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Prifysgol Fetropolitan Caerdydd

CARDIFF SCHOOL OF SPORT

DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (HONOURS)

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**THE IMPACT OF ACTIVITY CHOICE AND STEREOTYPING
WITHIN SECONDARY SCHOOLS ON GIRLS' PERCEPTIONS
OF FOOTBALL AND THE EFFECTS TO PARTICIPATION.**

**(Dissertation submitted under the discipline of
Socio-Cultural)**

Katy Hallett

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THE IMPACT OF ACTIVITY CHOICE AND STEREOTYPING
WITHIN SECONDARY SCHOOLS ON GIRLS' PERCEPTIONS
OF FOOTBALL PARTICIPATION.

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ABBREVIATIONS

FA - English Football Association

GCSE – General Certificate of Secondary Education

NC – National Curriculum

NCPE – National Curriculum of Physical Education

PA – Physical Activity

PE – Physical Education

PGCE – Postgraduate Certificate in Education

UEFA – Union of European Football Associations

WFA – Women's Football Association

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ABSTRACT

A considerable amount of literature regarding women's experiences in football has related to the ways women who play football are perceived and treated within a predominantly masculine sport. However, while football has been extensively associated with males, recent research has highlighted an increase in girls' participation of football over the last decade. In spite of this, the awareness and representation of women's football remains considerably underdeveloped in contrast to men's football. This study hopes to shed light on whether the education system affects the growth and development of girls' football at grassroots level. Focus will firstly be given to understanding whether activity choice within PE lessons affects the participants' decision to participate in football. Secondly, to understand if stereotypes surrounding women in sport affect the participants' decision to participate in football.

This research gains an in-depth and rich understanding of the experiences and perceptions of female secondary students, in order to shed light on the possible limitations to opportunities and/or stereotypes that impact football participation. The interpretive, qualitative method was utilised to learn about females' perceptions of football and specifically how these perceptions were affected within a school environment. Furthermore, five extensive focus group interviews were carried out with 6-8 girls' aged 11-16 from each year group. The focus group interviews were transcribed and coded to identify key themes from the data. Through the analysis of the focus groups a number of significant themes emerged: (a) Opportunities in Physical Activity, (b) Stereotypes vs Ability, (c) Male Dominance, (d) Relations with Mothers and (e) Experience. The main findings from this study firstly highlight the family as a significant factor influencing the socialisation of their daughters into sport. Secondly, the opportunities received within school does effect girls' involvement in football. Furthermore, implications for future research include the perceptions of parents towards their daughter's involvement in football. Additionally, an understanding into the views of secondary school aged girls already involved in football and their perceptions of how school effects their playing.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Caudwell (1999) proposed that it is the culture and social structure of gender that distinguishes women as feminine and men as masculine. Traditional values and traits associated with sport, such as violence and aggression, are considered as male traits. Thus, women involved in sport are often viewed as adopting masculine traits and considered to be rejecting their feminine values, thus, having failed as women (Hargreaves, 1994).

Further, the notion of masculine women has interfered with the gendered logic of femininity in women and its link to heterosexuality, particularly in sport (Caudwell, 2003). Caudwell (2003) suggested that due to the patriarchal theory, masculinity is seen as an anathema that supports, masculinity traits are fundamental in the debate of women's oppression. Therefore, overtime the masculine woman has been rejected not only by men but by women, which allows feminine stereotypical behaviour to be reproduced continuously over time.

Given the gendered nature of sport and the stereotypes that exist, it is perhaps of no surprise that terms such as 'tom boy' or 'butch' have been adopted in society to describe the masculine woman; fears of being linked to such terms are clear throughout previous research (Caudwell, 1999). Studies have found women, link 'butch' negatively to qualities as short hair and being 'big'. Such research portrays a connection between body size and shape to masculinity (Caudwell, 2003). The negative links to body size and shape mean these terms continuously demean women's achievements and success in sport. The physique created through certain long term sport participation can be viewed as manly due to the increased muscle mass developed. Feminine values perceive this as an unwanted development due to muscular definition and its link to masculinity which moves away from the ideal feminine shape.

One sport which has been subject to stereotyping is football, previous research by Caudwell (2003) included the remarks from male spectators of a women's football game, stating some women players needed to be 'sex tested' based on their non-heterosexual appearance. Additionally, Cox and Thompson (2001) argue that the labelling of females as lesbian, unless they are easily recognised as heterosexual, is one strategy employed to ensure the game remains dominated by masculinity and to not disrupt the gender order. Previous research regarding the stereotypes women face as football players has largely focused on adult women and their experiences. A central focus has been on

women's positions in sport and whether this has challenged or become accepted by male dominated gender roles. This study aims to explore views of females, specifically those whom may just be starting out as football players, to understand if they are aware of, and feel the pressures of female footballing stereotypes, and if they so, whether this affects their choice or opportunity to play.

Physical Education (PE) is also important to consider because lessons in school are an opportunity every child within the UK gets to experience sport. Therefore, activity choice and the opportunities available in PE lessons is a central factor to the development of health and talent (Scraton, Fasting, Pfister & Bunuel, 1999). Stirling and Schulz (2011) suggested that the school is the most influential place to motivate children into sport participation and providing them with the opportunity to play team games. The Physical Education Curriculum for Wales states that "schools must work to reduce environmental and social barriers to inclusion and offer opportunities to all learners" (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008, p.4). However, within secondary schools throughout the UK there is an imbalance as to what sports girls and boys can play (Lopez, 1997). The issue against the notion of equal opportunities in PE is the continued division of girls and boys into 'sex appropriate' sports (Stirling & Schluz, 2011). The division of sport in secondary schools not only limits opportunities for girls but also affects future physical education, as found in Capel and Katene (2000). In their study they found gender differences in Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students' perceptions of subject knowledge when teaching PE. Female students identified football as the sport they had the least knowledge to teach. Subsequently, future development of the National Curriculum of Physical Education (NCPE) is limited as girls are constantly losing out.

With regard to the past research the broad focus has been on that within General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level PE, where you'd expect activity choice and the teachers' teaching perspectives to be vast. In this study the focus will be across school age and take into account the pupils' opinion of the activity choice they receive in school.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Sport and Gender

Traditional ideals of men portray them as hard, powerful, strong and rational. These characteristics are often linked with roles of leadership, warriors and fatherhood. The ideal athlete can be similarly described and these ideas are virtually opposite to the ideals of womanhood. Traditionally, women have been described as being soft, graceful, weak and beautiful (Hargreaves, 1994). In general, these beliefs about women are virtually paralleled by those about women in sport and dictate why women are hardly mentioned in conjunction with sport (Morgan, Meier & Schneider, 2001). Hargreaves (1994) argued that girls are socialised into 'feminine appropriate' behaviours, similarly, Lopez (1997) stated that girls are 'channelled' into stereotypical behaviour in sport at home and at school which is then reinforced through the media's influence. This process can be viewed as having beneficial or negative effects, for example, previous literature suggests that inequalities between the sexes and discrimination towards women are a consequence of gender-role socialisation (Coakley, 1990). Furthermore, Cashmore (1990) explained these sexist beliefs have been strongly challenged since the 1960s; however, their effect on sport is still evident today, suggesting a gendered hierarchy surrounding sport. This hierarchy is displayed through the greater opportunities and focus given to males compared to females in sport. Moreover, the continued discouragement of women from sport acts as a strategy to maintain the gendered hierarchy. Evidence of this can be highlighted through the history of the Olympics, women had to challenge men for their place to compete and until recently were denied the right to participate in certain events that were deemed "too strenuous for women" (Choi, 2000, p.14).

This indicates male paternalism over women's bodies and the appropriateness of certain sports continues to reflect the Victorian ideals of femininity (Hargreaves, 1994). Furthermore, it has been argued that women do not have control over their bodies and are 'appropriated' by men (Hargreaves, 1994). Cashmore (1990) argues that over time, women's position in sport has become sexualised through how they are publicised, displaying them as 'sex objects' to be 'ogled' at by men. This process has made women's involvement in sport more accepted, creating more opportunities available to them. Kolnes' (1995) study found that female athletes felt this was acceptable in order to promote their sport but admitted feeling uncomfortable with so much of their body being visible. This image of sports women stems from the pressure placed upon them to 'perform femininity'. These images of 'femininity' are based around conventional

heterosexual assumptions, thus, have a symbolic ideological significance (Hargreaves, 1994). Consequently, many athletic women experience a problematic disjunction between sport and femininity (Clark & Paechter, 2007), thus, feel the need to conform to dominant images of heterosexual femininity. Subsequently, characteristics required for sport, such as “aggression, strength and determination” (Clark & Paechter, 2007, p.262), contradict notions of femininity thus, leading to ‘non-feminine’ athletes treated negatively, in turn affecting their sports career (Choi, 2000). Strategies used to emphasise their femininity are to wear make-up, utilise certain hairstyles and clothing, and publicising the existence of a boyfriend, husband and/or children. Jessica Ennis, a British track and field Olympian, is a prime example of this. In an interview she stated “I always wear a bit of make-up to compete ... If I feel I look nice it’ll help my performance” (Stylist, 2012). This example supports Creedon (1994) who states “feminised images represent a modernised attempt to reinforce traditional stereotypical images of femininity and female sexuality” (p.28). Oppositely, in the case of Olympic 800m runner Caster Semenya, her masculine appearance was questioned to such a degree that it resulted in her having to undergo sex testing (Choi, 2000). The intention of sex is to prohibit men from gaining an unfair advantage by competing in ‘women’s events’. However, Caudwell (2003) argues these tests are put in place to discourage women from becoming ‘too masculine’. Both of these examples stress how the media’s ‘feminised’ and sexualised portrayal of female athletes undermines women’s success and achievement in sport, further constructing the female athletes as less important than the male athlete (Creedon, 1994).

Women’s football is an accurate representation of the obstacles women athletes have faced in result of this paternalism. Football has always been viewed as a masculine sport (Stirling & Schulz, 2011) and women, even with a keen interest to play have been continuously dejected from the sport. The English Football Association (FA) deemed that women were prohibited to play on affiliated club grounds making it difficult for women to find the space to play (The FA, 2013). However, in 1969 the Women’s Football Association (WFA) was formed and in 1971 the FA council lifted the ban. Such barriers as this have been continuously put in place to discourage women from sport or to influence them into ‘sex-appropriate’ sports based on their biology, and not their physical ability or competence (Hargreaves, 1994). Some of these barriers still affect women’s sport today; the following section will look at the differences in women’s sport participation.

2.2 Sport and Female Participation

Women, contrary to the previous traditional ideals identified, are not “fragile, dainty or timid” (Cashmore, 1996, p.120). Although attitudes and knowledge about women’s participation in sport have changed, women are still reported to participate far less than men. Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation (2011) found that 1.5million fewer women than men participate in regular exercise. This suggests that there are still major barriers affecting women’s decision to participate. In addition, the types of physical activity women participate in are also different to that of men. For example, women are most likely to focus on keeping fit, using the gym or swimming as opposed to playing team games to keep active. This reflects the latest developments of the implementation physical activity has on health. However, team games remain the lowest form of exercise for women.

Nevertheless, Clark and Paechter (2007) reported that female football participation as the most popular sport for women. The Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation (2012) support this, identifying football as the most popular team sport for women, ranking ninth out of the top 10 sports activities for women. The initial growth of women’s football in 2008/09 has declined in the number of women players each year since then. This decline could be a result of the few success stories English women’s football has had since the 2005 Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Women’s Championship’s played in England. Following 2005 England football and English clubs gained success through a number of club and international competitions, which drew media coverage, increasing awareness of the sport. Today, 123,000 girls and women play weekly and make up 5.6% of club members (The FA, 2013).

2.3 Transition from Primary to Secondary School

Stirling and Schulz (2011) found that primary school gave girls in their study their first opportunity to play football. Girls were faced with an initial barrier but once overcome attitudes and perceptions of girls joining in with football changed. However, when making the transition to secondary school, girls were denied the opportunity to play. The biggest issue being, the division of boys and girls into sex appropriate sports, a matter that hasn’t changed since the 1960s (Cashmore, 1990; Stirling & Schulz, 2011). The study also found teachers’ attitudes changed with the transition between schools. Stirling and Schulz (2011) found that the women in their study felt equal opportunities to play football at primary school ages in and outside of school. However, this ceased at the entry to

secondary school where teachers' views were felt to be sexist and the division into gendered sports began. This, in turn, led to lack of awareness and availability of female clubs, resulting in increased drop out levels. Furthermore, girls' early experiences revolved around playing amongst boys, one factor that resulted in many girls not realising girls' football was an opportunity. This lack of awareness proves to be detrimental to the progress of girls' football.

Nonetheless, this study worked with adult, women footballers who considered football an important part of their identity. This serves as a limitation, as the school experiences they were asked to reflect on may have been remembered differently to the actual situation as a result of differing perspectives established through the development of their identity since childhood. Moreover, the study doesn't take into consideration the changes that have occurred in education since these participants were pupils.

Furthermore, a study by Knowles, Niven and Fawkner (2011) explored factors related to the decrease in physical activity behaviour in 14 adolescent girls during the transition between primary and secondary school. The study found that the environment was a central factor to understanding the decrease in PA levels since primary school. By ensuring a choice of activities, girls-only lessons and recognising the importance of social support in the form of friends were found to contribute to creating a positive environment which increased girl's involvement in PA. This study also discovered and determined break times to be a key opportunity for PA. These were found to be utilised in primary school but not during secondary school, even if girls were aware of the opportunity during breaks, they did not take it. However, the study failed to address why this was, further research about the type of opportunities received and interest levels regarding involvement should be considered.

2.4 Opportunities in Physical Activity

Prochaska, Sallis, Slymen and Mekenzie (2003) quantitative study of 414 elementary students examined the enjoyment of PE. The study found that enjoyment of PE declined significantly between the ages of 11-16 years, particularly in girls. The study found that intrinsic motivation indicated that perceptions of choice, sense of autonomy and feelings of competency increased enjoyment and involvement in PE. Due to the classes being coeducational, consideration was given to this being a reason for girls being lower in enjoyment. The pressure to perform in front of or compete with boys has previously been referred to as a reason for lower girls' participation (Clarke & Paechter, 2007). The girls

in the study argued that boys received preferential treatment over who can play and were often overlooked by teachers when they expressed interest to participate. Furthermore, the findings propose the need for an examination of the type of activities girls participate in during break and lunchtimes, consideration of this could indicate which activities to include in PE lessons to increase the interest and inclusiveness.

Similar to Prochaska et al., (2003), How, Whipp, Dimmock and Jackson (2013) looked at 257 students from eight different high schools in Australia. The study found that providing choice in PE was aligned with increased perceptions of autonomy, thus, increasing pupil's effort levels throughout the lessons. The literature highlighted that further research into activity choice is needed and consideration should be given to the influence of the social and cultural factors that affect students' choice of different activities.

Furthermore, Capel and Katene (2000) suggested incorporating equal opportunities when teaching different activities was largely dependent on subject knowledge of PE teachers within the national curriculum (NC). Additionally, Carter, Carre and Bennett (1993) suggested "in order to improve teaching, teacher thinking and subject knowledge are deemed to be important ingredients" (sited in Capel & Katene, 2000. P.47). Hence, in order to pass knowledge on to their pupils', teachers must attain a variation of physical activity experience. Capel and Katene (2000) recognised this to be an issue, finding gender differences surrounding the perceived levels of subject knowledge, stating that "girls lose out because research has suggested girls take part in team games less than boys" (p.61). Within with study, females were identified as having lowest perceived knowledge in teaching football. As knowledge is fundamentally gained through personal experiences, this low perception is likely to be the result of teachers' experiences.

The study also advocated that an activity is more likely to be taught if the teacher has confidence in their delivery of that activity, which is gained through secure knowledge and understanding. Subsequently, deeming that confidence is directly impacted upon by subject knowledge, thus, rendering teachers less likely to teach those subjects they perceive less knowledge of "this, in turn, may impact on the curriculum offered" (Capel & Katene, 2000, p.61). This study supports the need for further research in comprehensive schools with regard to the activities offered and whether the engagement in certain sports within PE lessons and outside of school is due to differing gender perceptions. The findings in this study enable assumptions to be made surrounding grassroots level

participation in sport. Also, provides the opportunity to research perceptions of pupils with regard to the activity choice within schools and their opinions surrounding the variety of non-gender specific sports they are offered.

Links can be made with Flintoff's (2008) study, which explored PA opportunities within a school partnership. The findings revealed girls and young women felt encouraged to be more physically active due to the increased opportunities being provided. Nonetheless, conclusions highlighted a narrow range of traditional sports were the centre of opportunities. However, football was considered to be successful, suggesting that opportunities for girls to play football are higher than ever before. Moreover, pupil's viewpoints of the opportunities available to them failed to be recognised. As pupil's activity choice is essential to facilitate interest and enjoyment, this is problematic to further research. Additionally, perceived opinions of peers in relation to certain sports were not determined, consequently other considerations for lack of participation, could not be identified. These factors remain essential in understanding why female participation and engagement in certain sports continues to be low.

Similarly, Smith, Green and Thurston (2009) carried out a study on student's experiences and views toward activity choice in PE. Participants of the study thought that PE teachers' provided them with a degree of choice with regard to activities, as they were asked for their opinions. Nevertheless, they felt PE teachers continued to refer back to traditional games and did not always meet their requests. Links can be made between this and the first study, and whether comfort levels and experience of certain activities determines if it is included within the curriculum. Conversely, this study concentrated on pupils in year 10 and 11 in comprehensive schools, thus, future research should be offered to additional age groups to gain knowledge of whether these perceptions change throughout their school development.

Stirling and Schulz (2011) argue it is the responsibility of the school to increase interest and to develop talent. Yet, the critiqued literature suggests that school can limit the opportunities provided to females. In addition, suggestions can be made in support of grassroots and school level participation directly affected by the perceptions and attitudes surrounding girls' football.

The evidence highlighted above proposes a gap for future research in understanding how girls' perceptions of football participation change as they get older and if football is affected at grassroots level. The consideration of further research needs to focus on

females in key stage (KS) three and four in order to acquire an in-depth understanding of activity choices available to them. To attain a method toward increasing female participation levels, the implications identified need to be addressed. Consequently, the purpose of this study will aim to deliver a critical analysis of the nature of girls' football within education and if this influences grassroots level participation.

2.5 Femininity and Gendered Issues in Football

Football has become the fastest growing female sport in the UK, replacing netball (The FA, 2007) however; girls still face barriers with regard to gender.

Clarke and Paechter (2007) completed a study that looked at the inclusion of girls in football over two different primary schools. The study found with regard to football, boys expressed the attitude that girls "should not be there" (p.266), portraying an ingrained understanding of the gender hierarchy on the playground. In which boys were automatically granted rights to the football pitch whereas girls had to request permission to join in play. Nonetheless, the intervention of teachers facilitated girls' presence and encouraged them to become more involved, though this was countered by the continuous rough play and name calling from the boys. Moreover, these gains by the girls were perceived as an infringement on male rights. The study concluded that although counterproductive, the segregation of football was found to be the only way that allowed girls to establish and recognise their right to play. The study was effective in understanding the thoughts of boys and girls toward girl's football during primary school, however, the results fail to take in to account the changes that may occur through the transition into a secondary school setting. Further research needs to be placed upon how girls' perceptions of football change as they grow older and the other factors that come to affect their views.

Football throughout the UK has been dubbed as a masculine sport due to the male domination that surrounds it; this may contribute to girls' lack of participation with regard to how they display their femininity. Shilling's (1993) 'social construction theory' stated the body is "somehow shaped, constrained and even invented by society" (sited in Caudwell, 2003. p.374), indicating that the actions of others are shaped by social norms. In this case, "corporeal displays of masculinity by women, the ordering of sex, gender and incidentally desire" (Caudwell, 2003. p.377), lead females to be labelled as 'tomboys' or 'butch'. With this in mind, it can be suggested that changes to girls' perceptions between year groups is largely dependent on their views on how they feel

they are portrayed in society. Thus, the perceptions of pupils' toward PE lessons and the activities within them should be assessed. Factors, such as teacher's knowledge and experience, could be identified as a reason limiting opportunities within school. In knowing such factors, modifications could be suggested to combat this, such as increasing opportunities for girls and changing the perceptions of sport girls have.

2.6 Rationale

The purpose of this study was to identify key factors that contribute to girls' perceptions of football and to examine the perceptions of female secondary students toward football participation. Emphasis will be placed on whether their decisions are affected by the stereotypes surrounding women in sport and/or the activity choices they are faced within school.

Although there has been a great deal of research done surrounding female footballing stereotypes and the opportunities girls receive to play (e.g. Stirling & Schulz, 2011; Smith., et al, 2009; Sheryl & Paechter, 2007), participation remains low. The reasoning for this remains unclear; consequently this demonstrated the need for further research into girls' perceptions of football and how said perceptions are influenced.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research design and specific methodology adopted by this study to explore the feelings and experiences of secondary school female students towards football in school. The study drew on the experiences and stories of the participants in order to gain a deeper understanding of perceptions towards football. The main aims of this research were to:

- i. Understand whether activity choice within PE lessons affects the participants' decision to participate in certain activities.
- ii. Understand if stereotypes surrounding women in sport affect the participants' decision to participate in football.

3.2 Research Design

Holloway (1997) defined qualitative research as “a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live” (Sited in Greig, Taylor & Mackay, 2007. p.136).

A qualitative approach was utilised to encapsulate the suitable data for the nature of this study. Qualitative research aims to acquire meanings that are not measureable, such as thoughts, feelings and experiences (Gratton & Jones, 2010). For qualitative research, the investigation process is down to interpreting the interpretations of others (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). This is believed most applicable due to the ability to collect the participants' experiences, memories, thoughts and feelings, which are of high importance when considering the study's intention. Moreover, an interpretative, qualitative study relies on the interpretation of the participants through extensive quotes and reoccurring themes that reflect the words and actions of said participants (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Therefore, the study attempts to obtain an understanding of the phenomena rather than verify the study's hypothesis at 'true'.

According to previous research, despite a surge of participation in 2010, participation has continued to fall. The qualitative, interpretative approach used cited information from the participants with the hope to acquire their perceptions of the game, with the aim to understand the latest decline in female participation and therefore, attempt to give an insight on how to change it. The use of qualitative research allowed the collection of the data to be based on the feelings and thoughts (Gratton & Jones, 2010) of the girls, and

therefore, gain an understanding of why and what influences them into the choices they make with regard to football.

The data for this project was collected via set focus groups, from which conclusions can be drawn on regarding the participants' experiences and perceptions of football through the National Curriculum of Physical Education (NCPE), which could add to finding out whether grassroots level participation is affected.

3.3 Sampling

When determining a sample, participants who are able to give a detailed insight into the phenomenon being explored are crucial (Amis, 2005). Therefore, with the study aiming to explore female football experiences within school, it was important the participants were specific to this.

Participants' in the study will be made up of female pupils at a comprehensive school in the South Wales area. Pupils' will be between the ages of 11-16 years old. Furthermore, the pupils' were asked to participate in a focus group interview. Each focus group consisted of six to eight females from each year group (year 7-11), a member of the schools teaching staff was also utilised to oversee each of the focus groups.

The sampling method that was used in this research was purposive sampling, similar to that produced by Smith, Green and Thurston (2009), which used set criteria in order to select participants. A similar criterion was used in this study which allowed participants to be chosen according to a particular feature, characteristic or specific experience. Purposive sampling is the selection of a sample with a goal in mind; this enables the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding on a certain topic from a particular group of people (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). This also ensured that effective research was collected, those selected had different experiences and enjoyment of P.E, thus, ensuring a vast range of opinions was collected. Moreover, characteristics of participants included: (a) main sport, (b) sports participation outside of school and (c) physical activity level in PE.

Participants were selected based upon their pre-existing friendship groups, which assisted recruitment. Additionally, as Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008) suggested, friendship groups would have "shared experiences and enjoy the comfort and familiarity" (p.293). This contributed to the flow of the conversation, enabling participants to remain comfortable within the setting and if opinions are challenged, creating in-depth and detailed answers. It could also be speculated that as the research

was conducted using same-sex groups, information collected was more confirmable. As the other-sex's judgement was not applicable, the influence of any thoughts or concerns was removed. It could be estimated that due to this, comfort levels within the situation became more relaxed, facilitating a more natural discussion (Maykut & Moorehouse, 1994).

3.4 Data Collection Methods

3.4.1 Instruments

For this study, five focus groups were carried out with 6-8 participants in each. Focus groups were used to create an informal setting to allow participants to become familiar with the interviewer, in turn enabling them to portray their feelings about PE and football more clearly and honestly. To ensure credibility, a voice recording device was used during the focus groups so that information could be listened to repeatedly until the data provided was understood and an accurate account of the girls' experiences of PE could be given.

The participants were each assigned a colour and asked to identify themselves before speaking through these colours throughout the focus groups. By listening to the recording participants could not be identified, this facilitated safer anonymity of the participants.

3.4.2 Procedure

Focus group interviews have been described as an open and emergent process. Furthermore, Maykut and Moorehouse (1994) define focus groups as "a group conversation with a purpose" (p.104). Moreover, focus groups revolve around a discussion of thoughts and opinions stemmed from an area of interest by a group of people. Participants for this study were chosen based upon pre-existing friendship groups and set criteria which was summarised by the researcher. The Head of PE and PE staff were involved in the selection process for several reasons. Firstly, as a method to protect the anonymity of participants. Secondly, as the schools cooperation was a crucial contribution to the success of the project, teachers were presented with a degree of control over the selection process. Thirdly, the teachers were better positioned to select pupils best fitted for the research, considering they would have known their pupils, some for several years.

Maykut and Moorehouse (1994) suggest an hour is a sufficient time for discussion. However, this was determined in an instance where participants were not acquainted with other members within the group. The hour timescale was established to allow participants time to familiarise themselves with each other as well as discuss the topics of research. As pre-existing friendship groups were used, it could be suggested that a lesser amount of time should be allocated to each focus group. However, the adequate amount of time for each focus group will be based upon theoretical saturation point. This occurs when no new concepts or perceptions arise from the data collection that would be significant for the progress of the study (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). The focus groups took place in a quiet classroom with a teacher present. The group were tape recorded in order to aid transcription for coding. Prior to commencement of the focus groups, a verbal agreement was given to all pupils stating protection of anonymity. In addition, participants were informed that they could stop the tape recording at any time should they feel the need to do so.

3.5 Data Analysis

The analysis component of the research was fundamental in gaining a detailed understanding of the data. A thorough analysis of data allows the researcher to ensure all the information is taken from the data. Sparkes and Smith (2014) state that data cannot 'speak for itself'; therefore, analysis is an important process. This process is of eminent importance to gain a greater understanding of a phenomenon and describe what is learnt through minimum interpretation (Maykut & Moorehouse, 1994). Therefore, without careful analysis, important information may be overlooked, making results and conclusions undependable.

Coding was the method adopted once data was collected, transcribed and structured, to identify any reoccurring themes in the data. Greig., et al (2007) defines coding as 'the key process, by which data are broken down into component parts. Each separate idea is given a label, often using words or phrases used by the participants themselves' (p.141). Due to the mass documents produced through transcript data, coding is an easy way of identifying various themes (Maykut & Moorehouse, 1994). A thorough understanding of the opportunities and perceptions regarding girls' football from female pupils' in secondary school education could be identified by categorising these patterns identified in the data.

3.6 Judgement Criteria

Trustworthiness aims to assure data collected through research is “worth paying attention to” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.290). Sparkes and Smith (2014) suggest the criterion in which to judge the study revolve around “credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability” (p.179).

Guba and Lincoln (1989) state dependability is concerned with the stability of data over time. Therefore, for a study to be dependable, it must be consistent and accurate. In order to do this the researcher must construct a detailed layout of their decision making process that can be followed by the reader, allowing the reader to make their own judgement of the study’s dependability (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Credibility focuses on determining whether or not the research findings represent an accurate conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants’ original data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state confirmability, is measured by how well the data collected supports the findings of the research. This helps to ensure the research findings are not an outcome of bias or based on figments of the researcher’s imagination (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). The degree to which the findings of research can be applied or repeated is down to the transferability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). McDonough, Sabiston and Crocker (2008) explained that certain techniques, such as having two investigators, facilitate the achievement of credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability (Cited in Sparkes & Smith, 2014).

This research is specific to the girls in the study and was rendered to gain a deeper understanding of the decision to or not to participate in football and if influences within a school setting affect this decision. The data gathered, together with previous literature, can be used to develop an understanding of participation levels and how to modify them. The extensiveness of theory with regard to the collected data can be suitably judged by the reader. In addition, due to the researcher being involved with football and having personal interests, commitments, and values, differences are determined (Sparkes, 2002).

3.7 Ethical Considerations and Limitations

Prior to the initiation of this study, ethical approval was gained by the School of Sport (See appendix A). This involved an in-depth description of the study by the researcher. Anonymity of the pupils was protected during the interview process as colours, instead of names, were used to identify the pupils on the recording. Each participant was given a pseudonym and any means for identification of the participants' were concealed by hiding the names of other people and places discussed throughout the focus groups. This process started from the point of transcribing interviews. In addition to changing the participants' names, the name of the school has not been mentioned throughout the study.

Additionally, before the focus groups could proceed, participants and their parents were required to give informed consent toward their involvement in the study (See appendix C). Parental consent was essential as the participants were under the age of 18 years, participants' confidentiality and anonymity to protect identities is agreed within this statement. Furthermore, the information sheets and consent forms that were issued gave parents and the participants the opportunity to acquire a greater understanding of the study (See appendix B). The issue of these forms also allowed participants' to indicate that they were happy and willing to contribute to the study, this in turn allowed the information given during the focus groups to be used ethically and morally.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter III has described the process of interpreting this data. Organisation of the information into themes has been used to present the results. Some of the themes were established through the literature review and taken to the interviews; other themes emerged from the interviews. These themes are coinciding and are interlinked.

4.2 Opportunities in Physical Activity

It has been suggested that upon entrance into secondary school girls and boys are spilt into sex-appropriate activities in PE (Stirling & Schulz, 2011), which allows them to carry out their suitable gendered behaviours. This segregation between genders affects the opportunities they receive in school and in turn, and the outside opportunities they face, thus, reproducing the traditional behaviours (Lopez, 1997).

Football is viewed as a traditionally masculine sport and the male dominance within the sport is a continual reminder of women's unwelcome place within it. These factors lead to girls' thoughts toward the sport being negative and something they feel they can't compete in due to the masculine nature and presumed differences between boys and girls. Findings here suggested the lack of opportunities were due to three main reasons. The year groups were spilt about why they felt they weren't offered opportunities. Angharad, year 10, believed that the negative views towards the sport by her peers was the main reason contributing to the lack of opportunities offered. She explains:

Angharad: 'I'd love to do football in PE ... everyone like kicks off when they say we're going to do football. And they think "oh that's a boys sport, we can't do that".'

Liz, year 11, explained why in her opinion football wasn't given as much interest in PE compared to other sports.

Liz: 'Netball and things like hockey and stuff, badminton. They're more popular in lessons than football.'

Teachers' experience of certain sports was also suggested to be a factor that contributes to the activities taught in lessons. Some of the participants highlighted that this could be a valid factor that affects their opportunities in school. Imogen, year 11, agreed that this did contribute to the structure of lessons. She explains:

Imogen: *'I think its more teacher experience as well because obviously Mrs Jones, she's more like experienced with netball and that and then there's other teachers who are more experienced with football like Mrs Jenkins.'*

The participants' opinions suggested that the opportunities to play football within PE lessons were limited or none at all due to the above reasoning; however, there was a lunch time club open for those who wished to take part. However, participants argued that this wasn't taken seriously compared with that of more mainstream sports that were taken after school. The girls suggests that lunch time clubs were never as popular at lunch as they prefer to 'talk' and 'have a break because they'd just finished lessons'. Other's stated that the short amount of time available at lunch times also affected how seriously they were taken, between getting changed and setting up they were sometimes only left with 10 minutes of playing time which 'wasn't beneficial'. Kristi, year 7, explains:

Kristi: *'The teachers are just chatting and everyone's just messing around and they're not doing the rules ... in netball, miss stops us in the middle of a match to say right you should be ... I think it's cause it's a lunch time it's different. They think it's more for fun.'*

4.3 Stereotypes Surrounding Women in Sport

Previous literature suggested that women in sport are at an immediate disadvantage based on their sex (Caudwell, 2003). This view is carried into schools where it is reproduced through the segregated activities and stereotypes which are in place to discourage girls' from certain activities, thus, limiting their opportunities (Stirling & Schulz, 2011). During the focus groups, the participants observed a difference between what it meant to be a boy and what it meant to be a girl. Aggression was a characteristic identified of boys; the girls were described as 'determined' rather than aggressive. Aggressiveness shown by girls was viewed as negative characteristic but was accepted when it was shown by boys. Kristi, year 7, explains:

Kristi: *'They probably come across as horrible, not like a horrible person but an aggressive person, but in really life you're not. You're just normal.'*

The negative behaviours and images portrayed surrounding girls in sport, were suggested to be overlooked if one showed a good level of ability. Kristi, year 7, continues:

Kristi: *'I think it's more on like ability than what you look like.'*

Showing girls could perform the same movements and actions as men proved to be an important aspect toward football being accepted. Liz and Jacqui, year 11, explain:

Jacqui: *'They can all do the same actions, like women can do the same thing as men so it like shows they can both do the same thing even though they're different genders.'*

Liz: *'I'd say it shows that they're both capable ... It doesn't show no different between them.'*

4.4 Male Dominance

4.4.1 'Ask Your Father': Key Male Figures

Many of the participants suggested that their fathers and/or brothers had the greatest impact on their football experiences. These ranged from watching family members play on the weekend, watching the premier league on TV to playing for girls' teams in their local area. The girls' fathers were seen as the main source for encouragement. Liz and Imogen, year 11, explain:

Liz: *'My dad plays football so that's what influenced me to join when I was younger, cause he wanted me to join and watching him play would make me want to do it as well.'*

Imogen: *'My dad used to be my coach so I used to play with him outside my house all the time.'*

The girls who didn't have brothers felt this encouragement the most from their fathers. Those with brothers explained how their experiences revolved around watching their brother's play rather than feeling the reassurance to play themselves. The experience of watching their brothers play led to a key observation as Kristi, year 7, pointed out:

Kristi: *'My brother plays football and I see when he has tournaments, I see more boys playing than girls.'*

Male dominance surrounding football was observed by the pupils'. The greater TV coverage and media focus male footballers are given was compared with that of the

women's game and stated to be a contribution to the lack of knowledge surrounding women's football. Liz, year 11, gives her opinion:

Liz: They're talked about more in the media than the women. You never hear about a women footballer on the news much. Like Gareth Bale, like you hear of him a lot.'

All participants admitted they didn't know of any female footballers, this was subsequently proven through the use of footballer images at the end, where all of the participants failed to recognise Kelly Smith (MBE) in two separate images that showed her playing and in casual attire.

4.4.2 Reflections of PE

When reflecting on their football experience in primary school, football was understood by all to be the 'only for boys', due to the behaviours the boys demonstrated on the playground. Laura, year 7, and Courtney, year 9, discussed how the boys controlled football during break and lunch times, hinting that they thought it was their sport. They reflect:

Laura: 'It was mostly their (the boys) game cause they wouldn't want girls joining in.'

Courtney: They (the boys) started to say like "oh yeah you can join" but the boys said that like the teachers didn't. It was up to the boys.'

Although most of the girls expressed an interest to join in, the boys made it clear that they were unwelcome on the football ground. Danielle, year 9, recollected experiences of asking the boys if she could join in play but being met with the same reaction time and time again. She recalled being told:

Danielle: "You're a girl, you can't play football, it's only for boys."

However, it was suggested across the year groups that ability contributed to being allowed to play. If the girls showed a decent level of playing ability the boys would make an exception and allow them to play. Emily, year 7, and Claire, year 8, explained:

Emily: 'If they thought you were rubbish they'd tell you to get lost so, it made it seem like it was their game.'

Claire: *'You have to go in and just start playing ... we were all like playing and there was other people then who weren't confident and they were like "they never pick us", well, if you show what you can do then they'll pick you.'*

However, this wasn't the experience of all the girls, Angharad and Sara, year 10, explained they were easily able to join in with the boys at break and lunch time. A strategy was created in order to make each game fair between the boys and the girls. However, this system seemed to reinforce gender equity, not ability. Angharad, year 10, explains:

Angharad: *'You'd have two girls as captains and then we'd do faces or numbers. Or when the boys were captains they'd have to pick a boy and then a girl, so it was fair.'*

However, they both observed differences in play when the girls were not involved:

Sara: *'I think they (the boys) were like, going a bit easy because we were girls and they wouldn't pass to you as much.'*

Angharad: *'But when the girls didn't play they would like run at each other and like tackle each other and everything.'*

Although the girls were 'allowed' to play freely, play was observed to be unequal. This suggests the boys felt the girls were inadequate to their standard and so adapted the game, allowing them to play, but in a subordinated manner.

This gives evidence to the separation into sex-appropriate activities even before secondary school. Boys and girls become aware of their gendered differences and behaviours they must uphold to fill these gendered roles. The accounts of the girls' experiences explain how the boys naturally took the more dominant role creating boundaries and rules toward female participation in football.

4.5 Relations with Mother's

The view of male dominance within football is re-established by the female influence surrounding the sport. The naturalisation of football as a masculine sport causes women to develop a dis-ownership with it to protect their feminine values (Caudwell 2003). This theory can be seen to be supported by the girls' thoughts about their mother's views.

When prompted for what their mother's reaction would be if they expressed interest to play football, many of the girls stated they would be told to 'ask your father'. This reaction suggests that the men in the family have the deciding factor over football as it is 'their sport'. This experience was shared throughout the year groups, some revealing the need to justify their reasoning to play to their mother's or even being discouraged by their mother's toward playing male dominated sports with the simple reasoning that 'you're a girl'. Courtney, year 9, recalled:

Courtney: 'When I was in Primary I wanted to do football but my mother kept saying "you're a girl" but like my dad used to say I could do what I want.'

The negative view toward girls playing football derives from girls being perceived to be 'fragile' compared to boys. Sophia and Claire, year 8, discussed this:

Sophia: 'My mam would be like "oh don't do that, you'll get hurt".'

Claire: 'She'll say that's good cause ... but she doesn't want me to get hurt, obviously she'll always be happy for me, that I'm doing more ... but she's just protective. Like my brother does rugby and does loads of rugby a week but it's like different to my brother because he's like a boy, and he's like really strong.'

4.6 Experience

The lack of knowledge about football emerged from the focus groups as a key factor which affected the girls' want to participate. As school is the main point for physical activity (PA) for most children and young adults, the different activities they experience in that space are important toward shaping their future involvement in PA (Stirling & Schulz, 2011). Encouragement of football within PE lessons, where participation is compulsory, could be suggested to change pupil's perceptions of football. This could be suggested to have a positive effect on participation rates. Liz, year 11, explains:

Liz: *'I think if we were more encouraged to do football, like with netball we have to do it, like if we had to do football then more people would want to join in because they've had experience of it.'*

Not knowing the 'basics' and having to 'start from scratch' affected the girls' feelings toward the sport. Jacqui, year 11, explained:

Jacqui: *'When you're starting a new sport at this age now when everyone else is better than you, they've had the experience, you don't feel intimidated but you feel like "I can't play as well so I don't want to play". I know you go to learn but like but you don't want to look like the one who's really bad compare to everyone.'*

The idea of being judged by others based on ability was suggested to be an obstacle preventing the desire to join a team outside of school. This barrier also affected their decision to play in school, the participants' conveyed not wanting to learn a new activity at their age due to the fear of displaying an inability. This also implied the idea of image and others' perceptions had a direct effect on what sport they felt motivated to take part in. The support of a friend when starting something new helped with this process and would offer more encouragement as Angharad, year 10, explained:

Angharad: *'If someone came with me, but I wouldn't go on my own because I'd look like a loner and they'd say "oh she ain't got no friends".'*

However, if one showed enthusiasm to join a club, those other factors identified previously, formed reasons which counteracted this.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will endeavour to obtain analytic conclusions in relation to the research question through discussing and evaluating the main findings in chapter IV. The central products of this study will highlight what these findings have achieved and added in relation to the literature presented in the literature review. Finally, general conclusions will be made with regard to the findings.

5.2 Family Impact

In spite of the popular rise in PA of women and girls, traditional gender ideals remain, impacting on what type of PA girls take part in. Literature advocates that parental influence acts as an important factor towards childhood socialisation into sport (Greendorfer, 1977; Lewko & Erwing, 1980). However, Giuliano, Popp and Knight (2000) suggest that parental influence has decreased indicating a shift in the last decade which has led to an increased influence from friends and peers toward sport socialisation. On the contrary, more recent literature supports the suggestion that the traditional ideologies of femininity remain, and are reproduced and reinforced through the family. Stirling and Schulz (2011) explain that the family plays a crucial role in issuing encouragement toward female football participation and the values held by parents can act as a barrier toward participation.

In this study, participants' experiences appear to confirm that these gender ideals remain and are reinforced through family, in particular, mothers. Several of the participants' shared experiences of being told by their mothers' that they couldn't take part in football due to the assumption that they'd 'get hurt'. This belief, reinforced by their mothers, instilled the ideas of differing characteristics between boys and girls, as Ashley, year 8, explained that girls were '*more fragile than boys*'. The views associated with women's football held by mothers, and consequently their daughters, highlights the need for a greater awareness and celebration of women's football as masculine ideologies and dated social perception still surround the sport, limiting further development.

Nonetheless, their recollections suggest that their fathers' encouragement was far more important due to the trust in their greater experience and understanding of football. By playing football, it has been suggested that females accept male traits which leads to a natural support from males (Scraton, Fasting, Pfiter & Bunuel, 1999). This advocates literature highlighting "the male domination in society seemed to triumph over the

outcomes of which parent would succeed” (Stirling & Schulz, 2011, p63). Thus, when considering sport, it may be suggested that male figures in the family have an overshadowing control. Previous literature highlights that football not only offers an emotional bond between fathers and sons but also fathers and daughters (Wedgwood, 2004; Stirling & Schulz, 2011). The close relationship created between fathers and daughters can cause a weakened connection between daughters and mothers (Stirling & Schulz, 2011). The findings from this study warrant that the opportunities for girls to choose physical activities are dependent largely on male encouragement and approval (Stirling & Schulz, 2011), which led to several of the participants taking a stand against their mothers with the support of their fathers. Danielle, year 9, explained *‘I just used to ignore my mum ‘cause she made me feel like I couldn’t play.’*

Nevertheless, one parent encouraging them into football was found to have a significantly higher influence on participation compared with neither. Without parental encouragement it was stated that the girls would feel ‘negative’ towards the sport and would be less likely to participate. This perhaps supports the concept that families develop invisible guidelines surrounding what they feel their children can and cannot do which in turn, affect the choices and decisions their children make. However, when considering ‘traditionally’ masculine games it can be proposed that male figures have a greater influence over the choices of their children. The control over their children’s developing identities suggests the role of the family constructs a social framework within which the practices of its children are impacted on; this can be argued to be similar to the construction of structure and the practices of agency within it (Scott, 2006).

5.3 Skill Development

In spite of the gains in women’s football, girls’ introduction into the sport remains a talking point for skill development. School has been identified as the most influential place for encouraging young girls’ sporting involvement and providing them with the opportunities to play in teams (Lopez, 1997). However, Scraton., et al, (1999) suggest the school systems in England do not provide the same encouragement for girls due to the continued following of gendered ideologies. This is similarly echoed by Stirling and Schulz (2011) who state that the school creates problems in motivating girls into playing football in their own time. This results in girls not being able to fulfil their footballing potential. Clarke and Paechter (2007) describe school as a space where boys’ discourage girls’ participation and diminish their skills. Griggs and Biscomb (2010)

support this; suggesting a bias towards male participation remains throughout schools and it seems girls' get the blame for their lack of involvement rather than the boys' refusal to pass to and involve them. In turn, leading to girls being faced with fewer opportunities on the playground. Nonetheless, literature by Stirling and Schulz (2011) suggests that primary school is the first real opportunity for girls to participate in football. They explained the playground offered key opportunities to join in play freely and that playing with boys increased the girls' strength and skill abilities.

In this study, the participants' experiences confirm that primary school was their first opportunity to play football, some even being greeted with the chance to play for a mixed or girls only school team. However, this experience was described as 'only messing around' and stated that no real skills were developed. The lack of skill progress had an adverse effect on continuing participation into secondary school. Despite literature highlighting girls playing football was not permitted at secondary school (Stirling & Schulz, 2011), participants in this study insisted that opportunities to join lunch time clubs were available. Nevertheless, these opportunities were not taken due to the unknown knowledge of 'the basics' felt across all participants and the informal environment participants' felt was provided by the teachers which led them to believe they were not being taken seriously. School being reported as the first and only real opportunity to play shows the lack of structure at grassroots level and advocates literature that suggests the separation of boys' and girls' football signals the beginning of the end for female football players' (Stirling & Schulz, 2011). In order for women's football to 'catch-up' with the men's game, development of well-organised youth policies are crucial to increase participation and the skill improvement of girls (Scruton et al., 1999). Within schools, the inclusion of football into the competitive element of the NCPE would enable girls to experience structured football and learn the basics. Furthermore, greater structure and significance given to afterschool or lunch time clubs would give girls' the encouragement and motivation needed to expand their own development in clubs outside of school.

Although the participants expressed the availability to play on the playground during primary school, acquiring this opportunity was not easy. Several participants made comments suggesting the need to prove their ability to their male counterparts first before being allowed to play freely.

5.4 Male Ownership

What is evident throughout this study is the male ownership over the game which impacts female perceptions of and their inclusion into football. Messner (1992) highlighted that female football player's childhood memories of football revolved around masculine ideologies. Clarke and Paechter (2007) advocate this, suggesting that the huge investment of male identity into football creates the male assumption of ownership over the game. Literature suggests this ownership is even visible among primary school children on the playground. Male possession of the game enables boys to show their authority both on and off the pitch, dominating play as well as monitoring rules. Thus, invisible gender zone boundaries are created, often highlighting the open discouragement and evidence of boys preventing girls from joining in (Clarke & Paechter, 2007). Stirling and Schulz (2011) identified that girls often found themselves asking permission of the boys to play, reaffirming football as a 'boys game' and the gendered hierarchy that grants boys the automatic right to the football pitch. Correspondingly, the participants in this study pointed out that they had to ask the boys for permission to join in, not the teachers, stating that it was 'their game'. Thus, indicating that women and girls still find themselves depending on the male sporting world to give them the opportunities to compete (Scruton et al., 1999).

The girl's experiences of football during primary school circulated around gendered hierarchy which can be suggested to stem from gender differences. Creedon (1994) argues that gender difference and the 'othering' of females are linked with gender hierarchy. The underlying expectations of being 'active, aggressive and spontaneous' seen as superior to being 'weak, passive and responsive' indicates gender differences and the dominance of males over females. In spite of being classed as the 'second' sex, when it came to being able to join in, the boys' relationship with the game was suggested to be a key method to get them involved in secondary school. Courtney, year 9, implied that because they go to an all-girls school there was no one to encourage them to play football. She stated *'in primary we only used to be interested in football because the boys used to start a match, but now there's no one to start a game.'* This highlights the importance of male presence felt surrounding football which reinforces previous literature that identifies the initial male figures that impact on girls' lives surrounding football, continue to be held of high stature throughout their involvement (Stirling & Schulz, 2011).

5.4.1 'Permission to Play'; Playground Rules

Griggs and Biscomb (2010) identified portrayals of girls' football in popular culture illustrate the impact of the media toward changing perceptions and increasing participation levels. Still, Stirling and Schulz (2011) explained none of their participants mentioned any female figures surrounding their very first memories of football. Likewise, in this study, the participants admitted to not knowing any female footballers, reaffirming literatures suggestion of very few or no female footballing role models. The findings highlighted the lack of media attention as reason for the unawareness of women's football. This reaffirms Griggs and Biscomb (2010) and suggests that little still remains to be done surrounding the game. From previous literature and the findings in this study it can be suggested that further television coverage, newspaper reports and other representations in popular culture need to be made in order to increase awareness of women's football and work toward changing perceptions of women playing football to boost participation.

Moreover, as a result of the assumed male ownership over the game of football, girl's often find themselves having to seek permission or prove their ability in order to join in (Clarke & Paechter, 2007; Griggs & Biscomb, 2010; Stirling & Schulz, 2011). The findings in this study advocates the literature, participants described experiences of frequently having to ask boys if they could join in and it wasn't until the latter stages of primary school that they were granted permission. Courtney, year 9, stated '*it was up to the boys*' to grant permission, as asking their teachers would result in the same response of 'get on with it'. The act of females' seeking permission of their male peers' reaffirms the hierarchy of the playground and contributes to the ordering of gender. Furthermore, this contradicts findings from Clarke and Paechter (2007) who suggested that teacher intervention was the only method to involve girls. Nonetheless, Clarke and Paechter (2007) found that even when permission had been granted, boys would alter the rules or not involve the girls through lack of passing to, making it known they were unwelcome. Similarly in this study, the participants reported that when they did play they were not 'treated fair'. This suggests that girls' are assumed to be the less able, which results in their disengagement from the football space.

Stirling and Schulz (2011) imply that in order to gain access to football within school, girls' must first prove their ability to their male counterparts. Male's offer females 'conditions' to prove their ability to play whereas for them is it given based on their

gender. This is true for even the less dominant, less skilful males who are still put above females based on gender alone (Clarke & Paechter, 2007). This demonstrates the gender order surrounding football.

The reinforced male ownership over football divides genders; females inevitably accept their subordination in football and continue to rely on male's authorisation into the sport.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter intended to draw analytical conclusions in relation to the research problem based on key findings identified in chapter IV. The literature review was used to help reinforce the experiences of the participants and their experiences strengthened the literature. The findings in this study portray the relentless limitations and rejections females face with regard to the opportunities to play football. Although it has been suggested that girls' receive initial opportunities to play, the major issues encountered to continue playing and progress are evident. The participants' reflections significantly establish the gender hierarchy surrounding football as a barrier, as girls often finding themselves subordinated whereas men assume the right. The research highlights the lack of developmental progress for females which is linked with restrained perceptions of girls' football. Therefore, consideration may be given to gender issues across other 'traditionally' male team sports, as although females are beginning to challenge the male presence and ownership in football, it is not significant enough. Likewise, this study reaffirms that the development of women's football is still very gradual and remains challenged due to the lack of progress at the initial introduction of girls' into football. In addition, the results from the study do not suggest any major differences between the five year groups involved. This gives additional support to the need for further development and awareness surrounding women's football.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

6.1 Conclusion

This study intended to gain an in-depth and rich understanding of girls' perceptions of football, in order to find out whether these perceptions affect their decisions to participate. Previous research has established that the introduction into female football is underrepresented by opportunities to participate (Scranton et al., 1999; Clarke & Paechter, 2007; Stirling & Schulz, 2011), yet few studies have placed the school education system at the centre of their research to illuminate young girls' lived experiences of football within school. From this study, it is clear that school enhances girls' footballing opportunities, though the opportunities remain fewer than other sports and participation remains gradual. What was greatly pertinent was the male hierarchy that worked as either an aid or a hindrance toward engagement in football, nonetheless can holistically be concluded to keep females subordinated in football.

Although the findings suggest girls' perceptions of women's football is improving, these changes are gradual and have occurred over time, with this study and previous studies signifying the same reoccurring issues (See Stirling & Schulz, 2011). Interestingly, the participants' seemed to recognise the inequality faced by females with regard to football, which perhaps highlights the few improvements made in the media, thus resulting in less public awareness of female football. However, this study discovered barriers toward changed perceptions of female football. It highlighted the views of their parents and how these views seemed to impact the girls' involvement, often detracting them from playing. These findings could suggest that perceptions of football remain encompassed by the traditional ideals of masculinity. Additionally, that parents in their gendered roles encourage these ideals creating a social framework contributing to the decisions their children make with regard to sport. The findings seem to signify the issue of gender hierarchy with males remaining at the centre of football, attaining the best opportunities and limiting the development of girls' football further. For instance, participants stated they accepted the need to prove their ability in order to play, whereas males assume the right, reaffirming and illustrating females being portrayed as 'second best', also exemplified by (Clarke & Paechter, 2007; Stirling & Schulz, 2011). Finally, the findings of the study failed to recognise any differences between year groups. This indicates that the awareness of female football needs further attention as a strategy to contribute to the increase of female participation.

6.2 Limitations of Research

A limitation of this study was the substantial amount of data collected from the focus groups not utilised, not all the participants and their opinions could be encompassed in earlier chapters. This made selecting the most predominant themes and most significant comments that addressed those themes difficult. Furthermore, a larger timescale would allow a greater in-depth understanding of participants' accounts as a greater rapport could have been built amongst participants and the researcher. Due to the narrow timescale only one focus group per year group could be administered. An increased time period would have allowed further focus group interviews to be directed which could have uncovered a deeper understanding behind the participants' opinions. Furthermore, a larger timescale could have permitted more than one school's involvement within the study, which would have added to the variety of opinions gathered and enabled a comparison to be made across the schools. Moreover, the results of this study don't generalise or claim to be an accurate explanation of all girls' football experience within school. Although, it does make an effort to discover some of the substantial issues present during girls' initial involvement in football and in school.

6.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Specific recommendations have been identified to improve the value of research. Firstly, a greater period of time would increase the depth of research, as a greater rapport could be built with participants over time to facilitate a wider variety of concepts.

A second possible idea for further research could focus on the perceptions of parents towards girls' football. This will help to further understand if gender ideals are reproduced by the family and if parents have an influence over their child's sporting participation. Future research could also revolve around those pupils' currently involved in football and their experiences of football within schools compared to those experiences outside of school. This would add further understanding to the effects of the education system on the encouragement and motivation of girls' into football.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ETHICAL APPROVAL

When undertaking a research or enterprise project, Cardiff Met staff and students are obliged to complete this form in order that the ethics implications of that project may be considered.

If the project requires ethics approval from an external agency such as the NHS or MoD, you will not need to seek additional ethics approval from Cardiff Met. You should however complete Part One of this form and attach a copy of your NHS application in order that your School is aware of the project.

The document ***Guidelines for obtaining ethics approval*** will help you complete this form. It is available from the [Cardiff Met website](#).

Once you have completed the form, sign the declaration and forward to your School Research Ethics Committee.

PLEASE NOTE:

Participant recruitment or data collection must not commence until ethics approval has been obtained.

PART ONE

Name of applicant:	Katy Hallett
Supervisor (if student project):	Carly Stewart
School:	Cardiff Metropolitan University
Student number (if applicable):	St20005309
Programme enrolled on (if applicable):	Sport and P.E
Project Title:	The impact of the activity choice and stereotyping within secondary schools on girls' perceptions of football participation.
Expected Start Date:	01/10/2013
Approximate Duration:	6 months
Funding Body (if applicable):	Click here to enter text.
Other researcher(s) working on the project:	If your collaborators are external to Cardiff Met, include details of the organisation they represent.
Will the study involve NHS patients or staff?	If yes, attach a copy of your NHS application to this form
Will the study involve taking samples of human origin from participants?	No

In no more than 150 words, give a non technical summary of the project
I have always maintained a keen interest in football, thus, the reasoning behind this project is to gain a further understanding of why female participation at grassroots level football remains low and whether activity choice and/or stereotyping within schools contributes to girls' perceptions of and experiences of football. Research into this area is

relatively limited; previous research has looked at gender differences in participation related to activity choice in P.E lessons at key stage (KS) 4. Other footballing specific research has mainly focused on those who are already playing football or those competing in senior leagues. Therefore, benefits of this research may change the meaning of girls' football within schools, give those more opportunities within a physical education setting and address possible barriers. To address this I intend to focus on young girls (aged 11-16) perceptions of football across five year groups at one secondary school.

Does your project fall entirely within one of the following categories:	
Paper based, involving only documents in the public domain	No
Laboratory based, not involving human participants or human tissue samples	No
Practice based not involving human participants (eg curatorial, practice audit)	No
Compulsory projects in professional practice (eg Initial Teacher Education)	No
If you have answered YES to any of these questions, no further information regarding your project is required.	
If you have answered NO to all of these questions, you must complete Part 2 of this form	

DECLARATION: I confirm that this project conforms with the Cardiff Met Research Governance Framework	
Signature of the applicant:	Date:
FOR STUDENT PROJECTS ONLY	
Name of supervisor:	Date:
Signature of supervisor:	

Research Ethics Committee use only	
Decision reached:	Project approved Project approved in principle Decision deferred Project not approved

Project rejected	
Project reference number: 13/10/07U	
Name: Peter O'Donoghue.	Date: 24/10/13.
	
Signature:	
Details of any conditions upon which approval is dependant: Click here to enter text.	

PART TWO

A RESEARCH DESIGN	
A1 Will you be using an approved protocol in your project?	No
A2 If yes, please state the name and code of the approved protocol to be used ³	
Click here to enter text.	
A3 Describe the research design to be used in your project	
<p>This will be a qualitative study; a methodology similar to that produced by Smith, Green and Thurston (2009) will be adopted and altered slightly to fit the project. Firstly, questionnaires will be sent out to one secondary school as a sampling method to see interest levels. Based on variability of questionnaire responses five focus groups will be administrated, consisting of 6-8 girls from each age group (years 7- 11). Participant selection will be discussed alongside the school's Head of Years' (HoY) and form tutors' based upon questionnaire responses, friendship groups and criteria set by the researcher, including; sports participation and physical activity in P.E. Their input will increase the variability of the participants to help give a more rounded set of results. For each focus group two to three pre-existing friendship groups will be used to ensure comfort and familiarity. As Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008) suggested, pre-existing friendship groups will easily facilitate discussion and have the ability to challenge one another comfortably. The inclusion of the HoY and form tutors will ensure anonymity of the participants is protected, as well as give the participating school a degree of control over the project. Each session will last approximately 30 minutes long. Participants will be required to attend one focus group session, however as qualitative designs are emergent some issues brought up may require readdressing. Therefore, subsequent focus session may be arranged.</p>	
A4 Will the project involve deceptive or covert research?	No
A5 If yes, give a rationale for the use of deceptive or covert research	
Click here to enter text.	

B PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE
B1 What previous experience of research involving human participants relevant to this project do you have?
<p>As part of my degree course the compulsory research process module has allowed practice in conducting interviews. I also have experience being responsible for and teaching children and young adults (8-15 years old) as a camp counsellor in the USA, as well as experience volunteering at a secondary school P.E department working with pupils in year 7- year 11.</p>
B2 Student project only
What previous experience of research involving human participants relevant to this project does your supervisor have?
<p>Carly Stewart is research active and published in this area, utilising a similar population (See Stewart, Lord, Wiltshire and Fleming, 2010)</p>

³ An Approved Protocol is one which has been approved by Cardiff Met to be used under supervision of designated members of staff; a list of approved protocols can be found on the Cardiff Met website here

C POTENTIAL RISKS
C1 What potential risks do you foresee?
Participant's knowledge of and acceptance to take part in the study. As the researcher, I will potentially be in a position of power that carries potential psychological abuse such as manipulation of participants, making them feel under pressure which may affect their word choice. Protection of participant anonymity. Protection of myself as the researcher.
C2 How will you deal with the potential risks?
To ensure potential risks are minimised I will first seek the child protection policy for the school I intend to use and follow the procedures accordingly. For example, if a child confides in me concerning problematic issues at home. Second, informed consent and assent forms will be issued to all the participants' guardians and the participants themselves. The informed consent will state the research design and procedure as well as how the research will be beneficial to society. I will also provide the school with an up to date CRB check of myself. Third, listening and understanding are key factors for this project, thus, participants will be encouraged throughout the research to remain fully engaged in the study. Questions will be adapted to ensure all pupils recognise that their opinions are the main focuses of the study as well as making the participants feel comfortable throughout. To help the researcher build rapport to gain the best results an open and approachable body language will be maintained by the researcher. For example, by sharing relevant stories of own experiences within a school/football setting. In addition, a second adult (available teacher from the school) will also be present during the interviewing process to verify and oversee it, helping with rapport building and creating a comfortable atmosphere. The inclusion of a second adult will also ensure that I, as the researcher, am protected in relation to what is said and done. Lastly, as means to try to guarantee anonymity, Head of Year and possibly form tutors will be involved in the selection process for focus groups. Also, all participants will be given pseudonyms and the name of the school will not be used in the project.

When submitting your application you **MUST** attach a copy of the following:

- All information sheets
- Consent/assent form(s)

Refer to the document ***Guidelines for obtaining ethics approval*** for further details on what format these documents should take.

APPENDIX B

INFORMATION SHEETS

Title of Project: THE IMPACT OF THE SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM ON FEMALES PARTICIPATION IN FOOTBALL.

Parent / Guardian Information Sheet

Background

This is a dissertation project with the purpose to understand the effects of the secondary schooling on football participation in girls' and whether this has a direct effect on participation at grassroots level.

The study will be overlooked by Cardiff Metropolitan University lecturer, Carly Stewart.

In brief, this study is concerned with increasing girls' and young women's levels football participation in curriculum and as extra-curricular activity. This project evaluates whether:

- I. Gender stereotyping
- II. Activity choice opportunities

Have a direct effect regarding girls' participation in football and that at grassroots level.

The study will be presented as a dissertation project to Cardiff Metropolitan University.

Your child's participation in the research project

Your child will be required to fill out a questionnaire based upon their activity and participation levels in sport and P.E lessons, opportunities regarding girls' football they're faced with and their perceptions to girls' football.

After completion of the questionnaire, your child may be asked to participate in focus group discussions based on their responses to the questions asked. If this is the case, they will join in a group discussion with their classmates to discuss their viewpoints on the two topics listed above and reoccurring themes produced by the questionnaires.

Why your child has been asked

Your child has been invited to take part in this study because it is thought that she will benefit as a result. I will be issuing questionnaires and administrating focus group with all the children who agree to take part starting Oct 2013. Your child would be one of those.

What would happen if you agree for your child to be a part of this study?

If you agree for your child to join the study, there are two things that will happen.

1. Your child will be asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding their perceptions and experiences of girls' football in P.E lessons at school.
2. Your child may be asked to take part in a focus group session with 6-8 of their fellow peers. They will be asked to give their opinions and attitudes towards participating in football and the opportunities they feel they're offered within and outside of school.

Are there any risks?

There are not any significant risks to your child from taking part in the evaluation study. If she is feeling unwell, we'd advise that she doesn't take part. And in any case, she should do anything that she doesn't want to just make it clear to the researcher.

Your rights

In the very unlikely event of something going wrong during the evaluation, Cardiff Metropolitan University fully indemnifies its staff, students and participants are covered by its insurance.

What happens to the results of the project?

Results will be transcribed and coded to identify re-occurring themes. Any relevant data will be included in the dissertation and submitted as part of my degree course.

Are there any benefits from taking part?

Your child will learn about the importance of physical activity and key issues relating to women in sport.

What happens next?

Accompanying this letter, there are two forms to complete. The first is for you to give permission for your child to be involved in the study. The second is a different form for your child to complete to confirm that she is willing to take part.

How we protect your privacy:

Your privacy is respected; the informed consent sheet states that I will do my best to ensure anonymity. Careful consideration has been made to make sure you cannot be identified from any information you submit for the project.

Focus groups are set up so that the researcher only has a small role in the selection process this is another way to ensure your anonymity is protected.

Further information

If you have any questions about the research or how we intend to conduct the study, please contact:

Miss Katy Hallett

E-mail: St20005309@uwic.ac.uk

Tel: 07815859136

Title of Project: THE IMPACT OF THE SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM ON FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN FOOTBALL

Child Information Sheet

About this project:

This project will assess female participation in football. The aim of the study is to understand you and your classmates' opinions and experiences of girls' football. This project will help increase awareness and encourage girls' football.

Why you?

You are being asked because I think you might be someone who has valuable opinions important for the study.

What will happen?

You will be asked to complete a questionnaire about your enjoyment of sport and P.E and your experiences within P.E.

After you have done this you may be asked to participate in a small group discussion with your 6-8 of your classmate to share your thoughts and feelings towards girls' football and the opportunities you're offered in school.

Do I have to?

No, you don't. No-one is forcing you. If you start and decide you don't want to carry on, that's fine. There's no problem, just tell me and you will not have to continue with the project.

What do we do?

When I get all the information I need I will write about what you've said as part of my degree. I won't say who took part. No-one will know it's you or your school.

Have you got any questions?

If you have any questions just ask. You can ask yourself, or you can get your parent or guardian to ask.

Miss Katy Hallett

E-mail: st20005309@uwic.ac.uk

Tel: 07915859136

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORMS

PARENT / GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: The impact of the activity choice and stereotyping within secondary schools on girls' perceptions of football participation.

Name of Researcher: Katy Hallett

Parent / Guardian of participant to complete this section: Please initial in each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated for this study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that the participation of my child(ren) is voluntary and that it is possible to stop taking part at any time, without giving reason.
3. I also understand that if this happens, our relationship with the school, with Cardiff Metropolitan University and our legal rights will not be affected.
4. I understand that information from the study may be used for reporting purposes, but that my child(ren) will not be identified.
5. I agree for my child(ren) to take part in this study.

Name of Child
Guardian

Name of Parent /

Signature of Parent / Guardian

Date

Name of person taking consent

Date

Signature of person taking consent

*When completed, on copy for participant and one copy for researcher's files.

CHILD'S ASSENT FORM

Title of Project: The impact of the activity choice and stereotyping within secondary schools on girls' perceptions of football participation.

Name of Researcher: Katy Hallett

Please fill this form in by ticking the face by each question that you think is best for you.

If you agree, tick this face 😊

If you aren't sure, tick this face 😐

If you disagree, tick this face ☹️

I understand the study and I know what will happen. 😊 😐 ☹️

I have had a chance to ask questions and get them answered. 😊 😐 ☹️

I know I can stop at any time and that will be OK. 😊 😐 ☹️

I know that information about me might be written in this study,
but nobody will ever know that it's me. 😊 😐 ☹️

I am happy to be doing this study. 😊 😐 ☹️

Your Name

Date

Your Signature

Name of person taking consent

Date

Signature of person taking consent

*When completed, one copy for participant and one copy for the researcher's files.

APPENDIX D

EXAMPLE OF TRANSCRIPT

Katy Hallett

Focus Group Interviews

Interview 2

YR 11 (26:08 minutes)

Q: How has PE changed since Primary school?

Blue: they're more enjoyable I think. There's more equipment.

Green: And they're longer. Yeah and there's more equipment cause in Primary school there was just like table tops and benches we used. Now we get the ropes and that.

Red: Yeah because when I was in primary, we never used to have that much equipment or anything and it only used to be like 20 minutes.

Blue: I think cause like, if like someone was naughty

Yellow: Then we'd get our PE lesson taken away from us

Blue: yeah and now, in comp you don't get a choice in a way. I enjoy it more like now cause I think, I don't know, it's just more enjoyable. It's like more of a subject, like we used to have a subject for one P.E lesson but I think now, like we've done netball and Gymnastics, 2 things but in primary we'd have done like 10 things already.

Green: Cause we had like 20 minute lessons sometimes like we'd have like a warmup which takes like 10 minutes then you get the equipment out and then you have like 2 minutes to do it, you'd have like nothing of a PE lesson. Whereas now you get like a full hour in PE.

Q: Are you offered a range of activities in PE

Green: Yeah, there's more choices

Q: Is PE more enjoyable cause of the choices?

All: Yeah

Show second set of photos.

Q: What do you think of the players' in the pictures?

Blue: It looks rough, not like rough but it looks like more like I don't know, they're more like hitting each other and like aggressive yeah, not like aggressive as in like a boxing match aggressive as in like you want to win.

Green: It's like they're all like trying to tackle each other just to get the ball as if it's the last two minutes of the game or something.

Q: So you think it looks like they're really trying to win?

All: yeah

Q: Is there a difference between boys and girls?

Green: They both seem to be going in for the ball and like tackling each other so it's more or less the same.

Blue: I think you come across boys as like rough and thing but girls like in a way girls and boys are the same I think in a way because they're both people, I think like.

Q: What did you mean when you said 'rough'?

Blue: I think girls in sport are aggressive

Green: when like we have matches and that cause you want to win and like its more aggressive cause men when they're aggressive they like take people legs and have fights and that whereas girls just like get their arms involved and kick them.

Q: Is there a problem with girls being aggressive in sport?

All: no

Q: Would you mind being seen this way?

Blue: No. well it depends because it looks like they're passionate and you want to win like, cause they're like out the way it's my ball. I don't know I wouldn't want to.. I don't know. Probably, I don't know it's a difficult question. Like you seem passionate but then you seem like don't do that, I don't know. I think probably these people who are being aggressive are they're not aggressive in real life it just like when you come to sport. So like you probably think it's all like, like if it's all in the paper and things and you thinking they're aggressive outside of sport but then they're different like and then they probably

come across as horrible, not like a horrible person but an aggressive person but in really life you're not. You're just normal.

Q: Are you offered football in school?

Blue: Yeah. Well we haven't done it in PE but we do it in, there's a lunch time club.

Yellow: It's not for our year, but there is an after school club but football at lunch time is for our year.

Green: At like lunch it's not that good cause I used to go but it's like less people turn up and you have like two aside.

Blue: It needs to be more organised

Green: and like cause..

Blue: Cause the teachers are just chatting and everyone's just messing around and they're not doing the rules.

Green: Everyone's just like kicking the ball around and the teachers are just talking to people

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Each student will be assigned a different colour that they will then need to use to identify themselves before they respond to the questions. The colours will be red, yellow, pink, green, orange, and purple, blue, violet. They will be assigned at random. The use of the colours will be to protect anonymity and ensure there is no confusion when understanding who said what when reviewing the tapes.

1. I am interested in your thoughts and opinions about sport and the opportunities you get in P.E lessons.
 - a. Do any of you participate in sport regularly?
 - i. outside of school
 - ii. for a school team
 - b. What do you enjoy about sport?
2. Do you prefer team games or individual sports in your P.E classes (e.g. football or athletics)? Why?
 - a. Do you enjoy the competitive element included within your P.E lessons? Why?
3. Do you feel like there is anything stopping you from participating in sport?
 - i. gender
 - ii. opportunities
 - iii. knowledge
 - iv. experience
 - b. Are you aware of any stereotypes surrounding girls in sport? What are these?
 - i. (Stereotype – to categorize individuals or groups based on image and personality)
 - c. If yes, do these affect your reasons to participate or what you participate in?
4. *Show pictures of male/female footballers (celebration).* How would you describe the people in the pictures?
 - i. Characteristics
 - ii. Stereotype
 1. *Butch, Tomboy*
 - b. Have you ever been described this way by anyone?
 - c. If yes, by who? Why? Did this affect your feelings towards sport?
 - d. What characteristics would you associate with these terms?

5. Have your P.E lessons changed since Primary School? How?
 - a. Are you offered a range of different activities every year? What?
 - b. If no, do you wish you were offered more? What would you like to see included?
 - c. Do you think you'd participate fully/enjoy lessons more? Why?
6. *Show other pictures.* How do you feel about the people in the pictures?
 - i. Difference between male/female players
 - ii. Would you like to be seen this way? Why?
7. Are you offered football during P.E lessons or as an extra-curricular activity?
 - a. If no, why do you think this is?
 - i. Teachers experience
 - ii. Male orientated sport
 - b. Do you feel the teachers encourage you to participate even though it's traditionally seen as a male sport? How?
8. Think back to your time in Primary School, how was P.E taken?
 - i. Compared to Secondary School
 - ii. Main differences
9. Did you experience football in Primary School? How?
 - i. Break/Lunch times.
 - ii. With boys or girls.
 - b. What do you do on your break/lunch times now?
 - i. Sport
10. Where else have you experienced football? Have you watched or played football at home?
 - i. Father and brothers.
 - ii. Reaction if expressed want to play football
11. How does your family feel about you taking part in sport?
 - a. Do they impact your reasons to engage in physical activity? How?
12. *Show pictures of Kelly Smith/Gareth Bale.* Do you recognise the people in these photographs? Where from?
 - a. How would you describe these people?
13. Are you aware of any girls' football teams within your local area?
 - i. Inside/outside school
 - b. Would you consider joining? Why?

- c. If you played more football in school, do you think this would encourage you to play outside of school? Why?