how this might influence the development of homosexual labels within a sport environment.

6.2.2 The development of the lesbian stereotype

There has been much written concerning the development of the lesbian stereotype of women in sport (Griffin, 1992; Halbert, 1997; Jefferson Lenskyj, 1994; Krane, 1996, 1998; Veri, 1999; Wright & Clarke, 1999; Young, 1997). The focus of such direct labelling stems from the acceptance or rejection of women's participation in traditionally male activities such as rugby, boxing and wrestling. It is clear that the level of physical power these women need to play such sports does not reflect the hegemonic masculinity of Western societies in which women are regarded as passive

and weak and men as strong and powerful (Sabo & Messner, 1993). Sport is regarded as a male preserve (Dunning, 1994), an area in which images of ideal masculinity are constructed and promoted (Connell, 1987). From investigating women in three sports that differ in levels of physicality and social acceptance it is clear that the lesbian stereotype exists regardless of sport choice. What does differ, however, is how and why these stereotypes develop within each sporting community. For rugby players the most striking aspect of the labelling process begins and ends in the physicality of the sport and the assumption that muscles equals lesbianism. Suzie, a rugby player in a strong premier club noted how perceptions of muscular women are fixed by the strong link to masculinity and 'butch' women. Women with muscle definition are considered a novelty and treated with surprise. This leads to a discussion about what this 'statement' could possibly mean for the woman she describes. She does, however, recognise that this perception exists both within and outside of the rugby playing community:

...the number of people that have said 'who's that girl with the muscles?'...at work probably about half a dozen people have...noticed because she is particularly muscly and particularly defined and...I mean nobody's sort of really said it negatively but...they were surprised because she is, y'know well she has got a lot of definition... I think the main thing that it is like associated with lesbianism but, y'know people automatically assume women rugby players 'oh you must be butch and a lesbian' (laugh) more than the muscly thing really...I think people who don't know anything about rugby think...you must be butch and you must be lesbian and people who know about women's rugby think you must be fairly fit and you must be gay (laugh) (Suzie : Rugby)

For rugby women in general there does tend to be a strong connection made between lesbianism and the display of power and in this particular instance the open display of a muscular body. The explanation provided by others is that this is a result of or a development from her lesbianism. Whether or not this is true does not really matter,

her sexuality exhibited through the display of physical prowess and control poses a threat to both women and men. Suzie's sexuality is assumed either because she is physical or because she is a rugby player. Choi (2000) points to the threat of over developed muscularity and the fear of appearing unfeminine in her work on female bodybuilders. Here unfeminine equates with lesbianism. Research on other sports, including football (Kolnes, 1995) and boxing (Halbert, 1997), also indicate a similar perceptual relationship between women's physical expressions, the assumptions of unfeminine behaviour and the short leap to lesbian definitions. Veri (1999) points to the definition of the female athlete as deviant because of its open defiance of the discipline of femininity. Any transgression from the traditional ideals of what the feminine body should be doing labels itself as deviant, masculine and thus homosexual. In terms of social constructionist thought, the shared vocabularies of society, which determine that women should not be muscular, judge women who are and classify them as deviant. The danger lies in the internalisation of such labels, whereby the identities of women who are muscular become spoiled through this classification process (Goffman, 1968). This can be more clearly seen in the classification of talent by women in section 6.3.2, 'Playing women's sport with male standards'.

Rhonda, a rugby player, attempts to explain how such perceptions are exacerbated through recalling how some women fail to understand why she chose to play rugby in the first place. It is as if rugby women have to provide a justification for playing and being successful in their sport in order to quell the fears of outsiders:

The women tend to knock you by typecasting you but never actually speaking to you, they all tend to be very loud and also have done no sport in their life so they can't understand why we would want to play. They think you're either after their boyfriend or that you're gay

Kate: and which is worse for them?
exactly do they think I'm after their boyfriends or after them? I don't think so! Perhaps if they label you it's easier to understand that you want to behave as you do. It's all generally snide remarks and appears to be that the root of their jealousy lies in that we have that camaraderie of being in a team that's really close and they don't have that. We all get on really well and have no bitching and a good time without having to have men around or other people (Rhonda : Rugby)

Rhonda clearly describes one of the key factors in the development of lesbian stereotypes in rugby, that is women outside of the sport failing to understand why she would choose to play. These women and men formulate ulterior motives in an attempt to justify to themselves that they are right to not play rugby. The result is a mismatch between recognising the sport as an enjoyable activity, which allows physical expression against an opponent, and the restrictive perceptions that all women who are fit or muscular must be lesbian. Cath, a cricketer recognises this link between power and lesbianism not as an indicator of women cricketers' lesbianism but as a more general statement about women in sport. Her explanation is insightful because it defines what it is about an athletic performance that makes women and men question a sportswoman's sexuality in the first place. Of course there is rarely a discussion about the validity or right that these questioners have in pursuing this line, it is as if this is, and should be, a natural approach to viewing women's sport. Here Cath is referring to the French tennis player Amélie Mauresmo:

...take for example the fuss there was over the French girl...last year..y'know people openly know that there are a lot of gay tennis players and don't talk about it at all, but the minute someone appears on the...court looking powerful...and that was what people got, y'know about the size of her arms...her sexuality suddenly became a huge issue whereas nobody really asks...about the others who look more petite, so here again you have a women who is strong...who is competitive, who is aggressive...and people immediately want to talk about who she prefers to sleep with (Cath : Cricket)

?

The influence of the media in the development and maintenance of the lesbian stereotype in sport is demonstrated through the trivialisation and marginalisation of women's sporting experiences (Griffin, 1992; Jefferson Lenskyj, 1998; Koivula, 1999; Pirinen, 1997; Wright & Clarke, 1999). In general men have been portrayed as active, strong and competent, with female athletes the emphasis has been on heterosexual attractiveness. There appears to be a strong resistance by the media to present athletic women as athletes without first identifying them as either acceptably feminine or dangerous deviants. What occurs through this 'symbolic annihilation' (Jefferson Lenskyj, 1998) is the exclusion of female talent as worthy with attention being directed to her sexuality. It would have been difficult to consider the complex relationship between perceptions of sexuality, physicality and social presentation without the use of interviews. As highlighted at the end of Chapter 5, the interviews allowed for a far greater exploration into very complicated dynamics.

6.2.3 Intrusion into male domain

For some respondents an explanation of the assumption of homosexuality through playing sport rests on male resentment of women's participation in 'their' activity. Clare recalls how her participation in cricket at school resulted in a wealth of verbal and physical abuse from her male peers because she had intruded on their sporting space. This continued into adulthood with male competitors in mixed cricket teams attempting to mock her performance through any means:

I did experience those sorts of comments playing cricket, even at that age...but not [for] any other sport that I played for school...because it's threatening isn't it? It's got to be, I couldn't explain it no other ways...they've got to find it threatening...that I was good at a sport that is allegedly just for them...I mean I avoid the situation I just don't play mixed games and haven't done for several years...I have found people, other blokes abusive and offensive, whether it be about umm

sexuality or...just the standard of cricket...it makes no difference
really (Clare : Cricket)

Her experience of male prejudice continues to influence her participation in certain activities demonstrating, perhaps, an inevitable acceptance of this form of abuse taking place and a wish to distance herself from future encounters. What this indicates is how fear of women's success in sport is utilised by men to justify their ridicule of female performance and to suggest that women do not have the physical or psychological capacity to play in a sport dominated by men (Young, 1997). Young (1997) also points to the transparency of such male attitudes towards women in sport and one which women actively resisted by developing alternative competitive philosophies. Taken to an extreme, Halbert (1997) notes the tension exhibited between men and women boxers when it comes to sparring practice. In order to demonstrate their physical superiority and to express their unhappiness at the female intrusion into their 'world' female boxers recall beatings received at the hands of more experienced men. This was regarded as an attempt by the men to persuade women that they did not belong in that environment. Young (1997) found similar findings with his work with female participants in rugby, ice hockey, wrestling, mountain climbing and martial arts.

Wright and Clarke (1999) further demonstrate this point by highlighting the media's rationalisation of women's participation in rugby by confirming to (male) readers that these women are not making any (feminist) statement. Rather they are playing because of a love and appreciation of the sport. This justification is rarely, if ever, given or deemed necessary when discussing male participation in rugby or any other physically demanding sport.

6.2.4 Sportswomen and sexuality

When discussing sexuality it is clear that the lesbian stereotype is prominent, but it would be inappropriate to continue this discussion without recognising that for the netballers there was an indication of being perceived as both gay and straight. These assumptions were based on two different principles. The first being that all women together will ultimately become or are lesbians, and the second being that netballers were 'up for a good time' with men. Considering that netball is one of most stereotypically feminine activities, because only women play it competitively in the UK, it was surprising at first to note that the lesbian label was as prominent in this sport as in many others that women play. Nanette noted that the perception of netballers as lesbians rests solely on the fact that it was women being together that brought this about:

blokes think there's...a lot of queers as well in the game

Kate: in netball?

yeah because it's all women (Nanette : Netball)

Taking this explanation to its natural conclusion, it would appear that women are regarded as lesbian purely on the basis of physical activity rather than as a consequence of participation in 'male' sports such as rugby and cricket. This could reflect wider assumptions that women who are together for any length of time regardless of activity are seen as lesbian, for example, in the case of female prisoners. Here the explanation does not depend on the level of physicality needed to play a sport but merely the fact that women are playing it. The phrase 'damned if you do and damned if you don't' comes to mind when trying to reconcile female participation in sport and physical activity.

2

On the other hand many netballers discussed the perception of their sexuality by men as reflecting a heterosexual ideal of women, one which focused the women's attention back onto men. Nicki recalls that the expected behaviour of netballers, especially at university, was one of overt heterosexual activity in the pursuit of men:

I think y'know if you talk to people and you say oh you're in a netball team, especially blokes are like 'oh the netball team hey you're up for a good time aren't you'...sort of thing, y'know also the social side...drinking lots and I don't know...sort of certain games going on...y'know having competitions on how many blokes you can pull or stuff like that (Nicki : Netball)

This contrasts sharply, however, with the team identity of netballers discussed in Chapter 5, where we saw that the uniqueness of netball social activities were that they were not focused on the pursuit of men. It is clear that the male perceptions noted here reflect deep-seated fears of being ignored when women develop friendships, as demonstrated by the netballers. There is support for this perception of the female athlete as sexualised object in research relating to the marginalisation of women's sport and the trivialisation of their performances by media reporters (Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988; Griffin, 1992; Jefferson Lenskyj, 1998; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Wright & Clarke, 1999). This does, however, relate mainly to those women in sports deemed as appropriate to female participation, women in traditional male activities suffer from a similar sexualisation but one which focuses on their potential lesbianism.

6.2.5 Justifying participation and the inevitability of the lesbian label

Having to justify participation in an activity considered to be inappropriate by others can also bring an insight into how and why definitions of femininity are constructed. There is a strong link made with the issue of participation in sport as equalling a

statement about one's life, as alluded to earlier in this chapter (section 6.2.3) and in Chapter 5. What is also important to recognise is how the accusers attempt to qualify women's participation on grounds other than the physical enjoyment of the game. Sue describes how she found men and women to be different in their pursuit of understanding of why she wanted to play rugby. This illustrates once again the need for those who are inquisitive to find an answer that is most reconcilable to them:

...men tend to be a bit more...suspicious because you've entered into that male territory...and want you to prove that you know what you're talking about, y'know...they say stupid things that piss me right off like 'do you do tackling?'...'do you play for 40 minutes each way?' and stuff like that...on the whole women tend to...look in a typical female way, not to be generalist...women are thinking what's your real reason, yeah what's your real motivation, do you play rugby because you want to be one...of the, y'know the rugby girl entourage?
(Sue : Rugby)

Having to face such prejudice and constant examination of motives it is not surprising that some women prefer not to discuss their sporting activities within certain gatherings. Ultimately she stays firmly 'in the closet'. One cricketer, Denise, comments on how her International status can be used as a way to diffuse the assumptions placed on her participation:

...sometimes I don't always bring it into the conversation...because, I don't know it sort of still gets frowned upon...just like football and rugby, like a masculine sport and it seems bizarre that women actually play it...but I think because I've done quite well in the sport people accept me more. I've played representative cricket and, y'know played at national level I think they tend to respect me more and...think 'wow an international!' or something...but I think if...I just played like recreationally or something I'd get, y'know...well masculine...like rough aggressive type sort of...and say 'oh you play women's cricket you must be a lesbian (Denise : Cricket)

Similar findings have come from work investigating the experiences of female wrestlers (Sisjord, 1997). When meeting new people participation in wrestling was hidden by both the wrestler and her family, focusing instead on other activities, such

as horse riding, that was considered more appropriate. It has been suggested by attributions research, (e.g. Jones & Davis, 1965; Lau & Russell, 1980; Weiner, 1985), that individuals tend to look for reasons or causes for unexpected events more than for expected events. So, for example, when Manchester United lose a game there are more questions and discussions than if Coventry City lose a game. Similarly, it would seem that people question why women play rugby much more so than they question why men play rugby, and subsequently female rugby players/cricketers more so than female netballers. No one is surprised that men play rugby or cricket or that women play netball. The fact that these women are constantly expected to justify their participation shows that people believe it to be an unexpected activity, which in turn reflects on stereotype formation and maintenance. The exclusion of an activity, which comes to mean so much to these athletes, must have an impact on the development of their sporting identity. It certainly demonstrates the ability of Denise to reconstruct her identity depending on the situation she is in at any given time. For Denise being an International player justified her participation when talking to men. When talking to other sportswomen her self-presentation may well focus on her team-mates and enjoyment of cricket rather than on 'proving' her ability. Demonstrating an undeniable level of expertise or fitness within a sporting activity deemed appropriate for men has been one avenue through which women have gained acceptance, albeit a reluctant acceptance (Halbert, 1997). This limited acceptance of sporting excellence remains the sole domain of female athletes. None of the respondents could recall a male athlete having to prove himself in a training session.

Throughout all the interviews there was an acknowledgement of the lesbian label within their own and other sports but also a realisation that the more physical contact

was involved the greater the assumption of lesbianism. This was particularly evident for both the netballers and cricketers in an acceptance that if they played rugby or football the perception of lesbianism would increase. Mary discusses this point when considering whether to start playing rugby at her local club and the reasons behind her reluctance to do so:

I suppose if anything people look upon netball as being more of a feminine sport rather than..some of the other sports which, especially the rugby and football which are typically male sports...I would be very interested in umm giving rugby a go...but when I was trying to find out if there was one in XXX I found it quite difficult to talk to people to say that...I was interested because I suppose in my..in one way I have always had this concept that rugby is a male thing and...if I was asking about it then I'd be looked at [differently]..so I suppose in a way I have got that sort of umm perception of what is a man's sport and what is a woman's sport...whereas I'm quite happy to say to somebody 'oh yeah love netball, play it a lot, very keen netballer' umm if I sort of said 'well, y'know I play rugby', then it would be a case of 'oh right yeah'...that's the assumption I've got...but I would, y'know feel as if I had to justify why I played it...whereas I don't feel I have to justify why I play netball (Mary : Netball)

For some of the women interviewed this was a difficult issue to reconcile because they wanted to play any sport they chose but were aware that by doing so they would attract certain sexual associations. All three sports attested to the inevitability of the questioning of their sexuality because of their participation, confirming similar findings with other sportswomen (Young, 1997). Although there is an acknowledgement that there are gay women who play rugby, cricket, football, tennis, netball, swimming and just about any other sport you could mention, there was also a strong feeling of having to explain and rationalise why this was so. In particular, it was only heterosexual women who commented most on this topic. This suggests that even when rejecting traditional ideals of acceptable behaviour, by choosing to play rugby or cricket, these women were still struggling to accept that there were gay women in their teams. More than any other topic of discussion in this thesis, the

identification of sportswomen with the lesbian label suggests the strength of the social processes that direct our understanding of sporting experiences. Rather than just playing the game they were attempting to rationalise why this was happening, in doing so identifying their own prejudices. Griffin (1992) highlights the nonsensical nature of trying to ascertain the number of lesbians within sport. For her "women in sport must come to understand that it wouldn't matter if there were no lesbians in sport. The lesbian label would still be used to intimidate and control women's athletics" (p.260). For Griffin, the real question that needs addressing is why women are subject to such analysis in the first place. Only by examining those motives will the prejudices faced by women in sport be tackled.

In a number of interviews the sportswomen tried to clarify for me how and why the lesbian stereotype was so rife. It appeared that they felt obliged to explain this to me because of the actual number of gay women who played these sports. Cath, a cricketer spent a great deal of time trying to intellectualise why there were a large number of gay women in her sport in an attempt to reconcile it for herself and explain it to me:

you can put cricket and hockey on a par...I mean if you're a cricket player and a hockey player you're as good as..as far as most people are concerned...or rugby, it's exactly the same, or even football, y'know the major men's sports, hockey aside...are seen as being women who want to prove something, who are out to be tougher than everybody else...the irony is there are a phenomenally large number...of gay women who play those sports...the only conclusion I can come to is because generally I would argue there are a lot of gay women who take a lot of pride or enjoyment in being physically fit, are...almost more in control of their body...not as a, I don't know a signal for sex in that sense...but more a kind of just of feeling it being fit, or powerful, or being able to do something umm that I would argue a lot of straight women aren't able to do...a pride in...yourself umm and also...y'know being gay, therefore, you're on the fringes of society, therefore, you form a team and so on and so forth (Cath : Cricket)

It was clear from such a statement that Cath had thought about this issue a great deal in an attempt to resolve the dilemma for herself, but her point about pride in physical appearance as not related to a sex signal was an interesting comment. There is some evidence to suggest that lesbian women differ from heterosexual women on levels of body image (Striegel-Moore, Tucker & Hsu, 1990). Striegel-Moore et al provide an explanation of this in that the lesbians do not have to appeal to the heterosexual ideal of attractiveness. Gay women may be rejecting traditional notions of acceptable physical appearance in addition to the rejection of traditional sexual relationships. Studies comparing lesbian and heterosexual women tend to support this view. Lesbian women were found to be significantly heavier than heterosexual women and preferred larger physiques. This was combined with a greater satisfaction of their bodies and less concern about their physical appearance (Brand, Rothblum & Solomon, 1992; Herzog et al., 1992; Siever, 1994). Whereas for women in heterosexual and men in homosexual encounters the display and maintenance of a certain image is valued in terms of a sexual signal (Brand et al., 1992; Silberstein et al., 1988), Cath felt that this would not be so for lesbian couples. The research up until this point tends to confirm this hypothesis. There is no reason to suggest that the pursuit of a mate for lesbian women would not be associated with physical attraction any less so because of their sexual orientation it may simply be in a different way than that which appeals to heterosexual men. It is not possible to infer from the research presented here if a similar relationship occurred because there is no way to determine how many gay women took part in the interviews. Future work could seek to identify just gay women in each of these sports to investigate the relationship between sport choice, body image construction and sexual orientation further.

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6.2.6 Changing the lesbian image

In considering the prevalence of the lesbian stereotype within women's sport there appears to be a clear directive concerning a change of image. One factor involved may well be as a result of government funding for these sports and the subsequent movement towards a more professional and marketable image. There is certainly an undercurrent, however, of moving towards what Griffin (1992) describes as the heterosexualisation of women's sport. Femininity serves as a code word for heterosexuality especially within the domain of sport. She states that:

...the underlying fear is not that a female athlete or coach will appear too plain or out of style, the real fear is that she will look like a dyke or, even worse, is one. This intense blend of homophobic and sexist standards of feminine attractiveness remind women in sport that to be acceptable, we must monitor our behaviour and appearance at all times (Griffin, 1992, p. 254)

In rugby there was an appreciation of how the physical qualities required of a female rugby player were changing due to the increase in standards throughout the world. Women were having to be far fitter, stronger and more athletic than in previous years. A number of the women remarked that the image of the 'lardy' prop that trundled from one point on the pitch to the next was long gone. For the cricketers there was also a real sense that the image was being changed, directed by a need to rid the game of the lesbian ticket. Both Denise and Danny talked about the change in women who joined their clubs and how the 'old style' cricketer as big and butch was being squeezed out. Both saw this as a positive intervention exposing their own assumptions of what a lesbian should look like:

...when I first started there was a lot of that around...it's really..well disappearing from the game, the image has changed so much so, I mean the seniors now there's so many..so many young people, I mean there's people married, engaged, having babies and stuff...and taking time out for the pregnancy and things like that and I think that's

much..I'd rather they did that then, I think the image is getting a lot better now (Denise : Cricket)

...well I think there's like sort of lesbianism around and...y'know sort of butch and sort bigger women, short hair that sort of image but I think now as well..we're coming through, that's sort of filtering out because of the fitness side and everything you don't so much get the bigger larger women now it's more of like sort of fitter...I don't know if it's cricket that attracts lesbianism or lesbianism that attract cricket...I think maybe to play sport you have to be, y'know hard, bigger and y'know physically fit. I don't know why you have to be gay...I don't even now where I got the image from (laugh)...and hockey players as well, I have an image of a..just really any female sport. I mean netball I wouldn't think because sort of feminine...like you wear a skirt (Danny : Cricket)

What is evident from such comments is the process of victim blaming that occurs within some sports suggesting that it is the women themselves that are hurting their sports because of the image they present (Halbert, 1997). Danny's comment is also interesting because in her definition of what it is to be feminine she uses the symbol of the skirt as a way to identify netballers as more feminine than cricketers. The irony being that female cricketers have always worn skirts until recently. Clearly this symbol of femininity is not transferred to women who play cricket but it clearly demonstrates how some female cricketers perceive the lesbian label. The considerations made over whether to wear trousers instead of skirts is discussed in greater detail later within section 6.4, 'Skirts or Trousers', but it is worthy of note at this stage because of the pervasiveness of the lesbian stereotype and the barriers to any change of that stereotype. These two cricketers, who were among the youngest interviewed, wanted to see a move towards a more acceptable heterosexual image, whereby women who played had children and got married.

The need to change the image of female cricketers is reflected in the wider discussion of how sport is promoted and who is considered to be a marketable product. Kolnes

(1995) points to the development of sexualised sportswear and how a women's sexuality can be openly displayed. She highlights the case of Florence Griffith-Joyner as the ultimate exponent of sexual presentation. Duncan's (1990) analysis of Griffith-Joyner's media coverage in the 1988 Seoul Olympics describes how her clothes, make-up and sexual attractiveness were discussed at every opportunity rather than highlighting her athletic abilities. Sponsorship in elite sport promotes the use of sexualised images and in doing so directs the athlete to appear in such a way that emphasises this aspect (Kolnes, 1995). Women both confirm and accept that they have to display their heterosexual attractiveness or fail to secure sponsorship to compete. Halbert (1997) noted explicitly this dilemma for the female boxers in her work and identifies how those women who appear more 'feminine' (i.e. heterosexually attractive) are more likely to receive backing from promoters. Both Halbert and Kolnes note how women can become complicit in this form of sexism. One boxer refers to the need to rid the sport of those women who appear like men or feel they can compete with the men in favour of more traditionally accepted displays of femininity. Halbert refers to this as 'internalised belief' of so-called 'appropriate' behaviour.

Taking this into consideration it is clear that women in many sports deemed inappropriate, either on the basis of physicality or social acceptability, are fully aware of the stereotypes in place. This fully supports Goffman's (1963) notion of the hierarchy of body idioms that individuals embrace and use to judge themselves and others. The women within these sports recognise those physical characteristics that are valued above others and use those to determine 'appropriate' sporting appearance. Cricketers are recognising that in order to appear convincing in their role as athlete,

they need to observe the corporeal rules which govern these encounters (Goffman, 1963). Griffin (1992) goes further to suggest that by becoming active in the process of trying to change the image of some women's sports, women are taking an active role in the continuation of such stereotypes. She argues "the energy expended in making lesbians invisible and projecting a happy heterosexual image keeps women in sport fighting among ourselves rather than confronting the heterosexism and sexism that our responses unintentionally serve" (pp. 260-261).

6.2.7 Lesbianism as a positive?

Not all women found the presence of lesbians to be such a negative experience. For some the assumption that there might be gay women within a sport team provided a way into a social scene that suited them. Sue recognised that her particular rugby team had a large number of gay women within it, but this was seen as a positive attribute. Here there was an existent social environment where it was safe to be 'out' and which provided a friendship network based on similar life styles:

I think there's a lot of people as well who come into it because it is predominantly gay, it is..the social life is really important and I also think the extension of that is a lot of people they find..if they are gay they find an identity there because it's..it's a scene (Sue : Rugby)

For many women having a recognised or known assumption about the presence of gay women in sport can result in a positive experience through membership. Having a safe environment in which to express your sexuality was very empowering for these women. Many discussed the ways in which the team provided opportunities for acceptance and recognition as a gay woman within sport. Jefferson Lenskyj (1994) highlights the potential for positive experience through her investigation of the Notso Amazon Softball league in Toronto. Here the women-only recreational league

provided an avenue for lesbian and lesbian-friendly women to gather together and share their love of sport. This ultimately provided an avenue for social support, friendship development and partner finding. Sue went on to reflect on her position within her rugby team as the sole heterosexual. She describes how being 'different' from the other members of the group was a good experience as it set her almost as a mascot for the team:

...before I moved here it was kind of a standing joke that I was like the only straight lesbian within my circle...I suppose I mean to be quite honest with you I did enjoy being the only sort of straight girl in a bunch of lesbians when we used to go out...I enjoyed that, being a bit different but that wasn't to do with rugby that was to do with...the whole lesbian thing...everybody else said I was a 'wannabe'...and the funniest thing that ever happened to me at rugby was coming out as straight to one of the girls...I said something about some bloke or whatever and...she turned around to me in the pub and said 'what you're straight?' and I said...'yeah' and she said 'oh God I never knew' (laugh) and I was like huhhh I said 'I live in a parallel universe!' (laugh) (Sue : Rugby)

For Sue's peers the acknowledgement of being gay within the team was so great that anything else was considered unique and curious. It is interesting to note here the reversal of assumptions, which points to how many women within rugby have accepted and embraced the lesbian image. Here it is valued and utilised to develop team identity and membership. This confirms Jefferson Lenskyj's (1994) work on women's softball whereby sexuality is openly displayed and accepted demonstrating how and why such sports are so successful.

Following this positive interpretation of the lesbian stereotype in rugby by the women players it is also important to recognise that this is not a generic reflection. For some rugby women the open display of their sexuality was damaging the game, as in cricket, and used as a source of resentment and suspicion within the higher ranks of

female sport. Suzie reflects on the prevalence of gay women within rugby and in particular the England rugby structure as potentially dangerous for newcomers to the sport. It is difficult to ascertain whether her perceptions are based on actual knowledge or fear of the potential damage this could cause:

I don't know but I think there is a certain amount of almost...peer pressure I think as well on some of the like the really...established players who umm the sort of older and the real, y'know stalwarts of the England team who are..who are gay perhaps..perhaps there is that pressure on..on younger players coming in and things like that and but I mean that doesn't explain why it's through all..all sorts of teams (Suzie : Rugby)

Once more we find that there is a need to explain and justify in some way why there are such a large number of gay women within certain sports. This remark does perhaps allude to the idea of the predatory lesbian seeking out the naive and vulnerable. Griffin (1992) discusses the use of this notion as an attempt by the heterosexual majority to prevent young women from participating in sporting activities. This assumption was clearly identified in 1994 when Denise Annetts had been dropped from the Australian women's cricket team. She alleged that her sacking was due to her heterosexual preference and marital status (Burroughs et al., 1995). Although never proven the speculation provided an avenue for rumours to abound concerning the sexual preference of all the women within the cricket team. Incidents such as these only serve to question the sexuality of any athlete in a traditionally male dominated sport.

It is clear from the rugby and cricket women in this study that the majority who watch and participate in those sports perceive the assumption of homosexuality negatively. For cricketers, in particular, there is an acceptance of the need to change the image in order to promote the sport to younger women and rid the game of the older more

'butch' woman. The demarcation of the lesbian stereotype is demonstrated clearly when discussing the perceptions of netballers as lesbian. For the women interviewed there was a recognition of the presence of the stereotype of them as gay because they were 'all women together', the perception, however, of this was very different to that focused on the rugby players and cricketers. Here the perception of lesbianism within netball had a more positive association for male observers because it appealed to their own heterosexual ideals of sexual fantasy. Nicola notes how the men she talked to were fascinated by the prospect of there being gay women within netball because it fitted a heterosexual fantasy of the 'lipstick lesbian' who would perform for their pleasure:

...from men one of the things they probably think, they're hoping that you're either going to be gay, whether there's a lot of gays or whatever lesbians would be in that sport because it's an all female sport

Kate: even in netball?

because it's a female sport, they think straight away they think 'oh right'...but they..I think they like to imagine, y'know 'cos it's one of their fantasies (Nicola : Netball)

It would appear that the presence of gay women in netball is more acceptable than in rugby and cricket if they are regarded as attractive in a heterosexual framework. This would mean that they were subsequently open, therefore, for sexual appreciation and objectification. We find further explanation of this phenomenon in the work of Maria Veri. Veri (1999) notes how the male heterosexual gaze is uninterrupted when athletes participate in sports traditionally reserved for women (e.g. figure skating, gymnastics and netball). Here the female athlete is still able to be objectified as a sexual object because she has not removed herself from what Veri calls 'compulsory heterovisuality'. This supports the notion that when women do participate in activities which are more masculine (e.g. rugby, cricket or football) the gaze, which holds her as sex object and not athlete, is disrupted. When questioned further about why this

fascination and acceptance of netballers as gay was so evident, Nicola tried to place the explanation within the perception of netball as a traditionally 'girly' sport, i.e. that it was played solely at school:

...yeah I think so definitely back to school, sometimes even blokes if they're not..not really sporty they relate to it, big black knickers again...y'know 'oh great I love seeing netballers' (Nicola : Netball)

The connection of a sexually attractive woman playing netball to a school girl is quite disturbing. It is not to say that all men perceive netballers as sexually available and are attracted to the idea of young girls running around in short skirts, but it is certainly the impression that many older women who play netball do have about male observers.

Social constructionism has helped to identify the ways in which dominant body stories are created (Sparkes, 1997) and how the shared vocabularies of society (Goffman, 1963) determine what is and is not acceptable physical appearance. This has strong consequences on the development of the lesbian stereotype because, based on these vocabularies, many muscular women are deemed physically 'unacceptable' and so labelled as deviant and lesbian. By transgressing the established boundaries of acceptable physical behaviour women are punished (Foucault, 1977) and the meanings attributed to their bodies become determined by society. In addition, the way in which women construct and reconstruct their identities becomes based on the social situation they find themselves in at any one time.

It is difficult at this stage not to highlight, once again, the benefit of having an interview-based investigation on the development of the perceptions of sexuality. This issue is particularly well suited to this type of method because it allows the respondent

the freedom to explore how their own perceptions have developed through and outside their sporting experiences. It is clear that there is a great deal more scope for future work in the area of sexuality and acceptable expressions of appearance. What follows is an consideration of how perceptions of physical ability are constructed and maintained.

6.3 Physical Capabilities

6.3.1 Introduction

In addition to the use of sexuality to define a woman's femininity, the women interviewed suggested that the perception of their physical ability also played a leading role. A distinction was made between an observers' perception of the physical qualities needed to participate in each sport and those of the participant herself. Additionally, these perceptions were supported by the acceptance by many of the women of the limitations of their physical abilities, and were, at times, disappointing. Some of the interpretations made on the interview material within this section is strongly related to the work previously undertaken in Chapter 5, 'Sporting Identity'. With this in mind what follows is an exploration into a number of the assumptions and values attached to women playing rugby, cricket and netball in particular and sport in general.

6.3.2 Playing women's sport with male standards

As referred to previously in this chapter (section 6.2.7, 'Lesbian as a positive?') and in Chapter 5 the strongest assumptions made in relation to the physical qualities needed to play netball were based on its associations as a school sport. This indicated

to those who described it as such that it was a poor imitation of basketball and a sport played by those who were not as physically able:

...men find that netball is a sissy sport, it's...they're not good enough to play basketball, it's a big comparison with basketball... 'what's the point in netball you can't run with it, you can't bounce it, you can't move with the ball'...and I think that they just think it's for people that aren't good enough to play basketball (Nancy : Netball)

This has dramatic implications on the value of netball as a sport and infers that as only women (generally speaking) play netball, women's sport is inferior to that of men's. This confirms other work in women's sport that suggests that male performance is used as a yardstick from which all other sports are rated (Hall, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994; Messner, 1988; Pirinen, 1997). Through this process male superiority is confirmed and supported whilst female performance is apologised for and ridiculed.

For rugby players, there does appear to be a connection between perceptions of ability and the level of physicality needed to participate in the sport. For many observers the disbelief in women's participation was based on the notion that they were never big enough or tough enough to compete. Ruth describes how people's perception of the female rugby player as big and butch constantly reflects their surprise at her involvement:

I think probably externally there were a lot of assumptions...like I said, I mean when I was talking about playing everybody was like 'oh you can't play you're too small, you'll just get broken'...y'know I think people who, mainly I guess people who have no contacts at all with women's rugby...think that everybody's very big and very strong and very macho (Ruth : Rugby)

There is little in the way of comparative literature that supports this example of female experience. What is available suggests that women in sports that require a high level of physical contact, such as boxing, found similar surprise at participation,

particularly if the woman concerned was defined as stereotypically 'feminine' (Halbert, 1997). Halbert describes the marketing situation in women's boxing whereby appearing more feminine would result in more fights. Here there is only one dimension of femininity ultimately meaning 'not manlike' which prevents any other possible expression of femininity. Being regarded as feminine by male observers and promoters produces a clash with what Halbert calls 'heterosexist logic'. This asserts that women who participate in the masculine sport of boxing must themselves not be feminine. This correlates strongly with the dynamics of women's rugby when women who appeal to male heterosexual ideals of attractiveness elicit surprise by those watching, and more so if they are talented. What is clear, however, is that these remarks do not reflect the experiences of women who play those sports. As found with female bodybuilders (Marsh & Jackson, 1986) perceptions of their own femininity are no less so because of their sports participation. Clearly the women who are actively involved in these sports are able to develop multidimensional constructs of femininity and ones which do not rely on restrictive codes of acceptable heterosexual identities.

The other major assumption described by Rhonda was one that indicates the lack of recognition of women's rugby as a sport which requires the same level of commitment and physical talent as their male counterparts. As an International rugby player she met incredulity about her position within the team and the talents of her team-mates:

...you have those who just take the piss about it and assume that there must only be about 30 women who play rugby in the whole of England, that's especially with the men and I think that's just an ego thing, that I play for England and they have no way of ever getting close to that. By dissing¹⁴ you it makes them feel like they can sit on

¹⁴ Dissing refers to the process of 'putting down' or talking negatively about another person's personality or attributes

their arse with a better feeling than before and still do nothing about it
(Rhonda : Rugby)

Rhonda discussed previously how women's perceptions of the reasons behind her participation were based on the need to fulfil some ulterior motive. Now she faced opposition from men on the basis that her inclusion in the national team was as a result of lack of choice by the selectors. In this and other incidences it is clear that the fear and resentment of women's participation in sport acts as a strong motive in the dissent of men. What is perhaps more worrying is how the women who play the sport also contribute to the perception of the physical differences between women and men in the sport. Rebecca notes how women and men's rugby is different due to the level of physical contact involved and argues for the separateness of them on that basis. Her remark had a sense of apology to it because of her comparison of women's rugby to that of men's. This perpetuation of the value of men's rugby as the 'real' sport tends to detract away from the immensity of the physical qualities needed to play rugby in the first place. Regardless of whether a male rugby player could hit harder or run faster on occasions should not influence how these women come to see their performance and yet it does. This indicates how strongly the hegemony of male superiority in sport intrudes on an otherwise separate field:

I don't think that a woman could ever compete, well I mean Gill Burns is better than a lot of male rugby players that I know, but I still don't think as a team we could compete in all those aspects and be as...good as a male team, I would hate to see umm England women play against England men...I mean it's just, it's totally different, it's 2 totally different games because of the physicalities of it really (Rebecca : Rugby)

It is clear that there is an acceptance of the male version of the game as more legitimate than the women's, which subsequently relegates women's rugby to second place. In a similar vein a number of the cricketers interviewed also apologised for

their performances. Clare recognised that the main difference for her was in the level of power utilised by women and men. Her acceptance of valuing cricket in this way deters the listener from the second part of her remark in which women are exalted for their superior technical abilities. Power over skill tends to be one of the main considerations in valuing women and men's sports differently but it is still the authority of power that supersedes the many talents women cricketers demonstrate:

...if you were to have a look at the men's game of cricket and the women's game of cricket side by side...you'd find that the men's game is far more exciting to watch because they've, men have got much..much more power...so obviously they..they score more runs and they bowl the ball faster, they throw the ball faster umm whereas if you watch the women's game it is slower, they wont score as many runs but technically the women will be better...‘cos they need the technique, y’know to get the momentum in the shots and..and the throwing in the bowling and stuff...so they are two completely separate games (Clare : Cricket)

Even though there is a recognition that the games are ‘different’ there is but one yard stick by which all performance is judged - the one depicted and embraced by men and subsequently enforced on women in the sport. Wright and Clarke (1999) argue that a comparison to the male game always results in a definition of female sport in terms which reflect hegemonic masculinity. This demonstrates that male performance should be considered the norm (Koivula, 1999) rather than recognising and praising the qualities that make women's sport different.

Danny, a young cricketer goes to the lengths of completely devaluing her talents and performances as an under 19 England player purely on the basis of comparison to her male counterparts. Regardless of the facts that she is an international cricketer and respected by all her team-mates she still feels inferior to her male peers and is

concerned about how her performance could detrimentally effect the image of women's cricket:

I think they...still think that...if you're under 19 women...then you've the same technical ability as an under 19 bloke and that's...wrong. I mean they seem to think...you've got to be as good enough as an under 19 boy which we're not...and that's why I feel a bit uncomfortable telling people because in some ways they do, they think you're good as a boy

Kate: isn't that better than thinking that you're a lot worse than the lads though?

I don't know, if they then have to go and see you play cricket it makes me feel uncomfortable knowing that they think you're going to be really good...and...I don't want to let down women's cricket in a sense for them to see you and think 'oh that's not very good' (Danny : Cricket)

The lack of self confidence presented by Danny was startling. There was a real sense that she felt always compared to, and compared herself to, the men in her age level, never considering the possibility that her technical skills far outweighed the ability of 19 year old boys to hit a four. Messner (1988) points to the 'double-edge sword' of being considered as an outstanding player. On the one hand it "is a compliment to an individual woman's skills, but it also suggests that since she is so good, she must not be a true woman after all" (Messner, 1988, p.205). Considering Danny's perception of the older cricketer as 'big and butch' it is not surprising to find her erring away from being considered an equal to male competitors. Assuming the role of interpreter here Danny could view the situation as follows: being a good sportswoman is to be considered not a real woman (Messner, 1988), which in turn threatens her heterosexual identity, and so infers that she is a lesbian. Her skill level is devalued because she classifies herself in relation to male peers. This subsequent self-classification suggests the development of a spoiled identity, (Goffman, 1968) and internalisation of the 'not as good as a man' label.

If there is only one level of performance, power, it is only a short leap to understand the confusion of many observers at the demonstrations of power by female rugby players. Exhibiting an attribute supposedly set aside for male competitors one rugby player commented on the unanticipated display of fighting within women's rugby. Her work mates were intrigued by the realisation that women did not play touch rugby and amazed by the display of violence:

...the number of times people say, they'll sort of say 'what...you mean you play contact rugby, not..not touch?' and they assume that you play, y'know and you all run around and go (flapping around)...and a chap from work came and he knew that I played and, y'know he came to watch a game and he said he was really surprised at the like the sort of intensity of it

Z¹⁵ : fighting

yeah

Z : I've seen more fights in the women's game than I have in the men's there

well yeah definitely it's worse, I know ten times worse (Suzie : Rugby)

As shown earlier (section 5.4.2, 'Demonstrating and enjoying physical power'), one of the major attractions to rugby many women discussed was the use and display of aggression. There does tend to be a clear gap between what is expected of the women who play these sports and what they are capable of achieving. The surprise at the level of competition played by all women, especially within rugby and cricket was strongly linked to the resentment felt by men when women participated in an activity previously set aside for men alone. Just as in the case of justifying their participation in sport previously discussed, there was an acknowledgement that success at that sport went some way to being accepted. This test was, of course, not a prerequisite of acceptance for the men. Rhiannon, a rugby player recounts an experience she had as a

¹⁵ Z who was Suzie's husband was in the room at the time of the interview and contributed on this point. As it developed Suzie's argument a decision was taken to include his comments.

younger sportswoman which demonstrates how the boys' perception of her changed through the demonstration of her talents:

I was always like playing around with sport mainly with the lads because they liked to play sports all..day basically and umm it was like they were amazed that a girl could be so good at sports if you know what I mean?...and then you did get some kind of recognition and like get called over to come and play...by the boys because you were good and then you get picked for teams by the boys as well...you'd always be picked quite high up because you were good at sports and that was a shock for them to see sort of a girl that could be as good at sport as the boys (Rhiannon : Rugby)

It appears that talent permits the inclusion of women on an honouree basis into the sport world but one which is tested at every opportunity (Halbert, 1997; Young, 1997). This means that if a woman (or girl) can prove to others (men) that she can perform at a reasonable level then she is permitted into 'their' sport world, if only temporarily. It is not clear if the men in their sports were ever challenged in such a manner. Cheryl also recalls an experience at a cricket practice session in which the men were asserting their power over the arena she had dared to intrude upon:

I used to go in the nets and the lads used to bowl and they'd bowl even harder because they can't have a girl knock one of their balls away and play a decent shot to one of their deliveries so they actually they..they play harder with you but I think that created a bit of respect in a way because they saw a girl down..down on the crease, down at the wickets bowling down to them and, y'know this person was actually managing to do something with the ball and I think that sort of thing will...challenge people's image of women's cricket (Cheryl : Cricket)

These demonstrations of power over the female cricketers in that group reflect many of the experiences of women in male-dominated activities, as discussed earlier within the chapter and by other authors (e.g. Halbert, 1997; Sisjord, 1997; Young, 1997). This evidence points to a challenge to male physical superiority in an arena thought solely to be their domain (Messner & Sabo, 1990; Whitson, 1990).

It would appear, therefore, that women are permitted into the realms of sport only on the basis of sporting excellence and not on the equally important motive of the pursuit of fun or new skills. It is apparent that men have no need to prove themselves in this way because they already 'belong to the club'. What is interesting to note here is that there is not the same need to demonstrate skill or power for the netballers. As a sport not valued and played by men there appears to be no necessity to prove physical talent in anyway in order to be accepted. As and when more men choose to play netball it would be an interesting exercise to evaluate how the standards are set and to whom they compare their performance.

6.3.3 Women's ideals of sportswomen

What is important at this stage is to recognise how women within sport also contribute to the exclusion of women who do not fit *their* ideal of what it is to be a sportswoman. In this instance there is a connection once again to the notion of being 'girlie' and therefore no good at that particular sport. One cricketer recalls how shameful it would be to be bowled out by someone she called a 'dolly bowler'. The woman in question was tall, slim, had long blond hair and was not considered to be a serious competitor solely because of her physical appearance. Delia remarks on this in relation to how difficult the game can be and how concentration is needed to avoid such embarrassing moments:

...y'know you've got to face each ball on it's merit, you may have the worse bowler in the world bowling at you but they might just come up with one corker of a ball and it'll get you out and...a lot of that as well is pride because you think 'oh God I've just been out by a dolly bowler', y'know and..and the shame of it (Delia : Cricket)

It is clear that, for this particular cricketer, there is as much fear exhibited by her need to avoid defeat by a 'dolly bowler' as there is for a man to avoid defeat by a 'girl'. For

Delia an exit at the hand of this bowler can only be evaluated through a mocking of her appearance rather than as an acceptance of her superior playing skills. Expectations of physical appearance permeate all levels of the sports presented here and by all competitors. The conflict being to either maintain an image which is appropriate for the sport, or seek one that appeals to potential participants. Whilst there is a recognition of the heterosexist definitions of female sport participants as lesbian there also appears to be an exclusion of women who do not fit that image by the participants themselves. For women within the sport there is a rejection of those they consider to be too feminine: the 'dolly bowlers', the 'mud wrestlers' and the 'Foxee' boxers. This is based not only on the presence of these women as supposed ridiculers of their sport but also in terms of what the female participants consider to be appropriate physical appearance. What is evident is that for these sportswomen there is a conflict between rejecting traditional ideas of acceptable behaviour, demonstrated by their choice of sport, but also in accepting women into their sport who choose to conform to ideals of heterosexual attractiveness. There is an expectation for the 'real' sportswomen to reject traditional ideals of what a woman should look like by simply imposing one set of rules for another. The irony would appear to be that it is at times the women within the sport itself who prevent inclusiveness. It seems to be that women who participate in sport have a very complex view of what femininity means to them and what it should mean to others. This situation suggests that there may well be two sets of body idioms or shared vocabularies, which are used to judge the presentation of the self (Goffman, 1963). On the one hand there are an agreed set of society idioms that are adopted and used to judge others and ourselves. On the other hand there may well be specific sport-based idioms that direct the judgements of sportswomen to either accept or reject a presented physical appearance. The

complicity of some women within these sports in the exclusion and limitation of acceptable appearance is one area which there has been little research in sport psychology/sociology. It is not the purpose here to link the practices of some men and some women in the exclusion of others but it is important to recognise their influence in this process.

6.3.4 War wounds?

One last aspect in relation to the expected physical abilities demonstrated by women in these sports is the accepted display and explanation of bruises and cuts obtained as a result of participation. This was recounted only by the rugby players and does reflect how physical appearance can be manipulated by what is deemed an appropriate activity for women and men. A man can display and promote a black eye as a 'war wound', a badge of honour worn as a prize for bravery. This follows on from the ideal extolled by many male rugby teams of 'no pain no gain' as *the* attribute to have (Schacht, 1996), providing the ultimate demonstration of masculinity (Young & White, 1995). This does not, however, correspond to the response received by women outside of the locker room. Anecdotally I would argue that women rugby players do discuss and compare war wounds after each match and do use this as a symbol of power and toughness as many men do. Outside of this environment, however, this does not occur. Both Suzie and Sue reported that the display of black eyes, bruises and scratches was always assumed to be a consequence of domestic abuse rather than as a sporting outcome:

I mean we..we have had it before when I, I mean I haven't had very many but I had a black eye and people will glare at XXX if we're...together

Z : they presume I've done it

yeah and other girls in the team people have come up to them and said 'y'know you don't have to stay with him if he...does that to you' and

they automatically just assume, y'know the worse (laugh) (Suzie : Rugby)

I had bruises all over my legs one time and they asked me if my boyfriend had been kicking me and I said 'no I play rugby' and the girls were like [shows surprise on face] (Sue : Rugby)

This is an interesting development in terms of what is and what is not an accepted and expected activity for women. Even if these women did not play rugby there was no expectation that an injury of this sort could have been inflicted by any other physical activity bar domestic violence. It is as if domestic violence is a more expected and acceptable behaviour for women to receive bruises from. This is especially evident if we consider domestic violence to be perpetrated on passive 'victims' rather than between co-operating and consenting adults. This normalisation of domestic abuse could be as a result of the increase of awareness of such abuse in our society. Certainly, police forces are recognising the problem of men's violence towards known women as being as serious as other forms of violence (Hearn, 1998). Recent research (<http://www.warwick.ac.uk/news/pr/women/210>) also suggested that children were aware of the common problem of violence within the home. The responsibility placed upon all citizens to recognise and report such behaviour can explain to some extent the reaction of these people. What is significant, however, is how quickly we assume one form of violence over the expectation that women might be pursuing a physically demanding sport.

The final section within this chapter focuses solely on the cricketers and the controversy described over the wearing of trousers whilst playing. This was an issue that had not been considered prior to the start of the interviews, but ultimately

provided a valuable insight into how cricketers come to see their sport and themselves within it.

6.4 Skirts or Trousers?

6.4.1 Introduction

This section focuses on cricketers and how perceptions of femininity are constructed and sustained through the wearing of skirts or trousers when playing. At the time of the data collection the issue of whether or not to wear trousers whilst playing women's cricket was being hotly discussed in all the clubs I contacted. For the first time a team could choose to wear trousers as long as all team members chose to do so. The following discussion focuses on the positive and negative aspects of this decision.

6.4.2 Identity as a woman

In considering why many women sought to preserve the wearing of skirts within their clubs there was a clear need for women cricketers to be identified as women. For many one of the most symbolic ways of achieving this was through the wearing of a skirt. For many women this was a sign of their femininity and distinction as women within a sport dominated by men. Cara describes the use of skirts as a tool for instant recognition of women playing cricket:

I think all the fuss has got to do with looking like women playing cricket otherwise it will be seen as boys playing and we want the distinction. We need to get women noticed, people need to take that second glance now whereas last year you could see from far away that it was women playing. I think that's it's drawing away from women playing cricket and getting them to look the same as men. It's just that thing where you get people who walk past you on the field and stop and have a look out of interest and curiosity about women playing cricket and now it will be like looking at blokes with bumps in the wrong places. We are meant to be trying to promote women in cricket so with them wearing what the blokes are wearing it detracts from what makes us unusual (Cara : Cricket)

For her and many others there was a strong desire to present the sport as an interesting or perhaps curious activity for women to play in order to recruit potential players and an audience. This was linked strongly, however, with an acknowledgement that the image of female cricketers was not what they wanted it to be. Clare goes on to explain this point further and demonstrates how the perceptions and stereotypes of the women who play cricket permeate all levels:

...you can tell that it's women playing cricket if you wear a skirt...and obviously some...cricketers are not the fittest of people so they don't look overly attractive in, y'know on a hot summers day with...a t-shirt and a pair...of cricket trousers on. Plus there are no cricket trousers made for women so it makes it even worse but...you can see from miles away that's women playing over there...otherwise we just look like boys, not men, boys (Clare : Cricket)

From these two remarks it is possible to extract a number of the difficulties and prejudices faced by the women who chose to play cricket. Firstly there is the connection between skirt as feminine symbol and cricket skirts, therefore, as symbol of female sport. For many women this was key to demonstrating that women's cricket was a woman's sport participated in by women. In a similar vein female boxers described how they employed a certain identity management through the wearing of 'feminine uniforms', such as pink shorts or fringe skirts, to present themselves as more 'female-like' in the ring (Halbert, 1997). Both Griffin (1992) and Hargreaves (1994) also point to similar tactics used by lesbian athletes to hide their sexuality by presenting themselves as examples of heterosexual femininity. It would appear from these comments that some of the cricketers are pursuing a corresponding strategy of identity management. In Australia, the women's cricket board has responded to such scrutiny by expecting athletes to wear skirts and dresses at official functions (Burroughs, Ashburn & Seeborn, 1995). This action clearly demonstrates an institutionalised approach to identity management and control. Theoretically

speaking, the management of the body and the way in which it is presented suggests just how strongly socially constructed ideals of femininity and what feminine women should look like permeate all areas of society. It also suggests just how robust the agreed idioms of acceptable physical appearance are in both social and sport contexts.

It should be remembered, however, that cricket was not regarded as a feminine activity compared to netball regardless of the wearing of skirts. Danny's distinction was based far more on the connection between physical appearance and the presumption of lesbianism than on the wearing of gendered clothes. It is clear that these women are very aware of the strong connotations of participating in cricket and the lesbian label. By maintaining the wearing of skirts it is possible for them to display their femininity through the presentation of themselves as women who wear the ultimate symbol of womanhood. Cath points out, however, the irony in this situation in that for many of the women she played cricket with this was the only occasion where they chose to wear this type of clothing:

...it's also something that shows that they are aware that cricket carries a certain reputation...and they're out to counter that and the only way to do that is by wearing a skirt, now that's rubbish but that's because they're young I think...y'know the irony is that these people wear trousers every day, they turn up to nets or we'll see them out and they're never wearing a skirt, y'know what I mean?...and as soon as they get on a cricket pitch they want to put a skirt on and I just think that it's because the environment that they think they're in, they think they need to prove something (Cath : Cricket)

By clinging to this remnant of femininity these women are trying to persuade outsiders that not all women who play cricket are lesbian because they maintain a traditional idea of what it is to look like a woman. This is as Cath puts it 'rubbish' but clearly indicates how strongly these women perceive the negative repercussions of the lesbian label. It may be as Griffin (1992) asserts, that women are actively apologising

for their physical appearance by trying to promote a 'heterosexy' image through wearing skirts. Or it could point to, as demonstrated earlier, a mark of difference between women and men's sport. Ironically this contributes to the sexualisation of women's sport, which only serves to trivialise any performance, or success they may have.

6.4.3 Physical appearance and trousers

In the earlier quote from Clare there is another aspect to the difficulty in wearing appropriate sporting attire. At the time of the interviews trousers were not being specifically made for women. This resulted in many women having to wear men's cricket trousers that did not fit them correctly, making them more aware of their physical appearance than when wearing a skirt. For a number of these women who felt that their figures were not slim this was regarded as a major factor in determining their acceptance of the new rule. For Cara the wearing of a skirt could hide what she felt was not attractive in her body. She also noted how other people appeared in their trousers and did not want to look as they did:

I always wear a jumper when I play even if it's hot. I'm not sure if that says anything to you about me?...skirts definitely otherwise I would think about what I'd look like all the time. I think that if some of them look like that with trousers on then what would I look like. I just think that skirts are for hockey and cricket. I always think that trousers restrict me when I play anyway. I mean it's funny because I wear trousers all the time at work and when I go out but I've always worn skirts for cricket (Cara : Cricket)

For Cara and others this need to 'hide' her body is important because being constantly aware of what you look like is going to have an impact on your performance. Choi (2000) refers to Krane et al's study which demonstrated how the wearing of skimpy outfits negatively influenced an athlete's focus and performance. Although the

cricketers did not have to wear revealing clothing the impact of ill-fitting clothes resulted in a similar negative effect on their performances. The importance of physical appearance to overall body satisfaction was highlighted within the results of Stage One. Findings from both the Multidimensional Body Self-Relations Questionnaire (section 4.8) and the Multidimensional Self-Esteem Inventory (section 4.9) provides support for this particular relationship. The influence of physical appearance on performance is explored in more detail within Chapter 7, 'Functionality', but at this point the impact of this concern is discussed below:

...you had to think about if you bent over, like if you were in a skirt. I mean nowadays like they're showing it on Sky TV. I'd feel so sad for a person to bend down and pick up a ball and a camera to be, y'know right there, I mean it would be so embarrassing...you don't want to have to think about that (Danny : Cricket)

The last comment made by Clare (section 6.4.2) in relation to the perception of female cricketers as 'boys not men' is an interesting concept. For her this meant the connection of their performance as level to that of junior male teams rather than seniors. This demonstrates not only the ridicule experienced by women when playing cricket in terms of their performance value but also suggests a recognition of the differences between women's and men's cricket. This point was explored earlier within the chapter (section 6.3.2, 'Playing women's sport with male standards') in a discussion of how women were regarded as apologising for their performances on the basis of comparing it to that of male standards. It would appear that the constant ridiculing of their activity as less than that of men's cricket ultimately leads to an embracing of some of those ideals.

6.4.4 Practical requirements of the game

The practical requirements of the game were used widely as a justification for the change to trousers. For many women trousers were an essential part or not only in improving the performances of players but in increasing the professional image of the whole game. In wearing trousers there would be more scope for diving and sliding when fielding, helping them move towards what many for the women felt was an equalling of their game to the men's:

...if the game's becoming where it's acceptable for you dive around, you stop the ball however you can and the simple fact that people were diving and they were scraping their knees and...getting injured and...maybe people would take cricket a bit more seriously because I know a lot of people say 'how can you play cricket when you've got skirts and long socks' and things so if by changing it it's saying 'look...it's becoming equal with the men now'...I think trousers are a much better idea I think and it gives us a more professional sort of image and that type of thing (Denise : Cricket)

Despite the physical requirements of the game and the need to protect their legs from burns and the heat of southern hemisphere countries these women were still concerned about their overall look whilst playing. This is a point that should be taken note of by governing bodies seeking to enhance every opportunity for success, many of these women noted how it would make a dramatic impact on their performance. Caitlin describes this problem very simply when deciding on her choice of sportswear:

I would rather be in navy blue tracksuit bottoms (laugh)...than in whites...probably a skirt actually...because white trousers make my bum look even bigger (laugh)...trousers are more practical because it means you can slide along and stop a ball without getting a great big burn down your leg...and obviously if it's windy your skirts going to blow up and show everything to all and sundry (laugh)...but I can also see the point of the other people who saying that ok it does identify you as a woman...because it's traditional isn't it?...but...I'm a trouser girl I suppose (laugh)...if it doesn't make me bum look too big (laugh) (Caitlin : Cricket)

For Caitlin there is a real need to present herself in a way in which makes her feel physically attractive, even if she is playing a sport. Considering the time and money spent on developing skin suits for track and field athletes there is a need to develop appropriate clothing for women cricketers to enhance their performance. This does connect strongly to the development of a more professional image enhanced by a dress code worn by male participants. One cricketer notes the contradictions of trying to maintain their femininity through pursuing a greater professional image but having to do so by rejecting a traditional symbol of femininity and embracing a symbol of masculinity, trousers:

Kate: you said they were trying to change the image...how are they trying to change that?

In some ways it's funny umm changing to wear trousers, I know that sounds...going from skirts to trousers sounds more masculine but I think...people are taking it more seriously now...because it's more practical...to show more skill and whatever and be able to dive and not ruin your knees and things like that...it's definitely changing, they're taking fitness a lot more seriously (Denise : Cricket)

Just as in the experience of female boxers (Halbert, 1997) so female cricketers appear to be rejecting and accepting traditional notions of femininity through their sportswear. Whilst rejecting traditional notions of acceptable female activity they accept that in order to identify themselves as women, and feminine women, they need to wear appropriate clothing. For the boxers this was through the use of pink shorts or fringe skirts, for the cricketers it was the wearing of skirts not trousers.

By accepting the wearing of trousers and a new direction in terms of fitness the women who play realise that the image of the cricketer who only had to hold a bat has no place in the future of England women's cricket teams. With this there is a move towards a younger generation of players who recognise the use of images in the

promotion of their sport and seek to rid the game of the perceived more older and butch cricketer of the past. There is a danger, however, in doing so the game may also rid itself of the social aspects which bound all the women I spoke to together.

6.5 Summary

This chapter has focused on the development and presentation of femininity through a variety of means. There has been an exploration of how sexuality comes to bear such an influence on the enjoyment and participation of all women interviewed. Here the underlying link of women's physical activity to lesbianism was identified. Many women were aware that the greater the physical contact required to play the sport the greater the assumed link to sexuality. It was identified, however, that women in sport were regarded as potential lesbians regardless of their activity being seen as appropriate or not. It was noted how the development of positive and negative lesbian stereotypes were formulated through the perception of male observers. Netballers being described as lesbian was promoted as a male fantasy, one which appealed to heterosexual ideals of female attractiveness. For rugby players and cricketers, however, the assumption of lesbianism was strongly related to the image of women in those sports as 'butch' and muscular, and, therefore, not attractive to heterosexual men. This led greatly to many women feeling that they had to justify their participation and search for an approval through sporting excellence

The value of women's sporting activities was highlighted through examining the perceptions of the physical capabilities of those women. Here sports were judged in relation to that of male games, ultimately devaluing their performances as second best. It was clear that this was presented not only by the men watching the games but

also by the women themselves. The negative social meaning given to women's performances only serves to sustain the belief that women should not play 'men's' games. If the body mediates the relationship between an individual's self/sport-identity and social-identity (Goffman, 1963) there will be a negative interpretation of what the female body can achieve.

Changing the image of a sport to fit a more professional and ultimately heterosexual end appeared greater for the cricketers than any other sport. This focused on the discussion of whether to wear skirts or trousers in competition. This one sub section revealed many of the inherent assumptions and prejudices experienced by the cricketers from observers and players within the sport itself. By rejecting one symbol of femininity for another of masculinity the irony of creating an image of a woman's sport by rejecting what made it different was explored.

Taking a social constructionists perspective on this chapter it is clear that the ways in which socially constructed ideals of femininity are formed permeate all levels of society. Even when resisting social dictates of acceptable physical behaviour, by playing cricket and rugby, the women within these sports still find themselves judging others by constructed notions of physical attractiveness. The irony being that it is often sportswomen themselves that create alternative body idioms to judge members of their own teams. It is also clear that certain social processes prescribe what those bodies should look like. In particular, it is often the marketing and promotion of sports that have determined which bodies are viewed as successful and financially viable. Although, as Goffman (1963) argues, individuals usually have the ability to control and monitor their bodily performances in order to interact with other people, the

meanings attributed to that performance are not determined by the individual. Meanings are the result of negotiated constructions and reconstructions by individuals as they interact with other people. If one sport performance is valued over another, such as 'feminine' over 'masculine', women may come to be categorised as a failed member of society or sport society by others. This may result in an internalisation of that label and incorporation of it into a 'spoiled' self-identity (Goffman, 1968). In many ways dominant body stories are created and maintained (Sparkes, 1997).

The accounts presented here demonstrate the complex nature of understanding women's participation in sport. Some aspects were so sport specific (e.g. skirts or trousers) that it might not have been indicated as a possible area of research. Indeed, this particular issue was only incorporated after the first interview with a cricketer. Only through the interview process did important factors such as these come to light.

The following chapter, Chapter 7, 'Functionality', extends some of the points raised here by exploring the relationship of physical appearance to performance both on and off the pitch/field/court.

Chapter 7 Functionality

7.1 Introduction

This chapter follows on from Chapter 6, 'Femininity', in that it explores the relationship between participating in a sporting activity and perceptions of attractiveness, and subsequently femininity, in the social environment. This chapter also has the strongest connection to the questionnaire findings because of its reference to the relationship between physical appearance and body satisfaction. These connections to the results of Stage One will be highlighted throughout this chapter. The first section, 7.2, 'On vs Off the Pitch/Field/Court', draws attention to the issue of the acceptance of physical size and shape by many women on the premise that it allows them to perform functions on the pitch/field/court that they would have been unable to do otherwise. This is contrasted, however, with the realisation that physical appearance in social situations reflect accepted definitions of what is and is not heterosexually attractive in women. The final section in this chapter, 7.3, 'Physically valued', considers how being physically valued either on or off the pitch/field/court impacts greatly on feelings of self-worth and confidence. Social encounters may begin and are subsequently sustained through a mutual appreciation of sporting experience. Although the social impact of being physical is discussed in the final data chapter, 'Impact of Sport', it is also included in this sub section because of the relationship of physicality to inclusion within certain social groups.

7.2 On vs Off the Pitch/Field/Court

7.2.1 Introduction

The first section examines the relationship between a woman's perception of her body whilst competing on the pitch/field/court and her body perception at a social occasion.

Here the construction of body image concepts are explored through recognising how and what influences a sportswoman's perception of her physical self. In discussing women's bodies in terms of the function they perform on the pitch/field/court it is clear that the display of control and power lends a great deal to the positiveness felt by all sport participants. There is, however, an anomaly when considering the presentation of women's bodies in a social space, one that is governed by what is considered to be sexually desirable and attractive in women. The following discussion relays the tension exhibited between a woman's perception of her body as useful and functional in the sporting environment but still failing to reach standards of femininity and attractiveness once placed in the social domain.

We begin this section by focusing on the relationship between performance and the development of a positive body image. For many women the experience of physical activity results in more positive perceptions of their physical self and a greater acceptance of body size (Fox, 1997; Furnham, Titman & Sleeman, 1994; Richards, Peterson, Boxer & Albrech, 1990). This was confirmed by Stage One of the research process indicating that all three sports had high levels of body satisfaction, as predicted. The sportswomen within this study all noted how physical activity had come to change their physical shape in some way, producing a more toned and muscled body. For many of them it was also recognised that their body size and shape performed a function on the pitch that no one else could perform. This resulted in heightened sensations of self-efficacy and enjoyment from that participation. Physical self-efficacy, as demonstrated here, is one of the central constructs in the exercise and self-esteem model proposed by Sonstroem and Morgan (1989). Based on a hierarchical structure, the model suggests that physical self-efficacy is the first

cognitive link between higher order psychological constructs and actual behaviours. What this illustrates is how efficacy of the physical self impacts on feelings of physical competence, which in turn influences physical acceptance of an activity. This may reflect a recognition of the function the body performs in any one sporting role. The subsequent impact on physical competence and acceptance influences and increases levels of self-esteem experienced by the sport participant in that environment.

7.2.2 The transiency of body satisfaction

Although recognising how important their bodies were to performance and dominance over an opponent there was still an acknowledgement of the impact social definitions of femininity and attractiveness had outside the sporting arena. The influence of physical activity on these women's body image appears to end to a certain degree at the entrance to the locker room.

Earlier, in Chapter 5, the discussion surrounding the use of power was explored and this demonstrated how these women utilised their strengths to overcome an opponent. Taking into consideration this positive interpretation of size as a tool to performance, it is perhaps surprising, therefore, to find that many women interviewed found that this did not transfer outside of that location. Rhonda, a rugby player, describes some of the contradictions felt between her performing body and her social body:

...when I'm not on the pitch and playing I'm conscious of my legs because I think they're too short...when I'm on the pitch I'm never uncomfortable, I don't feel conscious of anything really, I think I'm a good size with my legs and body and things and I have a strong neck...but I'd like bigger boobs and longer legs but that's it really, I don't ever spend time worrying about it...but off the pitch I have to say that I'm a bit of a girlie I'm afraid (Rhonda : Rugby)

Rhonda's comment highlights a number of issues concerning performances of women's body. Firstly, there was a general consensus of the lack of consciousness concerning body shape and size whilst playing. When asked about any physical or psychological sensations concerning their body in play the majority of women could not recall any incidences in which they were focused on how their body felt unless they were carrying an injury. For the most part it would appear that the physical function their bodies performed on the pitch/field/court appeased any qualms they had about body shape. The following examples from cricket and netball demonstrate that this belief was not particular to any one sport:

I'm always conscious of my knee when I'm playing cricket because I've got an old injury...I've got a big bum but apart from that no (laugh)...it doesn't bother me anyway, it's not a problem it's just that I know it's there...I know I have got a big arse, I can't help it I was born with it...if I was out socially I might think 'oh I look a bit fat in these jeans...or whatever but it doesn't bother me at all when I'm playing...because that's where I know I get my power from...so why should it bother me? (Caitlin : Cricket)

I'm aware of them [legs] all the time but I do think they do serve the purpose on court definitely...I feel quite happy with myself on court, I feel...definitely...I think with regards to my body my arms are definitely muscly through playing netball...and I hate that (laugh)...I hate that but that is definitely netball...it is because obviously my throwing arm...it's a good thing...but when off court I sense it (Naomi : Netball)

These comments provide evidence to suggest that body satisfaction does come from adhering to the physical requirements of a given sport (Furnham et al., 1994; Snyder & Kivlin, 1975) but may wane after that sporting performance. It is clear that women recognise that certain parts of their body are useful and help them perform the function they need whilst playing. Consequently, however, the environment that they happen to be in at any one time can exert a strong influence over the level of positiveness about body shape and size felt by these women. Kolnes (1995) identified

similar findings in her investigation of female footballers. The women in this study also described how physical appearance is secondary whilst playing, but concessions to femininity after each match were made. Choi (2000) also refers to a study conducted by Krane and colleagues whereby athletes were extremely satisfied with their bodies in a sporting context because they were strong and powerful, allowing them to perform the functions they needed to do as athletes. It was also shown that once outside this environment the women became very aware of their musculature and were concerned about the connotations associated with increased muscle mass. McDermott (2000) asserts that one of the main causes of this might be in early recollections of being physical. McDermott suggested that the formative experiences of women's physicalities were often constructed and realised through appearance. This experience of physicality subsequently acts as a filter through which other bodily experiences are processed. For the women interviewed by McDermott and highlighted in this research being able to separate the experience of physicality from 'looking feminine' was and is a very difficult task to achieve. It is as if an inner censor acts to hinder these women in their search for physical expression by restricting not only the perceptions of acceptable physical appearance but also the activities permitted to display that appearance.

Awareness of body presentation can also be found in relation to women in non-competitive exercise situations. Markula (1995) found that some members of an aerobic class felt a contradiction between enjoyment at the physical strength gained from activity but also demonstrated concern over this presentation of power. Choi (2000) notes that "this sense of contradiction stems from the current ideal of the feminine body that is slim and toned, not strong, and the traditional notions of gender

that equate strength with masculinity, not femininity" (p. 75). What these findings point to is the overriding sense of femininity as constructed by others and not determined by the athletes themselves as noted by other research (e.g. Guthrie & Castelnovo, 1992; Miller & Penz, 1991).

In considering Rhonda's account a second point can be made on the perception of bodies off the playing field in that notions of acceptable appearance come to dominate how and why she dresses as she does. For some of the women in this study there was an inevitability about this as well, reflecting on the 'naturalness' of women's concern over their physical appearance. For Rhonda this acceptance of concern was considered to be 'girlie', contradicting with her performing self. Rebecca, another rugby player also demonstrates this acceptance of what is and is not considered to be attractive for women:

...my shoulders...they're fairly broad and if you want to go out...it's a complete girlie thing...if you want to go out in a dress or whatever I am conscious of making sure that I've got the right shape dress on...I damaged my shoulder 7 years ago and...my clavicle sticks up so again that's kind of, y'know off putting...I do have very very broad shoulders that still...don't tend to fit in with the rest of my body (laugh)...I don't have sort of legs the size of tree trunks and I'm just like any other female I don't like the shape of my butt but...what can you do about that (laugh) (Rebecca : Rugby)

This acceptance of concern over shape and size in a social setting demonstrates clearly how the construction of femininity and attractiveness are embedded in everyday encounters (Sparkes, 1997; Theberge, 1993). The definition of acceptable attractiveness clearly denotes one of the strongest indicators of how meanings attributed to certain bodily shapes determine our experience of sport. The social meanings which are attributed to particular bodily forms and performances tend to become internalised and exert a powerful influence on an individual's sense of self

and feelings of inner worth (Shilling, 1993). When these meanings assert the preference of the thin and non-muscular body, women in sports that require strong bodies are ultimately punished.

In an attempt at self-ridicule at this concern over her physical appearance there is the use of the term 'girlie'. This is used as a way of demonstrating that this expression of anxiety is usually the domain of women considered to be different to her. For Rebecca there is an obvious perception of the type of woman who would normally behave in this way but she also attempts to justify and explain her demonstration of concern in relation to a unique occasion:

The only time it crosses my mind is if I'm getting ready for a black tie do and I go to those once in a blue moon...or the end of season do or whatever, I've got to put on a dress and I'm sort of like well do I wear something with straps or not blah, blah, blah...but if I'm just going out in the evening I'm just like any other female, does this colour go with my eyes...that type of nonsense (Rebecca : Rugby)

Perhaps for Rebecca having to reflect on her behaviour with another person prompted her to validate her actions by asserting the naturalness of such activities. Although not necessarily asserting the 'naturalness' of this concern, Choi (2000) points to her earlier work when describing Jane's (one of Choi's respondents) resistance and compliance of what it is to be feminine. As a bodybuilder, Jane recognises the need to market oneself to the public. As such, she is aware that "if you are on stage and you are big and muscly, its not going to be attractive to people" (cited by Choi, 2000; p. 52). This acknowledgement also directs Jane to present herself in a way which will emphasis her femininity, providing her with greater opportunities for sponsorship. There is also the added assertion that this demonstration of 'girlie' behaviour was a common experience of all women and made more evident to her because of the social

occasion. Although these women do not clarify why their body shapes were not or did not fit their perception of acceptable physical appearance outside the playing arena, it is evident that the change of self-worth indicates social influences.

There were also explanations relating to why certain women altered their appearance in order to fit an ideal of heterosexual attractiveness. One rugby player noted how her team-mates' perception of what others thought they should look like resulted in a number of 'mistakes' in dress choice:

I suppose that they are shocked generally because I suppose they expect someone short and fat rather than the way I am especially after the game is over...I suppose I do try and make an effort after the game but not really for any particular reason or whatever. Some of the England girls do try and change a lot and do sometimes make some big mistakes because they think that's what people expect them to look like afterwards (Rhonda : Rugby)

This demonstration of appealing to another's perception of what they should look like i.e. heterosexually attractive may be considered to be an attempt to deflect the lesbian label. As previously discussed in Chapter 6, a number of women in sports deemed to be masculine, such as boxing, wrestling or cricket, overtly displayed the wearing of feminised clothing in an attempt to avert such an image (Burroughs et al., 1995; Griffin, 1992; Halbert, 1997). As one cricketer noted, this may be combined on occasions with presenting themselves as an available sexual target to any men that might belong to the same club. Cath appears to deride the attempts made by women who take this approach as an example of their naiveté and fear of being regarded as a lesbian:

...to be honest I've really noticed it with the rugby club...like the girls, I mean at cricket often because you've..been there for hours...they won't necessarily get changed...but I've got a few friends who..play rugby and..there is a real discrepancy between those who just get up and get, y'know tracksuit and...those who'll come up very glammed

up...and I think part of that though is because they're actually normally always in an environment where there are..men...I think..within cricket there are those who are...very homophobic and make a big noise about it and make a point about every kind of conquest they have that's male (Cath : Cricket)

Taking Cath's view further it could be said that the continued emphasis on femininity, by the use of make-up and appropriate clothes, allows these women to be recognisable as 'proper' women (Kolnes, 1995). This means being regarded as feminine, heterosexual and subsequently available to men.

At times there is a demonstration of the conflict between embracing the positive consequences of physical activity on body image perceptions and admitting that this does not remain constant. For many of these women there was a contradiction in their responses. On the one hand they asserted the positiveness they felt towards their bodies because of participation, but subsequently admitting that they had concerns over their physical appearance when placed in certain situations. This contradiction was present among all the sportswomen and demonstrates just how pervasive the perception of the perfect body is regardless of how functional and useful a body can be when playing sport. This is not to say that physical performance does not lend itself to a greater acceptance of shape, size and musculature because the remarks of these women do suggest this. It is, however, indicating that the restrictions of Western society in terms of what is and is not an acceptable attractive body does place a huge influence on the perceptions of body satisfaction outside the sport setting. In one sense it could reflect the transference from adoption of an exercise schema to a more appropriate social or gender related schema. Other research (Haimovitz, Lansky & O'Reilly, 1993; Roth & Armstrong, 1994) has demonstrated that short-term situational differences do impact on perceptions of body satisfaction. Results indicate

that women were more critical of their bodies where their bodies had greater exposure, such as on the beach. Myers and Biocca (1992) also reflect on the elasticity of body image that can be influenced by a number of situational and hormonal factors (e.g. the onset of menopause). For these women the transfer of their bodies from a sports performing setting to a social setting may stretch body satisfaction perceptions. In this way the change of perceptions and acceptance of shape and size mirrors the change in social environment.

These findings are supported by a number of results taken from Stage One, which highlight how, for all sports, satisfaction with physical appearance has the strongest relationship to overall body satisfaction. It would appear to be that, although body satisfaction was strongly related to the function a body takes within a sporting environment, one's physical appearance, with reference to stereotypical definitions of attractiveness, still has the strongest influence on body image constructs. What did present itself as unique from the interview material was the transiency of body satisfaction. The MBSRQ did account for a great many factors concerning body satisfaction but could not have predicted the change in body perception of these women. Once again the combination of questionnaires and interview accounts helps to explain a multifaceted construct.

7.2.3 Body satisfaction and body parts

In an attempt to discover exactly the parts of the body that tended to be the focus of discontent findings from the sportswomen's accounts reflected previous research on this topic. For many the focus depended on the injury status of their body as highlighted by Rebecca's comments on her shoulders. The other main areas of

concern appeared to be the relationship of weight to performance (Silberstein et al., 1988) and the size of bottoms (Bailey, Goldberg, Swap, Chomitz & Houser, 1990) and breasts. There was no notable difference between sports as to the particular area of focus although a number of the netballers did mention that their arms and calves were more pronounced than any other part of their body because of the sport and so had a heightened awareness of these in social encounters.

The reasons behind some of the concerns ranged from comments made by men regarding those areas and through comparisons to an 'ideal' shape presented by another. The relationship of weight to body satisfaction has been reported (Silberstein et al., 1988), indicating that for women the greater the weight the less satisfied they are with body shape, regardless of tone or muscle. For one netballer in particular her focus on weight was fixed by a belief that her performance was connected directly to her weight at any given moment. For Nicola a previous injury meant that any extra weight would prevent her from performing as she wanted to and increased the chance of future damage. She also reflects on the similarity between sporting performance and social activities suggesting that all women react in a comparable way when attempting to define body satisfaction:

I have to be a certain weight in order to feel comfortable running around...once I get to a certain weight I don't like it...I hate putting on my netball skirt on if I'm too heavy 'cos I'm conscious of my legs, it's really really strange really...I'd rather keep them covered up...what puts me off at the moment you see because I know I've got that half a stone overweight...for playing you see...if I'm that little bit lighter I'm not going to be so heavy landing and things as well...I think really...you feel happier at a certain weight...it's like even when you go out socially isn't it you have certain things that you want to put on and if it doesn't fit quite right and I think it's the same for your sport 'cos you know what you should be wearing...it doesn't bother me so much when I'm out but when I'm on the court it does...I don't feel as fit...I always try and tone my legs up you see that's my main thing I

would work on...I hate my legs, I think that most people do though don't they? (Nicola : Netball)

What is different about Nicola's account is that she is very aware of her body whilst playing netball. This sets her apart from the majority of the other sportswomen in this study because of her conscious recollection of her body both during and after her performances. This finding confirms the results of Stage One, in which control over one's body was far more important for netballers than the other two sports. Nicola exhibits a desire to be in control of her weight and this suggests that social constructions of femininity, which determine the ideal of thinness, affect netballers more than rugby or cricket participants. This may be exaggerated because of her injury but does indicate that not all sportswomen are able to forget about the presentation of their self whilst playing.

For other sportswomen it is a specific body area rather than an overall weight which focuses their attention. The following example from Cheryl points to how and why her consciousness of her breasts developed through a number of sporting occasions. She also indicates how her presence in either a sport or social setting contributes to the positive or negative interpretation of that experience:

...the only bit that I've ever been ribbed about and the only bit that I've ever been conscious about are my boobs basically 'cos there like this (laugh) well not huge but they're bigger than I'd like them to be...and if people are going to take the piss about anything they will take the piss about that when I run so...if I'm fielding then when I'm running sometimes it does cross my mind...that's when you think 'oh I bet this looks nice'...it stems from comments people made really...I mean they're both positive and..there not really negative they just laugh and say 'oh y'know you're going to get a black eye' or whatever but you know I've had as many..people have said to me that it's an asset (laugh) to have my chest size (laugh) and maybe it is if you're out on the pull but I don't know about running around on the sports field (Cheryl : Cricket)

So Cheryl's perception of the acceptability of her chest size is dictated a great deal by the setting she has to be in and her perception of the use of it. For Cheryl, this particular body area is more obvious to her because it does not contribute in any way to her sporting performance. Although she is aware of her body it is enhanced by the comments of spectators, usually men. For Cheryl, functionality and feminine attractiveness collide. She not only considers how functional her body is whilst playing cricket, but how sexually attractive she is in that sports setting.

For other sportswomen consciousness of body areas are greatly influenced by the comparison to an ideal shape. Nancy highlights once again the inevitability of women's concern over physical appearance:

... 'does my bum look big in this?' that's my favourite phrase... I think a lot of women always say 'oh does my bum look big in this?'... I mean I'm conscious because my sister is very tall and she's very thin... but it doesn't really bother me when I play... I think when you're playing I'm in a situation where I'm with seven other people and I've got other things to concentrate on and even though you're in your skirt... and, I mean sometimes I've fallen over before and I've been lying on the floor and my skirt's been up and everything... but it doesn't really bother me then I think because everyone's in the same situation, everyone's hot and flustered... I don't really think about it then (Nancy : Netball)

Even though Nancy and many of the other women profess not be concerned or 'bothered' about how their bodies work and perform there is a clear indication that once the whistle goes she is and they are.

Throughout this section the differences between performance and social gatherings in relation to body satisfaction has been highlighted. There is little doubt that these sportswomen relish the chance to be physical in an environment that appreciates the function and use of certain shapes and sizes in a game. Body satisfaction can be

developed through the experience of success and ability to complete actions that no other member of the team could perform. In this sense the team promotes sizes and shapes that do not rely on traditional notions of acceptable feminine qualities because they have no place there. Rather they focus on what role the body can perform for the team. This would tend to confirm both the exercise and self-esteem model proposed by Sonstroem and Morgan (1989) and Fox's (1990) physical self-perception hierarchy in which competence at an activity increases feelings of physical self-worth. This domain specific perception directs an increase at a more general level of self-esteem. Once the setting changes, however, there is a clear indication that the majority of women struggle to attain their ideal self-perceptions of what is an acceptable physical appearance. Social constructions dominate the ways in which women perceive their own and others' physical attractiveness. If a negative social meaning given to a particular body form, such as the athletic body, becomes internalised this can exert a strong influence over an individual's sense of self worth (Fox, 2000; Goffman, 1963). The lesbian label that pervades women's sport does impact on the activities some women take to counter such prejudice. Some may try and overcompensate through overt heterosexual encounters and the open display of such conquests. Others may simply choose to wear clothes perceived to be feminine but ultimately do not reflect or flatter their physical qualities.

The final section in this chapter focuses on the relationship between a woman's physicality and the value drawn from it for herself. Here an understanding of how and why being physical in a sporting arena comes to mean so much for these women are explored.

7.3 Physically Valued

7.3.1 Introduction

The aim of this section is to ascertain how a woman's performance on the pitch/field/court is included and valued in other areas of her life. For some of the women in this study, being regarded as the only person able to complete a specific role is very empowering. This does relate more to the rugby players than any other sport mainly on the basis that certain positions within rugby do require a particular body mass to be successful. There is a strong connection to the acceptance of others through sporting success, as alluded to previously, and the development of respect through competition. The main focus of this section, however, is to highlight how being perceived as physically essential in a team comes to bear such a huge influence on overall body satisfaction.

7.3.2 Valued because of physical size and shape

The most striking example of the impact of being physically valued was demonstrated by Susan whose rugby playing experience has had a dramatic impact on her perceptions of her physical self as well as her confidence. For Susan participating in rugby has provided an avenue for pride and respect that had been absent previously in her sporting activities. As a tall, well built woman she recognised the impact of her size from the moment she attended her first training session:

- ...the best part about it was when I walked up the drive and John the coach was there...and he looked at me and he went 'how tall are you?', '5'10', he went 'brilliant!'...there was a lot of small players and me and Helen were the tallest so we were sort of automatically paired for a second row...it was really flattering to have that sort of response, y'know and everybody was just so 'oh great you're really tall and...strong and, y'know perfect for the game'...so that encourages you more...you...maximise your strength...being valued because of your size was something I had never experienced before (Susan : Rugby)

For Susan this experience was very empowering and she went on to describe how her experiences of playing sport at school had been less successful because her size meant that she was regarded as clumsy and inappropriate for other roles. Rugby brought to her the belief in her physical self and the realisation of her sporting talents that were often subverted in school sports such as netball and hockey. The memory of P.E lessons in which an individual is made to feel physically incompetent does appear to have serious long-term consequences. A lack in physical confidence instilled through years of negative school experiences does detrimentally effect future participation in physical activities (McDermott, 2000). As previously discussed, the physical self (Fox, 1997, 2000) has come to bear a great deal of influence over the development and maintenance of self-esteem. Developing physical self-efficacy through role performance not only leads to greater perceptions of physical competence but also a sense of effectiveness, self-determination and personal control (Fox, 2000). Demonstrating physical power and eliciting value from that demonstration is one of the key areas in assessing how sport can impact on women's lives.

Equally, the notion of value because of your physical size and shape was found in both cricket and netball. This was not necessarily because of a power based on contact but more so because of other physical attributes. A number of the cricketers noted how height was valued above many other qualities. This led to an acknowledgement of the processes involved in presenting themselves as a bowler and the subsequent perceptions of other people that they were so. Cath, who is over six feet tall discuss how her size was regarded as a bonus at University and her inclusion within the England team:

...my height was the first thing that people noticed when I was at Oxford, people said 'oh there's a bowler', 'you've got to be a bowler

because you're tall'...I am a lot taller than most of the other bowlers...once my arm is in the air it's coming down from sort of 7'6...and that's a fair old whack and...the angle at which the ball, therefore, lifts up at a player or is coming into a player...is much harder for a lot of people to play me (Cath : Cricket)

The down side as far as Cath was concerned was that her height restricted her close fielding. The important point to make here is how value is placed on certain physical qualities that were otherwise regarded as a disadvantage outside sporting occasions. Cath noted at an earlier part of the interview how she always tried to stoop in company in order not to appear too tall. As a woman she felt that her presence would be too domineering, whereas in cricket her physical domination was valued more so because of her size. The selective presentation or omission of certain attributes in order to create a desired impression in a particular social encounter is one of the tactics used in self-presentation (Leary, 1992). This helps to direct behaviour and appearance once the sport participant has changed environment.

The assumption of talent because of shape and size was an important aspect in terms of how sporting identity develops for many of these women. This was recognised as a process both within and outside their sport. For Cheryl this assumption added greatly to her acceptance as a talent within a sporting group. She also promoted this presentation of her self in social activities to sustain her identity as such:

I think my height's advantageous sometimes, I mean people tend to look at me and assume...that I'd be a bowler actually...people look at my physique and assume that I'll be athletic or sporty (Cheryl : Cricket)

There was also a recognition that physical size did have an impact on how other people perceived them to be in social and work situations. For one netballer this translated into the nickname of 'Bruiser' on the basis of her size. Martine goes on to

describe how her personality is often shaped by how other people viewed her simply because of her size:

I can't get away with being kind of shy and timid I suppose whereas someone whose maybe shorter or smaller might get away with, whereas if I walk into a room I guess yeah I'm definitely there kind of thing (Martine : Netball)

7.3.3 Transferring physical value to social environments

For some sportswomen the recognition of their physicality as an asset was one which had its focus purely on the pitch/field/court. For others, however, this asset was valued in terms of how sporting experience created an avenue to be accepted within a more male dominated area, such as sport knowledge. Although this distinction is a false one it is important to recognise how these women utilise their experiences in gaining access to an outside group. For Mary in particular her experiences of playing netball contributed greatly not only to her inclusion within a male group of footballers at work, but also in her acceptance by her pupils at school. At times, however, there existed a conflict surrounding how her femaleness became invisible at certain points in the social encounter. On the one hand she valued and accepted her perception of being 'one of the lads', but rejected that label when her identity as a woman was no salient. Mary wanted to be valued as a person but valued as a woman when jokes or the conversation contradicted with her more 'feminine' sensibilities. The following quotes relate to this issue:

...it's definitely had an impact...I definitely find I get included more in conversations about sport with my male friends then quite a few on my non-playing female friends...they don't get listened to quite as much as I do even though I might not know as much...I think people see me..in a slightly different light than people who don't play sport (Mary : Netball)

And later

I've played five a side and it's me and all the rest are blokes...we always go for a drink afterwards and...although I back down on quite a few things it is a case of they see, almost see it as one of the lads rather than [as a woman] and sometimes I don't like that...in some cases yeah you're sat here and I start shrinking, some of the conversations I just literally shrink into the corner and think 'right if I don't say anything they won't actually realise that I'm still sat here' (Mary : Netball)

For Mary this conflict is an interesting one. For her, the inclusion and acceptance as 'one of the lads' is important, but not at the sacrifice of her identity as a woman. Once she had been included and was not seen as different, she subsequently wanted to be as seen as such. This conflict reflects a number of the contradictions exhibited by these sportswomen. It would appear that their identity as women is not compatible with how others perceive their sporting identity and other associated attributes. That is not to say that there is any role conflict occurring within the women themselves but rather that the limitations placed on women's acceptable social behaviour is being directed by the perceptions and limitations of hegemonic masculinity. Perhaps it is insightful that this conflict appears to be greatest among those sportswomen who participate in sports traditionally regarded as feminine, netball. By participating in less 'feminine' activities rugby players and cricketers may set less rigid definitions of what is acceptable and desirable in women (Furnham et al., 1994). Conflict is reduced through the breaking away from the limitations of sport choice and subsequently the restrictions on how to behave in those sport situations.

7.4 Summary

This chapter further explores the perceptions of femininity discussed within Chapter 6. The connection between physical performance on the pitch/field/court and the perception of themselves off it was examined. Here physicality was highlighted as

one of the most powerful influences to body satisfaction for these sportswomen. This was balanced alongside the difficulties of sustaining that image once they had left the sporting environment. There was a recognition that societal expectations of female attractiveness bear a great deal of influence on the acceptance of size and shape in a social setting. Many women emphasised that any concerns they revealed were simply a 'natural' female response to the inevitability of unhappiness towards physical appearance. Regardless of physical power and skill many women still felt that outside the sporting arena (and sometimes on the pitch/field/court) their size and shape were no longer useful and therefore problematic. What should be highlighted is that their bodies were only 'problematic' because they did not fit with socially constructed notions of acceptable physical appearance or behaviour. It would also appear that identities are rarely constant, being reconstructed as and when the situation considers it necessary to do so (Schwalbe, 1993). By understanding the meanings given to certain aspects of the body and recognising that many of the meanings are determined by social processes a greater understanding of the way in which women experience sport was found.

Many women recognised the empowerment of being physically capable and the realisation that their sporting experiences allowed them entry into a previously considered male preserve. There were, however, occasions for concern in which acceptance as 'one of the lads' removed the difference between the genders that ultimately some women wanted to maintain. The key for a number of women would be to participate in any activity they wished as an athlete but to still assert themselves as female. What this would actually entail and how it would actually work does not, however, appear clear.

The interview material presented here did provide a fair amount of support for the initial findings from the three questionnaires. In particular both methods were able to discover the importance of physical appearance to overall body satisfaction. What was more interesting perhaps was how and why body satisfaction was affected by physical appearance as a function of social context. Only through the interview data could this issue be explored appropriately.

The final data chapter reflects on the experiences of women in each sport and attempts to assess the impact that participation has on other aspects of their lives. The chapter examines the transfer of skills and knowledge to work and family situations and the development of skills such as problem solving and decision-making. This is discussed alongside an investigation into how that sport participation has become a part of their life. Finally there is an examination of how body image and personal identity is sustained throughout and beyond that participation.

Chapter 8 Impact of Sport

8.1 Introduction

This final data chapter has its main focus on the impact of playing sport on other areas of sportswomen's lives. In attempting to search for any underlying relationship it should be noted that causal effects are extremely difficult to determine because for many women sport has always been an integral part of their lives. To decide if sport participation produces sporting attributes, or if having a certain attribute predisposes you to participate in sport cannot be fully understood here. What is clear, however, is that the negative impact of injury and the end of competitive seasons can go some way to clarify how and why participation leads to so many benefits. The chapter is divided into four subsections, investigating how sport has become a huge a part of these sportswomen's lives through to how perceptions of their bodies have changed because of that experience.

In the first section, 'Part of Life', the focus is turned towards how these women view sport participation as part of their lives and for some, how it has 'become their life': sport comes to define who they are and how they would want their children to be. This connection is supported by the belief that once they have reached a point at which they can no longer compete at a comparable level they would choose to stop rather than be seen as a poor sportswoman. The indication being, that the perception of themselves as sportswomen would be lost if they were suddenly regarded as inactive or less talented. Taking into consideration Leary's (1992) work on self-presentation the women are attempting to hide their physical frailties to ensure that their image as sportswomen are maintained. The next section, 'Transfer of Skills', discusses the relationship many women found between sport participation and the

development of certain skills in work or social domains. This is closely connected to the section within Chapter 5 relating to sporting attributes. This section tries to identify how and why physical and social confidence grows from that experience for many of these women.

The 'Impact of School' is examined within section 8.4 in an attempt to highlight the beginnings of the relationship between sporting success/failure and future participation. There has been some research to suggest that continued participation in sport or physical activity in adulthood is more likely if being physically active was valued within school years (Allied Dunbar National Fitness Survey, 1992; Coakley & White, 1992; Curtis, McTeer & White, 1999; Woods, Mutrie & Scott, 1999). How and why differences between the perceptions of girls and boys sporting prowess develop is discussed alongside the positive and negative experiences of those considered to be not 'sporty'. The final section of this chapter concentrates on how participation in sport impacts on body perceptions and the ways in which acceptance of size and shape are developed. This extends a number of the debates concerning the function and use of the body within Chapter 7. The aim of this final chapter is to bring together the main factors related to sport participation in an attempt to truly reflect the impact sport has had on these women. Although some accounts relate to issues considered in previous chapters the focus now is more on the direct impact of sport for these women.

8.2 Part of Life

8.2.1 Introduction

In considering the impact of sport participation, one of the most recurring comments made by the women interviewed was that it was 'part of their life'. For them there was a definite connection between physical activity and sporting attributes such as drive, commitment and a purpose to life. There was an acknowledgement of the inevitability of participation in becoming an essential part of their existence because of the time spent training and competing and more importantly because of the friendships formed through that experience. What follows is an exploration of how and why these women come to view sport as 'part of their life'.

8.2.2 Factors influencing continued participation

There were a number of indications of why their sport had become such an integral part of their everyday life. These ranged from the need to release tension to maintaining a sense of identity. For the most part these women suggested that participation would continue until it was physically impossible for them to carry on.

The following accounts demonstrate these feelings:

...if something happened to me that was so threatening that I was say confined to a wheelchair or something, it doesn't even bear thinking about...I just don't know how I'd cope with that...it's part of my life
(Rebecca : Rugby)

I wouldn't foresee that I gave up cricket and didn't take up something else...it's always been there and I couldn't imagine it not being there, and obviously because you play sport it's a huge part of your social life as well...it's just a huge part of the people you meet, the friends that I've got through playing cricket and playing sport...I couldn't imagine...that part of it not being there, whatever sport it may be...it's such...a huge part of my life (Clare : Cricket)

I've always seen...myself to be active...until there's real physical reasons as to why I can't carry on with it. I...can't see me coming out of sport now...it's always..been such a part of my life, all my holidays have always been active...it's the general feeling that you get when you are fit. I just like being active, like to be thought of as being active as well as actually being this, it's something I reckon I'd always do (Mary : Netball)

Both Clare and Rebecca's comments reflect the views of all the women interviewed that nothing short of incapacity would prevent them from being physically active in some way. For many it was clear that the thought of inactivity would result in an inability to cope, although the explanation of this was not always clear. There is evidence to suggest (e.g. Mutrie, 2000) that being less active results in greater incidences of depression. Studies utilising a longitudinal approach have shown that both women and men who were less active were at greater risk of becoming clinically depressed (Camacho, Roberts, Lazurus, Kaplan & Cohen, 1991; Farmer et al., 1988; Paffenberger, Lee & Leung, 1994; Weyerer, 1992). Although the women interviewed were not clinically assessed there is certainly evidence to demonstrate that a termination of activity could, or was perceived to have serious long-term effects. The more transient effects on mood and self-esteem because of injury are explored later within section 8.5, 'Body Impact'.

Many women talked of the need to release tension whilst others referred to the need to push themselves and achieve long-term goals in their sport:

I think I'd go completely round the bend if I didn't play rugby...I really find it difficult to imagine not playing rugby (Ruth : Rugby)

Everything is on hold really till later when I've finished doing everything I want in rugby. You find similar friends, those who play at the same level as me who understand and know what I'm doing because they are doing it too...it gives me a sense of purpose of who I am. When people ask me who I am and what I am I can say that I'm an international rugby player and I like that. I find that I need a role and

this is mine, there is something within women who play rugby that is important to have a strong role and rugby can give that to them...it's just one part of what and who I am but it's the part that gives me the most satisfaction (Rhonda : Rugby)

Clearly for Rhonda her goals of International success do not fit the motives for all the women interviewed but it is useful to see the extreme end of the commitment continuum. When considering the impact of such a strong commitment to her sport it is clear that she does value this because of her resultant identity as an international rugby player. What is only hinted at from the interview is how her commitment to rugby can also have detrimental effects. Studies demonstrate that over adherence or addiction to physical activity or sport can result in a lack of compromise over their exercise regime (Wichmann & Martin, 1992) and an obsessive preoccupation with their sport choice (De Coverley Veale, 1987; Griffiths, 1997), as clearly indicated by Rhonda's actions. The interviews did not address fully the negative aspects of sporting commitment to the loss of relationships and friendships but it is evident that sacrifices such as these are made.

In considering sporting attributes it is clear that many women search out activities which push them and drive them towards ultimate success. For others, however, the pull towards sport rests in the development of friendships and the sense of protection and reciprocal emotional support that results from group membership:

I think it plays a big part in certainly in terms of..there's something about playing in a team that is very special and it does make you feel more sort of whole, you're needed and you need them, there is some reciprocal stuff going on and it's made a huge impact on me now (Susan : Rugby)

For the rugby players this sense of belonging and desire to be needed stemmed from the risk taken when putting a 'body on the line' for each other and the intense nature

that the physical danger brings to friendship networks. As discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5, the cricketers' team identity focused more on the social relationships developed through an ethos of fun and sense of community that was perceived to run through all cricket clubs. For the netballers, friendships developed because of a need to be 'part of the girls', identified by the separateness from other non-sporty friends in terms of the goals of an evening together. Team membership and its role in the development of friendships is clearly identified within this section, thus supporting the overwhelming evidence of the importance of this factor identified in the PMQ findings presented earlier (section 4.7). These factors make a huge impact on the lifestyle of these women and something they would not wish to discontinue for anything other than fear of physical incapacity.

8.2.3 Influences on children

For many of the women interviewed the most significant impact of sport participation was the influence that this would have on their children. This was recognised both by women who had children at the time and women who were planning to do so in the future. There appeared to be two main strands for the reasons why they wanted their children to be so involved in sport. Firstly, because for them sport was an important part of their lives and they valued physical activity in the social growth of their children. Secondly, sport was regarded as a moral example one which provided an alternative to other youthful pursuits such as drinking and drug taking:

I think then it helps them [children] be the same, y'know I think if probably they see their parents being active...I think then they would want to be active and play sport and...if they see you, y'know doing it as well...I do think sport is a good way of mixing with people and getting on well with, y'know your peers...and...then it could help as well in careers depending on...y'know what they do and I think it's a helpful thing (Sharon : Rugby)

It's got to be good for you doing sport anyway because it makes you physically fit...kept me out of trouble and that's a big thing isn't it?, I mean I think...15/16 year olds can get into sport and it always gives you something to do...it's...just...a good way of life...I've got a 17 year old and a 14 year old and I've never had any trouble with drugs or drinking or whatever, I'm not saying that I won't but I think it gives you a fairly good basis to sort of a decent life doesn't it?...I think it keeps you instil a sense of fun...I think it's good for them to see you like still active, you're not quite such the old fart that they think you are anyway (Maria : Netball)

For Maria, in particular, her long-standing physical activity meant that she felt she was valued as a parent by her children when compared to other non-sporting parents. A sharing of activities that brought her so much enjoyment appears to instil in her children that being active provides a valuable way of life and a 'decent' one which should protect them from the suspected dangers of alcohol and illegal drugs. This perception of the moral role of sport in society demonstrates how constructed notions of idealism become associated to sport and people who are physically active. Subsequently this perception informs our understanding of sport experiences as 'good' and a healthy way to live. Taking into consideration the long-term impacts of participation in sport at school for the continued pursuit of similar activities by adults (ADNFS, 1992; Coakley & White, 1992; Curtis et al., 1999; Woods et al., 1999) perhaps this also means a continuation of a 'decent' life. An indication of beliefs and values over a long-term period would provide more evidence to support this idea.

8.2.4 Sport as sacrifice

For the women interviewed who were still at college there was a real need to explain the difficulties and pressures they felt they were under in order to be successful in their sports. When considering long-term careers and the potential downfalls of over commitment at any early age these comments refocus the need of selectors to protect

and support young performers rather than simply press them into playing. Regardless of the sport played by young women, Danny's comment encompasses the concerns of those on the verge of International success:

I was asked to play for England under 21's but I had an exam on...one of the days and they...did ask me if I wanted to play. I mean it would've never even crossed my mind to play...knowing I had an exam, never and I think it was a bit unfair...because some people who do take their cricket maybe a bit more seriously than I do would maybe alter their future and I disagree with that..I think if you're not going to make any money from it education should come first (Danny : Cricket)

This inclusion directs the attention of the thesis to one of the more worrying aspects of sport participation, that of the potentially detrimental effects of intense involvement on a players education and social activities. As discussed previously, in relation to Rhonda's commitment to rugby, there appears to be a real danger of putting all her 'eggs in one basket' and becoming obsessed by one goal. Danny felt that many young players could feel trapped by the enticement of an England call up when compared to sitting an exam. Since slightly older than some of her team-mates, Danny recognised the value of completing an education. This certainly reflects a comment made by Cath, in Chapter 5, who noted that there were added pressures on women's cricket to perform when receiving very little if any monetary support.

8.2.5 The self-preservation of a successful athlete

The last accounts within this section focus on the need of a number of the sportswomen to discontinue their participation in order to preserve their best performances in the minds of those who would continue after them. This indicates how closely these women associate themselves with their identity as sports performers and the need to safeguard this. Even though these women professed that

they would continue until they were physically unable to do so there was a deep-seated fear that their best would be forgotten. For some they did not want to be remembered as anything less than great performers:

...to me I'll stop playing when I can see myself not being good enough any more...I think when you're..like, y'know got to quite a high level you don't want feel yourself going down and seeing everybody else fitter and better than you, especially physically, I mean there's one lady who used to coach us who...played into her fifties and...I wouldn't like that, I mean you'd look back and go 'ohh I used to be able to do that, I used to be able to do that', and that would frustrate me...that would really get to me (Danny : Cricket)

...two years ago I decided that we've got a lot of good youth at our club, to stand down because you can't go for ever and I'd prefer people to remember me as a good player rather than look and think 'what on earth is she still doing playing there?'...I still play lower down where you can still shine (laugh) (Maria : Netball)

For these two women, and others, the need to preserve their image as successful sportswomen was far more important than simply continuing to play the sport. The identity developed through participation had become the part of their lives that brought respect and enjoyment. The fear of losing that through physical inability was something that neither could face. The implications of being perceived as an exerciser or sportsperson are far reaching. Exercisers were considered more muscular and more physically able than both non-exercisers and individuals in the control group (Martin, Sinden & Fleming, 2000). Martin et al also demonstrated that those who exercise were considered to be more self-confident, to have greater self-control and to be harder workers than non-exercisers and individuals in the control group. When taking Maria's previous comments into consideration relating to the moral benefits of sport and keeping fit it is clear that the associated characteristics of an exerciser are both physical and psychological. This exercise-related attribute can also be seen when investigating how many people have very negative images of individuals who engage

in unhealthy practices (Gibbons and Gerrard, as cited by Martin et al., 2000). In terms of impression management (Conroy, Motl & Hall, 2000; Leary, 1992), providing information about one's exercise related behaviour, in which the individual puts her/himself in the best possible light, is certainly one tactic utilised by the women interviewed.

For the women rugby players, cricketers and netballers the impact of participation is far reaching and it is difficult to separate one activity, which dominates their lives from the rewards they appear to gain. The following section expands on how and why sport has become such a big part of their lives by exploring how the skills developed through playing transfer to other areas. This was regarded as both a positive and negative experience.

8.3 Transfer of Skills

8.3.1 Introduction

This section reflects on the qualities and skills acquired by the sportswomen through their participation in rugby, cricket and netball. No differences were found between the sports in terms of the qualities they felt they had gained through their experiences. This demonstrates at one level how any physical activity may contribute to the development of confidence and a commitment to achieve a goal. As discussed within the sporting attributes section of Chapter 5, there were a number of qualities exhibited by sportswomen which they felt reflected a certain sporting personality. These included the presence of a drive to succeed and a commitment to complete a sought after goal. This section reflects on how sporting qualities and skills are developed through participation and the subsequent use of those skills in other areas.

8.3.2 Confidence

The quality which was most remarked upon by all the women interviewed was confidence and how this grew through continued physical activity. As previously mentioned (section 5.4.3, 'Physical confidence on and off the pitch/ field /court'), there were a number of women who felt their physical confidence on the pitch/field/court influenced the perception of ability outside the sport setting. For many this resulted in a sense of security in the belief that they could 'handle' themselves in a potentially dangerous situation. There are, however, other benefits to this growth in confidence through speaking to other team-mates and work colleagues. Rachel believes that her efforts as team captain has allowed her to develop both speaking and problem solving skills based on the confidence she has in communicating with other people. Although it is difficult to ascertain the direction of the relationship between confidence and performance, it is clear that for Rachel her confidence as a successful rugby player contributes greatly to her confidence in captaincy and in life generally:

I am very confident at speaking in front of a lot of people...at decision making and having the attitude of well that I'd rather make a bad decision than just sit back and not make a decision at all...I've noticed it in actually in my work life as well I think it's had a really good effect because I've been doing lots of interviews recently to try and promote...the club on the radio...my confidence has grown talking in front of people thinking that my opinion may count for something rather than thinking 'oh it doesn't, it won't matter'. I can sort of think things through just as I'm saying them and it just makes it so much easier...and I think that has got a lot to have done with being captain for 3 years (Rachel : Rugby)

For Rachel and other sportswomen there does appear to be a relationship between being successful in an activity and a drive to continue in that role. For some this is purely based on the physical confidence obtained through holding a role within the team. For others this is through more managerial type functions. This aspect leads

strongly into the competence motivation work of Harter (1978; Messer & Harter, 1986). Within this theory individuals are found to be motivated in achievement domains where their competence can be demonstrated. For many of the women motivation was based on a need to be considered not only physically competent but also competent in directorial roles. Management skills and leadership were valued greatly within work activities and many placed the development of such skills within their sport experiences:

I'm a team leader at work and I tend to have a more relaxed attitude at work due to playing cricket I think. Organisational skills as well with the team, especially when the captain is busy with other things. I find that I can organise people quite well, making sure about getting stuff done, stuff like that (Cara : Cricket)

...rugby certainly taught me to be a much stronger person and it's taught me a lot about success and I think that I am strong and quite successful in what I do...sort of strong minded, strong willed, not letting people trample all over you in your job (Rebecca : Rugby)

Many of the sportswomen interviewed reflected on the whole experience of playing sport as an adult and recognised how they have changed as individuals through that experience. Self-confidence grew through an appreciation of the ability to expand previous boundaries to success, indicating how the physical-self as perceived achiever influences the psychological-self. For Nicki her experiences of netball at a high level helped her to overcome a shyness and negativity about her ability to perform certain functions:

I think over the last few years just...meeting new people, just learning to relax a bit and realise that I can actually play...so now when I get on there...I think if there's a boundary saying 'oh well yeah I've done this much but I don't know if I can go to the next step', now everything is open to me say 'well if they can do it there's no reason why I can't at least try and do it' (Nicki : Netball)

Generally, it would appear that participating in a sport does produce qualities such as self-confidence, problem solving and an awareness of the potential within. Clearly a number of these qualities may have been developed through activities other than sport and providing a direct causal relationship, therefore, would not be possible. It is possible, however, to demonstrate that for these sportswomen the belief in self-confidence and problem solving stems from their participation. It is the perception of a transfer of skills that should be noted rather than assuming that these women would have gained a similar level of confidence through non-sporting activities. Sonstroem's (1997a, 1997b) personal development hypotheses proposes that self-esteem can be changed through experience, either positive or negative, through development in skills, task mastery and success. It was also found that it is the perception of an improvement of fitness or other factors rather than actual physical changes that results in an increase in self-esteem (Fox, 2000). For these women it is the perception of a change as a result of their participation in the sport that is most important. The impact of injury on confidence and the subsequent consequences for self-esteem levels are discussed within the final section of this chapter. Here it is evident that the removal of physical activity does have detrimental effects on other areas of life, suggesting that there is a causal relationship to some degree.

The penultimate section of this chapter is a retrospective investigation of the experiences of sport at school and how this experience may have impacted on the development of sport related stereotypes. It provides an insight into how and why sporting individuals at school come to have such a level of respect amongst peers and how success can defer ridicule within academic areas.

8.4 School Perceptions

8.4.1 Introduction

This section reflects on school experiences of sport and attempts to identify activities that became recognised as appropriate for girls and boys. There is also an investigation as to why it was acceptable for girls to be bad at sport but not boys. Here we recognise how stereotypes about the expected behaviours of girls and boys are differentiated and supported through peer recognition or ridicule. Respondent accounts highlighted how success within sport could hide a multitude of shortcomings within the academic side of school. Just as sports teachers could connect to children with behavioural problems because of their interest in sport, as identified in Chapter 5, there was a realisation that children who were not academic were 'valued' by peers if they had sporting talent.

8.4.2 Being 'sporty' as a valued attribute

A number of women recalled how being sporty at school was a valued attribute to have, but that this attribute far more expected of and valued by boys. Ruth recollects how girls were still respected if they had physical talents but this was seen as a bonus rather than as a necessity. For boys, however, this was crucial:

I think it was more...acceptable...for girls to be bad at sport than it was for boys...I mean girls who were good that's fine...I think that was deemed as a positive thing, y'know that girls were allowed to be good at sport but I think that girls were also allowed to be dreadfully bad at sport...it didn't matter, whereas I think it must have been very difficult...for a lad who couldn't...y'know who were naturally just like wanted to sit in the corner and not go outside in the cold and wet (laugh)...I suppose it's because, in a way...people don't expect girls to be good at sport in some ways (Ruth : Rugby)

The expectation here is that girls were not going to be good at sports and so there was no real concern if she failed. Her friends would still want to be her friends without

recriminations. It would appear that the construction of acceptable behaviours and sporting expectations for girls and boys are different. Sport has been argued previously (Whitson, 1990) to be an agent in how boys construct their expectations of themselves in social relationships with women and other men. It also serves as a site in constructing male solidarity. As a male preserve (Dunning, 1994) sport is an area in which images of ideal masculinity are constructed and promoted (Connell, 1987). Boys learn what it is to become 'men' and notions of the differences between men and women, and between men who do and do not compete, are also developed (Connell). Similarly, sport also provides the avenue in which many girls construct their identities, forming boundaries for acceptable behaviour, future sporting career opportunities and notions of their importance in the sporting environment. It is clear from Ruth and Nicki's comments that boys were supposed to be good at sport. They received the adulation of the girls and respect from other boys. As Nicki remarked on the development of this stereotype into adulthood it is a requirement of masculine identity to be interested in sport even if you do not participate. To admit a dislike or ignorance about sport, and in particular football, is tantamount to announcing that you are not a man:

I think that if a lad was good at sport they were totally sort of respected or y'know the girls sort of like thought 'oh yeah he's lovely'...I think the girls really weren't expected to be that good at sport whereas if you were a lad and you weren't very good at sport, I don't know if it was necessarily that they would be picked on but they didn't get as much respect and I think they felt a bit more conscious about it as well...I think there's a lot more emphasis on sport with men anyway in this country...it's the sort of laddish phenomenon if you're not good at say football or you don't like football...you're not a man (Nicki : Netball)

It is clear that this stereotype has its roots within school definitions of what is and is not acceptable and expected sporting behaviour. For young men this results in a

question of their masculinity and ultimately their sexuality. This is one of the paradoxes in the associations between sporting behaviour and sexuality for women and men. For men an omission of physical activity in their lives preceded accusations of homosexuality, but for women it is the inclusion of physical activity which lends itself to the lesbian label. Clearly the role of physicality and what that comes to symbolise in Western society has the greatest impact on stereotype formation. For young women this results in the lowest expectations of sport success and the lack of interest to pursue any such desire. When considering the how and why women choose to participate in any sporting activity it should be made clear that their history lies in apathy and low expectations.

8.4 3 Sport used to hide other difficulties

With this in mind it is interesting to focus on the benefits of participation in sport at school through the shielding of other less prized attributes. For a number of sportswomen there was the recognition that children could avoid ridicule or prejudice in one area by substituting it for success in sport. Nicola recalls an incident of a young boy who had learning and behavioural problems at school but was still included and embraced by his peers because of his physical talents:

I think you can get away with a lot if...I think even if you've got say some sort of special needs...like if there's something wrong with you a little bit, if you're good at something, like even a sport because they can pick you for that team you can get away with it...I know an example...at Primary school where there was somebody who had a problem with their speech...and even the teacher said to me that they got away with it because they were good at their sport, if they'd not been good at that, because they were always wanted in the team they would probably have been picked on a bit more in the class (Nicola : Netball)

Sport as an avenue for acceptance and relief from other prejudices has been documented before in terms of promoting the social benefits of exercise rather than just the physical. Certainly for women the social and team aspects of sport act as a greater motivator in participation than that demonstrated by men (Finkenberg & Moode, 1996; White, 1993, 1995). It is also clear that for those students who had learning problems but little physical talent the situation would have been made even worse. As teachers and programme administrators this evidence should help to question the prevalence of sporting attributes above all else within certain schools and universities. Equally the presence of the 'thick jock' stereotype who cannot attain any decent level of education contends with the flip side of the benefits of sporting excellence. One cricketer recalled how her inclusion within a university degree programmes, with other talented sports people, allowed her to become recognised as more than just a sportswoman.

This section has investigated how school perceptions of physical ability come to bear a great deal of influence on the subsequent assessment of respect and value as an individual. It is clear that girls and boys have different expectations placed on them by peers and adults concerning their physical capabilities. Girls could be rewarded for physical achievements but this is not considered vital to peer acceptance. Boys, alternatively were regarded as attractive and worthy only if they did have sport success. The last section within this chapter reflects on how perceptions of body satisfaction may change through participation in physical activity. There is a discussion concerning the use of sport as a tool to release tension and how the 'buzz' created by playing cannot be found in any other area of their lives. Finally, there is a

reflection on how the perception of physical fitness comes to have a knock on effect on body image construction and acceptance of size.

8.5 Body Impact

8.5.1 Introduction

The body has been the focus of many of the topics discussed within this thesis, the roots of a number of explanations lying in the level of physicality experienced by each sport group. Being physical and being valued because of your size and shape has made a dramatic impact on a number of the women interviewed, as discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. Here the focus is on how sport provides a release of tension for these women, one that becomes exacerbated when performance is halted due to injury. This sensation can be understood when considering the importance placed on the experience of the performance 'buzz'. As described it produces an adrenaline rush that serves to differentiate the sporting experience from any other activity. Ultimately the cycle of physical self-appreciation is identified, developing through the improvement of a fit and healthy body.

8.5.2 Releasing tension and the 'healthy body - healthy mind' syndrome

The beginnings of physical satisfaction rest in the ability to release tension through the exertion of playing. For many women this is the sole reason for playing sport and one in which, when restricted because of an injury, is very unbalancing. The comments from Caitlin are typical of such a response:

I would be very frustrated, I would be a nightmare to live with basically, I would be so frustrated and so angry I would be horrible, I know I am...because that's what I was like when I was out for that nine months...I was horrible, I was just completely like frustrated, stomping around the house, depressed because I didn't have that contact, didn't have anybody else to...talk to, to go out and discuss the

match with or whatever, horrible, I'm a horrible person when I don't exercise (Caitlin : Cricket)

Caitlin describes some of the most common symptoms exhibited by sportspeople who have an involuntary break from exercise, that of frustration, irritability, tension and depression (De Coverley Veale, 1987; Griffiths, 1997; Szabo, 1995). The negative impact of withdrawal from exercise can be seen as the result of becoming suddenly deprived of enjoyable experiences, such as mood enhancement and social interaction that regular exercise brings (Pierce, 1994). Alternatively, Pierce goes onto suggest that the loss of physical arousal from exercise prevents the participant from avoiding negative feelings such as lethargy and sluggishness, which stems from that inactivity. For Cath her experience of training is based on a need to be active and a fear that the lack of training will have detrimental effects on her moods elsewhere:

...healthy body makes me a healthier person as I feel much happier...and it has become psychological for me that...if I don't go training I get very, very grumpy and y'know...a lot of people I know experience that...I think if I stopped playing at that level...I would be concerned if my motivation to be healthy or to be fit disappeared, that would worry me...I think if I don't train, y'know I feel very sluggish and that...has a knock-on effect with my moods (Cath : Cricket)

Biddle and Mutrie (2001) suggest that the evidence for a link between physical activity and psychological well-being is sometimes weak or inconsistent. There are, however, studies which do demonstrate a link between exercise and enhanced mood and affect contributing to the general perception of exercise as psychologically beneficial (Biddle, 2000; Gordon & Grant, as cited by Biddle et al, 2001; McAuley, 1994; Moses, Steptoe, Mathews & Edwards, 1989; Sonstroem, 1984). For a number of the studies mentioned the effects do appear limited but could be the result of the recruitment to exercise studies. Such individuals may already be psychologically healthy and so indicate little improvement on measures used to assess positive mood

change (Biddle & Mutrie, 2001; Mutrie & Biddle, 1995). Although this may be the case non experimental research does point to the positive effects of exercise on mood and self-esteem because individuals still perceive the benefits of exercise (Biddle & Mutrie, 1991) as confirmed by the ADNFS (1992). It would appear that however tenuous the relationship between physical activity and enhanced mood states are it is clear that all of the women interviewed did appreciate a greater sense of well-being as a result of their sport participation.

8.5.3 The adrenaline 'buzz'

The sensation that something would be lost if they did not compete does reflect some of the rugby players' discussions concerning the 'buzz' received from playing. Having to put their bodies 'on the line' time after time in order to protect a team-mate produces high levels of adrenaline because of the risk of being injured. For many this was the only time in which they experienced such a rush and believe that rugby would be the only sport to produce such a sensation:

I don't suppose I do anything else that gives me such a..doesn't give me the same feeling...it's a real adrenaline buzz...I suppose it's the only thing..the only thing I do where you allowed to like be fairly physical (Ruth : Rugby)

Another rugby player tried to explain why rugby was such a unique sport through a comparison to netball. Her need for physical contact continues to motivate her to play rugby as no other sport can bring the rush connected to this aspect of sporting experience:

I play rugby because no other sport gives me the buzz that rugby does. I can't get that buzz playing netball, I can't get it playing basketball...I could be wrong, y'know I'm not I'm not a netball player, but I don't think you could get that excited every...pass that you do (Rachel : Rugby)

For her it is the contact that makes the difference. As alluded to previously in Chapter 5, there were certain women who were considered just not 'hard' enough to play rugby and it is on the basis of physical contact that separates women rugby players from other sportswomen. That is not to say that other sports do not experience the 'buzz' whilst playing. A number of the cricketers reflected on the adrenaline rush experienced when having to face a bowler one on one. This gladiatorial component was both terrifying and enjoyable by those who experienced it. Cheryl describes the sensation below:

I liked batting...I like the one on one thing, I don't know it..it's like a personal challenge really, you're out there on your own and it used to make me really nervous and I like that, you get a buzz from that 'cos you get a real adrenaline rush so that's why I liked it..you kind of get hooked...it make me nervous and it's like a buzz..sometimes you hate it at the time it depends who you're facing but afterwards you feel really good (Cheryl : Cricket)

There was not a similar reflection made by the netballers as to the sensations of a battle against an opponent. The only netballer to recall a 'buzz' sensation was Maria who describes it in terms of a public response to an overall performance rather than as a direct result of competition with another player:

I suppose at the end of the day, even though I didn't consider my self to be a big head it's still a lovely feeling when people said 'oh you had a great game today' and you wanted that every time, I suppose it's like a performance isn't it...I don't know what you'd call it..a buzz a rush or something and when you get out there on a stage and everybody goes 'yes!'(Maria : Netball)

This distinction may be as a result of the lack of physical contact that should happen within netball games. It is clear, however, that netball can be a very physical game and so the explanation may lie in the individual combat experienced by each sport participant. For the rugby player there is direct contact with an opponent consistently throughout the game, for cricketers batting provides that intensity of competition

although this does not continue throughout the match. Perhaps as netball restricts the movements of each player and, therefore, lessens the chance of contact the 'buzz' created by a physical challenge does not arise. If the experience of the 'buzz' can be incorporated into physical self-worth via a combination of sport competence and physical strength it would not be surprising to find it having such an impact on the overall sense of physical self-efficacy and self-esteem of these sportswomen.

8.5.4 Acceptance of the body

The physical perception of fitness and looking-good impacts greatly in terms of how and why individuals learn to accept what their bodies look like. For some this is as the result of a change in the muscle tone of their bodies regardless of their weight at any given time. This contrasts with a number of research papers that suggest that women focus on weight as the sole indicator of physical attractiveness (Bailey et al., 1990; Silberstein et al., 1988). For the sportswomen interviewed here the centre of their attention was on muscle and skin tone in addition to the sensation of overall fitness that this brought. For a number of women this had a direct relationship to their perception of themselves as sportswomen. Their identity was constructed around the concept of them being sporty and fit and so having a body which reflected that perception was highly valued. Cheryl describes this frequently sought activity:

...it sounds really vain but I like to look quite toned, and when that goes it effects me 'cos I like to look sporty...I love to wear shorts or whatever and T-shirts if I'm semi-toned...and I as soon as that goes it effects me I feel...really lethargic, weak...it just effects how you feel about yourself and y'know then I'm itching to get down the gym and...sort of backtrack and getting my muscle tone back or whatever, you do..you have higher confidence..you...look toned and it does effect your confidence (Cheryl : Cricket)

For Cheryl, and other women there is a direct relationship between the sensation of being toned and having physical confidence. It is not just about the ability to complete a particular task but also about presenting oneself in the image which suits them most. Creating a body which fits the sporty image is one way in which to achieve this identity confirmation. The sportswomen in this study all concern themselves with identity management (Conroy et al., 2000; Leary, 1992) at some level. Presenting oneself as an athlete is high on their personal and public agenda.

The awareness of tone and fitness has clearly become, for the women in this study, one of the most significant consequences of participation. Susan describes this process eloquently through recognising the impact that her rugby playing has had on her body satisfaction. For her self-appreciation through the physical abilities displayed whilst playing have resulted in an increase in the acceptance of her body shape and size. The value placed on her body because of the function it performs on the pitch and the recognition of this from coaches and other players promotes her body as useful and worthwhile. She felt that this assessment of her by others and the development of an awareness of the importance of fitness and healthy eating continued to push her towards maintaining that level of body control:

I mean all my life I've been sort of yo yoing with weight and diet and stuff like that and ironically the...positive response that I got from John and the rugby team, because of my size and build meant that because I was doing more exercise, because I felt better about myself, because...I was more aware of my fitness and y'know yes it is alright to eat like, y'know loads of pasta but skip the chocolate and y'know be a bit more sensible, that ironically I lost sort of a stone in the first year of playing and y'know you learn that 'oh yeah muscle weighs more than fat'...as long as you work hard and you exercise it off...your body becomes more toned, it becomes more supple, I know that I am a hundred percent fitter now than I was ten years ago so in terms of age and I see women swimming at the gym and I bet they're the same that they can say 'yeah I'm loads fitter now' and feel better for it (Susan : Rugby)

Susan continues her discussion on how and why her perception of her body has changed since playing rugby through the notion that exercise creates a cycle of satisfaction for her. Through playing sport her body becomes more toned and fitter, which in turn promotes the benefits of adherence. For her the process resulted in a greater acceptance of size and shape alongside an attitudinal shift into what equalled a healthy lifestyle:

...it does make you feel better about yourself, you don't feel so hard...on yourself you've got, y'know positive self-esteem, positive self image...positive feedback you can't help but feel better about yourself...you look at yourself in the mirror and you think 'God!', y'know even...if you haven't lost weight or anything you feel better in yourself so, therefore, you are perhaps more disposed to do something about yourself if you do want to lose a bit of weight or...y'know start flattening your stomach off and want to do 100 sit-ups a day you are going to want to do it because it's going to make you a better player, it's going to make you feel better about yourself...it's the sort of the domino effect, y'know the more you do, the better you feel about yourself, the more energy you've got, the more energy you've got the more you do, the more exercise you squeeze in, it's a sort of faultless formulae, you can't go wrong (Susan : Rugby)

Susan had previously described how she had struggled with her weight prior to her participation in rugby and always felt that this was her stumbling block because of her height. Now she had come to realise that her body size and shape were the ultimate quality needed to play her position. The unique experience of body value resulted in a positive change in the perception of what was an acceptable and ultimately useful body for her. McDermott's (2000) work also recognised this shift in attitude, suggesting how the experience of being physical contributed to the broadening of body perceptions or developing alternative ways of understanding their own physicality. It is also evident from recent research (Drew, 1996; Mutrie & Choi, 2000) that the perception of the healthy body is strongly linked to being thin. The restructuring of such attitudes to those demonstrated here by Susan would go a long

way to prevent some of the dietary restrictions and hazardous exercise behaviours many women exhibit in the search for the 'ultimate body' or the 'look' (Featherstone, 1991). What Susan demonstrates is how important satisfaction with body appearance is to global self-esteem and to the sense of identity an individual has. This is matched by the relationship found between identity integration and body appearance satisfaction during Stage One of the thesis. Likewise there is similarity in results that show a strong relationship between body appearance scores and the role a body takes within a sport. These findings and others throughout Chapters 5 through 8 demonstrate the association between both stages of the thesis.

8.6 Summary

Throughout this chapter the focus has been on how sport participation has impacted on the lives of the sportswomen interviewed. It has been shown that for all these women sport has become a part of their lives that they could not see themselves relinquishing. For others it has become their life, directing all their time and efforts to pursuing an ultimate goal of international performance. The inclusion of some of these women in conversations relating to sport as a holder of knowledge was also recognised as a direct result of participation. What was clear, however, was that at times the inclusion within a sport group that sought to hide her femaleness presented a number of difficulties. Wanting to be included primarily on the basis of sporting ability was important but maintaining an identity as a woman, and therefore, different was also required. This tension reflected some of the other contradictions exhibited by many women between wanting to reject traditional ideals of the separateness of women's and men's sporting activities but wanting to accept that at times it was nice to be viewed as different.

Reflecting on school experiences and the development of accepted and expected behavioural patterns goes some way to identify the roots of sport specific stereotypes. Here it was shown that there were very little expectations of sporting talents for girls at school but a great deal of pressure on boys to have a level of sport excellence. This lack of expectation in terms of the sporting potential for girls comes to bear a great deal of influence at later stages of development when considering the perception of a girl's sport, such as netball. Here we find that the expectations associated with netball are very low in terms of the physical requirements needed to play and the respect given to those who participate in it. There was also the confirmation that sporting success can ultimately protect a child from prejudice in other more academic areas purely by the inclusion within a school team. It would appear that academia does not become an accepted aim for many young people until university, when for many this is too late.

In the final section there was a discussion on the impact sport participation has on body perception and satisfaction. Here the development of positive images develops through an acceptance of what the body does on the pitch and an increase in the awareness of health and fitness because of that. For some women there appears to be a circle of satisfaction one, which starts at performance and value of the role the body takes, developing through a physical change in the body and ending in the construction of a positive body image. This ultimately should be valued above all else as body satisfaction through performance and muscle tone is far greater an objective than simply being able to lose weight.

A number of conclusions can be reached if we consider the social construction of sport as a source of moral guidance for children and the evidence suggesting low expectations of girls' physical abilities. What these findings suggest is the prevalence of accepted notions of the limitations of female physicality and the self-classification of sport as essential to masculine development. It also demonstrates that once women have reached a level of maturity in both age and skill their identities are reconstructed in order to present themselves as 'sporty' in order to benefit from the supposed related attributes. Interpreting the accounts in a social constructionist framework has focused how social processes determine our understandings of sporting experience.

The respondent's accounts have led to a deeper understanding of how sport can impact on individual lives. Listening to and re-reading the accounts demonstrates clearly how important hearing the stories of the women in this study, rather than counting responses on a sheet gives so much more reality and depth to their experiences. Having completed the discussion of the interviews and listened to so many stories it is clear that interviewing women was more illuminating than just using the three questionnaires.

The next and final chapter in the thesis is a discussion and reflection chapter, which brings together the main issues identified in the previous five data chapters. Here the relationship between performance and identity will be clarified in addition to explaining some of the similarities and differences exhibited by the rugby players, cricketers and netballers. The chapter will continue by reflecting on the process and outcomes of the entire research exercise indicating areas to pursue in the future and any potential downfalls of the methodology used.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

In this concluding chapter I will bring together the main themes presented in the previous eight chapters and place the whole thesis in its research context. I will look back on the aims and objectives set at the outset of the project and track the development of ideas. Here the main factors which contribute to the understanding of the perceptions women rugby players, cricketers and netballers have of themselves as sportswomen and the impact of sport choice are highlighted. In addition to this I will reflect on the research process itself, identifying my influence on the research process, possible areas of change and future research opportunities.

9.1 Aims of the research project

The focus of the thesis rested on the experience and identity of women within rugby, cricket and netball. I identified that there was a gap in the understanding of women in all sports (see Brighton Declaration, 1994) and in particular women in sports that were considered to be non-traditional. Subsequently the aims of the research were expanded to include an investigation of the impact of that participation on self-esteem, body image and identity development. I sought to identify how women experienced sport, how they gave subjective meaning to that experience and how self-identity changes or becomes rooted in that experience. This ultimately resulted in the presentation of both positive and negative aspects of their participation experience and provided a greater insight into why women choose to play rugby, cricket or netball. Physicality and its influence on continued participation became an important area of investigation as it was thought to influence life choices and behavioural expectations. In particular its relationship to the development of body satisfaction through adhering to the norms of a given sporting activity were explored. In essence

the project sought to investigate how the physical-self as an essential part of identity develops and what factors can influence that development.

9.2 General findings and contribution to knowledge

The results from both Stage One of the research process (questionnaires) and Stage Two (interviews), indicate that women in rugby, cricket and netball do participate in their chosen sports for a number of similar reasons. Additionally, it was found that the women had similar sport experiences to one another. There were, however, a number of distinctions among the sportswomen and between the sport groups that appeared to be rooted in the level of physicality needed to play each sport. This demarcation of experience was most evident in the relationship between team and individual identity and that of physical contact. For the rugby players, putting one's 'body on the line' for another team-mate was the key factor in friendship development and support networks. When attempting to identify how different women experience sport and how they give subjective meaning to that experience the theoretical implications are far reaching. Trust, protection and honesty are concepts rarely discussed in relation to competitive sporting values or consequences for continued participation. Recognising that women do participate in sport for the value of physical experience alone furthers our understanding of the role sport can have for many women. In addition it is clear that researchers should acknowledge the multitude of possible outcomes of physical experience. Rather than investigating concepts such as confidence or anxiety singularly it is evident that these are interrelated and better understood when considered holistically.

For a number of the women in this study the physical experience of sport was described as 'gladiatorial' or 'squashing' or 'overpowering'. This description thus adds women to the equation of sport as the last domain in which it is possible to display physical domination over another, once previously argued to be the sole domain of men (Sabo & Messner, 1993; Whitson, 1990). This finding, however, can be regarded as problematic. Previous research suggests that women in sports that do require a great deal of physical contact or power such as boxing (Halbert, 1997), wrestling (Young, 1997; Sisjord, 1997) and football (Pirinen, 1997) do not display the supposed 'male' qualities of ultimately trying to 'kill each other' whilst in the playing arena. In this way research asserts the notion that women remove themselves from the masculinization of their sports because they seek to attain other goals such as friendship, community spirit and understanding. This is explicitly noted in the development of the Notso Amazon softball league in Toronto as described by Jefferson Lenskyj (1994). The research on which this thesis is based suggests that women rugby players *do* want to play sport for the physical contact and the potential to 'squash' and 'munch' and hurt an opponent. Indeed, there is strong evidence from this research to suggest that women recognise and embrace this ideal as a legitimate way to commit assault on another woman with no recourse to the law. I do not attempt to argue that all women display the aggressive qualities, as described above, in pursuit of sporting experiences. It should, however, be recognised as a possibility and an identifiable characteristic of female participation and not the sole domain of male competitors. This lack of understanding concerning women's experiences of power within a range of sporting activities certainly points to a gap in the present literature. There is a need to explore how women within a number of sports, which differ on the level of required physical contact, experience power and how that may

influence self-identity.

Other key areas highlighted within the data chapters also have potential theoretical and applied implications. The research supports much of the work within competence motivation and self-efficacy in identifying that the perception of one's ability to perform a particular task, such as a sport skill, does lead to continued participation (Harter, 1978; Bandura, 1977, 1986). It also lends itself to the discussion on the overall impact or consequence of that participation on other areas of life. All of the sports groups identified an increase in the perception of their physical confidence outside of the sports arena. This was most evident in relation to perceptions of being able to deal with physical confrontations or the learning of new physical skills. Individual perceptions were corroborated by similar peer reflections on their physical capability. This led to the development of an identity as 'fit' or 'healthy' and was regarded as *the* factor which contributed most to their identity management or self-presentation as sportswomen. When considering self-presentation it is clear that being regarded as physically and subsequently psychologically adept impacts not only on career opportunities but also on motives to continue in that sport in the future. There is, however, a need to investigate the longevity of sport identity presentation and the advantages associated with that persona. Exploring how long an individual can be regarded as a sportsperson, even after participation has ended, would provide a richer understanding of how sport becomes such an integral part of a person's identity. There may be differences in the perception of an individual as a sportsperson depending on the reasons for cessation of activity. Injury may result in the negative interpretation of a sports identity because the athlete can no longer perform as they had. Alternatively it may be the case that retirement, as a result of age related physical

difficulties, might end in a more difficult adjustment to non-sport life because of the presence of sport within their life up until that point. Research focused on self-efficacy and physical competence would certainly contribute to our understanding of how individuals cope with injury.

Another interesting finding from the research was the impact of sport on body satisfaction and the transiency of that concept. The evidence points to a greater acceptance of size and shape because of the function the body performs within a sporting context, as identified by previous research (Furnham et al., 1994; Snyder & Kivlin, 1975). What is clear, however, is that body satisfaction changes once the player leaves the pitch/field/court. There is a tension between rejecting traditional ideas of acceptable sporting behaviour for women on the one hand whilst still accepting, on some level, definitions of acceptable feminine appearance. This was commonly related to the heterosexually defined perceptions of sexual attractiveness within Western society. Ultimately this resulted in positive perceptions of their bodies as useful and approved becoming submerged by the restrictions of socially constructed definitions of femininity. In addition to this finding evidence suggests that all three sport groups were subject to the labelling of participants as lesbian. Here there was no distinction on perceptions of lesbianism in terms of participation in traditional male or female sports. Although factors such as greater musculature and physical contact did increase the perception of women as lesbian by observers of the sport, women within the sport recognised that they were labelled as such regardless of their sport choice. The distinction did occur, however, in the interpretation of that label by both the women themselves and observers. For women within a traditionally female sport, netball, the assumption of lesbianism was associated with positive

fantasy-driven ideals of female sexuality. In this instance netballers who were perceived to be gay were still considered to be attractive and potentially available to men because it fit an ideal of heterosexual attractiveness. For rugby players and cricketers, however, the association was negative. Women were regarded as butch and big indicating that their sexuality and potential heterosexual attraction was not valued. The theoretical implications of this finding would appear to be that women, regardless of sport choice, do suffer from the lesbian label. What is not fully understood is to what extent women embrace or reject that label. The research on which this thesis is based suggests that for rugby players there is a value placed on the label in terms of providing a scene in which to present oneself as gay. This is seen as an open environment, one that embraces all women without prejudice and creates a greater acceptance of behaviour both within and outside the sports arena. This is similar to the experience of women within the Notso Amazon Softball league presented earlier. In order to explore this concept of labelling and its positive or negative interpretations research should look towards more female sports that differ in levels of physical contact and social acceptability. It would also be a worthwhile investigation to ascertain how men in traditionally female dominated sports, such as ice skating or dancing experience labelling.

The thesis set out to explore how self-identity developed through and as a result of sport participation with an emphasis on the role the body took in that process. The findings do suggest that body satisfaction is effected by the usefulness of that body to complete a task within the sport environment. It is also clear that body satisfaction does alter as the situation changes. This does appear to be centred on the wearing of appropriate clothes for sporting or social occasions. What is interesting to note is how

the women themselves perceive this change. Many of the women interviewed recognised this change in their behaviour but regarded this as a natural part of being a 'girl'. The implications of such findings would suggest that early stereotyping of gender appropriate behaviour does have long-term effects on the way in which women interpret body size, shape and usefulness. Taken alongside the discussion surrounding the influence of sport at school the research suggests how perceptions of sport at a young age not only influence our continued participation in adulthood but also our perceptions of femininity and masculinity.

The research presented here contributes to the knowledge on women in sport and women in general on a number of levels. Firstly, it highlights just how important sport has become to the women in the study and, therefore, suggests the influence it may have for large numbers of women who participate in physical activity. Secondly, recognising the role physicality has within women's experience of sport brings an added dimension to our understanding of femininity and masculinity in Western society. If we recognise that sport reflects the society in which it exists, women's perception of and the use of physicality challenges hegemonic assumptions on the physical capabilities of women. The perception of femininity equating to passivity and frailty (Sabo & Messner, 1993) does not match the reality of sporting experience demonstrated here. Certainly women in sports that require physical contact are not only displaying power, but also enjoying what they can do with it. The impact is that these women portray themselves as physically capable and by doing so show that women in all spheres of life have the potential to choose the way they want to behave.

I sought to identify the key relationships between physicality and sport experience through a social constructionist framework of analysis. This concerned itself with understanding that the way in which meanings are interpreted should be placed within an historical and cultural context. As such it was agreed that social processes directed many of the meanings associated to the body and bodily performances. Key to the interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data was that social meanings become embodied in the classification of the social self and consequently how sportswomen experienced the physical self. It was also accepted that the shared vocabularies of body idioms are adopted and used to judge not only other people's behaviours but our own. In doing so women's experiences of sport are determined by social constructions of what is and is not physically attractive. In such ways the construction of dominant body stories, that highlight the preference of thin and non-muscular women over muscular, are developed and sustained.

Social constructionism also identified that individuals construct and reconstruct identities, manage their bodies and present the self depending on the situation and company there are in at any given moment. This was most clearly evident in relation to the transiency of body satisfaction. Once again it was clear that the body idioms of society, in which the physical woman was not valued, had precedence over the function the body performed on the pitch/field/court. The results being that negotiated understandings of the body and the self were constructed through interactions with other people and the social processes that direct them.

By adopting both a social constructionist and feminist interpretation of the data a greater understanding of women's sporting experiences has been achieved. There are

still many questions left unanswered but the five data chapters do provide a detailed consideration of how body satisfaction is formed and how definitions of physicality are constructed and reconstructed by social processes.

9.3 Implications for policy

The findings indicate the importance of school experience on perceptions of the value of sport and future participation in sport. Teachers need to be made aware that girls do perceive that they have lower expectations of physical abilities set for them in comparison to their male peers. Sport and other physical activities at school need to be promoted as equally valuable for girls as for boys and young men. By including sports, such as rugby, which involve physical contact, girls who may have felt that they are not physically 'suited' for traditional games may find an avenue for appreciation and value. As the incidence of eating disorders is increasing among young people in sport (Petrie, 1996; Taub & Blinde, 1994), providing an arena where body satisfaction can be promoted through the value of size and shape may go some way to halt this phenomenon. Additionally, providing a wider choice of sports can only serve to attract more girls who previously found the traditional activities of hockey and netball as inadequate or inappropriate to their physical needs.

Certainly the promotion of rugby, cricket and netball at senior level needs to be reassessed. Although there are a number of full-time athletes in each sport, this does not match the demands of international fixtures or the expected commitment of selected athletes. Participants in all three sports recognised that playing for their country was something highly prized and an ultimate goal in their sporting careers. They did, however, all point to the inadequacy of financial support provided to them

in order to reach that aim. Linked to this were concerns over the suitability of clothing available to them, in particular cricket trousers. This is clearly a 'must do' point for the English and Wales Cricket Board to ensure that their female players can concentrate on the game at hand rather than on what their bodies look like in ill-fitting sportswear.

The labelling of female athletes as lesbians may well be something that governing bodies wish to change or even challenge. Recognising that regardless of sport choice this stereotyping occurs, it is difficult to highlight ways in which this would be possible to do. As pointed to previously, the reasons behind such action should be questioned. By seeking to change such images, sport governing bodies are only serving to perpetuate the notion that this is a 'problem', and one that should be 'dealt with' (Griffin, 1992). This may even be enforced through ensuring participants wear 'feminine' clothes at social occasions (Burroughs, Ashburn & Seebohm, 1995). All those involved in sport, from governing bodies to individual participants, should challenge the notion that lesbianism within sport is necessarily negative. There are heterosexual and homosexual women within and outside of sport and the response to this should be 'so what?'. The sexuality of players and other individuals is irrelevant and should not be an issue. What governing bodies should be focusing on is the promotion of sport as a valuable part of life and an activity that can bring both respect and enjoyment. Concentrating on the promotion of female athletes as fit and heterosexually attractive only serves to widen the gap between specific sport participants and the associations attached to them.

Finally, the stereotyping of women in sport as lesbian implicates how society seeks to define appropriate behaviour for women. An important aspect of this research was to highlight the quandary women within sport found themselves. There are indications from the sportswomen interviewed as to the 'correct' appearance of 'real' players. This is subsequently endorsed by society's limitations on the acceptable appearance of all women and especially in relation to women in sport that wish to identify themselves as heterosexual. The complicity of sportswomen in this process is and will continue to be one of the most destructive aspects of sport participation unless all involved embrace resistance to such constraints. This thesis demonstrates clearly how the physical expression of women, whether in or out of sport, is controlled by traditional ideals of the role of women and what their bodies are permitted to do. Ultimately the thesis revealed that in spite of numerous set backs, financial restrictions and prejudices women still enjoy and play sport.

9.4 Reflecting on the research process

The use of questionnaires and interviews within the study did bring a number of benefits to the process, for example, allowing for further exploration into how and why body satisfaction develops through sport and the impact of that participation on identity. However, in doing so this also resulted in a number of difficulties because of the quantity of data produced. The primary aim of the questionnaires was to gather information relating to participation motivation, self-esteem and body image in order to provide a guideline for further interview-based investigations. In this sense they achieved that aim. Following on from the questionnaire data collection and analysis I found that the wealth of information retrieved could have been counterproductive. This was because the vast array of correlations between factors within and between

questionnaires may not have elicited the most important questions for consideration. I felt that the combination of three questionnaires produced an almost unmanageable amount of data. Future projects would be advised to utilise a more focused approach, one that considered a specific question rather than simply collating a mass of information on a number of issues. In hindsight a questionnaire that investigated both body related issues and self-esteem development together would have been more appropriate. Taking this into consideration, however, the questionnaire stage of the research process was extremely valuable to the development of the study. Essentially, I found that the questionnaires gave me a platform from which to initiate my exploration into sporting experience rather than simply starting with a blank sheet.

With this in mind, the interview stage of the research did begin with a number of difficulties, none more so than the selection of appropriate questions for the interview schedule. Here the development of the schedule was based primarily on the findings of the three questionnaires resulting in an extensive selection process. Taking guidance from research into the physical-self the schedule focused on the role of body satisfaction on participation rates, self-esteem and body image development. Questions concerning self-identity and presentation management were introduced because of the need to identify the impact of sport on life style choices. In retrospect the interview schedule proved highly successful. The material elicited from the interview process covered all areas of sporting experience. Here the questions concerning why body satisfaction can be affected by the role taken within a sport was fully explored. The semi-structured approach of the interviews combined with appropriate probe questions allowed the respondents to clarify issues, such as the transience of body image satisfaction, as and when required. As I was previously

unaware of this factor the interview stage resulted in a greater understanding of the complexities of the body image construct. Without interviewing women who play rugby, cricket and netball it would have been extremely difficult to ascertain the impact that participation had on the rest of their lives and their self-identity. Subsequently the understanding of women's sporting experiences and the influence it has on the presentation of the physical-self has been increased.

In reflecting on personal issues within the research process the relationship between understanding subjective meanings and the interpretation of results was an interesting dynamic. Here the use of social constructionism and feminist research guided the interpretation and discussion of the themes from the interview stages. Taking into consideration my own presence within the research process as a woman, sportswoman and researcher it was clear that previous knowledge of sporting activities did lend to a greater understanding of the feelings and meanings given to individual experiences by these women. The interviews were performed with an emphasis on an interactive conversation about sporting life and not about the more sensitive area of body image. This resulted in a series of interviews that produced open, detailed and rich explanations of their own and other people's actions. In taking a phenomenological approach to interview analysis it was clear that the meanings given to events by the respondents provided a far greater understanding of the impact of sport on women's lives than the use of the three questionnaires at Stage One. Continuing the exploration into themes such as sporting experiences at school and the impact of injury and retirement on body satisfaction and self-presentation would certainly be one area for further work.

9.5 Future Directions

Having completed the research (and the thesis) it is important to consider possible avenues for future work and new directions to explore. Research into sporting experience would be enhanced through an in-depth investigation of a number of previously under-investigated areas. One such area would be the role of power and physical contact on identity development. This may help to clarify some of the remaining questions, such as how individual differences in the use and enjoyment of physical contact can be explained within a rugby team. This aspect could be further explored by seeking out how different sports utilise the experience of power and physical contact within team practice and in the development of that sport's identity in other arenas.

The longevity of sporting identity is another area within sport psychology/sociology that has been poorly researched. There are still many questions which remain unanswered in relation to the mechanisms in place that support the development and maintenance of a sporting identity. In addition there are still gaps in understanding between the importance of voluntary versus involuntary cessation of activity and the transition to athletic retirement. Investigating this area in more detail would provide valuable insight for psychologists and counsellors in guiding an athlete through that difficult career phase. By investigating the importance of self-efficacy and physical competence in sports that differ in levels of physical contact researchers would be able to identify how significant a role those concepts have on identity permanence.

Perceptions of femininity and its influence on how other people view women within sport has been discussed a great deal within sport sociology literature. This research

has extended that knowledge base by investigating women within rugby, cricket and netball, three sports previously under investigated. There is certainly scope for further investigations into how school experiences of sport and early gender stereotyping influence our future perceptions and understanding of sporting experience. This is particularly relevant in terms of how the lesbian stereotype becomes so fixed on female athletes and how athletes embrace or reject these labels. This research would also lend itself to an exploration of the perceptions of masculinity in sport and how definitions of appropriate male behaviour are rooted in similar descriptions of acceptable activity choice. Certainly, examining the differences and similarities of the experience of men in traditional female activities such as dancing could provide a greater insight into how stereotypes are formed and supported by social mechanisms.

The transiency of body satisfaction is a concept that has great scope for further work. This movement between sport and social occasions highlights the frailty of a number of the positive aspects of sport participation. It is clear from the research presented here that sport participation does result in an increase in positive perceptions of the body and its function but it is limited at times by social constructs. It would be useful to investigate a number of sport activities that differ in the level of physicality and social acceptance to understand how individuals perceive this change and to what extent this is an acceptable practice. It would also be a worthy topic to discover if lesbian and heterosexual women differ in the transiency of body satisfaction and if this is influenced again by their participation in 'gay friendly' activities, such as softball.

Utilising an individual case study approach in future work could also help to clarify the meaning of team versus individual competition within a cricket squad. This would increase our understanding of how these two concepts are synthesised in a practical setting and how coaches manage such difficulties. Further explorations are also needed to fully comprehend how and why netballers' perceive themselves to be underrated and undervalued in the sporting world. The application of these findings could contribute to current promotional activities of governing bodies and to develop an identity for netball as a skilled and competitive sport.

9.6 Concluding thoughts

The thesis set out to explore female rugby players, cricketers and netballer's participation motivation and its relationship to self-esteem, body image and self-identity. The research exercise itself resulted in an exploration of the sporting lives of over 200 women. Identity was explained in terms of the ability to cope with physical contact, the ability to value the social attributes of a game and the ability to recognise sport friendships as unique. There was a recognition of the role the body took within a sport team, increasing the value and acceptance of that body by the women themselves and by others around them. Women came to understand that the perception of female sports participants as lesbian occur regardless of their sport choice. It was also discovered that women would receive positive or negative reactions to this stereotype depending on sport choice. The analysis demonstrated that the greater the use of physical power and the further away from traditional ideals of acceptable behaviour the closer the connection to the butch lesbian stereotype.

Perceptions of femininity are at the root of all the descriptions and interpretations

taken from this thesis. It influences not only the perception of sexuality but also physical ability and perceptions of competence outside the sporting arena. The body and its function on the pitch/field/court appears to have the greatest influence on overall body satisfaction, albeit transient. The influence of socially constructed ideals of femininity comes to bear a huge influence on the acceptance of oneself as a woman and a sportswoman. Presenting oneself as a sportsperson and appreciating the rewards from that presentation is an area which does require more investigation. The exploration into how clothes, conversation and attitude influence our understanding of the world around us clearly demonstrates the impact sporting experience has on the rest of our lives. None of the women interviewed could imagine a time without some form of physical activity in their lives.

Investigating women's experiences of rugby, cricket and netball does not only reflect our perceptions and understandings of women within the sporting world. It also demonstrates the pervasiveness of stereotypes and the inevitability of the restrictions on female identity. The struggles to free oneself from that inevitability are shown through the transiency of body satisfaction and an acceptance of that part of being a 'girl'. Throughout the struggles imposed by financial restrictions, gender biased behavioural expectations and limitations on perceptions of femininity these women play sport. What should be made clear above everything else is how women overcome prejudice in search of sporting experience. Taking this one factor alone, the women who took part in this research present a dynamic and illuminating picture of their sport lives. This thesis has explored the role of the body within three different sporting activities and it highlighted the array of sensations and perceptions that result through that experience. It also demonstrated how a decision to be physically active

influences life choices and relationships far outside of the pitch, field or court. The research process illustrated how little we really understand about the relationship between body satisfaction and identity. It also highlighted the complex nature behind definitions of femininity for sportswomen and the body-management skills employed to attain them. It is hoped that by listening to these women's voices through the research process women's experiences of all sport becomes valued.

At this stage I would like to return to Susan, whose experience influenced this whole study. Like Susan I recognise how playing sport and being physically active all my life has made me revel in the physicality of my own body and how much I would miss that experience if I became injured. When I reflect back on being 'sporty' all my life and reread Susan's account, it becomes clear to me just how valuable her experience is:

...being valued because of your size was something I had never experienced before...not just your size but your strength, because you're valued for your height in netball but not strength because it's not a contact sport..but in rugby, God y'know it does contain respect and value and...it's positive and it does make you feel better about yourself, you don't feel so hard on yourself you've got, y'know positive self-esteem, positive self image, you can't help but feel better about yourself
(Susan : Rugby)

Like Susan, sport has not only changed the way I perceive myself and my body, it has changed the way in which I look at other people's bodies. I have always taken for granted my physical self as fit and fast and 'useful'. I had never considered that I would be thought of in any other way. I used to feel a certain pity for people who were clumsy or overweight at school because I thought they should be thinner, fitter, faster and ultimately more 'useful' in the sporting sense. Through listening to Susan's, account of the negative experience of sport at school, I feel closer to understanding

how awful that must have been and how amazing it would be to feel physically valued for the first time. Now I recognise just how much body satisfaction can be influenced by the ability of your body to complete a sporting role. It is an ironic consequence of this research that although I have been 'sporty' all my life and constructed my own prejudices about physical shape and ability I too have come to realise the transient nature of my identity. As I look forward to the ageing process there is a realisation of the time-limited use of my sporting identity and the 'usefulness' of my sporting body. I come to realise just how similar myself as a sportswoman and the women in this study are. This research has provided an insight into the experiences of over two hundred sportswomen including one researcher.

10 References

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APPENDICES

Appendix 11.1 Questionnaires

11.1.1 Participation Motivation Questionnaire

11.1.2 Multidimensional Body Self Relations questionnaire

11.1.3 Multidimensional Self-Esteem Inventory

PARTICIPATION MOTIVATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Date : _____

Gender : _____

Sport : _____

Age : _____

Years of participation in chosen sport : _____

Team : _____

Level : _____

What is the one most important reason why you participate in your sport?

What is the one most important reason why you first started to participate in your sport?

Below are some reasons that people give for participating in sports. Read each item carefully and decide if that item describes a reason why you participate in your sport. Mark an "X" to indicate if that reason is very important, somewhat important, or not at all important for you.

(Participation Motivation Questionnaire taken from Gill, Gross and Huddleston 1983)

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not at all Important
1. I want to improve my skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I want to be with my friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I like to win	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I want to get rid of energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I like to travel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I want to stay in shape	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I like the excitement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I like the teamwork	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. My parents or close friends want me to play	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not at all Important
10. I want to learn new skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I like to meet new friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I like to do something I am good at	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I want to release tension	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I like the rewards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I like to get exercise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I like to have something to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I like the action	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I like the team spirit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I like to get out of the house	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. I like to compete	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. I like to feel important	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. I like being on a team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. I want to go on to a higher level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. I want to be physically fit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. I want to be popular	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. I like the challenge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. I like the coaches or instructors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. I want to gain status and recognition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29. I like to have fun	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. I like to use the equipment or facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

THE MBSRQ

INSTRUCTIONS--PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

The following pages contain a series of statements about how people might think, feel, or behave. You are asked to indicate the extent to which each statement pertains to you personally.

Your answers to the items in the questionnaire are anonymous, so please do not write your name on any of the materials. In order to complete the questionnaire, read each statement carefully and decide how much it pertains to you personally. Using a scale like the one below, indicate your answer by entering it to the left of the number of the statement.

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Mostly Agree	Definitely Agree

EXAMPLE:

_____ I am usually in a good mood.

In the blank space, enter a 1 if you definitely disagree with the statement; a 2 if you mostly disagree; a 3 if you neither agree nor disagree; a 4 if you mostly agree; or enter a 5 if you definitely agree with the statement.

There are no right or wrong answers. Just give the answer that is most accurate for you. Remember, your responses are anonymous, so please be completely honest and answer all items.

(The duplication and use of the MBSRQ permitted by
Thomas F. Cash, Ph.D., Department of Psychology,
Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA 23529)

	1	2	3	4	5
	Definitely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Mostly Agree	Definitely Agree
_____	1.	Before going out in public, I always notice how I look.			
_____	2.	I am careful to buy clothes that will make me look my best.			
_____	3.	I would pass most physical-fitness tests.			
_____	4.	It is important that I have superior physical strength.			
_____	5.	My body is sexually appealing.			
_____	6.	I am not involved in a regular exercise program.			
_____	7.	I am in control of my health.			
_____	8.	I know a lot about things that affect my physical health.			
_____	9.	I have deliberately developed a healthy life-style.			
_____	10.	I constantly worry about being or becoming fat.			
_____	11.	I like my looks just the way they are.			
_____	12.	I check my appearance in a mirror whenever I can.			
_____	13.	Before going out, I usually spend a lot of time getting ready.			
_____	14.	My physical endurance is good.			
_____	15.	Participating in sports is unimportant to me.			
_____	16.	I do not actively do things to keep physically fit.			
_____	17.	My health is a matter of unexpected ups and downs.			
_____	18.	Good health is one of the most important things in my life.			
_____	19.	I don't do anything that I know might threaten my health.			
_____	20.	I am very conscious of even small changes in my weight.			

[illegible]

_____ 58. I have tried to lose weight by fasting or going on crash diets.

1. Never
2. Rarely
3. Sometimes
4. Often
5. Very Often

_____ 59. I think I am:

1. Very Underweight
2. Somewhat Underweight
3. Normal Weight
4. Somewhat Overweight
5. Very Overweight

_____ 60. From looking at me, most other people would think I am:

1. Very Underweight
2. Somewhat Underweight
3. Normal Weight
4. Somewhat Overweight
5. Very Overweight

61-69. Use this 1 to 5 scale to indicate how satisfied you are with each of the following areas or aspects of your body:

1	2	3	4	5
Very Dissatisfied	Mostly Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Mostly Satisfied	Very Satisfied

_____ 61. Face (facial features, complexion)

_____ 62. Hair (color, thickness, texture)

_____ 63. Lower torso (buttocks, hips, thighs, legs)

_____ 64. Mid torso (waist, stomach)

_____ 65. Upper torso (chest or breasts, shoulders, arms)

_____ 66. Muscle tone

_____ 67. Weight

_____ 68. Height

_____ 69. Overall appearance

ERASE

Item Booklet

Instructions

Begin by completing the information on the rating sheet. Enter your name, age, sex, and date. Read the following directions carefully before you begin.

This booklet is divided into two sections which contain statements about how people see themselves. Please indicate how accurately each of the following statements describes you. Mark all of your responses on the rating sheet provided. **DO NOT ERASE!** If you need to change a response, make an "X" through the incorrect response and then fill in the correct circle.

Work as quickly as you can without making careless errors. It is best to rely on first impressions in answering each item. Fill in only one circle for each statement, and be sure to respond to all of the statements. Please note that the items are numbered in columns.

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Section 1

Use the following scale for your responses to Section 1:

- Fill in ① if the statement is *completely false*.
- Fill in ② if the statement is *mainly false*.
- Fill in ③ if the statement is *partly true and partly false*.
- Fill in ④ if the statement is *mainly true*.
- Fill in ⑤ if the statement is *completely true*.

For example, if you believe that a statement is *mainly true* in describing you, fill in the ④ circle for that statement on your rating sheet.

Example

1. ① ② ③ ● ⑤

① *Completely false* ② *Mainly false* ③ *Partly true and partly false* ④ *Mainly true* ⑤ *Completely true*

1. I often fail to live up to my moral standards.
2. I nearly always feel that I am physically attractive.
3. I occasionally have doubts about whether I will succeed in life.
4. I have trouble letting others know how much I care for and love them.
5. No matter what the pressure, no one could ever force me to hurt another human being.
6. I am very well-liked and popular.
7. On occasion, I have tried to find a way to avoid unpleasant responsibilities.
8. I occasionally worry that in the future I may have a problem with controlling my eating or drinking habits.
9. It is often hard for me to make up my mind about things because I don't really know what I want.
10. I am not easily intimidated by others.
11. I am usually able to demonstrate my competence when I am being evaluated.
12. I don't have much of an idea about what my life will be like in 5 years.
13. I nearly always feel that I am physically fit and healthy.
14. I usually do the decent and moral thing, no matter what the temptation to do otherwise.
15. There are times when I doubt my sexual attractiveness.
16. I sometimes have a poor opinion of myself.
17. There are times when I have doubts about my capacity for maintaining a close love relationship.
18. The thought of shoplifting has never crossed my mind.
19. I sometimes feel disappointed or rejected because my friends haven't included me in their plans.
20. There have been times when I have felt like getting even with somebody for something they had done to me.
21. I feel that I don't have enough self-discipline.
22. In general, I know who I am and where I am headed in my life.
23. I am usually a lot more comfortable being a follower than a leader.
24. Most people who know me consider me to be a highly talented and competent person.
25. I often feel that I lack direction in my life—i.e., that I have no long-range goals or plans.
26. I nearly always feel that I am better physically coordinated than most people (of my own age and sex).
27. I almost always have a clear conscience concerning my sexual behavior.
28. There have been times when I felt ashamed of my physical appearance.
29. I put myself down too much.
30. In times of uncertainty and self doubt, I have always been able to turn to my family for encouragement and support.
31. I have never felt that I was punished unfairly.
32. My friends almost always make sure to include me in their plans.
33. There have been times when I intensely disliked someone.
34. I am sometimes concerned over my lack of self-control.
35. Once I have considered an important decision thoroughly, I have little difficulty making a final decision.
36. I have no problem with asserting myself.
37. There are no areas in which I have truly outstanding ability.
38. Sometimes it's hard for me to believe that the different aspects of my personality can be part of the same person.

① Completely false ② Mainly false ③ Partly true and partly false ④ Mainly true ⑤ Completely true

39. Most of the people I know are in better physical condition than I am.
40. I often feel guilty about my sexual behavior.
41. I usually feel that I am better looking than most people.
42. All in all, I would evaluate myself as a relatively successful person at this stage in my life.
43. There have been times when I have felt rejected by my family.
44. It hardly ever matters to me whether I win or lose in a game.
45. On occasion I have avoided dating situations because I feared rejection.
46. There have been times when I have lied in order to get out of something.
47. I often give in to temptation and put off work on difficult tasks.
48. I seldom experience much conflict between the different sides of my personality.
49. I feel that I have a lot of potential as a leader.
50. I am usually able to learn new things very quickly.
51. I often feel torn in different directions and unable to decide which way to go.
52. I occasionally have had the feeling that I have "gone astray," and that I am leading a sinful or immoral life.
53. I have occasionally felt that others were repelled or "put off" by my physical appearance.
54. I nearly always have a highly positive opinion of myself.
55. I occasionally feel that no one really loves me and accepts me for the person I am.
56. I have almost never felt the urge to tell someone off.
57. People nearly always enjoy spending time with me.
58. There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.
59. I have difficulty maintaining my self-control when I am under pressure.
60. I have often acted in ways that went against my moral values.
61. I am usually very pleased and satisfied with the way I look.

Section 2

In Section 2, you are to describe how often you experience the thoughts and feelings described in each item. Use the following scale for your responses to Part 2:

- Fill in ① if you *almost never* experience them.
 Fill in ② if you *seldom or rarely* experience them.
 Fill in ③ if you *sometimes* experience them.
 Fill in ④ if you experience them *fairly often*.
 Fill in ⑤ if you experience them *very often*.

For example, if you *seldom or rarely* experience the thoughts and feelings described, fill in the ② circle for that statement on your rating sheet.

Example

1. ① ☒ ② ③ ④ ⑤

① Almost never ② Seldom or rarely ③ Sometimes ④ Fairly often ⑤ Very often

62. How often do you expect to perform well in situations that require a lot of ability?
63. How often do you lose when you get into arguments or disagreements with others?
64. Do you ever "stretch the truth" and say things that aren't completely true?
65. How often do you feel confident that you have (or someday will have) a lasting love relationship?
66. When you are meeting a person for the first time, do you ever think that the person might not like you?
67. How often do you feel proud of the way that you stay with a task until you complete it?
68. How often do you feel dissatisfied with yourself?
69. How often do you feel that others are attracted to you because of the way you look?
70. How often do you feel a sense of vitality and pleasure over the way your body functions in physical activities?
71. How often do you feel uncertain of your moral values?
72. How often do you feel self-conscious or awkward while you are engaged in physical activities?
73. How often do you feel very certain about what you want out of life?

Continued on next page. ►

① *Almost never* ② *Seldom or rarely* ③ *Sometimes* ④ *Fairly often* ⑤ *Very often*

74. How often do you have trouble learning difficult new tasks?
75. When you are involved in group discussions, how often do you feel that your ideas have a strong influence on others?
76. Do you ever gossip?
77. How often do members of your family have difficulty expressing their love for you?
78. How often do you feel certain that people you meet will like you?
79. How often are you pleased with yourself because of the amount of self discipline and willpower that you have?
80. How often do you feel that you are a very important and significant person?
81. How often do you wish that you were more physically attractive?
82. How often does your body perform exceptionally well in physical activities, such as dancing or sports?
83. How often do you (by your behavior) set a good moral example for others younger than yourself?
84. How often do you feel clumsy when you are involved in physical activities?
85. How often do you feel conflicted or uncertain about your career plans?
86. How often do you feel that you can do well at almost anything you try?
87. How often are you able to be assertive and forceful in situations where others are trying to take advantage of you?
88. Have you ever felt irritated when someone asked you for a favor?
89. How often do you feel able to openly express warm and loving feelings toward others?
90. Does it ever seem to you that some people dislike you intensely, that they "can't stand" you?
91. How often do you feel that you are more successful than most people at controlling your eating and drinking behavior?
92. How often do you feel really good about yourself?
93. How often are you complimented on your physical appearance?
94. How often do you feel in top physical condition?
95. How often are you pleased with your sense of moral values?
96. How often does your body feel "out of sorts" or sluggish?
97. Have you ever felt that you lack the intelligence needed to succeed in certain types of interesting work?
98. Do you enjoy it when you are in a position of leadership?
99. Have you ever felt jealous of the good fortune of others?
100. Have you ever felt alone and unloved?
101. When you go out with someone for the first time, how often do you feel that you are well-liked?
102. How often are you able to exercise more self-control than most of the people you know?
103. How often do you feel highly satisfied with the future you see for yourself?
104. How often do you feel unattractive when you see yourself naked?
105. How often do you enjoy having others watch you while you are engaged in physical activities such as dancing or sports?
106. How often do you feel highly satisfied with the way you live up to your moral values?
107. How often do you feel that you are not as intelligent as you would like to be?
108. How often do you feel uneasy when you are in a position of leadership?
109. How often is it hard for you to admit it when you have made a mistake?
110. How often do people whom you love go out of their way to let you know how much they care for you?
111. How often do you feel that you are one of the most popular and likable members of your social group?
112. How often are you able to resist temptations and distractions in order to complete tasks you are working on?
113. How often do you feel lacking in self-confidence?
114. How often do you approach new tasks with a lot of confidence in your ability?
115. How often do you have a strong influence on the attitudes and opinions of others?
116. How often do you gladly accept criticism when it is deserved?

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Appendix 11.2 Interview schedule

11.2.1 The interview schedule

Appendix 11.2.1

Interview schedule: Participants experiences of playing sport.

(A) General:

1. Age? Job? Family set up?
 2. Sport - how long, often do you train?
 3. Can you remember what got you started initially? What do you think keeps you motivated now?
-

(B) Body satisfaction:

1. Can you describe to me in your own words what your sport is like? *Prompt - how physically demanding, social, atmosphere, culture of it?*
2. Within your sport what would be the ideal physical qualities to have, or would be the most beneficial?

Prompt - positions, certain sizes, height, weight?

3. What about the Ψ qualities?

Prompt - things like concentration, leadership, positions, control?

4. Where do you think these ideals originated from in the first place?

Prompt - most important? Reachable?

5. Do you think that your body and what it can do are an asset to your sporting performances?

Prompt - what functions does it perform?

6. If you could break your body down into particular parts, are there some which influence your performance more than others?

Prompt - height? ability to complete a function? Is it a whole thing? Special ability? How does that feel? Is there a particular sensation associated with doing something unique? Ψ aspects towards good performance?

7. Would you say that you had a positive or negative attitude towards your body?

8. Is there any aspect that contributes more?

Prompt - physical? Ψ ?

9. Do these positive or negative feelings get transferred into other areas of your life?

Prompt - work? Relationships? Any that are easier? Ψ ? Confidence?

10. If you think about the different aspects of your body do you feel more conscious of one part more than any other?

Prompt - height? Weight? Fitness? Why? Particular situations? Any particular people? What about Ψ stuff?

(C) Physical appearance:

1. If we talk about your physical appearance in the sense of how you dress, hair, time spent getting ready etc, do you think that there is one aspect of that which influences whether or not you feel positive or negative about it?

Prompt - difference between body satisfaction and physical appearance. Situation and person dependent?

2. Is there anything about your physical appearance that is affected by you playing your sport?

Prompt - time getting ready on and off pitch? Do you look the 'part'? Maintain an image?

3. Would you say that you felt quite positive or negative about your overall physical appearance?

Prompt - does sport help in any way to get this positive feeling? If you stopped, due to illness or injury, would this positive feeling change?

(D) Personal experiences:

1. Has being active been an important part of your life?

Prompt - identify with sporting image? Does stopping playing alter that?

2. Can you tell me about your experiences of playing sport at school?

Prompt - valued? Avenue for success? Unusual sports valued? Boys and girls differences? Size?

3. How would you describe your sporting experiences now?

Prompt - effected same as child? Career opportunities? Impact of sport?

4. Try and remember an experience of playing your sport when you felt that you had done something really great, a goal or tackle or match. Can you describe to me what happened and what that felt like?

Prompt - particular aspects, physical? Ψ ? Scoring? Fitness? Why so enjoyable?

5. Can you describe to me then what the most positive aspects of playing your sport are for you?

Prompt - physical, Ψ , social? Perceptions from other people? Any aspect influence choice to play?

6. Can you think of any negative aspects of playing your sport?

Prompt - physical, Ψ , social?

7. What are the main assumptions people have of you as a sport participant?

8. *Prompt - sexuality? Perceptions from others change when sport identified? Aspects of sport that influence this? Age differences? Effects of this? Good and bad? Are certain women safe here? Individual versus team?*

(E) Extra:

1. If I asked you to sum up what sport has done for you, or means to you, what would you say?

Prompt - what would be any different if you stopped? Impact on life?

2. Do you think your identity is closely associated with being physical?

Prompt - the importance of body to identity.

3. Anything else?

Appendix 11.3 Tables for Multidimensional Body Self Relations Questionnaire

11.3.1 Table 4.4 Pearson correlation coefficient scores by rugby players on the MBSRQ

11.3.2 Table 4.5 Pearson correlation coefficient scores by cricketers on the MBSRQ

11.3.3 Table 4.6 Pearson correlation coefficient scores by netballers on the MBSRQ

Table 4.4

Pearson correlation coefficient scores by rugby players on the MBSRQ.

Subscale	Appearance Evaluation	Appearance Orientation	Fitness Evaluation	Fitness Orientation	Body-Areas Satisfaction	Overweight Preoccupation	Self- Classified Weight
Appearance Evaluation		-.08	.49***	.42***	.74***	-.42**	-.55***
Appearance Orientation			-.20	-.09	-.32**	.49***	.28*
Fitness Evaluation				.41**	.51***	-.34**	-.37**
Fitness Orientation					.39**	-.07	-.47***
Body-Areas Satisfaction						-.46***	-.53***
Overweight Preoccupation							.46***
Self-Classified Weight							

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4.5

Pearson correlation coefficient scores by cricketers on the MBSRQ.

Subscale	Appearance Evaluation	Appearance Orientation	Fitness Evaluation	Fitness Orientation	Body-Areas Satisfaction	Overweight Preoccupation	Self- Classified Weight
Appearance Evaluation		.03	-.11	.29*	.58***	-.36**	-.40**
Appearance Orientation			-.08	.03	-.05	.04	-.46***
Fitness Evaluation				.34**	-.14	-.03	.11
Fitness Orientation					.32*	-.36**	-.17
Body-Areas Satisfaction						-.33**	-.22
Overweight Preoccupation							.18
Self-Classified Weight							

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4.6

Pearson correlation coefficient scores by netballers on the MBSRQ.

Subscale	Appearance Evaluation	Appearance Orientation	Fitness Evaluation	Fitness Orientation	Body-Areas Satisfaction	Overweight Preoccupation	Self- Classified Weight
Appearance Evaluation		.15	.16	.11	.72***	-.41**	-.57***
Appearance Orientation			.12	-.07	.19	.19	-.06
Fitness Evaluation				.52***	.2	-.01	-.20
Fitness Orientation					.06	.14	-.11
Body-Areas Satisfaction						-.41**	-.52***
Overweight Preoccupation							.47***
Self-Classified Weight							

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$.

Appendix 11.4 Tables for Multidimensional Self Esteem Inventory

11.3.1 Table 4.8 Pearson correlation coefficient scores by rugby players on the MSEI

11.3.2 Table 4.9 Pearson correlation coefficient scores by cricketers on the MSEI

11.3.3 Table 4.10 Pearson correlation coefficient scores by netballers on the MSEI

Table 4.8.

Pearson correlation coefficient scores by rugby players on the MSEI.

Scale	Global Self-esteem	Competence	Lovability	Likability	Personal Power	Self-control	Moral Self-approval	Body Appearance	Body Functioning	Identity Integration	Defensive Self-enhancement
Global Self-esteem		.58***	.49***	.55***	.26*	.35**	.33	.64***	.54***	.52***	.34**
Competence			.10	.32**	.42***	.38**	.20	.26*	.47***	.44***	.18
Lovability				.57***	-.03	-.04	.18	.46***	.19	.37**	.26*
Likability					.18	.13	.25*	.51***	.45***	.29*	.25*
Personal Power						.23	.36**	-.02	.12	.26*	.003
Self-control							.41**	.15	.34**	.25*	.37**
Moral Self-approval								.07	.23	.43***	.39**
Body Appearance									.48***	.25*	.31*
Body Functioning										.19	.35**
Identity Integration											.33**
Defensive Self-enhancement											

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 4.9

Pearson correlation coefficient scores by cricketers on the MSEI.

Scale	Global Self-esteem	Competence	Lovability	Likability	Personal Power	Self-control	Moral Self-approval	Body Appearance	Body Functioning	Identity Integration	Defensive Self-enhancement
Global Self-esteem		.69***	.56***	.53***	.51***	.53***	.43***	.66***	.40**	.67***	.36**
Competence			.11	.40**	.59***	.45***	.42**	.42**	.41**	.37**	.26*
Lovability				.62***	.21	.45***	.42**	.46***	.29*	.51***	.31*
Likability					.36**	.38**	.45***	.49***	.46***	.41**	.42**
Personal Power						.35**	.26 *	.13	.15	.48***	.03
Self-control							.59***	.33**	.41**	.59***	.41**
Moral Self-approval								.41**	.33*	.53***	.49***
Body Appearance									.55***	.38**	.29*
Body Functioning										.19	.18
Identity Integration											.45***
Defensive Self-enhancement											

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4.10

Pearson correlation coefficient scores by netballers on the MSEI.

Scale	Global Self-esteem	Competence	Lovability	Likability	Personal Power	Self-control	Moral Self-approval	Body Appearance	Body Functioning	Identity Integration	Defensive Self-enhancement
Global Self-esteem		.52***	.63***	.64***	.56***	.60***	.44**	.78***	.36**	.78***	.35**
Competence			.30*	.46***	.54***	.26	.33*	.41**	.53***	.39**	.27
Lovability				.63***	.30*	.40**	.31*	.57***	.22	.59***	.35*
Likability					.36**	.31*	.27	.66***	.38**	.43**	.32*
Personal Power						.23	.25	.36**	.30*	.39**	.08
Self-control							.46***	.60***	.38**	.65***	.45**
Moral Self-approval								.25	.22	.50***	.31*
Body Appearance									.50***	.68***	.36**
Body Functioning										.29*	.12
Identity Integration											.42**
Defensive Self-enhancement											

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Appendix 11.5 Letters of agreement to conduct research by governing bodies

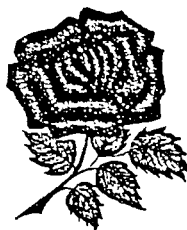
11.5.1 Rugby Football Union for Women

11.5.2 West Midlands Women's Cricket Association

11.5.3 Coventry and District Netball Association

RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

FOR WOMEN



2 Old Tree Cottages
Upper Tysoe
Warks CV35 0TB

Dear Kate

Further to our recent telephone conversation, I am writing to inform you that the RFUW has no objections to you carrying out research into Women in a Male Dominated sport.

The Midlands has 39 clubs playing at different levels within the RFUW league structure, some divisions are National, the others Regional.

Nationally, the RFUW have over 200 registered clubs with approx. 5000 players, included are youth and students.

Within the Midlands, there are several International players, including 4 players who have recently been selected for the England World Cup Squad to be held in Holland in 1998.

Further more detailed information may be obtained from myself or the National Development Officer, Nicols Ponsford, House of Sport, De Montford University, 21 The Crescent, Bedford MK40 2RT.

Yours sincerely

Rose Morris

Rose Morris
RFUW West Midland Regional Representative

WEST MIDLANDS WOMEN'S CRICKET ASSOCIATION

President: Miss M.A. Leath

Chairman:

Miss J. Horwood,
23, Didcot Close,
REDDITCH,
Worcestershire,
B97 5UP.
Tel: (01527) 459323

Public Relations Officer:

Miss H. Pugh,
Ashbrook,
Laverton,
BROADWAY,
Worcestershire,
WR12 7NA.
Tel: (01386) 584471

Secretary:

Miss T. Nash,
105, Mercot Close,
Oakenshaw South,
REDDITCH,
Worcestershire,
B98 7YY.
Tel: (01527) 403205

Ms Kate Russell,
School of Health and Social Science,
Coventry University,
Prior Street,
COVENTRY,
CV3 5BR.

20th May, 1998

Dear Kate,

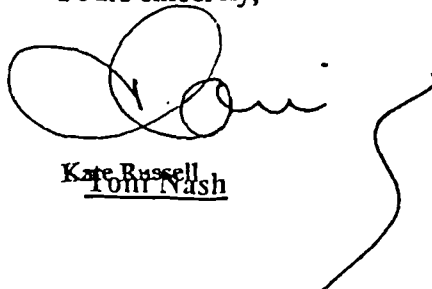
Apologies for the delay in responding to your request regarding information in relation to your Ph.D on women who choose to play male dominated sports and how it affects their self-esteem in today's image.

It posed a bit of a problem for me, in that any leaflets and brochures that we have on women's cricket would not really be of use. However, I think your best bet, in the first instance, would be to contact Club Secretaries with a view to perhaps interviewing Club players for their views. To this end, I am enclosing a copy of our 1998 Handbook, which gives details of the Clubs and Schools affiliated to the West Midlands (see pages 26 and 32). I am sure they would be happy to help and you can, of course, tell them that you have come through me.

Obviously, there are Club players who are happy to remain as such, and those who progress to representative cricket through their County up to England Squad level. Therefore, it might also help if you could get something in relation to the England Squad as, obviously, these players are the only ones to be affected publicly and their reasons would probably differ from those of the ordinary Club cricketer. The best way to do this would be to put something in writing to Head Office at Edgbaston, with a request that they distribute your request through the Manager. As you will see from the Handbook, we have the Australians touring England this year, so the Manager and the Squad are very busy at the moment. If you would like to come along to any of the matches, especially the Final Test at Worcester, we would be happy to see you.

I hope the above is of some help to you and I wish you well with your Ph.D.

Yours sincerely,



Kate Russell
Tom Nash

COVENTRY & DISTRICT *Netball* *Association*

11 Billington Close
Coventry
CV2 5NQ
18 November 1997

Dear Kate

Motives for Participation in Sport

With reference to your recent letter regarding the research work you wish to undertake involving members of the Coventry and District Netball Association. I was unable to respond by 14 November 1997 as requested, I did not receive your correspondence until 13 November 1997.

Just a little background about the local Netball scene, which Coventry and District Netball League is one of a number of leagues in this area. We have some 1000 players registered, playing on a Saturday afternoon in the main. The game is of an hours duration and played in the main to All England Association rules outdoors.

The Clubs within the League number over 40 with not all of them playing in Coventry they are outposted to areas like Nuneaton, Leamington and Offchurch.


I think, for the type of information you are looking it would be best if you contacted the clubs direct. Therefore, I enclose a booklet produced by Lesiure Services which gives the majority of clubs playing in the Coventry area together with their training night and other relevant information. I suggest you contact those clubs that appear in this booklet. I intend letting the clubs know by way of the Leagues next Newsletter which will not be sent until some time in early December, therefore, I would appreciate you not contacting the clubs until after that point.

If you wish to know of those clubs in the League that are not situated in Coventry I would need to write to them letting them know you are after assistance in carrying out this reasearch and see what sort of response is received.

If it would help to know those clubs and teams that have proved successful over the years let me know and I could provide the final League tables for 1996/97.

I hope the above is sufficient for your purposes and should you require any further details do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours in Netball



Denise Barlow
Chairman

Kate Russell



Appendix 11.6 Letters of invitation to participate

11.6.1 Letter to captains/coaches of clubs

11.6.2 Letter to individual players

Dean of School
Dr Donald C Pennington
BA PhD CPsychol AFBPS

Coventry University
Priory Street Coventry CV1 5FB
Telephone 01203 631313
School of Health and
Social Sciences
Direct Line 01203 838041
Fax 01203 838784



Kate Russell
School of Health and Social Sciences
Coventry University
Tel. 01203 838178 ext 7344 (W)
01203 256101 (H)

Our reference

Your reference

Date

20/11/98

Dear Captain/Coach,

This is a letter to ask for your help with a PhD project being conducted by myself at Coventry University. I am investigating women who play male dominated sports and comparing these players with a female dominated sport, netball. The essence of my work is to investigate the motives women have for playing different sports and the subsequent effects that playing sport has on women's lives. The initial part of the research is the completion of a sport questionnaire that all sport participants respond to. The second phase of the work is a more in-depth look at the individual experiences of women who play different sports and what it is about their chosen sport that makes them want to play, keeps them playing and the positive effects playing sport has on their lives.

I have spoken to June Bedworth about the project and she has seen no problems with this work and has agreed, with the coaches of the U18/ U21/ and senior netball squads in your area, to ask players to complete the questionnaires for me. They come with a prepaid envelope that will get sent straight back to me so there is no need for any expense on the part of the players. I appreciate that many clubs do not wish for their contact numbers to be distributed arbitrarily, but I can assure you that this research is very important to me and will be carried out professionally.

I would ask, therefore, for your co-operation and permission to distribute questionnaires amongst your players. If there is any difficulty with this request or you have any queries then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your time,

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kate Russell".

Kate Russell

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C O V E N T R Y
U N I V E R S I T Y

Dean of School
Dr Donald C Pennington
BA PhD CPsychol AFBPS

Coventry University
Priority Street Coventry CV1 5FB
Telephone 01203 631313
School of Health and
Social Sciences
Direct Line 01203 838041
Fax 01203 838784



Our reference

Your reference

Date

1/10/98

Dear Player,

I am writing to ask for your co-operation in my PhD work here at Coventry. I am investigating the effects and personal experiences of women who play sport, and in particular women who choose to play male dominated sports such as rugby and cricket.

As the initial part of my work I am asking players from these sports to complete a questionnaire which addresses the motives for participation that women have to play these sports and how the experience of playing may effect the perceptions they have of themselves. I would really appreciate it if you could find 15-20 minutes to complete this questionnaire and send it back in the Freepost envelope provided. I really need the support of players such as yourself to help me explore this area.

Thank you for your time,

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kate Russell".

Kate Russell

Appendix 11.7 Interview consent forms

11.7.1 Information letter

11.7.2 Consent form

Appendix 11.7.1

Dear

thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. I would like to take this opportunity to assure you of a few details relating to your interview.

Firstly, you have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time if you wish to do so. Secondly, you can request that your interview transcript and its content to be excluded from the research project at any time once the interview has been completed.

Finally, in terms of confidentiality, your transcript will only be listened to and read in full by myself. Any subsequent reference to your transcript (in terms of appearing in my PhD theses or in future publications) will be accompanied by an alternative name or number. No identifying features such as your real name, family situation or location will be included in the final draft.

These precautions are there to ensure that you feel at ease with the interview and happy with the interview process. If there is anything that you are unsure of or need clarification please do not hesitate to ask me.

Again, thank you for your co-operation,

Yours sincerely

Kate Russell
Telephone: 024 76 887023
Fax: 01203 838300
Email: krussell@coventry.ac.uk

CONSENT FORM:

Title of research : women's participation in sport

Name of participant.....

Name of interviewer.....

I confirm that I have read the terms and conditions of the interview process attached.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.

Participants signature..... Date.....

Interviewers signature..... Date.....