"SACRIFICE AND COMPROMISE":

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF REGIONAL ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN REGIONAL VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA WHO HAVE DROPPED OUT OF ORGANISED SPORT

A Thesis submitted by

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Abstract

Recent research has demonstrated that the rate of dropout from sport by adolescent girls throughout regional Australia continues to increase. In response to this phenomenon and to the nature of the research into it, this study investigated the lived experiences of 12 female participants from a regional Australian area who had dropped out of sport during their adolescent years. More specifically the studies main research question was "What are the lived experiences of regional adolescent girls in relation to their participation in and dropout from sport? The study had two sub-research questions attached to it that asked: "How do adolescent girls explain the reasons for their dropout from sport?" and "What can be learnt from the lived experiences of the adolescent girls who have dropped out of sport to make a difference toward decreasing its prevalence? The study was framed conceptually by a synthesis of interpretative and hermeneutic phenomenology and Bronfenbrenner's ecological development theory, drawn from interpretivist philosophy.

Adopting a methodological approach using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the study used focus groups and individual interviews with 12 participants to collect data. The data analysis process followed a spiral process that enabled the revisiting of steps in the process to ensure the rigour of the data and the process itself. These themes indicated that the dropout from sport by adolescent girls is individualised depending upon the individual girl concerned, and it is complex for girls more generally. It involves negative influence from peers, families, coaches, sporting clubs and the media, all of whom influence the girls' decision to dropout from sport. The study demonstrates that the participants were required to make undue compromise and to deal with unwanted pressures via individual, community and situational means. Pressures from these were shown to often result in the adolescent girls premature dropout from sport. In order to address these concerns, the study recommends that a combination of institutional, educational and structural changes in sport, education and the media are required to deal with the phenomenon of adolescent girls' dropout from sport. More broadly, the study contributes to practice-related, methodological, theoretical and policy knowledge pertaining to this phenomenon.

Certification of Thesis

This thesis is entirely the work of Lukas Peter Carey except where otherwise acknowledged. The work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award, except where acknowledged.

Student and supervisors signatures of endorsement are held at USQ.

Robyn Henderson

Principal Supervisor

Helmut Geiblinger

Associate Supervisor

Jan Du Preez

Associate Supervisor

Acknowledgments

This is a journey I never thought I would have started, let alone finish. The idea of a government school boy from a single parent family in a lower socio-economic area completing a doctorate in the area of female dropout from sport was as fanciful as the idea of doing it at the same time as working full time, playing sport and raising a family. This journey, and the skills required to complete it have been developed and fostered in me from an early age by many people.

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To my amazing children, Chloe, Hudson and Jackson, I love you with all my heart and I apologise for the time that I spent away from you. Your hugs, kisses, smiles and laughter made me continue to realise that the journey I was taking could hopefully pass on a message to you both never to settle for second best and that you

can achieve anything you put your minds to. Chloe, I am proud of the woman you have become and the study you're undertaking to start your career in an industry you have always had interest in. Hudson, your visits into the study to watch the Knicks on Dad's knee bring absolute joy and also a tear to my eye every time I think of it. Jackson, you have completed our family and made it whole and seeing you develop in the months since you were born, make me smile. The love I have for you all keeps the air in my lungs and my heart beating.

The last year has been a challenging one but amongst the madness, I hope that you can see that I would do anything for all of you and the love I have for you is endless. If you own your mistakes, admit to them and deal with the consequences, you can move on knowing who to rely on and who is there for you. Remember mistakes are things to learn from and you will all make them in your life, but throughout them, you will have my unconditional love and a supportive dad in your corner always.

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Chapter 1 – The Introduction

As a parent of an adolescent girl who has dropped out of sport, and as a husband of an avid and elite sports participant, I have seen the challenges faced by female athletes first hand. The premature dropout of my daughter and her friends prompted me and some of their parents to ask why? And from that question, this study was developed.

Withdrawal or dropout from sport by adolescent girls is becoming a growing concern and is being experienced across all of Australia, Victorian regional areas are not immune from the phenomena (Casey, Eime, Payne, & Harvey, 2009; Mugford, 2001a; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Spaaij, 2009). In addition to this being a local issue, the challenge is being faced internationally and in order to explore how these trends are similar to Australia a set of international studies have been referred to in this section of the thesis. This study explores the lived experiences of girls who have dropped out of sport. This will allow for a greater understanding of these girls' experiences and of their perceptions in relation to sport and also provide insights into the actions that came from these experiences. The girls who were interviewed, some now young adults, spoke of their lived experiences as adolescents when they dropped out of sport.

Background and rationale

The prevalence of adolescent female dropout in sport is increasing (Barnett, Van Beurden, Zask, Brooks, & Dietrich, 2002; Mugford, 2001a; Oldenhove, 2001; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010) and forms the phenomenon that was explored in this research. Further highlighting the significance of this problem is that participation in sport by adolescent girls in Australia is also declining with concern being shown by several government agencies in relation to the future health of girls and women (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007; Australian Sports Commission, 2013; Department of Heath and Ageing, 2004).

A national survey recently undertaken in Australia by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) in relation to physical activity reported that approximately 31% of boys and girls aged 9 to 16 failed to meet the national guidelines (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013) for physical activity at an

equivalent age, as suggested by health professionals in Australia (CSIRO Australia, 2013). These guidelines suggest the minimum amount of physical activity that should be undertaken by each age group of the people of Australia. The CSIRO survey also suggested that adolescent females achieved lower levels of physical activity than males, with fewer girls aged 14 to 16 years meeting the physical activity guidelines than males (CSIRO Australia, 2013). Additionally, only 46% of males and 30% of females aged 15 to 24 years participated in levels of physical activity as recommended in the national guidelines to obtain a health benefit (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007). One of the major ways in which this physical activity level was met was through the involvement and participation in sport (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

The data provided in these studies have been supported over the last 10 years, with Australian governments and health bodies sponsoring and/or conducting large population surveys to identify the activity participation trends and patterns of adolescent Australians and children (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2004; Australian Sports Commission, 2003; Booth, Bauman, Owen, & Gore, 1997; Booth, Macaskill, Phongsavan, McLellan, & Okely, 1998). These studies highlight concerns regarding the level of dropout of girls across regional and metropolitan areas of Australia (Fraser-Thomas, Cote, & Deakin, 2008; Gould, Feltz, Horn, & Weiss, 1982; Harlick & McKenzie, 2000; Machado-Rodrigues et al., 2012; Matton et al., 2006; Mooney, Casey, & Smyth, 2012; Mugford, 2001a; Petlichkoff, 1996; Weiss & Williams, 2004).

An increase in the number of adolescent girls dropping out of sport has resulted in a decrease in the overall number of adolescent females involved in sport (Barnett, Van Beurden, et al., 2002; Coleman, Cox, & Roker, 2008; Crosswhite & Fischer, 2006; Telford, Telford, Olive, Cochrane, & Davey, 2016). These studies have occurred over a long period of time and they have indicated that adolescent girls become involved in sport for many reasons. It is important to acknowledge and understand these reasons, as they provide important contextual information before the reasons that the participants dropped out from sport are considered. The three main reasons identified for girls' involvement in sport were shown to be:

1. Gaining social acceptance and support from peers and parents (Cauce, Reid, Landesman, & Gonzales, 1990; Cicirelli, 1995; Côté, 1999; Dempsey, Kimiecik, & Horn, 1993; MacPherson, Kerr, & Stirling, 2016);
2. Fun and enjoyment (Coleman et al., 2008; Fairclough, 2003; Jaakkola, Ntoumanis, & Liukkonen, 2016; Kimiecik & Harris, 1996; Weiss & Duncan, 1992);
3. Developing and demonstrating physical competency (Craike et al., 2013; Dollman, Maher, Olds, & Ridley, 2012; Eime, Payne, Casey, & Harvey, 2010; Noordstar, van der Net, Jak, Helders, & Jongmans, 2016; Weiss & Duncan, 1992).

The importance and relevance of these findings initially provided me with contextual information related to the involvement of the girls with whom I was about to gather research. The findings outlined in the above points one, two and three confirmed some of the reasons that the participants in this study initially shared as to their commencement of and their involvement in sport. The importance of this for me was paramount as it linked data from this study with the data in previous studies. This provided not only a validation for me that the topic being studied was important but also confirmation that many girls, other than the participants in this study, shared similar experiences in relation to sport.

Health impacts

Participation in sport by adolescents is important to their overall mental and physical development and assists in developing skills that provide a solid grounding for what the participants described as "success" in later life (Barbosa Filho et al., 2016; Modi, 2003). Organised sport plays an important role in the development of today's children and youth, with millions of children worldwide participating in community, school and privately run sports programs (De Knop, 1996). Whilst the physical and psychosocial benefits of involvement in sport are recognised by research (McNamee, Timken, Coste, Tompkins, & Peterson, 2016; Sabo, Miller, Melnick, & Heywood, 2004; Stenevi-Lundgren, Daly, Lindén, Gärdsell, & Karlsson, 2009), it is essential to explore further the reasons that people, especially adolescent girls, dropout from sport and how this phenomenon potentially alters their health in later life (Andrew, Tiggemann, & Clark, 2016; Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005; T. Nelson, 2016).

Physical health impacts

Studies have shown that it is important to recognise that lack of involvement in physical activity can have a negative effect on the health of all people, regardless of gender or age (R. Hall & Oglesby, 2016; Sabo et al., 2004). It must be acknowledged that physical activity is not exclusive to participation in sport (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012) and that other methods of physical activity such as gym or running are referred to in this section of the thesis.

Acknowledging that health issues result from lack of physical activity is important when looking at female health and the health of children and adolescents (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012; CSIRO Australia, 2012; Revenson & Marín Chollom, 2016; Warburton, Nicol, & Bredin, 2006). The physical inactivity of adolescent girls has been shown to be a large contributor to health risks and disease such as obesity, hypertension, heart disease, diabetes and high cholesterol (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2010; Magnus & Killion, 2008; T. Nelson, 2016; Paprin, 1985; Sabo et al., 2004).

Obesity and being overweight have also been recognised by researchers as a side effect of inactivity, with being overweight or obese bringing a distinct set of negative health effects to inactive people (Magnus & Killion, 2008; T. Nelson, 2016; Sabo et al., 2004; P. West, Reeder, Milne, & Poulton, 2002). Multiple studies indicate that adolescent girls who experience obesity in adulthood are shown to have had weight issues caused by inactivity as adolescents (Bouchard, 2009; Bouchard, Shephard, & Stephens, 1992; Sabo & Veliz, 2016).

The health benefits of physical activity for all include increased life expectancy, physical fitness, energy, mental health and cognitive functioning (Bauman, Bellew, Vita, Brown, & Owen, 2002). Regular physical activity reduces cardiovascular risk and helps to protect against Type 2 Diabetes and some forms of cancer, particularly in the primary prevention of colon and breast cancer (T. Nelson, 2016; Reiner, Niermann, Jekauc, & Woll, 2013; Revenson & Marín Chollom, 2016; Sabo et al., 2004). It also has benefits for musculoskeletal health in maintaining muscle strength, joint functioning and bone health, which is important for skeletal development in young people and which assists in protecting against falls and fractures among older people (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2010; Sabo et al., 2004).

Psycho-social health impacts

The benefits of participation in sport are not only physical, but also psychosocial benefits have been recognised (Magnus & Killion, 2008; Sabo et al., 2004). Research into the health of people who have withdrawn from participation in sport has shown that they have experienced negative physical and psychosocial impacts after their withdrawal (Sabo et al., 2004).

Participation in sport has shown that it can make a significant contribution to preventing depression, reducing stress and anxiety and improving the mood of adolescents, especially females (Barbosa Filho et al., 2016; Bull, Bauman, Bellew, & Brown, 2004). Additionally, engagement in play and sport gives young people opportunities for self-expression, relief of tension, achievement, social interaction and integration as well as encouraging the adoption of other healthy behaviours such as the avoidance of alcohol and drugs (World Health Organisation, 2010).

One of the prime benefits of participation in sport is for social reasons. Throughout my involvement in sport I have seen first-hand the level of socialisation undertaken by young female athletes and the flow on benefits that this has on the lives of the girls and in many instances their families. Research has uncovered the same with Kirk et al. (2003) finding that adolescents who have withdrawn found it difficult to socialise owing to the loss of friends involved in the sport they withdrew from and that they deemed the socialising as important to their involvement (Kirk & MacPhail, 2003; Patrick et al., 1999). Several other studies indicate that participation in sport provides opportunities for social interaction and reduce isolation and exclusion through strengthening relationships, building cohesive communities and enhancing our access to safe and supportive environments (Sport England, 2009; Wold, Hendry, Biddle, Sallis, & Cavill, 1998).

Themes linked to dropout from sport

Several studies that researched the reasons that adolescent girls dropped out of sport uncovered a similar set of themes to one another as to why the phenomenon is becoming more prevalent (Basterfield et al., 2016; Lindner, Johns, & Butcher, 1991; Paprin, 1985; Petlichkoff, 1996; Weiss & Williams, 2004). Other studies undertaken in the area of female dropout from sport identified the following themes as to the occurrence of dropout from sport by adolescent girls. Some of these themes

uncovered further in this thesis were explored in more detail via the lived experiences of the participants.

1. Negative experiences with sport at school (MacPherson et al., 2016; Sleap & Wormald, 2001);
2. Sporting uniforms (Greenleaf, 2002; Harvey-Short, 2016; Koivula, 2001; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010);
3. Lack of support from coaches (Erickson & Côté, 2016; Mooney et al., 2012);
4. Lack of time (Barnett, O'Loughlin, & Paradis, 2002; Barnett, Van Beurden, et al., 2002; M. Hall, Newland, Newton, Podlog, & Baucom, 2016; James, 1998);
5. Playing in front of boys/men (James, 1999, 2000; A. Phillips & Weiss, 2016; Scraton, 1987; Wellard, 2016);
6. Lack of finance/transport (Andrew et al., 2016; Knoetze-Raper, Myburgh, & Poggenpoel, 2016; Lewko & Greendorfer, 1988; McElroy & Kirkendall, 1980; McMeeking & Purkayastha, 1995; W.C. Taylor et al., 2000);
7. Negative body image / Perception of others (Basterfield et al., 2016; Choi, 2000; C. Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Engel, 1994; T. Nelson, 2016; Prapavessis, Robert-Grove, & Eklund, 2004);
8. Competency (Craike et al., 2013; James, 1999; Noordstar et al., 2016).
9. Gender stereotypes (L. Brown, 2016; Carlisle-Duncan & Messner, 1998; Henderson, Stalnaker, & Taylor, 1988; Kane, 1990; Paechter, 2006; Peper, 1994);
10. Lack of careers in sport for girls (Archer & McDonald, 1991; Bertozzi, 2008; Carlisle-Duncan & Messner, 1998; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Gentile et al., 2009; Guillet, Sarrazin, & Fontayne, 2000; O'Neill & Franks, 2016b).

Most of the Australian research that has looked into the involvement of girls in sport has relied on the use of surveys, questionnaires and other quantitative methods (Bauman et al., 2002; Booth, 1997; Booth et al., 1998; Mugford, 2001b). An extensive search of literature where the lived experiences of regional Victorian girls were used as the search terms has resulted in no studies of this nature found.

These studies have opened a substantiative gap in knowledge that this study has attempted to address and has done so through providing a detailed and contextual

study of the lived experiences of adolescent girls that have dropped out of sport in a regional Australian location.

Research questions

This study set out to investigate the lived experiences of adolescent girls who live in regional Victoria and who have dropped out of sport. The phenomenon of dropout from sport has been shown to be a growing one and one that is particularly on the rise in regional areas in Victoria with the reasons for this uncertain and requiring further research (Mooney et al., 2012; Mugford, 2001a). In order to explore the prevalence of this phenomenon, I have used the lived experiences of the group of participants to generate a data set that will identify a set of common themes that influenced a group of girls to dropout from sport during their adolescence. These themes were explored and interpreted using the Interpretative phenomenological analysis.

The main question:

What are the lived experiences of regional adolescent girls in relation to their participation in, and dropout from, sport?

The sub-questions:

1. How do adolescent girls explain the reasons for their dropout from sport?
2. What can we learn from the lived experiences of adolescent girls to make a difference toward decreasing the prevalence of adolescent girls' dropout from sport?

Thesis structure

The thesis has commenced with an introductory chapter that outlined the background of the study and explored the impact of sport participation on individuals and communities. The chapter also discussed the research questions for the study and presented the thesis structure.

Chapter 2 of this thesis provides a review of studies and a detailed review of literature related to girls' dropout from sport and the advantages and benefits from participation in sport and the reasons that adolescent girls participate and withdraw are also reviewed. Chapter 3 outlines the research philosophies that shaped the study with information regarding the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), hermeneutic phenomenology and lived experience and my role as a phenomenological researcher.

Chapter 4 of the thesis is the methodology chapter. It outlines the chosen research approach, the phases of data collection and data analysis, and the study's ethical considerations. The process used to advertise the study and to recruit participants is outlined in this chapter, as is the use of focus groups and individual interviews used to gather the experiences of the participants.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are the chapters that present the participants lived experiences to identify and highlight themes influencing their dropout from sport. Three types of themes were grouped and identified as being individual, community-related or Society related themes. The themes are discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, which outline the rationale behind the groupings. Chapter 5 highlights the individual themes that were identified through the experiences of the participants. Chapter 6 outlines the community-related themes and how others in a community setting influenced the participation in and dropout from sport by the girls in this study. Chapter 8, the final of the data analysis chapters, discusses the context-related themes that have been identified through the experiences of the participants.

The thesis concludes with a recommendations and conclusion chapter. Chapter 8 provides feedback from the participants and myself as a researcher and shows possible actions that could be undertaken to assist in decreasing the prevalence of the phenomenon of dropout. The chapter also provides a summary and conclusions for keeping adolescent girls playing sport. The major findings from the research identified are also discussed in this chapter, along with the implications of the study. The learnings from the use of lived experience as a method and the possibilities for future research to contribute to knowledge in the field are also discussed in this chapter along with the study's contribution to theoretical knowledge.

Following the conclusion chapter and the reference list, appendices are presented that provide additional information relevant to the study. These appendices include samples of data collection and analysis, individual feedback from individuals external to the study and the official paperwork required to complete this study.

The biographically situated researcher

This study is close to my heart as a father of a daughter who along with many of her friends dropped out of sport during their adolescent years. Seeing the benefits they experienced while playing with sport and seeing my wife who played at the highest level also see these same positives made me wonder why the girls would dropout. After several social discussions with my daughter's friend's parents, it seemed they had similar concerns and were wondering why they dropped out themselves and if there was anything they could do to get them back into sport or to ensure that other young girls they knew did not dropout as well. We all had our suspicions from years as parents but I had some ideas that I had developed over twenty years of coaching girls and women's sport that related around coaches and the selection of sports. This driving factor made me take finding answers to these questions personally and started the quest to commence this study.

Conclusion

Studies have shown that the prevalence of the dropout from sport of adolescent girls in Australia is continuing to increase and that the reasons for this dropout are varied. The mental and physical health advantages of being involved in sport are well known and girls not involved in sport have been shown to suffer long-term health challenges. This study has been designed to explore the lived experiences of regional girls who dropped out of sport as adolescents in an attempt to provide decision makers with possible recommendations as to how the phenomenon could be lowered and to provide contributions to the knowledge of the phenomenon.

Chapter 2 – The Literature review

Introduction

Chapter 1 introduced the topic being discussed in this study. The background of the study and the rationale as to why the study was chosen were also outlined in the previous chapter. The reasons that dropout occurred gleaned from previous research were discussed, as were some of the preliminary reasons that these studies had uncovered. The structure of the thesis and also the research questions and that sub-questions were also presented in Chapter One.

This chapter outlines the many factors required to consider the involvement of adolescent girls in sport, with the literature also looking at the commencement of sport in schools and comparing the activity of boys and girls. Additionally, the influences of friends, families, partners, coaches and significant others are discussed and how they influence the level of participation in sport by adolescent girls. The issues of gender construction, gender stereotypes and gender difference are also discussed, along with the influence of media on girls' participation. Each of these topics shows the complexity of the phenomenon of adolescent girls' dropout from sport and allows readers to gain an understanding of the diversity of the topic.

Adolescent participation in organised sport

Organised sport is defined "as active recreation, which is structured, rule-governed, typically requiring supervision, specialised equipment, and a designated play area and time" (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2010). Adolescent participation in sport is important to overall mental and physical development, and it assists in improving skills and characteristics that provide solid grounding for success in later life (Modi, 2003; Van Dijk, Savelberg, Verboon, Kirschner, & De Groot, 2016). Organised sport plays an important role in the development of children and youth, with millions of children worldwide participating in community, school and privately run sports programs (De Knop, 1996; Sherry, Schulenkorf, & Phillips, 2016). Whilst the physical and psychosocial benefits of involvement in sport are recognised, it is essential to further explore further the reasons that people, especially

adolescent girls, dropout from sport and how this decision potentially alters their health and well-being in later life (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; Telford et al., 2016).

Participation in sport are essential during children's development years to ensure normal growth and development (Warburton et al., 2006). However, a variety of lifestyle changes synonymous with life in the changing world has seen an increase in some of the factors restricting the amount of free time available for involvement in sport (Eime et al., 2013; Guagliano, Rosenkranz, & Kolt, 2012; Mulvihill, Aggleton, & Rivers, 2000). Compulsory schooling until the age of 15, the extensive development of motorised transport and the increase in the availability of technology in the home have all have had a major effect on the free time of Australian children and in turn on their ability to play sport (Kemper, 1994; Telford et al., 2016).

The introduction of these technologies that include the IPhone in 2007 and Facebook in 2006 have changed the way that socialisation occurs and have in some instances replaced face-to-face socialising (Agosto, Abbas, & Naughton, 2012). Traditionally sport was a key place for socialisation to occur but the change in technologies has allowed this to take place in areas away from the sporting field (Madge, Meek, Wellens, & Hooley, 2009). Although not the sole focus for this study future work into this area could further look at the link between technologies and their influence over the social interaction of girls.

Studies regarding the topic have primarily been undertaken in the USA and Canada with little extensive Australian research existing (Australian Sports Commission, 2013). Results from these studies revealed that from the age of six North American boys were 10% more active than girls. This pattern was shown to continue through until the age of 14. This information is important to consider as this lower level of female participation may be due to factors uncovered in this study (Sabo & Veliz, 2016).

Canadian studies showed that females decreased their activity level from 49% for those aged between seven and 14 years to 39% for those aged between 15 to 19 years and 26% for those aged 20 to 24 years. This pattern highlights that the level of female involvement in sport begins to decrease in adolescence and continues to decrease after high school age, whereas males show a decline only after reaching

university age (Buhr, 2009; Robbins, Pender, & Kazanis, 2003; Stephens & Craig, 1990). Similar results from studies in England and Sweden outlined that a decrease in girls' involvement in sport occurs around adolescence, while boys' involvement in sport generally lowers after tertiary education (Porter, 2002; Tebelius, 2001).

In 1991, an Australia wide survey was undertaken in relation to the involvement of children and young people in sport and PA. Although the research was undertaken some time ago, the findings are paramount to this study and show that the phenomenon being discussed is one that has existed for a significant period of time. The study, based on the reported attitudes of 1700 male and female adolescents, showed that 36% of those surveyed were not participating in organised sport. The research found that girls predominantly participated in fewer sports than boys and that they participated in few sports that had traditionally been labelled as "female". Additional discussion regarding sports labelled feminine or masculine is discussed further in this literature review (Australian Sports Commission, 2003). It was also found that girls generally participated in sporting teams much smaller sporting teams than their male counterparts, who had larger teams and who played more sports. An additional study undertaken prior to this one by the Australian Sports Commission (1991) outlined that boys had greater opportunities to play because of these sports and the size of their teams, whilst girls opportunities were limited owing to the same reasons (Australian Sports Commission, 1991).

A study undertaken in Australia that looked into the involvement of adolescents in sport also found that a sharp decline in physical activity (PA) in Australia occurs with 64.4% of females being involved in sport at the ages 11 to 12 years. Although sport is only one type of physical activity, it has been shown that after the age of 11 to 12 years, that a large number dropout of sport with only 44% of girls at age 13 to 15 years involved in sport. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). The decrease continued with only 39% of girls aged between 16 and 19 involved in sport and 31% involved in sport over the age of 20 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2007) outlined its suggested requirements for Australians in relation to minimum levels of physical activity. In order to receive the health benefits of physical activity, it is suggested that young

people aged 13 to 17 years should undertake at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007). Sport is the most common and generally the most popular type of physical activity that is referred to in these studies (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001, 2009). The guidelines suggest that the physical activity of young people should include a variety of aerobic activities, including some vigorous activity, at least three days per week. These activities include those that strengthen muscle and bones, such as using the gymnasium, weight training or other sporting pursuits (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2004; Australian Sports Commission, 2003; Department of Heath and Ageing, 2004). These surveys and studies link PA with sport, with a large majority of participants suggesting that their preferred method of physical activity took place in the form of sport. An Australian national survey (2009) found that approximately 31% of boys and girls aged 13 to 17 failed to meet these national guidelines for physical activity (CSIRO Australia, 2013). More specifically, adolescent females also achieved lower levels of physical activity than males, with fewer girls than males aged 14 to 16 years complying with the physical activity guidelines than males (CSIRO Australia, 2013). An earlier study also suggested that only "46% of males and 30% of females aged 15 to 24 years participated in levels of physical activity as recommended in the national guidelines to obtain a health benefit", showing that this issue has been an ongoing one, showing that this issue is an ongoing one (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007).

Studies researching adolescent participation in sport have highlighted several reasons for their participation and involvement from adolescence through to adulthood (Bailey, Wellard, & Dismore, 2005; Barbosa Filho et al., 2016; Barnett, Van Beurden, et al., 2002; Basterfield et al., 2016; Biddle, Cavill, & Sallis, 1998; Booth et al., 1997; Telford et al., 2016). The reasons given by female adolescents for their involvement in sport were similar to those of their male adolescent counterparts (Scully & Clarke, 1997). The three main reasons outlined in previous studies given for adolescent female participation in sport are:

1. Developing and demonstrating physical competency (Craike et al., 2013; Dollman et al., 2012; Eime et al., 2010; Noordstar et al., 2016; Weiss &

Duncan, 1992);

2. Gaining social acceptance and support from peers and parents (Cauce et al., 1990; Cicirelli, 1995; Côté, 1999; Dempsey et al., 1993; Sherry, Schulenkorf, et al., 2016);
3. Fun and enjoyment (Fairclough, 2003; Jaakkola et al., 2016; Kimiecik & Harris, 1996; Weiss & Duncan, 1992).

This information differs somewhat from the information provided in Chapter 1 as that chapter included several studies that are important to the background of the undertaking this study. These studies suggested that adolescent girls experienced far more barriers to participation in sport than their male counterparts (Basterfield et al., 2016; Robbins et al., 2003; Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986; Scraton, Horne, Jary, & Tomlinson, 1987; Scully & Clarke, 1997; Telford et al., 2016). These barriers, often resulting in dropout from sport, were affected by the temporal environment in which the girls were situated, their desires to do other things with personal time, a lack of interest in sport, schoolwork, and the difficulty of actually playing sport (Basterfield et al., 2016; Guagliano et al., 2012; Mulvihill et al., 2000; Robbins et al., 2003). It has been shown that these barriers exist in both metropolitan and regional areas, however, studies about this issue in regional areas has been limited (J. Connell, 2016; Mooney et al., 2012).

Benefits of physical activity and participation in sport

The benefits of involvement in sport and physical activity are often publicised and are associated with numerous positive health outcomes, varying from physiological health to physical health and selfworth. Again it must be stated that sport is only one type of physical activity and remains the focus of this study.

Many medical and social sciences studies undertaken in Australia and worldwide have found that a close relationship exists between health standards and a participant's involvement in PA and sport (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2010; Sabo et al., 2004; Van Dijk et al., 2016; P. West et al., 2002; World Health Organisation, 2010). The benefits of participation in sport are both mental and physical and they provide positive life opportunities for those regularly participating (Magnus & Killion, 2008; McNamee et al., 2016; Moghadasi & Siavashpour, 2013; T. Nelson, 2016). The exact physical benefits for each sport and type of physical

activity are extensive and diverse and could be the platform for many targeted studies in the future.

Physiological benefits

The benefits of participation in sport are both physical and psychosocial (Magnus & Killion, 2008; Sabo et al., 2004; Van Dijk et al., 2016). Research into the health of people who have withdrawn from participation in sport has shown that both physical and psychosocial impacts have affected them after their withdrawal (Reiner et al., 2013; Sabo et al., 2004). Sport has been identified as a variety of settings where young people develop aspects of their identity and explore their standing and position in their communities, and also where they learn important social skills and values such as working in a team, learning to win and lose, fair play, leadership, decision making, trust and honesty (Milligan et al., 1997; Sherry, Schulenkorf, et al., 2016).

Participation in sport has shown that it can make a significant contribution to preventing depression, reducing stress and anxiety and improving moods amongst adolescents, especially in females (Bull et al., 2004; Van Dijk et al., 2016). Additionally, engagement in sport gives young people opportunities for self-expression, relief of tension, achievement, social interaction and integration as well as encouraging the adoption of other healthy behaviours such as avoidance of alcohol and drugs. It has also been found that participation in sport by adolescent girls can also reduce the occurrence of high-risk behaviours such as smoking, drinking and premature sexual activity, assisting in the achievement of greater long-term health and wellbeing (Andrew et al., 2016; Chau, 2007; Kirk & MacPhail, 2003; Sherry, Schulenkorf, et al., 2016; Sport England, 2001, 2009; World Health Organisation, 2010; Zill, Nord, & Loomis, 1995). It must be acknowledged that discussion of these advantages are at a meta level and the individual results and benefits to a person vary depending upon numerous other characteristics such as lifestyle and the activities being undertaken.

Physical benefits

The health benefits of participation in sport are varied and include increased life expectancy, physical fitness, energy, mental health and cognitive functioning (Bauman et al., 2002; Sabo et al., 2004; Stenevi-Lundgren et al., 2009; Strobl et al., 2014). Regular participation in sport reduces cardiovascular risk and helps to protect

against type 2 diabetes and some forms of cancer, particularly in the primary prevention of colon and breast cancer (Sabo et al., 2004).

It is important to recognise and realise that lack of involvement in sport has a negative effect on the physical health of all people, regardless of gender or age (Revenson & Marín Chollom, 2016; Sabo et al., 2004). Health issues such as heart disease and diabetes are especially important to consider when looking at female health and the health of children and adolescents (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2010; Warburton et al., 2006). Not participating in sport has been shown to result in girls missing out on its benefits and has been shown to be a large contributor to other health risks and diseases such as obesity, hypertension, heart disease, diabetes and high cholesterol (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2010; Magnus & Killion, 2008; Sabo et al., 2004).

Adolescent girls who removed themselves from participation in sport have been shown to potentially to experience negative health issues (Sabo et al., 2004). The negative health effects on inactive girls and woman are not restricted to Australia with the trend expanding internationally (Sabo et al., 2004; Tan, Kartal, & Guldal, 2014; P. West et al., 2002). Globally physical inactivity accounted for 21.5% of heart disease, 11% of stroke, 14% of diabetes, 16% of colon cancer and 10% of breast cancer (Bull et al., 2004). A World Health Organisation (2010) study identified physical inactivity was identified as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality and that is expected to continue to increase into the future. With physical inactivity and dropout levels in sport rising in many countries, there is a growing global concern as to the general health of the population moving forward (World Health Organisation, 2010). It is important that all benefits of sport participation are discussed in this chapter to highlight what girls may miss if they dropout of sport and that these advantages vary individually dependent upon their day to day behaviours and also the influence of these actions over their health and wellbeing.

Girls' dropout from sport

The departure of young people from sport is often referred to as "dropout" (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2008). Dropout is a phenomenon that has been researched widely, but research into adolescent girls' dropout from sport, and more specifically that of

Australian regional girls, is limited (Mooney et al., 2012; Mugford, 2001a). Dropout from sport by adolescent girls is a growing phenomenon throughout Western countries, with as many as two-thirds of participants aged seven to 18 dropping out of sport each year (Bailey et al., 2005; Barnett, O'Loughlin, et al., 2002).

Previous studies undertaken over several decades have shown consistency in the reasons as to why adolescent females dropout from sport exist (Oldenhove, 2009; Orlick, 1974; Paprin, 1985; Petlichkoff, 1996). Negative experiences with sport at school, and influence from clubs, friends and families have been found to have strong impacts on the decisions that adolescents make regarding their participation in sport. Many children decided not to join teams or not to be involved in sport owing to linking negativity experienced at school during sport and play with sport participation itself (Sleap & Wormald, 2001).

Research has also shown that many aspects of the perceived body image of girls also have a negative influence on their ongoing involvement in sport (Andrew et al., 2016; Peper, 1994). These perceptions have often resulted in changes in behaviour, defined by the thoughts and beliefs of others, and are often stereotyped by the construction of gender that occurs as children develop and that has a strong influence on the participation and in turn the dropout actions of many (Carlisle-Duncan & Messner, 1998; Henderson et al., 1988; Kane, 1990; Paechter, 2006; Peper, 1994). Researchers in these studies found that gender stereotyping linked with perceived and expected body image has influenced the ability of girls to remain involved in sport and how they saw this participation ending (Paechter, 2006).

Studies undertaken in relation to the dropout from sport of adolescent girls suggests that dropout is influenced by a girl's self-concept; body dissatisfaction; support or lack of support from peers, families and teachers; and their increasing and alternative time commitments (Craike, Symons, & Zimmermann, 2009; Fraser-Thomas et al., 2008; Gilbert, 2000). The same studies also showed that when girls reached adolescence, their self-concept regarding their ability, skills and competence necessary for continued participation in sport affects their continued involvement and is a major influence on dropout from sport (Lindner et al., 1991; Paprin, 1985; Petlichkoff, 1996; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Van Dijk et al., 2016). The fear of being bullied, mocked or teased, should the girl not be able to perform a skill to a

certain level, was shown to occur more regularly than for adolescent males. This was shown to have a major influence on the dropout levels of adolescent girls from sport (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Sleap & Wormald, 2001).

The time taken to be involved in sport is often arduous and time-consuming (Ferrar, Olds, & Walters, 2012; Orlick, 1974; Schmidt & Stein, 1991). These time constraints have been identified as being one of the influencing factors as to dropout from sport. With changing priorities of adolescent girls including school, part-time employment, friends and partners, in many instances sport becomes collateral damage and is sacrificed for the girl to be able to involve herself in the other activities (Barnett, O'Loughlin, et al., 2002; Barnett, Van Beurden, et al., 2002; James, 1998). Paired with this time imposition, in many instances, is a significant travel and cost element that has been shown to act as a deterrent to involvement in sport and that often encourages dropout by adolescent girls (Lewko & Greendorfer, 1988). Many families indicated in studies that they do not have the financial ability to pay for the sporting pursuits of their children and often do not have the time in which to transport them to their sporting commitments. This was shown to be more prevalent among females rather than among males and it opens the question of the perceived value and perception of sport in the community; this is discussed further in the gender section of this chapter (Greenleaf, 2002; Koivula, 2001; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Telford et al., 2016).

Another of the identified influencing factors that increased the level of dropout from sport is the lack of career opportunities for female athletes in sport and the sport industry (Basterfield et al., 2016; Guillet et al., 2000; Sokolove, 2008). The ability for females to effectively gain fulltime employment in the sporting industry is very different from that of their male counterparts. As some adolescent girls start making decisions about their futures this starts to become an influencing factor in their dropout from sport (Archer & McDonald, 1991; Bertozzi, 2008; Carlisle-Duncan & Messner, 1998; Guillet et al., 2000).

Several studies undertaken found that the support that girls received from their peers, families and teachers influenced their confidence levels, their belief in themselves and their concept of their own ability which in many instances lead to the girls dropping out of sport (Biddle et al., 1998; Hausenblas & Fallon, 2006; Hills, 2007;

Jaffee & Ricker, 1993; James, 1999). These have been shown to affect dramatically the girls continued involvement in sport and in turn influences their potential dropout from sport (Casey et al., 2009; Mooney et al., 2012; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Sleap & Wormald, 2001).

Other studies found that girls living in regional areas were on average more active than metropolitan girls (Mooney et al., 2012; Mugford, 2001a; J. Phillips & Young, 2009; Pini, 2006). It was shown that metropolitan girls had more access to social and work opportunities than regionally located girls; their time available for sport was therefore reduced. Regional located girls had fewer choices about the types of sport available; however, sport was still considered to be a prioritised social activity and therefore their engagement remained high (Craike et al., 2009; Symons et al., 2013).

Although research highlights a large number of influences affecting dropout from sport exists, a significant amount is still unknown in relation to the lives of adolescent girls and other influences that lead to their dropout from sport. Other studies researching the decline in participation in and the increase in dropout from sport amongst adolescent girls do not consider shifts in participation to other activities - for example, non-traditional activities such as going to the gym or participation in social sporting activities (Lindner et al., 1991; Lirgg, 1992; Petlichkoff, 1996; Weiss & Williams, 2004). Additionally, sports specific studies measure shifts in participation in that sport, but do not consider participants who may have "transferred" to another sport or activity (James, 1999). Studies have focused on sport specific dropout aimed at 8-12-year-olds while they are "trying" sport rather than selecting and being involved in a specific sport. It could be suggested that this may have provided a false statement of dropout (Harlick & McKenzie, 2000; Petlichkoff, 1996).

Influence of other people on adolescent girls participation

The influence that others have on the levels of adolescent girls participation and in turn of dropout in sport cannot be overstated. Studies of the influence of parents, siblings, extended families, peers, teachers, coaches and boyfriends or partners have identified these as the main groups who have altered the level of participation in and influenced the dropout of girls from sport (Cicirelli, 1995; Co˘te´ & Hay, 2004; Cumming & Ewing, 2002; McElroy & Kirkendall, 1980; Raedeke, Lunney, &

Venables, 2002; I. Robertson, 1987; Whipple, Fetro, Welshimer, & Droler, 2006). All of these groups and the research related to their influence on the dropout of girls are explored in this section of the thesis and again these influences are spoken about at a meta level in this section of the thesis but are supported through the lived experiences shared by the participants in the ensuing chapters.

Influence of families

Friends have an immense influence on the participation of adolescent girls in sport. Many studies recognise this, but they suggest that families also have an immense influence over the actions undertaken by adolescent girls (Lewko & Greendorfer, 1988). The influence of parents as the "lead" members in most families plays an important role in the decisions made by adolescent girls in many areas, including physical activity and participation in sport (Barbosa Filho et al., 2016; Cervello, Escarti, & Gyzman, 2007; Lewko & Greendorfer, 1988; McElroy & Kirkendall, 1980; McMeeking & Purkayastha, 1995).

Several studies explored the link between parents' involvement in sport and their daughters' involvement in sport (Co˘te´ & Hay, 2004; Côté, 1999; Dempsey et al., 1993; Graham, Dixon, & Hazen-Swann, 2016; Schoeppe, Liersch, Röbl, Krauth, & Walter, 2016). It was found that family support and parent participation had major effects on the level of sport participation (Biddle, Whitehead, O'Donovan, & Nevill, 2005). Literature regarding adolescent sports participation indicated that parents and siblings also play significant roles in the encouragement of their sons and daughters to commence sport and to remain involved (Freyer, 1996; Hanlon, 2007; Sallis, Hovell, & Hofstetter, 1992; Sallis, Prochaska, & Taylor, 2000).

The motivation provided by parents and families is also seen as a major influence on adolescent girls in participation in sport (Côté, 1999; Cumming & Ewing, 2002; Roberts, 1992, 2001; Sarrazin, Vallerand, Guillet, Pelletier, & Cury, 2002). Social support and positive encouragement from parents and friends were reported to be a strong motivators for the participation of adolescent girls (Hellstedt & Murphy, 1995; Robbins et al., 2003) . Additionally, the climate in which parents and families provided support and emphasised personal improvement, co-operation and effort, influenced positive involvement in sport by their daughters, resulting in fewer incidences of dropping out (McMillan, McIsaac, & Janssen, 2016; Moreno, Hellín,

Hellín, Cervelló, & Sicilia, 2008). The role of parents was examined in American junior tennis players' success. Coaches believed that 59% of parents contributed to the success of their children, but that 36% hurt the development and continued involvement of their children, primarily by over-emphasizing winning, holding unrealistic expectations, criticising their children, and pushing their children to play, all of which increased the likelihood of withdrawal or dropout from sport (Gould, 2007). These statistics look at the issue at a meta level but the individual lived experiences shared by the participants look at this area with a greater focus.

Not only does physical support from parents influence the participation of adolescent girls in sport, but protective support and financial support from the family also influences their daughter's participation (Coakley & White, 1992). Linked with gender, many families and boyfriends of adolescent girls feel the need to protect their daughters, sisters or girlfriends from perceived negative or threatening situations in the community (Azzarito, 2009; Choi, 2000; C. Cockburn & Clarke, 2002). Stopping girls from travelling at night, playing sport after hours or attending sporting venues that are isolated are all examples of protective behaviour, all negatively affecting the girls' participation in sport. These types of protective behaviours have been shown to be more prevalent in regional areas (Coakley & White, 1992; Hellstedt & Murphy, 1995; McMeeking & Purkayastha, 1995).

Financially the requirements of sport are draining on many families' resources with many adolescent girls from lower socioeconomic families experiencing a higher occurrence of withdrawal from participation in sport (Kirk et al., 1997). Families with low socio-economic standing have a higher incidence of sedentary behaviour or insufficient physical activity, especially sport to benefit health, and within this cohort female members of families report lower levels of involvement in sport (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009). Additionally, the cost of participating in sport is increasingly onerous for many families and has been shown to be this way over a long period of time (Hellstedt & Murphy, 1995; Holt, Kingsley, Tink, & Scherer, 2011; Kirk et al., 1997). The importance of sporting opportunities that are affordable is evidenced by the strong correlation between sports participation and family income (Australian Sports Commission, 2013). Further study in this area, in an Australian setting, could be useful and would provide further information to clubs

and leagues as to the financial pressures placed on families and the effect that these pressures may have on participation.

Girls were influenced by their parents' own sporting history and performances, as well as parental support for their own sporting pursuits and interests (Côté, 1999; Cumming & Ewing, 2002; Wing, Bélanger, & Brunet, 2016). Parents who were active sportspeople themselves, or who were involved in key roles within sporting clubs and teams were found to be more supportive of their daughters' involvement in sporting teams (Dollman & Lewis, 2010; Wing et al., 2016). Several studies found that girls who perceived their parents as being active while playing more sport than those who perceived their parents as being less active were less inclined to withdraw from sport and generally remained involved in sport longer (Co˜te´ & Hay, 2004; Côté, 1999; Cumming & Ewing, 2002; Davison & Lawson, 2006).

An Australian study found that some metropolitan mothers believed that their adolescent daughters were less interested in sporting pursuits than their sons and male friends, and some believed that their adolescent daughters needed less physical activity than their sons and male friends. The flow on result from mothers providing less encouragement to their daughters to play less sport was shown to support the idea of sport being not important (Graham et al., 2016; Hinkley, Salmon, Okely, Crawford, & Hesketh, 2011). Similar research findings suggest that some parents often push their adolescent female children to concentrate further on academic pursuits and on furthering their study skills, rather than participating in sport (Craike et al., 2009; McMeeking & Purkayastha, 1995). This brings into focus the parental priorities of those who have daughters or sons and the ways in which they promote and encourage participation in sport and also challenges the roles of parents that continue to evolve due to technologies and changing community expectations and behaviours.

Influence of peers

The importance of friends in the lives of adolescent females is a complex phenomenon and is very individual depending upon the person (Murcia, de San Román, Galindo, Alonso, & González-Cutre, 2008; Patrick et al., 1999). The ability of a girl's friends to persuade and influence their actions provides unique challenges for many girls but forms an essential part of a girl's identity creation (Patrick et al.,

1999; Power & Woolger, 1994). Friends and boyfriends of girls often influence the ways that they spend their time and the ways that they participated in and saw sport. Additionally, the friends and boyfriends often pressured the girl to spend more time with them, resulting in the foregoing of sport (Li, Bunke, & Psouni, 2016; MacPherson et al., 2016; Ullrich-French & Smith, 2006).

The participation of adolescent girls is affected by the thoughts and actions of their friends (Dwyer et al., 2006; MacPherson et al., 2016). Studies of the lives of teen girls and adolescents have suggested that they spend a large part of their free time with friends, with those friends having a great say in the activity choices that they make in all areas of their lives (James, 1998; Malaxos & Wedgewood, 1997; Porter, 2002). Their friends' attitudes and behaviours have a greater influence on whether or not they choose to exercise and participate in sport (W C Taylor et al., 2000). If the friends of adolescent girl had a negative experience in relation to sport, they may attempt to persuade their friends that the activity may be negative for them (Hey, 1997). If a friend dropped out of sport and "talked down" ongoing involvement, it could threaten the stability and commitment of the individual's participation and encourage her dropout from sport (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2003).

Girls in many of these studies indicated that they did not like physical activities that they or their friends thought to involve exertion and effort (Sleap & Wormald, 2001). Activities that made a girl or her friend sweat, or affected their make-up or hair, was often seen negatively by them resulting in their having a lower desire to participate in sport and in turn a higher level of dropping out from sport (Azzarito, Solmon, & Harrison Jr, 2006; Bertozzi, 2008; Scraton, 1987). Several studies identified that the issue of sweating and participation affecting the way that a girl looks stretched across not only sporting clubs and team sporting contexts but also the school sport environment (Basterfield et al., 2016; Pate, Dowda, O'Neill, & Ward, 2007). School sporting teams often saw a lower level of involvement by girls who believed that they or their friends' would sweat or perspire and that doing so would affect their or their friends' appearance, resulting in some girls not playing sport or dropping out of sport prematurely (Flintoff & Scraton, 2010). Some schools and sporting clubs, in a study by Fairclough (2003), attempted to engage the study participants in game style activities rather than in structured team sport to encourage participation and involvement. Engaging girls in team games with their friends was shown to be

beneficial for them as the shared enjoyment that the girls experience distracted them from the unpleasant feelings associated with higher levels of exertion (Fairclough, 2003; Whitty, 1999).

Studies undertaken in Australia and the United Kingdom with adolescent girls have shown that adolescent girls learn about female and male physicality during their teenage years, mostly in coeducational and sporting settings where both genders were present; the same cannot be said for those girls attending single-gendered schools (Robbins et al., 2003; Scraton et al., 1987; Sleap & Wormald, 2001; Tebelius, 2001). Additionally, during school times the behaviours of males have been found to influence and shape the ideas of the girls in relation to assertive and non-assertive behaviours (Campbell & Bell, 2000; Choi, 2000; Coad, 2002). This was shown to be more prominent when the two genders were to compete or play sport together (Brustad, 1996; Reay, 2001), with girls more content in taking a passive, non-assertive approach and "sitting back" from participation or excluding themselves completely (Azzarito, 2009; Duda & Hall, 2001).

Influence of boys and partners

The effects that boys and partners have over the decisions made by adolescent girls must be considered. The willingness of a girl to alter her sport participation can often be influenced by a boy, a same-sex partner or an attraction to another person (Miller, Sabo, Farrell, Barnes, & Melnick, 1998; Ross & Shinew, 2007; Van Acker, Carreiri da Costa, De Bourdeaudhuij, Cardon, & Haerens, 2010). Many girls indicated that impressing boys and those to whom that they were attracted to was more important than involvement in sport, while others expressed that involvement in sport if they were good at it, provided a vehicle to impress the boys (Allender, Cowburn, & Foster, 2006). Although this idea can be linked to femininity and teens understanding and perceptions of femininity and gender roles, several researchers describe boys as being one of the most influential factors affecting adolescents girls behaviours and their involvement in team sport (Allender et al., 2006; Arnett, 2003; Bailey, 2006; Basow, 2016; Brustad, 1996). Research has shown that in many instances boyfriends and partners were active in discouraging their girlfriends from participating in sport as it made the girls look "butch" or "manly" (L. Brown, 2016; Coakley & White, 1992). It could be argued that having an athletic girlfriend or partner who performs well athletically could challenge the masculinity of the partner in the eyes of their

team-mates, friends and families (Azzarito, 2009; Bertozzi, 2008; Choi, 2000; C. Cockburn & Clarke, 2002).

"Getting" and "having" a boyfriend or a partner were significant factors in adolescent girls' participation in sport, with sport often being sacrificed to allow them more time and more energy to attempt to do so (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2003). Several of the adolescent girls in the McCabe and Ricciardelli study (2003) study also believed that participating and succeeding in sport when their boyfriend did not do so placed strain on the relationship and often left them second-guessing their own involvement in sport (Lehman & Silverberg-Koerner, 2004; M. A. Messner, 1988; Miller et al., 1998; Ross & Shinew, 2007).

Several studies found that many adolescent girls often associated sport with the development of muscles, sweat, communal showers and changing, unflattering uniforms and "unladylike" activities (Beckner & Record, 2016; C. Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Cockerill & Hardy, 1987; M. A. Messner, 2000), all of which contradict the idea of femininity and the expectations of regional communities toward the roles of a girl (Azzarito, 2009; Bailey, 2006; Bailey et al., 2005; Biscomb, Matheson, Beckerman, Tungatt, & Jarrett, 2000).

This section of the thesis has focussed on the importance of boys and partners in the lives of girls, although the focus is on sport in this instance the influence is much greater. The exploration of their influence is a major topic that could be explored further from both a psychological and physical standpoint at a meta level.

Influence of coaches

The majority of junior sporting experiences by Australian's have been undertaken under the supervision or direction of coaches (Goudas, Biddle, Fox, & Underwood, 2001; Super, Verkooijen, & Koelen, 2016; Trninic, Papic, & Trninic, 2009). The influence that a coach has on the participation in and in turn the dropout from, sport by players of both genders is essential to consider because the large majority of participants in these studies have been directed by or have played under a coaches during their sport playing past (Bennie & O'Connor, 2010; Black & Weiss, 1992; G. Dale, Jackson, & Martin, 2001). Additionally, the link between dropout from sport by adolescent girls and the influence of the coaches was first considered in literature in the 1970s work of Orlick and Pang (1974). Their early research indicated that

coaches had a large influence on the continued involvement or the cessation of that participation in sport by the players whom they supervised. The stresses and expectations of the coach were seen in this early work as being potential influencers over the dropout of athletes, especially of females (Orlick, 1974; Orlick & Botterill, 1976; Pang, 1974).

Extensive work undertaken by Gould during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s in relation to coach influence on the participation and dropout of athletes from sport found that two distinct coaching types could be identified (Gould, 2007; Gould, Eklund, Petlichkoff, Peterson, & Bump, 1991; Gould et al., 1982; Gould & Petlichkoff, 1988). These two identified types of coaches were the "good coach" and the "bad coach". Each of these coaches had a distinct set of characteristics that either kept the athletes involved in sport or drove them away from it. "Good coaches" were shown not to impose undue stressors onto players, especially females, and they were shown to accept the individuality of each athlete and to understand the challenges that she or he faced when trying to be involved in sport (Erickson & Côté, 2016; S. Robertson, 2016; Super et al., 2016). "Bad coaches" were shown in the work of Gould to put their own needs and wants ahead of the needs and wants of the players and in many instances to impose unreachable and often unreasonable expectations onto players. The expectations of players under these types of "bad coaches" have been shown to often to reduce the enjoyment of players, in many instances resulting in a decrease in interest or motivation to be involved in sport, generally resulting in dropout from sport (Basterfield et al., 2016; Gould & Petlichkoff, 1988; Martin, Dale, & Jackson, 2001; Raedeke et al., 2002; I. Robertson, 1987). The idea of coaches being either good or bad could be seen as a simplistic way of viewing the complexity of the influence that coaches play on the decision making of their players. The complexity of this issue is covered in detail in this study but further research in the area would provide greater clarity about this complex issue.

The efforts that coaches put into developing the skills of their players and not focussing solely on winning and results, have an effect on the participation of adolescent girls in sport (I. Robertson, 1987; R. Smith & Smoll, 1997). Coaches seen as being successful and "good" by participants in these studies were shown to be able to balance social events, enjoyment and the achievement of team goals together to

maximise the participation and involvement of adolescent girls in sport (I. Robertson, 1987; S. Robertson, 2016). The efforts of some coaches to coach games and conduct training in a serious manner have been shown often to result in negative feelings towards coaches by their players, often resulting in dropout from sport during the players' adolescent years. Several studies identified that over professionalised sporting programs implemented by coaches - for example lack of playing time, lack of success, pressure to win and dislike of the coach resulting in many adolescent girls' withdrawing from sport (Butcher, Lindner, & Johns, 2002; Goudas et al., 2001; I. Robertson, 1987).

Many young athletes, especially females, have shown through research that they feel that coach selection of teams also plays a large role in their involvement in and dropout from sport (Horn, 1985; Martin et al., 2001; Super et al., 2016). Adolescent girls feel that they may be unsuccessful in being selected for teams by coaches owing to their age, having their skill unfairly judged, having to compete against undue large numbers or the preconceived selections of a coach before tryouts occurred (S. Robertson, 2016; R. Smith & Smoll, 1997; Super et al., 2016). The basis of the criteria for selecting players is often seen to be unstructured, inadequate and in many cases not based on merit or skill but rather politically driven owing to a parent's or a family's role in the club or the team, or the potential for what a player may be able to do in the future and not on the skill they possess now (I. Robertson, 1987; R. Smith & Smoll, 1997). This lack of clarity has been shown to result in mixed messages and expectations being passed to players and in many instances resulting in dropout from sport, especially amongst adolescent females (Erickson & Côté, 2016; Raedeke et al., 2002; Super et al., 2016).

Coaches driving their players to succeed and perform have always been shown to have an effect on the participants in sport; however, it has been shown that driving players past their individual levels of capability and competence also often leads to dropout and also "burnout" (J. Dale & Weinberg, 1990; Harlick & McKenzie, 2000; Robinson & Carron, 1982; Schmidt & Stein, 1991). Burnout from sport has been described as the time when a young athletes withdraw from sport owing to their perceived inabilities to cope with the stresses in sport, resulting in less positive feelings towards that sport (J. Dale & Weinberg, 1990; Harlick & McKenzie, 2000).

Children and adolescents who have burnt out have been shown to feel this way owing to several reasons. One of the more prominent reasons is the coach's role in over emphasising winning and delivering messages in a negative and often demeaning way, making the players feel negativity towards themselves, the coach and often the sport (Robinson & Carron, 1982).

The skills of coaches to assist in the delivery of positive experiences for their athletes and players are something that clubs, associations and governing bodies across the world continue to work to improve (Allison, Abraham, & Cale, 2016; D. Gould, 2016). Many sporting associations and governing bodies have initiated coaching development programs that are designed to improve their skills and abilities. In an attempt to improve the quality of sport and the players' performance, coaches must be of an immediate concern because of their central role in influencing the behaviours of the players under their control (Beckner & Record, 2016; Bennie & O'Connor, 2010; Black & Weiss, 1992). In the study undertaken by Robertson (1987), 1000 coaches identified the characteristics that they suggested were required to be identified as a "good coach". The characteristics of patience, understanding, a knowledge of children and youth, a working knowledge of the skills of the sport at hand, how to teach those skills, the ability to communicate with people of all ages, the ability and willingness to help others, compassion and empathy were all identified as being key characteristics of effective coaches (I. Robertson, 1987; Trninic et al., 2009).

The importance of coaches and their responsibility towards the promotion of sport and the development of children has been highlighted by Pooley (1981). The importance spreads more widely than just the game and has longer lasting effects on the athletes, even after they have ceased playing or have dropped out of the sport, with athletes from successful sporting competitions and teams highlighting the respect that they possessed for coaches who taught them to play with courage, conviction and honesty and to the best of their abilities – win or lose (Pooley, 1981). Many coaches understand and appreciate this responsibility as it was shown in the work by Pooley (1981);

> We have an important responsibility to the kids to provide competent guidance and instruction in the techniques and strategies of the sport and [to]

> create a psychologically healthy situation in which they can derive the positive benefits of sports participation. By creating such an atmosphere, we can all be winners regardless of the win-loss record. What kids carry away with them will endure for longer than the outcome of the game. (p.19)

Influence of changing priorities

As a child develops from adolescence through to adulthood, priorities and interests change and in many areas mature (Le Bars, Gernigon, & Ninot, 2009; S. Shaw, Caldwell, & Kleiber, 1996; Zill et al., 1995). As a child interests generally revolve around family and play, while adolescents has a much wider scope of interests and priorities that vary from person to person (Blakemore, 2008). These changing priorities have been identified as causes for adolescent dropout from sport in several studies (Allender et al., 2006; Biddle et al., 2005; Gadzic & Vuckovic, 2009).

In a study undertaken in the United Kingdom it was found that the transition from childhood to adulthood by girls was a key risk for dropout from sport (Sport England, 2001). Adolescent girls did not wish to be associated with activities described as "childish" and instead they chose activities that were independent and that conferred a more adult identity upon them (Coakley & White, 1992). The study participants in a subsequent study expanded on the work of Coakley and White (1992) and found that that spending time with friends in social activities, such as shopping or dining, were preferred by participants over participation in sport and were perceived as being more "adultlike" (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2003). Many adolescent girls rated social activities as a higher priority than sport, with free time being seen as a perfect opportunity to socialise rather than to play sport (Eder & Kinney, 1995; McElroy & Kirkendall, 1980; Wold et al., 1998).

Socialising and spending more time with friends have been shown in studies to be a priority that developed further and that took priority as an adolescent girl grew older (Hey, 1997; Murcia et al., 2008; Wold et al., 1998). The willingness of adolescent girls to spend more time with friends in non-sporting environments outweighed their desire to play sport (Biddle et al., 2005). Many young women felt that they needed to plan time to undertake sport participation, rather than have it, as part of a their ongoing lifestyle with many others also feeling that planning to spend time with friends was easier to do and took less effort than playing sport (Sleap & Wormald, 2001). Less active girls tended not to consider sport as it contradicted their teenage

female identity, while the more active girls ensured that they had time to participate in sport, making this a priority (Cairns, 2014; Clark & Paechter, 2007). Many active girls, however, they complained about the pressures to mix physical activity and sport participation with socialising, school, work and family, with dropout from sport often the outcome (Whitehead & Biddle, 2008).

Many studies have indicated that the life and day-to-day experiences of adolescent girls have changed over time, as have the lifestyles they lead (Bauman et al., 2002; Biscomb et al., 2000). Contemporary lifestyles have become increasingly sedentary with technological advances, labour-saving devices and passive forms of electronic entertainment used during leisure time requiring less energy expenditure resulting in minimised involvement in sport (Bauman et al., 2002). Many studies take this into account and use the term "screen time" when discussing the time that participants spend in front of a television, computer or similar electronic device (Dollman et al., 2012). Studies highlighted that the link among high levels of "screen time", lack of physical fitness and involvement in sport is high. It is important to consider children and adolescent sport involvement alongside information about the amount of screen time in which they engage. Various studies found a positive correlation among the hours of television viewing, lack of physical activity and in particular sport participation, and being overweight with 66% of adolescents exceeding the screen time guidelines (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007; Dollman et al., 2012).

Time pressure and a change in priorities added another challenge about which adolescent girls has to make decisions. In addition to changing schooling requirements, many adolescent girls' changes in lifestyle requires additional money (Woodhill & Samuels, 2004). The use of cars, the cost of transport, cost of entertainment and technology form a large part of the extra costs of living faced by adolescent girls (S. Shaw et al., 1996; Shields & Synnot, 2016; Zill et al., 1995). The most common way to make this additional money is through part time employment. It has been shown in studies that increased schoolwork and responsibilities and part-time jobs lead to tiredness and the need to use their spare time for resting rather than for sport (Burke et al., 1997; Ferrar et al., 2012). These circumstances provided another priority choice for adolescent girls where involvement in sport becomes a lesser choice and a sacrifice, in many instances resulting in the dropout from sport.

Influence of the media on adolescent girls participation

The issue of gender difference is highlighted by the fact that in many areas of media coverage, girls may be athletes, but they are often shown that they are female first (Bruce, 2016; D. Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2004; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003). The physical attractiveness of these athletes is often emphasised over their athletic abilities and skills (Buysse & Embser-Herbert, 2004; Fountaine & Comrie, 2016). The reality of many women athletes being strong, skilled, competent competitors is shown in media images, with females being depicted as athletes capable of participating against one another, but not in the same class as male athletes, possibly sending the wrong message to girls regarding their participation in sport (Andrew et al., 2016; Lumby, 2010; M. Messner, Duncan, & Cooky, 2003).

Media outlets also use space and place to steer the construction of gender for both males and females (MacCallum & Widdows, 2016; Silverstein, Perdue, Peterson, & Kelly, 1986). Audiences are shown and in turn taught about who does and does not belong in a variety of settings, what behaviours are linked to which places, and what "socio-cultural practices are acceptable in those places" (Fountaine & Comrie, 2016; Gottschall, 2014). This occurs not only in mass media, but also in films that have been referred to as "vehicles of public pedagogy" and "teaching machines", which intentionally "influence the production of meaning, subject positions, identities and experience" (Field et al., 1999; Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002). Many areas of the media, including film and television do more than entertain, they educate audiences about "how to act, speak, think, feel, desire and behave" and persuade people as to where these behaviours "should" take place, making the media an important medium that must be considered when dealing with adolescent girls (Fountaine & Comrie, 2016; Gottschall, 2014).

Studies exploring the idea of sport being a male domain found that the coverage of female sport and male sport, has in the mainstream painted many sports as being either "feminine" or "masculine" (Bruce, 2016; Carlisle-Duncan & Messner, 1998; Crittenden, 2016; Frederick, Sandhu, Scott, & Akbari, 2016; Groesz et al., 2002). These sports have then been promoted that way in all forms of media. Masculine activity and sport are portrayed as being "strong", "aggressive" and "mean", while female sports and the athletes involved in it are portrayed as "feminine" or

"attractive" and not at the same level as their male athlete counterparts (L. Brown, 2016; Lumby, 2010; M. Messner et al., 2003; Mooney et al., 2012; Swain, 2002; Symons et al., 2013).

Symons et al. (2013) and Mooney et al. (2012) found that these gender stereotypes and the ways that these stereotypes were promoted and presented in the media had a negative effect on Australian adolescent girls' engagement with and participation in sport. Television coverage of female sport is at a lower level than that of male sport coverage with the amount of screen time when compared to the coverage of men's sport amongst major sporting and news television networks (Cooky, Messner, & Hextrum, 2013; Lumby, 2010; M. Phillips, 1997; Tuggle, 1997). In a study completed by the Australian Sports Commission (Lumby, 2010) several factors were outlined that supported work from other studies from Australia and the rest of the world.

The Australian Sports Commission study outlined by Lumby (2010) found that the coverage of women in sport made up 9% of all sports coverage in Australian television news media, while 7% of non-news programming content on television was devoted to female-dominated sport. Male sport, on the other hand, occupied 81% of television news reporting, and 86% of non-news programming on television (Lumby, 2010). The reports that took place across Australia about female sport had the lowest average duration of all the types of sport analysed, with reports about male sport having an average duration of 30 seconds longer than reports about female sport. To put this into context, horse racing and dog racing received more airtime than women's sport in Australian television news (Lumby, 2010). Additionally, Lumby (2010) found that in Australia during a calendar year, 250 television journalists reported about male dominated sport, while only 82 journalists reported about female dominated sport. It was also found in the work of Lumby and in other studies that male sport dominated stories often spilled into main news items and were not classified as being 'exclusively sport related'(M. Phillips, 1997) see also; (M. Phillips, 1997; Sherwood, Osborne, Nicholson, & Sherry, 2016; Tuggle, 1997). Female sport stories, on the other hand, were almost exclusively linked with the sports section of a news bulletin. It also reflected that more journalists are better equipped and commissioned to report about male dominated sport, with networks

allocating more resources - for example, cameras, camera operators and reporters - to them, rather than to the coverage of female sport (Lumby, 2010; M. Phillips, 1997; Tuggle, 1997).

The coverage of year round televised sport, the Olympic games and the Commonwealth games acted to reinforce the male dominance of sporting culture in Australia and in other countries around the world (MacArthur, Angelini, Billings, & Smith, 2016; Osborne, Sherry, & Nicholson, 2016; M. Phillips, 1997; Sherwood et al., 2016). The mainstream media in Australia and in several other countries such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand and the USA are more likely to present men and male athletes as having something interesting to say about sport rather than women or female athletes speaking about sport (M. Messner et al., 2003; O'Neill & Franks, 2016a; M. Phillips, 1997; Tuggle, 1997). Males are seen as experts in the performance, tactics and methods that athletes follow in performing their sport, while females are seen to add "other" information such as how athletes look, information not necessarily connected with the sport itself or the commentary on it (M. Phillips, 1997). Furthermore, the proportion of men speaking about female dominated sport was in both cases greater than that of female spokespeople discussing male sport (Lumby, 2010).

A key concern about the coverage of women's sport that has been raised in academic literature is the perception that female athletes are trivialised, patronised and, in particular, sexualised in media coverage (Lumby, 2010; M. Messner et al., 2003; M. Phillips, 1997). These underlying messages continually represented in the media have been shown to have an effect on the overall thoughts of adolescent and young girls towards sport and should be considered as a key influencer in the dropping out of these girls from sport (A. Nelson, 2000; M. Phillips, 1997; Silverstein et al., 1986; Taveras et al., 2004).

It has also been also shown that similar reinforcement of stereotypes, strengthening the negative thoughts of adolescent girls towards sport, also occurred in print media and magazines (Andrew et al., 2016; L. Brown, 2016; Carlisle-Duncan & Messner, 1998; C. Cockburn, 2002; Morales, Yubero, & Larrañaga, 2016; Murnen, Greenfield, Younger, & Boyd, 2016). Studies undertaken in the USA in relation to images shown in teen magazines found that only 7% of 620 images within teen

magazines showed women being physically active or in a sporting context but that most focused on muscle tone and shape. It was also uncovered in both the American studies and Australian studies that it was the bodies of female athletes that were highlighted to a greater extent than their athletic skills and performances, often trivialising and sexualising the female athletes and making them somewhat of objects rather than athletes (C. Cockburn, 2002; Cooky et al., 2013; Daniels, 2009; Fountaine & Comrie, 2016; Hardin & Greer, 2009; Mitchell, 1997).

There is considerable debate surrounding the influence of the media in the studies identified and referenced in this thesis. Positions taken by some of the studies focus on mass media such as television and magazines while a smaller amount focus on social media. A key debate that has only been touched on minorly in this study is a comparison of the two and how girls and younger people are moving from their dependence on mass media to the use of the internet and technologies such as mass media.

Influence of self-esteem and self-concept on adolescent girls participation

The idea of self-esteem and self-concept has been shown to be key influencers as to the actions undertaken by many adolescents, especially girls. Self-esteem has been defined in scholarly literature and research as an evaluative attitude towards oneself and is a judgment of overall personal worth, as individuals take into account all of the different aspects of themselves (Coopersmith, 1967). It has been shown that strong self-esteem and self-concept can exercise strong influences on the ongoing participation of adolescent girls in sport. The opposite can have them second guessing themselves and how they feel about themselves, often resulting in dropout (Andrew et al., 2016; Cooky & Rauscher, 2016; Gilbert, 2000; Gould et al., 1982; Richman & Schaffer, 2000).

Self-esteem has received a large amount of attention in both media and research, especially in relation to adolescent girls well being (Adams, 2005; Andrew et al., 2016; Buchholz, Mack, McVey, Feder, & Barrowman, 2008; Carron, Burke, & Prapavessis, 2004; Cash, 2001). These studies have explored the importance of self-esteem for the development and general well being of adolescents, with a larger focus generally being placed on girls. It has been found that high levels of self-

esteem in adolescent girls have seen them achieve higher levels in things such as academia, sport and other pursuits and have found them to be more effective in meeting the situational demands with which they are confronted (Brentnall, 2010; Coopersmith, 1967; Greenleaf, 2002; Noordstar et al., 2016). Additionally, adolescent girls with high self-esteem have been found to report less dangerous behaviours such as alcohol and drug use and they have displayed a resistance to eating disorders (Martinson, 2010; Parsons & Betz, 2001; Patel, D., Pratt, & Phillips, 2003; Taub & Blinde, 1992). By contrast adolescent girls who reported lower levels of self-esteem and self concept displayed higher levels of risk taking behaviours, higher rates of depression and mental illness, lower levels of life contentment and higher rates of anxiety and nervousness (Beltran-Carillo, Devis-Devis, Piero-Valert, & Brown, 2012; Biddle et al., 1998; Buchholz et al., 2008).

According to research, self-concept is a continually evolving concept and has been defined as individuals' perceptions of themselves, with those perceptions being formed via experience and interaction with the environment and the people in it (Noordstar et al., 2016; Wichstrøm & Von Soest, 2016). It has been defined as the description of themselves, their attitudes, their perceptions of their attributes and abilities, and their comparison of these with the environments in which they function (Andrew et al., 2016; Harter, 1990). Researcher in the field, Shavelson et al (1976) described self-concept as possessing a "multidimensional, hierarchical structure that becomes increasingly differentiated with age" (pg. 6). This structure is based around global self-concept and then branches further into other areas, with physical self-concept being the most important for consideration in this study.

Referring to the pioneering work of Marsh et al. (1994) in the area of self-concept, it is important to identify the nine facets referred to that make-up physical self-concept, all of which were mentioned in the stories shared by the participants in this study. These nine areas are:

1. Sports competence;
2. Strength;
3. Endurance;
4. Co-ordination;

5. Flexibility;
6. Physical appearance;
7. Body fat;
8. Physical activity;
9. Health.

Studies have also shown that girls' self-concept can be influenced by their perceived competency in sport, with it being shown that there is a greater sense of 'being competent' in adolescent boys and a far lower level in adolescent girls (Noordstar et al., 2016; Weiss & Duncan, 1992). This pronounced difference between adolescent males and females could go a long way to explaining the overall difference in self-concept, with males being more likely to be involved in sport than their female counterparts (Jaffee & Ricker, 1993; James, 1999; Kirkcaldy, Shephard, & Siefen, 2002). This greater participation has been shown to assist strongly in the development of the sports competency element of global self-concept and that this indicates lower levels of sports competency in adolescent girls (Marsh & Redmayne, 1994; Noordstar et al., 2016). Finally, it may be possible that sporting competency is considered to be more important to adolescent males than to adolescent females, and indicates again the strong link between positive, perceived sporting competency leading to a stronger global self-concept for males.

The willingness to "attract" and "impress" members of the opposite sex is inexplicably linked with self-concept and has played a big role in many girls' ceasing involvement in sport if they felt that their performance would not show them to be competent (James, 1999). Linking with this belief of competency was another influencing factor that altered participation, body image and perception of others. The ways in which adolescent girls' see their own body image has been studied over a long period of time in many contexts. In the instance of sport, it has been shown that an adolescent girls' ideal body image and the body image that they perceive that others are "seeing" can negatively alter their participation (Brentnall, 2010; Cooky & Rauscher, 2016; Gard, 2016). Additionally, many girls felt that the ways that they looked and were perceived by others changed the actions that they undertook in relation to participation in sport and in many instances made them stop their participation altogether (Choi, 2000; C. Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Engel, 1994;

Gard, 2016; Prapavessis et al., 2004; Rogers & Ebbeck, 2016).

Linking very closely with the perceived body image of girls is the actions that they often undertake that are defined by others (Gard, 2016; Noordstar et al., 2016; Wichstrøm & Von Soest, 2016). These actions are often stereotyped by the construction of gender that occurs as children developed and has a strong influence on the participation and in turn the dropout actions of many (Carlisle-Duncan & Messner, 1998; Henderson et al., 1988; Kane, 1990; Paechter, 2006; Peper, 1994). Adolescent girls have been shown to be more greatly influenced by self-concept than their male counterpart; additionally, they placed a high value on the competency of their own skills and how these skills were perceived by others, especially their peers (Gard, 2016; Vescio, 2001; Voorhees et al., 2005). If a girl felt that her skills were sub-standard, or she believed that she was not competent, she was more likely to withdraw from that sport to dodge the fear of ridicule or being teased by peers (Casey et al., 2009; Mooney et al., 2012; Rogers & Ebbeck, 2016).

Influence of body image on adolescent girls participation

Body image can be defined as a subjective evaluation of the body, consisting of the individual's perceptions, attitudes and thoughts about what their bodies looks like or should look like. Numerous studies regarding body image have shown that there is a strong link among adolescent girls, their perceptions of their own body images and their self-concept levels (Abbott & Barber, 2011; Cooky & Rauscher, 2016; Dishman et al., 2006; Evans, 2006; Gard, 2016).

The assessment of body image is a very difficult one to identify completely owing to its varying nature and the individuality of the person assessing it (Dishman et al., 2006; Evans, 2006; Findlay & Bowker, 2009). Individual body size and shape have been shown to be the most common of the assessments made by adolescent girls and boys. However, often specific body parts are often judged and assessed by their owners (Brentnall, 2010; M. Pritchard & Wilson, 2005). Each individual can feel a positive or a negative experience when assessing her or his own body image. These feelings can often result in a change in the level of an individual's self-concept (Gard, 2016). Studies have shown that the body images of individuals, especially those still developing, such as adolescent girls, are influenced by the environments in which they socialise, their own physical characteristics, their personality attributes

and their personal experiences (Cash, 2004; Gard, 2016; Rogers & Ebbeck, 2016).

It has been argued that female adolescents are particularly vulnerable to experiencing negative body image and thoughts about their own bodies (Brumberg, 2010; Buchholz et al., 2008; Carron et al., 2004; Cooky & Rauscher, 2016; Rogers & Ebbeck, 2016). These studies and the work of others in the field have shown that between 40% and 70% of adolescent girls are dissatisfied with one or more portions of their body and that the level of satisfaction with their bodies has slowly decreased from the age of 12 and 13 years (Brentnall, 2010; Smolak, Levine, & Thompson, 2001). The reason that this occurred at this age and the reason for the decrease have many potential factors linked with them. First and foremost this age is often paired with the onset of puberty and the transformation of one's body, the development of breasts, the increase of fat deposits and the development of the genitals (De Ridder et al., 1992; Wertheim, Paxton, Schutz, & Muir, 1997). The changes experienced by an adolescent girl during this time are not only physical but also emotional and psychological. As shown in numerous works and displayed in previous study findings, girls who reach puberty early have higher levels of body dissatisfaction owing to being "different" from and "bigger" than others as they are often not mentally prepared for these changes (Buchholz et al., 2008; Davies & Furnham, 1986; Gard, 2016).

Previous literature has indicated that the physical changes of body size and shape during adolescence are likely to exacerbate body dissatisfaction in adolescent girls which may be influential in relation to their participation in sport (Cairns, 2014; Clark & Paechter, 2007; Coakley & White, 1992; James, 1998). This international research is consistent with previous Australian research that showed that females expressed greater body dissatisfaction than males, where they rated their current body size or the size of portions of their bodies as being larger than ideal and tended to underestimate the size of the female body that males rated as being attractive (Dishman et al., 2006; D. Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2004; Tiggemann & Pennington, 1990).

Work undertaken by Paxton et al (1991), strengthened this idea after finding that 27% of adolescent girls who were within the normally accepted weight range

classified themselves as being overweight, very overweight or fat. Although the girls believed that physical activity, exercise or the involvement in sport were the best ways to lose weight, the study showed that they spent far less time exercising or playing sport in any given week than their male counterparts and felt far more confident about the way that their bodies looked than the boys (Paxton et al., 1991). Furthermore in order to have 'better bodies' 13% of girls in the Paxton study reported using one or more extreme weight loss behaviour at least weekly, while 30% believed that extreme weight loss behaviours were 'helpful' despite exhibiting medically identified characteristics of eating disorders such as Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa (Brentnall, 2010; Paxton et al., 1991).

The actual extent of the relationship between body image and self-esteem requires significant further work to completely understand and appreciated completely. It has been indicated that self-esteem can be affected by body image more greatly amongst adolescent girls than amongst adolescent boys, and that a positive body image leads to higher self-esteem and confidence (Smolak et al., 2001; Smolak, Murnen, & Ruble, 1999).

One of the premier studies in the field related to a meta-analysis undertaken to gain the experiences of high school and college athletes in relation to sport and body image. The study found that athletes in college and high school were found to have a higher level of happiness with their body presentation and general body image, than those of the non-athletes at the same institutions (Hausenblas & Symons-Downs, 2001). One of the possible reasons for this is the development of self-esteem from involvement in sport that, in turn, results in a higher level of happiness with body image than those who do not play sport (Evans, 2006). Additionally, different sports have different impacts on body image with the way that they present the ideal of femininity in their sport. For example, the sports of swimming and diving present an ideal of being thin and athletic through the bathing uniforms required. The sport of basketball, by contrast conveys an ideal of being less feminine than that of swimming owing to the baggy uniforms that are worn and the wider variety of body types involved at the highest level of the sport (Evans, 2006; James, 1999; Kirkcaldy et al., 2002). Additionally, some sports such as running require a thin and athletic body to be deemed successful, while a sport like netball expects short skirts and

briefs to be worn as part of the playing uniform that may again make girls challenge their level of body image and self-esteem (Greenleaf, 2002; Mooney et al., 2012). A similar study undertaken found that those who regularly participated in sport identified their bodies in a more positive light than those of non-sport participants, and that sport and physical activity are an effective way to enhance the body image of all (Hausenblas & Fallon, 2006). The same studies also identified that the ongoing participation in sport has been found to be a major vehicle for the development of physical self-concept, positive body image, self confidence and in turn general well-being (Hausenblas, Brewer, & Van Raalte, 2004; Marsh & Yeung, 1998; Parsons & Betz, 2001).

A study undertaken in Western Australia in relation to the perceptions of participation in sport found that body image factors play a large role in influencing adolescent girls. In a survey of 276 Year 10 girls from 10 different high schools, it was reported that the adolescent girls often avoided or minimised the time in "active areas" at school (James, 1998). The feelings of self consciousness, particularly when boys were around made the adolescent girls minimise their visits or time spent in places such as swimming pools, basketball courts, football ovals and gymnasiums. These feelings of self-consciousness were shown to be associated with having to wear inadequate clothing that did not cover areas of their bodies that they felt were not 'perfect' (James, 1998, 1999, 2000).

A similar study undertaken also in Western Australia questioned 1065 female students between Year 8 and Year 12 from coeducational schools. The results revealed that the girls were less inclined to participate in activities such as swimming, athletics and basketball because of compulsory uniform requirements, which exposed much of the body, often including areas that the girls felt were not "the way they should look" (Malaxos & Wedgewood, 1997). It was shown by the researchers in this study that if the adolescent girls were allowed to wear alternative clothing such as shorts instead of skirts for netball, t-shirts instead of singlets for basketball and athletics, and rash vests and shorts over bathers for swimming they remained involved in sport longer and felt more comfortable doing so (C. Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Harvey-Short, 2016; Malaxos & Wedgewood, 1997).

Influences of gender on adolescent girls participation

Gender roles, gender construction and gender stereotyping have been shown to be important in the sporting participation decisions made by adolescent girls (R. Hall & Oglesby, 2016; Kimmel, 1996; M. A. Messner, 1990). The ideas of femininity and masculinity have long been linked with the ways that people, from a young age through to adulthood, participate and perceive their roles in sport and in life in general (Clark & Paechter, 2007; Coakley & White, 1992). It is essential to acknowledge that, because gender is formed, shaped and reinforced through social institutions, interactions and cultural practices throughout one's lifetime, it can also be challenged, resisted and potentially altered (Bordo, 1999; Currie, Kelly, & Pomerantz, 2007). These experiences affect the actions and perceptions of people towards the roles and attributes that each gender "should" perform (Scraton et al., 1987; Wright, O'Flynn, & MacDonald, 2002).

The media, discussed in greater depth in the media section of this chapter, plays a major role in representing both masculinity and femininity as cultural symbols and in turn portrays these traits as those that 'should' be performed by each gender (Carlisle-Duncan & Messner, 1998; C. Cockburn, 2002; Cooky et al., 2013; Duncan & Messner, 2000; Fountaine & Comrie, 2016). One of the more poignant gender themes currently being portrayed in the media is the idea of "girl power", in which girls are portrayed as the agents of their own actions and that they have a greater level of socially acceptable power to make their own decisions (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005; Gonick, 2006; Hains, 2012; Taft, 2004). Although their actions may go against previously prescribed ideas of gender, if they "work" for their achievements they are accepted as results of "girl power" and are then seen as being socially acceptable (D. Francis, 2014; Ringrose, 2006, 2007; Walkerdine, 1989, 2006). It has been shown that, although "girl power" sees females in the current day being free from the constraints of those who have come before them, it simultaneously positions them as being "at risk" because their gender and age are understood as impediments to their success and in turn their decisions (Ringrose, 2007).

Gender creation

The construction of gender develops expectations and ideals as to what it means to be a man or a woman and as to what actions a man and a woman "should" be undertaking is not fixed at birth but constructed through actions and discourse (Mikosza & Phillips, 1999). Females are expected in many areas, especially in sport, both in history and in present day life to be somewhat subservient to their male partners and to support them in their sporting and work pursuits (Bertozzi, 2008; Kane, 1990; Paechter, 2006). Males in comparison are expected to be more ego-orientated and to present higher levels of physical self, aggression and strength than females and to pursue sporting and career opportunities with the almost expected support of their partner (Deaner, Balish, & Lombardo, 2016; Drummond, 2016; Marsh, Barnes, Cairns, & Tidman, 1984).

Sport is presented to the world in many different forms with gender created, embraced and challenged and resisted differently in each form. The various types of masculinity construction within these different types of sports have received various levels of coverage in the literature about gender and sport (Anderson, 1999; MacArthur et al., 2016). The masculinity and femininity of a basketball player, a netballer and a runner, for example, are often very different and require various discourses and occurrences to create masculinity and femininity that are particular to the sport (Anderson, 1999).

The creation of gender commences generally from early in life by the preconceived actions undertaken by parents and family members such as the influence of actions 'to be like dad or mum' (Kreager, Staff, Gauthier, Lefkowitz, & Feinberg, 2016; Swain, 2002). This construction then generally continues when a child attends pre-primary school and primary schooling where 'play' becomes more directed and modelled on what a boy or a girl should do and should look like (Anderson, 2008; Archer & McDonald, 1991; Cooky & Rauscher, 2016; Swain, 2002). Furthering this idea, the concept of "genderplay" was developed to analyse the social processes through which children construct gender (Thorne, 1993).

Other research on the topic has shown that a set of "rules" was developed in a large number of primary schools that "aligned" male and female specific gender expected behaviour such as football for the boys and netball for the girls (Clark & Paechter,

2007). The playground and the sporting fields at school have been identified as key sites for gender construction, negotiation and interaction, with certain "spaces" in the school ground often labelled as being 'boys' or 'girls' areas for play (Clark & Paechter, 2007; Reay, 2001). Athleticism and sporting ability are deemed masculine traits in primary school, while humility and sharing seem to be key themes of "proper" femininity within the playground communities at each school (Thorne, 1993). Gender expectations from peers, parents, partners and social groups and institutions often negatively influence adolescent girls not to be involved in sport or to cease their involvement (Culp, 2008). Additionally, these gender constructs and the stereotyping of gender ideals constrain women's and girls' participation in sport and leisure, as it is often seen as not being "socially appropriate" and "not feminine", with many girls being deemed not physically capable. (L. Brown, 2016; Henderson, 1996).

Australian gender researcher Connell (1996) indicated "not only is gender constructed within institutional and cultural contexts that produce multiple forms of masculinity and femininity, but schools are one of the prime active players in the formation of these masculinities and femininities and the reinforcement of gender dichotomy" (p.212). Inside and outside the school contexts various elements result in the different constructions of masculinity. Connell (1996) and Messner (1990) through their work with Australian and North American boys have identified different cultures, different upbringings and different geographical locations as key influences in the construction of gender at schools and sporting clubs at all levels (R. Connell, 1996; M. A. Messner, 1990).

The construction of gender continues in a different context as the move to secondary school takes place. It has been indicated through research that girls and boys learn 'new' ways of behaving in secondary school, which involve changing relationships between boys and girls as many of the 'rules' followed by the adolescents were to be discovered and negotiated (Hills, 2006; Kreager et al., 2016; Measor & Woods, 1984). Additionally, at this time it has been shown that the changing interactions between the sexes involve sexuality and its exploration both having a strong influence over the day to day activities of adolescents (Kulig, Brener, & McManus, 2003; Leaper & Spears-Brown, 2008).

An Australian study explored the influence that schooling has over the creation of gender is the '12 to 18 Project' (Yates, 1999). The study examined how schooling impacted on the gender creation and class identities of young people and linked the interplay of gender and class in order to develop their gender identity (Collins, Kenway, & McLeod, 2000; Yates, 1999). Additionally, research has shown how school practices engage or disengage students through their practices, and in doing so alters the formation of the ways that members of a society regard and treat one another, especially in the case of adolescent boys and girls (Yates & McLeod, 2000).

Schools have been recognised as a key area where masculinity and femininity and gender are developed. Work by Connell (1996) undertaken with Australian children noted that not all masculinity's are the same and that there is often a hierarchy or a pecking order within them (R. Connell, 1996). Some masculinities are more honoured and revered than others by adolescents and adults; for example, homosexual masculinities are often seen in a lesser light than heterosexual masculinities (Anderson, 2008; Koivula, 2001). Additionally, Connell (1996) also discussed the idea of the 'active construction of gender' (p. 215) and that gender is not a set thing that someone 'is' or 'has' as part of her or his personality; instead, masculinity is constructed as people act and perform everyday tasks. These tasks could be as simple as a conversation or in this instance the actions undertaken in a sporting context (R. Connell, 1996; MacArthur et al., 2016).

Construction of gender also occurs outside the school parameters through media representations and the promotion of images of both masculinity and femininity (Ritchie, Hawkins, Phillips, & Kleinberg, 2016; Silverstein et al., 1986; Taveras et al., 2004). With the ideal of the slender body being a metaphor for health and physical appearance has come to be taken as an "indicator of social value and an appropriate moral orientation to personal care" (Ritchie et al., 2016; Williams & Bendelow, 1998). Linking body shape with gender construction, associates slim, youthful, attractive bodies with social and personal identity and expectations of behaviours (Fountaine & Comrie, 2016; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003; Lumby, 2010).

Gender stereotyping

Gender stereotyping has been formed over decades and is enforced in everyday life (Kreager et al., 2016; Sczesny, Bosak, Neff, & Schyns, 2004). Many sports such as football, cricket and rugby are deemed by many as being masculine sports and are not seen as sports in which females should participate (Bertozzi, 2008; Mooney et al., 2012). These stereotyped behaviours have been shown to vary from metropolitan to regional Australia, with sports such as netball being labelled as 'female' sports and as extensions of the local football club, rather than as entities in their own right (Mooney et al., 2012). These labels, gender stereotypes and the expectations that go with them are often a deciding factor as to an adolescent female's withdrawal from sport especially in regional areas (Mooney et al., 2012). These stereotypes and labels are often referred to as "gender-based tradition", which has been identified as a major reason why many adolescent girls' did not participate in "masculine" sports (Archer & McDonald, 1991).

Extensive study in both Australia and the United States of America identified that subcultures of gender exist. Some sports have more subcultures attached to them than others and terms such as such as "jocks" and "pretty boys" and "punks" appearing in some of the literature about gender construction and stereotyping in sport (Bourdieu, 2001; Butler, 1990; Clark & Paechter, 2007). While sexuality is often referred to as a subculture in female sport words such as "butch", "girly-girl" and "leso" (short for lesbian) are used in sport related literature to describe different girls who played sport or who did not fit the stereotype of the sport in which they were involved in (Anderson, 1999; L. Brown, 2016; R. Connell, 1996; Sabo & Veliz, 2016).

Gender differences

For the most part, women of all ages are not given the opportunity to use their full body capacities in free and open engagement with the world, nor are they encouraged as much as boys to develop specific bodily skills (Deaner et al., 2016; I. Young, 1990). Many athletic adolescent females experience a "problematic disjunction between sport and femininity, in part because those characteristics required for sport, such as aggression, strength and determination, tend to contradict dominant notions of femininity" (Clark & Paechter, 2007) .The general association of sporting activities with masculinity is illustrated through practices relating to gender, including the perceived importance of involvement for males, reduced opportunities

for women to participate at local and professional levels, the gender stereotyping of particular activities and the overwhelming emphasis on male sport in the media (Drummond, 2016; Hills, 2006; MacArthur et al., 2016). Popular culture supports these associations by often representing the female as needing to be "protected" and as an ethical, caring, emotionally intelligent subject, able not only to manage herself but also to manage and take responsibility for the problems of family, of friends, of partners and of their communities (Butler, 1990; Deaner et al., 2016; Mean & Kassing, 2008; Ringrose, 2006).

Opportunities for participation in sport

Sports participation in Australia is based on the principle of 'whoever wants to play can do so' but it does not have any rules or legislation ensuring that this actually occurs (Bouchard et al., 1992; Breuer, Hallmann, & Wicker, 2011). The number of males and females participating in sports during adolescence is substantially weighted towards males with fewer girls playing sport during those years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001; Australian Sport Confederation, 1983). Legislation is non-existent in Australian sporting clubs and educational settings, and without it, the provision of equal opportunities for females are not assured or guaranteed. However, in other countries such as the United States of America the opportunities for females in sport at clubs, school and colleges are guaranteed through the development of Title IX legislation (Gavora, 2002).

Title IX is a civil rights law that has been implemented in the United States of America to provide equal opportunities for male and female athletes via scholarships in the schooling system. The Title IX law was passed as part of the Education Law review undertaken in 1972 after several high profile females attending colleges in the US complained to the universities and then to their local government representatives. An investigation was then undertaken and a pattern of discrimination against females was occurring not only through the allocation of sporting opportunities but also through the ability to access academic positions in these schools (Griffith, 2003; Mikulyuk, Milner, & Braddock, 2016; Stevenson, 2010; Weber, Carney, & Frazier, 2016). During the 1970s and then into the 1980s a large majority of schools, colleges, universities and higher education institutions did not provide scholarships for female athletes or academics; however, after the law was introduced the number increased (Gavora, 2002; Mikulyuk et al., 2016). The gender-based inequality was so

one-sided, that before the law changed, swimmer Donna de Varona, who won two gold medals in the 1964 Olympics, could not find a college scholarship for swimming or for academic studies (McKenna, 2016). Two years after Title IX became law, fewer than 50 athletic scholarships were awarded to women, 15 of those at one university, the University of Florida. This level of scholarship has increased dramatically and is now close to parity with some exceptions made to new schools and universities and high schools where limited academic and sporting programs are offered or where religious exemptions exist, but with stringent requirements made to ensure that the opportunities would be equalised in the future (Augustine-Adams, 2016; L. Francis, 2016; Francisco & Schaefer, 2016; McKenna, 2016). Although the level of club, school and university sporting participation by females has now increased owing to the Title IX legislation, significant and consistent reviewing and assessment are required to meet the changing needs of the female athlete (Arthur, 2016; L. Francis, 2016; Werner, 2016). The legislative changes have been identified as a major contributor to the success of some of the female athlete performances in the Olympics by female athletes, success in international sports such as tennis and golf and in female sporting leagues such as the WNBA (Woman's National Basketball League) and the Women's Professional Soccer league (McDowell, Deterding, Elmore, Morford, & Morris, 2016; Mikulyuk et al., 2016; Stevenson, 2010; Weber et al., 2016). In addition to the development of playing and studying opportunities for females in the United States of America, the Title IX law introduction has also seen a marked increase in the sports administration and sport-related career opportunities for females (Estrada, Lugo, & Olmeda, 2016).

Influence of regional location on adolescent girls participation

Life in regional Australia is a well-researched subject with leaders in the field finding that it has been seen to have changed in the last decade with political allegiances, notions of national identity and changes to everyday life all being challenged and altered (Alston, 2002; J. Connell, 2016; Holmes, 2006; B. Pritchard & McManus, 2000).

Little research has examined how regional environments and the lived experiences of girls in these areas, impact on the ways in which adolescent girls shape ideas about being physically active and being involved in sport (Dollman et al., 2012; Eime et

al., 2010; Mooney et al., 2012). Research has indicated, however, that adolescent females living in regional areas generally have their sporting opportunities commence in school-based activities (Bailey, 2006; Brustad, 1996; Machado-Rodrigues et al., 2012). The activity then generally moves from physical education to organised community sport and team-based activity with unorganised 'play' type sport being played during this entire time (Casey et al., 2009). Additionally, studies found that, owing to limited and declining populations of many regional towns and centres, the availability of regionally located girls to participate in team sports is sometimes limited to only schools (J. Connell, 2016; Slingerland & Borghouts, 2010). Their metropolitan counterparts do not experience these population challenges and have wider sporting opportunities in places such as schools, sporting clubs and leisure facilities, providing them with greater opportunities to move from club to club or from sport to sport if the situation in which they find themselves is not conducive to their participation (Mooney et al., 2012).

In order for adolescent girls to be involved in prolonged sport in regional areas, they are generally required to become members of sporting clubs and teams (Matton et al., 2006; Mooney et al., 2012; Mugford, 2001a). These activities in regional settings are more traditional sports such as netball, basketball, gymnastics and dancing, with activities being chosen by the girls requiring 'feminine characteristics' (Azzarito, 2009; Choi, 2000; C. Cockburn & Clarke, 2002). It has also been found that metropolitan adolescent females have a wider choice in sports and recreation than their regional counterparts (Azzarito, 2009). These selections have been shown often to align with the number of clubs available in metropolitan areas compared with regional areas (Spaaij, 2009). Sporting and recreational clubs are not only seen not only as sources of sport but also as sources of social interaction and 'being part of a community', with regional clubs often being seen to have a larger influence on the community than their metropolitan counterparts (Basterfield et al., 2016; Kirk & MacPhail, 2003; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Spaaij, 2009; Townsend, Moore, & Mahoney, 2002). Significant deficiencies in the knowledge pool of this topic exist in this area, with the lived experiences of adolescent girls in Australian regional areas being researched at a minimal level (Mooney et al., 2012).

Research has found that sporting clubs and teams in regional settings have different characteristics from those of their metropolitan counterparts (Kirk & MacPhail,

2003). The roles of regional sporting clubs are often considered the 'glue' that holds communities together (J. Connell, 2016; Spaaij, 2009) and the sustainability of sporting clubs are often seen as gauges of the health of regional communities (J. Connell, 2016; Mugford, 2001b; Spaaij, 2009). The limited research into regional sporting clubs has found that Australian Rules football clubs, and in turn the netball clubs attached to them, play important roles in regional communities (Kirk & MacPhail, 2003; Mooney et al., 2012; Mugford, 2001a). They provide not only recreational opportunities for both males and females, but also provide "life-long" support and social experiences for people of all ages (Mooney et al., 2012; Mugford, 2001a).

Research has found that the same clubs that provide these social and participation opportunities have been found also to present other issues that could alter the withdrawal of adolescent females from sport (Basterfield et al., 2016; Mooney et al., 2012; Mugford, 2001a; Oldenhove, 2001). Similar studies refer to the "other side" of regional competitive sport, highlighting problems of social exclusion and marginalisation linked to gender stereotyping and perceived gender roles (Mooney et al., 2012; Tonts & Ackerley, 2010). It has been found in studies that the practices of males in regional clubs acted to segregate and subordinate women through the split of netball and football and the stereotypical roles that are linked to those sports (Dempsey et al., 1993; Mooney et al., 2012). In several instances, research and my own observations found that the netballers role in the club is very different from the role of the male footballers (Engel, 1994; Mooney et al., 2012); additional research indicated that further study in this area is required to include other sports.

Football and netball clubs division of labour at whole clubs functions showed that women were usually responsible for activities such as preparing food, cooking and cleaning, while men generally were not expected to be involved in these types of activities (Leaper & Spears-Brown, 2008; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Tonts & Ackerley, 2010). Additionally, research and observations highlighted that many of these club events were held to fit in with the footballers rather than with the netballers and were often advertised as football events rather than club events (Mooney et al., 2012; Spaaij, 2009). Further work in this area must occur in order to expand the understanding of these types of experiences of girls in regional sporting clubs (Mooney et al., 2012).

The research found that the physical site where an adolescent girl was born or resides, could also affect her availability to participate in sport (D. MacDonald, Cheung, Côté, & Abernethy, 2009; D. Macdonald, King, Cote, & Abernethy, 2009). It was found that the physical layout, access to team sports and gymnasiums, transport to these facilities and links with school sports have been shown to correlate with the level of physical activity and inactivity and involvement in sport (Oldenhove, 2001). Additionally, studies found that regional adolescent girls have their levels of sedentary behaviour, inactivity and lack of involvement in sport affected by the same constraints (Machado-Rodrigues et al., 2012; Mooney et al., 2012; Mugford, 2001a; Oldenhove, 2001).

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed review of the studies that have been undertaken regarding this topic. The review looked at the literature around adolescent girls' dropout from sport, the challenges that girls face in participating in sport and the influencers of their decisions to remain involved in sport. Several conflicting debates exist in all of the topics covered in this chapter with the challenge faced to acknowledge the two sides while remaining focussed on their influence on the participation of sport, as per the studies focus.

Chapter 3 of this thesis explores the conceptual and philosophical framework of this study and discusses the role of Phenomenology, Interpretative Phenomenology, lived experience and the role played by me as a researcher to undertake this study.

Chapter 3 – The conceptual and philosophical framework

Introduction

The previous chapter provided a review of the literature relating to participation in sport and adolescent girls' dropout from sport. The chapter reviewed numerous topics previously covered in research from across the world and links the literature to the study being undertaken.

This chapter outlines the theoretical background of the study and discusses phenomenological varieties, Interpretative phenomenology and lived experience. Information linking the use of these theories to this study is also provided, as is the role of a phenomenological researcher.

After completing reading and research into phenomenology, I see a lot of its principles in my own life and in the way I observe objects and happenings. I understand that individual happenings can easily be linked to the person experiencing them and that these happenings have a major influence over other happenings in life. The exact influence is often difficult to fully understand, however, the use of Interpretative phenomenology (IPA), hermeneutics and phenomenology have all influenced this study, with no tensions between them and with no one methodology fitting the study perfectly. These philosophies have been reviewed with several of their elements used to develop the data collection and data analysis process used in this study.

It took reading and exploration of the topic of phenomenology and all of its "species" to actually be able to align and, in turn, understand my thinking. Primarily exploring the research of Van Manen (1998, 1997, 2002), Devenish (2002) and Gadamer (1975) and then extending to the work of many others, allowed me to gain a level of clarity that allowed me to gain further interest in the ideas they discussed throughout their work, resulting in my use of these methodologies to guide and inform this study and all of its elements.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology has been shown in numerous research projects in two very different

and distinct lights. My reading into the topic has shown the first saw phenomenology as a disciplinary field in philosophy, whilst the second saw it as a movement in the history of philosophy. This has also been shown in the work of Dowling (2007), where he showed these two distinct differences and used samples to highlight them (Dowling, 2007). Phenomenology has been defined in several ways but is simply defined as the study of "phenomenon" in the form of experiences, structures of experience, consciousness and the understanding of experiences (Devenish, 2002; Giorgi, 1997; Husserl, 1927, 1960; Van Manen, 1982).

The practice of phenomenology has been shown to have traditional roots that link back to the philosophers in early religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. Dowling (2007) has suggested that the links to ancient times are clear and that the importance of each phenomenon in those early religious believers formed the basis for what we call phenomenology today. The wisdom from these traditions was shown to be the first that linked a phenomenon to the effect they have over other areas of the lives of individuals (Dowling, 2007; B. Smith & Smith, 1995). Dowling (2007) and Husserl (1960) suggest that when Buddhist and Hindu philosophers reflected on their experiences in several states of consciousness achieved through a variety of meditative states, they were practising phenomenology (Dowling, 2007; Husserl, 1960).

Phenomenology first appeared in the language of researchers throughout the 20th century through the works of Husserl (Landgrebe & Welton, 1981; Laverty, 2003; Sokolowski, 2000). However, the term, "phenomenology" had been used in other philosophical and scientific language prior to the organised writing of Husserl. It has been shown by Smith (1999) and Sokolowski (2000) that the first formal structuring of phenomenology can be attributed to Husserl's mentor, Franz Brentano (B. Smith, 1999; Sokolowski, 2000).

This work by Husserl was followed by numerous writings displaying several "species" of phenomenology (Embree, 1997). Eight "species" of phenomenology have been written and outlined in a series of works throughout this period, all having a strong link to the work of Husserl (McCarthy, 1999; Sadler, 2014). It is important to reflect on these various forms of the methodology to appreciate the decision I have made to develop my own process informed primarily by IPA and phenomenological

theory. These eight types of phenomenology as shown by Husserl (1927, 1960, 1964,1965,1970), linked through the idea of a "phenomenon" are:

1. *Hermeneutic phenomenology* –Explores how we understand experiences and how we engage things in and around the physical world.

2. *Interpretative phenomenology* – Explores the structures of lived experience and their interpretations. It makes interpretations based on the delivery of these experiences.

3. *Existential phenomenology* – explores the free choices and actions humans undertake and based on the existence of human beings as entities in the universe.

4. *Generative historicist phenomenology*- studies how meaning, as found in our experiences is generated by historical happenings, processes and its influence on people.

5. *Genetic phenomenology* – explores the meaning derived from things within one's stream of experience.

6. *Realistic phenomenology* – studies the structure of consciousness, assuming it occurs in the real world and does not occur in our consciousness.

7. *Naturalistic constitutive phenomenology* – this studies how things are considered in the world of nature and makes the assumption that consciousness is part of the makeup of nature as a whole.

8. *Transcendental constitutive phenomenology* – explores how objects are constituted in pure or transcendental consciousness, with all elements of the natural world and it's belonging removed.

Work undertaken by Crotty (1996a) has shown that the diverse disciplines of phenomenology can be more easily labelled and described in two ways, a traditional category of phenomenology and a newly created category of phenomenology. It is important to acknowledge these categorisations and also the language used in each of them to fully appreciate and understand the selection of methodology I have chosen and the language I use in its implementation. Crotty (1996b) completed work on comparing the language used in the phenomenology that appears in each of the defined categories and found that, although the language was similar, there were notable differences between the two. The language used in the disciplines that appear in the new category of phenomenology have been shown the desire to 'understand the subjective experience of the people it studies (Crotty, 1996b, p. 3). The language used

in the phenomenological disciplines deemed traditional have been shown to be more concerned with the objects of humans experiences by enquiring about the phenomenon itself rather than human's attempts to make meaning from the experience or phenomenon (Crotty, 1996b).

Other researchers have used Crotty's (1996b) classification and labelling of disciples of phenomenology to suggest that the overall aim of traditional phenomenology disciplines is to steer the experiences of the participants and their links to the phenomenon back to themselves and their original decisions to undertake those actions (Spinelli, 2005). Other work has shown that phenomenology relies on the natural attitudes of people as a means to access things and worldviews (Spinelli, 2005). It is only once information has been accessed that phenomenology can help clarify concepts (Colaizzi, 1978; Conroy, 2008; Crotty, 1996; B. Smith, 1999). An example of this was explored through the work of Rinofner (2002) and Spinelli (2003) where memory has been referred to as a past perception and once this past perception has been relived can be seen as an object with its own meaning (Rinofner, 2002; Sokolowski, 2000; Spinelli, 2003).

Interpretative Phenomenology

Interpretative phenomenology forms a great working relationship with hermeneutic phenomenology. Interpretative phenomenology analysis (IPA) is based on the lived experiences of others and how they are interpreted. It is based on the pioneering work of Heidegger (1962, 1975) and has been referred to as the Heidegerian philosophy. It has been the basis for much research throughout the last half century that looked at furthering the methods use when developing research questions and processes when searching for meaning in human experience (Allen, Benner, & Diekelmann, 1986; Burgess, Knight, & Mellalieu, 2016; Carlen, 2009; Diekelmann & Ironside, 1998; J. Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Finlay and Ballinger (2006, pg. 12) described IPA as a "variant of phenomenology" that "aims" to explore individuals' perceptions and experiences. The focus is firmly on the individuals' cognitive, linguistic, affective and physical being and what makes up the lived experience as a whole experience (Burgess et al., 2016; Finlay & Ballinger, 2006; O'Halloran, Littlewood, Richardson, Tod, & Nesti, 2016).

The origins and theoretical underpinnings of IPA are formed via the work undertaken

by pioneer researcher Husserl (1927, 1964) in his attempt to link the science of consciousness with hermeneutics (the theory of interpretation). IPA links these and provides a proven method in which the understanding of the lived experiences of others can be interpreted. This level of understanding was important for me as I felt I needed to immerse myself in all the historical elements of the methodology to understand it and utilise it to its fullest. After reading several PhD student forums many listed that their greatest mistake in their study was not undertaking sufficient reading and immersion into the history and development of their methodologies. My work in this area required a significant time investment but I believe has made me feel closer to the methodology and more comfortable in its execution.

IPA focuses primarily on the understanding and analysis of a person's experiences and how participants make sense and understanding of these experiences (O'Halloran et al., 2016; J. Smith, 2004). Through research in the health field and the attempt to find meaning from the experiences of patients experiencing severe medical conditions, Smith (2004) identified that as a researcher I should be looking for this understanding and should aim to enter the "others personal world". However, in order to do this, I should also consider my own preconceived ideas of the phenomenon and also of the person who has experienced the phenomenon. This was challenging but the use of tools such as the notebook, made the process more effective than originally anticipated.

With the IPA gaining its roots from psychology, the role of the analysing and understanding of the experiences of others is paramount (J. Smith, 2004). It is this perspective that differentiates IPA from other forms of phenomenological research. IPA does this by developing a process that a researcher in the field should follow in order to collect detailed and reflective lived experiences from participants. The use of IPA as a research methodology provides a greater level of sense-making of these experiences than some of the other strains of phenomenology (Allen et al., 1986; Carlen, 2009).

Taking this into account, the key conceptual cornerstones for IPA are a combination of hermeneutic phenomenology and idiography (J. Smith, Harrè, & Van Langenhove, 1995). As with all qualitative research approaches, IPA depends upon events and experiences and derives meaning from them. The process of focusing on the meaning

of any lived experience or event provides the participant with the knowledge and feeling of importance and that its meaning is also significant to the researcher (Burgess et al., 2016; O'Halloran et al., 2016; Quinn et al., 2008; J. Smith, 2004). In this way, IPA has a commitment to an idiographic level of analysis, which suggests a focus on the particular, rather than the general (J. Smith et al., 1995). This connects IPA and hermeneutic phenomenology and forms a solid relationship used in this research study via the ability to take an experience and look into it further, make interpretative suggestions as to its meaning and importance and provide recommendations as to how the same phenomenon may be avoided in the future.

Other researchers in the field have assisted in shaping the original work of Husserl (1927, 1960, 1964). The work of Heidegger, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, and Merleau-Ponty, suggests that research in the area can never fully make Husserl's reduction due to our observations already made. Heidegger, outlined his idea that the *Dasien* (person) is inextricably involved in the world and its happenings and is in relationships with the world and people in it (Heidegger, 1962a, 1975). Merleau-Ponty, agreed to some extent with this and showed that all persons were embodied too and that this shaped our perceptions of the world and everything in it (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). The link between a person and their world cannot be overlooked with this relationship is important to consider and must be thought of while making interpretations into the experiences of the participants.

One of the advantages of the use of the IPA is its ability to uncover phenomenon experienced by the participants that may not have been expected or foreseen. Some of the discussions that took place in the focus group element of data collection allowed many of the girls to link with the ideas of others and to uncover feelings of their own that they had not engaged with or dealt with prior. Additionally, the ability to share these stories and feelings with others in a similar situation allowed further exploration to take place.

Most research commences with elements of a hypothesis and perceived answers to research problems, pre-determined by researchers, using the work to prove or disprove these (R. Shaw, 2001; J. Smith et al., 2009). The use of IPA often found additional answers or rationale to test these preconceived ideas. Additionally, the data collection methods and in turn evaluation and interpretation methods of IPA lend

themselves being of a more flexible and open nature than other methodologies (O'Halloran et al., 2016; J. Smith et al., 2009). This allowed participants to open themselves further to the researcher and opened the possibility of them expanding their sharing of stories into areas they originally did not consider important or relevant to their dropout from sport (R. Shaw, 2001; J. Smith, Flowers, & Osborn, 1997). In this way IPA can be referred to as data-driven rather than theory-driven, making it more user-friendly for many researchers (O'Halloran et al., 2016; Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, & Hendry, 2011). I can agree with this statement completely. After toying with other forms of phenomenology I settled on using parts of IPA due to its user-friendly nature and its ability to look into the experiences of the girls rather than the theories and ideas of people from the past. This freedom allowed me to be more open-minded when I approached the collection of data and the questioned the participants, resulting in deeper stories being shared due to the absence of preconceived ideas held by the researcher. This process was supported by the research of others where it was shown that the deeper stories increased the validity of the research (Carlen, 2009; O'Halloran et al., 2016).

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

One of the more common and useful adaptions to phenomenology is hermeneutic phenomenology. This phenomenology gained particular momentum at the completion of World War II, coming to full strength by the early 1960s (Embree, 1997; Giorgi, 1985). One of the preeminent researchers in the area of hermeneutic phenomenology was Ricoeur. His belief that hermeneutic phenomenology spawned from the dissatisfaction with the stringent structuralist position undertaken held by the majority of people in his day (Sweeney, 2002b). Ricoeur's essential focus for hermeneutic phenomenology was based on the importance of interpretation and the ability of those influenced by the phenomenon to engage in dialogue to fully understand and appreciate its extent and the extent it had on the individual (Ricoeur & Thompson, 1981; Sweeney, 2002a, 2002c). Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology speaks of the creative ability of language and has been used as the starting point of many in the interpretation of lived experience and the intricacies attached with these (Jervolino, 2002; Ricoeur, 1986; Ricoeur & Thompson, 1981).

In addition to the pioneering work of Ricoeur, Gadamer has also been credited as a key developer of theory in the hermeneutic phenomenology field. It has been indicated in the work of Dowling (2007), Smith (1995) and Rossi (2002) that Gadamer developed his theories and ideals around hermeneutic phenomenology from other pioneers such as Husserl, Van Manen and Scheler. It has primarily been focused on the interpretation of meaning and understanding through the use of verbal and non-verbal communication (Dowling, 2007; Rossi, 2002; B. Smith & Smith, 1995). It has been highlighted in the work of Aylesworth (1991) and Dowling (2007) that Gadamer based his understanding and interpretation of participant experiences using hermeneutic phenomenology on the language and dialogue and how these are linguistically expressed (Aylesworth, 1991; Dowling, 2007; Gadamer, 1975). An important position of Gadamer is that any attempt to understand or evaluate the reality of personal experiences are filtered and influenced by a person's past experiences and education.

Hermeneutic phenomenology, as with all theories, also has its detractors and researchers who question its legitimacy. One major detractor with criticism was outlined in Embree (2001) has been identified over the last forty years has been that some practitioners of the methodology have practised a style of interpretation that focuses on the past uses as opposed to its intended purpose, having even been linked to deconstructionism. This has been identified as a possible lack of interest from the researchers to look outwards to the methodology of phenomenology as a whole (Embree, 1997, 2001). This background information is important to continue to build the rationale and understanding as to my selection of methodology and the importance of hermeneutics forming part of my methodology development.

Another of the pioneers of hermeneutic phenomenological methodology is Van Manen. His work has been extensive and is based on the construction of an interpreted understanding of an aspect of the human life world (Van Manen, 1982, 1990). Linking interpreted understanding to the lived experiences of the girls directed me to the selection of Interpretative phenomenology as a methodology. This objective of Van Manen is based around deriving an understanding of the experiences of others. Van Manen works to meet this objective via the exploration of the speech, language, body language and thought patterns generated from the experiences of people in everyday life. The interpretative process is linked to an attempt to find the most naïve

and basic experiences and its meaning (Dowling, 2007; Van Manen, 1982, 1997). Hermeneutic phenomenology is an Interpretative phenomenology where the researcher transforms to become an interpreter of interpreters. The experiences of others and the filters in which these experiences are viewed provide analysis that is predominantly unique, resulting in a large variety of interpretations (Klein & Westcott, 1994).

Important researcher in the topic, Van Manen (2002) explored the further aim of phenomenology to seek and attempt to explain universal meanings of the experiences of others. In order to do this, I have referred closely to Van Manen's work in the area of phenomenological writing (Van Manen, 1944, 2002). This most poignant element of this work is the discussion of the focus of any writing in the field. It discusses the explicit aim of showing, describing and interpreting the subject's experiences. However, another point enunciated in the work is the idea that some experiences cannot be explained and may be outside of the ability of language (Van Manen, 2002). The aim of his development of hermeneutic phenomenology is to get experiences back to their pure nature through their interpretation of both experiences shared and experiences potentially concealed (Van Manen, 1990). An effective description obtained through phenomenology is when the 'description is an adequate elucidation of some aspect of the lifeworld' (Van Manen, 1990, p. 27).

Lived experience

Researcher in the field, Merleau-Ponty (1996) discussed in his studies that the human experience is entwined with embodiment and that of human consciousness (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Merleau-Ponty & Smith, 1996). A lived experience is that of the experiences undertaken and performed by individuals each day. The positioning of the mind and in turn the body during these experiences has been studied in depth and has a large field of research linked to it. Pioneers in this field of study, Merleau-Ponty and Van Manen have provided information about lived experience and the methods in which the experiences of participants can be reviewed and explored.

Although stating the obvious, it is important to place readers of this thesis into the importance of each moment of the girls' lived experiences. Each minute of each day human beings are living through a variety of experiences, the girls in this study are no different. These experiences involve both body and mind and are shown to be

identifiable and recognisable by each person, making each person able to identify and realise the experiences of others (Ellis, 1992; Mylén, Nilsson, & Berterö, 2016; Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005; Van Manen, 1990). It is this realisation of both our own lived experiences, but the recognition of others, that fuels the need for understanding both physically and mentally (Blank, Finlay, & Prior, 2016; Van Manen, 1990). The importance of the body in these experiences is the most obvious observation that has been made by researchers in the field, after all 'if our heart stops beating, so do we' (De Botton, 2008). The importance of this work for this study is paramount. The ability of others to identify and share their own experiences and discuss the experiences of others, made for better quality information being shared and in turn able to be interpreted. This ideal, discussed by Ellis (1992) and Reid (2005), is an important pillar of this study and expresses the importance of lived experiences to each participant.

It is essential to recognise that not all experiences are physical and that many others may be mental, emotional or other (Beck, 1992; Mylén et al., 2016; Pelusi, 1997). The body experiences of human beings cannot significantly be just linked to the body, mental and mind, ramifications and experiences are often linked to these elements, although not always conscious (Abram, 1997; Blank et al., 2016). It is important that this is considered when interpreting the experiences of the participants, as not considering and being aware of them may have left me as a researcher missing elements of the lived story, making it hard to interpret. Messages and emotions can be shared through body language or facial expressions. In order to fully interpret and understand the experiences of the girls, it is important that these elements were considered.

However, taking these complexities into consideration, it has been indicated that assessing and finding understanding in the lived experience of others is often difficult and fraught with complexities (Mylén et al., 2016; Reid et al., 2005; Ricoeur, 1991; Van Manen, 1990). Ensuring that the subjectivity, authenticity and honesty of these lived experiences remains, it has been shown that reducing these experiences to individual themes and grouping them together allows for a greater level of exploration to occur (Aanstoos, 1986; Bush, 2002; Reid et al., 2005; Van Manen, 1990, 1997). Following these researchers, I ensured that I took these complexities into

consideration right from the selection of the methodology through to the development of data collection and analysis methods. The experiences shared by participants were in relation to their adolescent dropout from sport. They shared their stories whilst in focus groups and interviews with many of them doing so now as young adults.

Ecological systems theory

After identifying the methodology for this study and commencing the work on it the work of Bronfenbrenner was introduced to me and provided an additional theory for reference throughout the study. Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979, 1992) is a commonly referenced expert in the area of psychology, human development and specifically the development of children and teenagers. His work into the development of children and teenagers is extensive with his work into the various levels and degrees of influence on a child's development is discussed as part of the by ecological systems theory. He likened these influences on behaviour to a series of layers with the innermost layer being the individual, which is then surrounded by a 'number of other levels or systems of influence' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). His work discussed the important role of every element of a child's life and he reinforced the important role of the micro, meso, macro, exo systems and a to a lesser degree relevant to this study the chrono system and how these had an influence on the development of the individual.

The micro system section of the theory looks at the direct environments that the child has in their lives. The child's family, friends, schoolmates, teachers and other people who have a direct contact with them are included as part of the micro system. The micro system is the setting in which direct social interactions with these people are shown to influence the development of the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 2009).

The mesosytem involves the relationships between the microsystems in an individual's life. This can be shown using examples of education in where a child develops their attitude and educational habits from the experiences their family has with schools. Additionally, is can also be said that the same applies in a sporting context with individuals relationships with coaches based on the relationships they have with other educators in their lives such as their parents and grandparents (Bronfenbrenner, 1992).

‘The exosystem is the setting in which there is a link between the context where in the person does not have any active role, and the context where in is actively participating’ (Darling, 2007; Ryan & Paquette, 2001). In a sporting context, it could be shown that if a player were closer to an assistant coach than a coach and that assistant coach were to move away the individual may have a negative response or reaction to the head coach influencing their performance and output. This example could be applied in several other environments such as teachers at school and parents.

The macrosystem setting could be shown to be the influence of the actual culture of an individual. The cultural areas that are discussed in this section of the theory are areas such as the socioeconomic status of the individuals family, the ethnicity of the child’s family and in some areas the race of the individual. The chronosystem, however, includes the transitions and shifts that occur in the life of an individual. ‘One classic example of this is how divorce, as a major life transition, may affect not only the couple's relationship but also their children's behavior’ (Bronfenbrenner, 2009; Darling, 2007). Although not directly linked to sport, these examples show the complexity of the development of children and teens.

The role of the phenomenological researcher

The primary researcher role in any interpretative interview process is to keep the interview focused on the overall question and develop depth in the participants’ responses (Larkin & Thompson, 2003; Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). However, to develop depth, my role was to aid in the process of verbalising, and therefore objectifying, what was previously only a simple action (Vermersch, 1999). The ultimate task of the phenomenological investigator is to be open to exploring the nature of the experience being shared whilst shelving their own and the co-researchers meaning systems (Crotty, 1996).

After reading into the roles of researchers using this methodology, I found that the position was fairly consistent and revolved around promoting discussion amongst participants. Moustakis (1994) outlined his views that the researcher conducting research into the human experience has a responsibility to ensure their study met appropriate standards of rigour, authenticity and quality (Moustakas, 1994).

Additionally, Moustakis encouraged researchers in this area who were utilising interview or focus group techniques to develop a set of questions before approaching participants. It is encouraged that these questions were based on the ability to organise, coordinate, bracket and reduce them (Moustakas, 1994). The importance of these questions is based on the ability of them to be precisely worded with a personal and social meaning, and with clarification and definition of all words clearly outlined.

Pioneer researcher in the area, Van Manen (1990; 1997b) considered the key element to the interpretation of the lived experiences and, in turn, the answers to the constructed questions is the writing of the answers gathered. This reconstruction of the experiences of any study participants that is derived from the answers given to these questions is to "serve as a reliable guide to the listener's own potential experience of the phenomenon" (Van Manen, 1990, 1997). The writing that occurs should involve reflections and notes regarding the body language and non-verbal language of the participants, this allows for a complete view of the picture of the lived experiences sourced from the questions asked. This type of process has been tried and tested in other research and has been shown to be successful in providing reference material assisting in the interpretation of these experiences (Bollnow, 1961; Ellis, 1992).

Research undertaken by Crotty (1996b), outlined his beliefs that the phenomenological research method and in turn the role of the researcher was to "attempt to regain a childlike openness in our encounter with the world" (Crotty, 1996b, p. 158). His work outlined several steps that a researcher should undertake in order to attempt to achieve this. These steps involved the researcher determining what the phenomenon was that was being explored and then considering this phenomenon as if they had no previous experience with it. It has been indicated by Foucault (1978) that the phenomenological researcher should consider the phenomenon as if they have never seen it before and that it is the first time they have come across it (Foucault, 1978). All perceptions, experience, judgments and opinions should be used to interpret the experiences of the participants. These interpretations should look at the whole lived experience and use signals like body language and voice to provide further information. (Crotty, 1996; Dowling, 2007).

While Van Manen's (2000), research in interpretative phenomenology combined the

mix of an individual's orientation to lived experience with the researcher's interpretation of the "texts of life" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 4). According to Van Manen (1990), the role of the researcher in completing this interpretation is advised to "be vigilant against the seductive illusion of technique" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 3). It could be argued that Van Manen directly contradicted himself with this edict toward the role of the researcher in Interpretative phenomenology. This contradiction makes the position to be taken by a researcher a challenging one and one that I believe cannot be linked to only the work of Van Manen. I considered the guidelines outlined below before constructing my own methodology in order to shape my role as the researcher. In order to continue progressing the writing of this thesis, I moved away from the development of the research questions to the stringent focus on exploring it and the collection of data to explore it. In order to do this I utilised the guidelines of Van Manen and followed the below-structured approach:

1: Focusing on the question

2: Gathering information

3: Exploring the phenomenon

4: Focus on writing

5: Focus and orientation

6: Writing

Selecting this method allowed me to pay attention to not only the words but also the actions and body language of the participants, telling a complete story rather than one that has sections removed or left out. This method that I have utilised was shown to be successful in several studies and provided quality information for the researcher to commence an Interpretative analysis (Kvale, 1996; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

In order to provide myself with the best opportunity to interpret the shared experiences of the participants of this study, I utilised the work of several researchers who have shown the ability to move from research questions to the gathering of data and then to the interpretation of those experiences. Initially, it was challenging to use this method, as I was unfamiliar with it, however after immersion into the method I

was able to better use the process.

Another of the key roles of the researcher whilst using IPA is to identify and manage my behaviours as an older male engaging with younger participants. Clearly some ethical considerations have been identified and are discussed in depth later in this work, however it is important to acknowledge certain behaviours I was required to undertake in order to complete interviews and focus groups using an IPA stance.

As a male interviewing female participants there were several practice issues I needed to deal with in order to remain true to the IPA methodology that was chose to explore the lived experiences of the participants. The first was to attempt to gain a rapport with the participants to attempt to make them feel comfortable in the sharing of their lived experiences. In the work of Thurnell-Reid (2016) the importance to change the position of the researcher in the areas of masculinity and social status was required as a male interviewing younger participants or participants of the opposite gender (Thurnell-Read, 2016; C. West & Zimmerman, 1987). In order to 'fit in' to the interviews and focus groups members it was important that I share the ownership of the study and the importance of the results shared. Practically I needed to show empathy and also an understanding of the position the participants found themselves in. Monitoring my language and reactions to the girls discussions and also their language used was important in fitting in and allowing the participants to share with a researcher they felt 'fitted in' (Sallee & Harris III, 2011; Thurnell-Read, 2016).

The age of the participants was also important to consider for this IPA driven study. Gender has been discussed but age is often missed in similar discussions (Thurnell-Read, 2016). It has been shown that age can influence the relationship between the researcher and the researched and unless the researcher acknowledges and alters behaviours such as the use of language and responses to questions from the participants, the quality of findings can be jeopardised (Renzetti & Lee, 1993; Thurnell-Read, 2016). Considering this advice from previous studies I made a concerted effort to not use language and actions that replicated my age difference from that of the participants and alienated me or made the participants see me as someone who didn't fit in. I engaged in pre-interview discussions and banter with the girls and actively viewed their social conversations, laughing and almost replicating

the actions of the other participants involved in the discussions (Padfield & Procter, 1996; Sallee & Harris III, 2011; Thurnell-Read, 2016). These practical points occurred in the focus groups and then once successful allowed me to almost replicate the actions into the individual interviews with making a connection and fitting in with them a priority for gaining quality data.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the various types of phenomenology used in previous studies and provides detail into the chosen phenomenology type, Interpretative phenomenology. Information regarding Hermeneutic phenomenology and its use in a variety of studies is also shared in this chapter and its link to the selected conceptual framework. The work of Bronfenbrenner and the development of the Ecological systems theory are also discussed in this chapter and provide information essential to understanding the design of this research study. Additionally, my role as a hermeneutic researcher is outlined in this chapter and the actions planned to be undertaken as this study progresses

Chapter 4 – The Methodology

Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the research philosophy that informed this study. Additionally, the development of the data collection and analysis process, phenomenology, interpretative and hermeneutic phenomenology and lived experience were discussed, along with the other various forms of phenomenology.

This chapter provides information as to the selection and recruitment of participants for this study, the methodology chosen and the benefits of using the selected method. The chapter also outlines the data collection and analysis process and the process undertaken in preparing the thesis. Included in this chapter is also the ethical considerations identified in order to undertake this study.

The chosen approach

Quantitative research has been shown in several studies to be a viable way of gathering facts and is considered, by many, to be a reliable tool for the measurement of information (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). As Burns (1997) outlines, quantitative methods "provide answers, which have a much firmer basis, that the layman's common sense or intuition" (p.7). This is important within this study as the lived experiences of the participants are not easy to comprehend and appreciate as the intricacies involved in each must be explored to a greater depth than 'common sense' or 'intuition'.

Data were collected in two phases, each using a different approach, namely focus groups and individual interviews respectively. Both phases of data collection employed the use of phenomenological interviewing techniques (Van Manen, 1990, 2002). A phenomenological interview is an Interpretative conversation wherein all participants reflectively align themselves to the interpersonal or collective ground that brings the significance of the phenomenological question into view (Van Manen, 2002). The phenomenon of dropout from sport by adolescent girls is also linked to the individual interviews. In order to achieve this common ground, I reviewed each of the focus group sessions with the individual participant before commencing her interview. This informal conversation was not recorded and was based on the

thoughts of the focus group and a catch up on her sporting progressions in the time I had not seen her. This served not only as a reminder of the topic but also aligned the conversation to the phenomenon being studied in a relaxed manner.

When deciding to engage in research of a particular experience from a phenomenological perspective, the researcher begins a process of self-reflection. In the case of this study, it became part of the preparatory phase of research and included the recording of reflections for reference during the analysis process (Colaizzi, 1978). The self-reflection process I followed involved making extensive notes in an exercise book that I continually revised and reflected on. This notebook was a personal book that I took to work and kept with me at all times, to ensure I was able to record thoughts and ideas that arose from these reflections. The purpose of these reflections was to become aware of my own biases and to record possible assumptions that I had already made in my own mind. Although impossible to fully put aside these assumptions, it was important to acknowledge them, as a means to view the experiences of the participants without the assumptions clouding my view. This process was informed by the work of Karlsson (1993) who asserted that it is essential to allow the researcher to engage in the participant's experiences without preconceived ideas and thoughts about what may be uncovered throughout the research (Karlsson, 1993). The idea of 'bracketing' these biases in a formal process was reviewed by Gearing (2004) and LeVasseur (2002) and is discussed in further detail in the data analysis chapter.

On commencing these self-reflection activities I listed several "ideas" and thoughts that I referred back to throughout the focus group process. Doing this allowed me to list my biases in an attempt to interpret the participants' experiences through what I refer to as a "clear lens", an excerpt of this list appears in appendix F. I wrote "clear lens" on large post-it notes, placing these throughout my study area as reminders of the importance of the process and my role in reviewing the experiences without my biases "clouding the view". These biases did allow me to monitor my behaviour to ensure I did not use them to structure the questions or steer the comments. This saw me use leading questions to allow the participants to steer the conversation with topics that either I had a preconceived idea or narrow understanding due to being a male in this environment.

The phases of data collection

The phases of data collection are two-fold with the first occurring in the form of focus groups and the second taking the form of individual interviews. Both stages of the data collection revolved around the same twelve female participants who shared their stories of dropout from sport as adolescents. Information and a short synopsis on each of the participants appear in the appendix section of this thesis.

Participant recruitment

Participation was invited from young women residing in a Victorian regional city and its surrounding areas. Besides their location, other inclusion criteria were that they had been involved in sport and had dropped out of sport while an adolescent. In order to gain enough data to analyse I recruited twelve participants to be involved in the study who fit the selection criteria.

An advertisement was placed at the town's sports stadium after permission to display the advertisement was provided by the town's Basketball Association due to the fact that this venue is the largest multi use facility in the city and holds restaurants, bars, pokie machines and hosts numerous sport and non sporting events on a daily basis. Sixteen girls, who met the criteria contacted me and showed interest in being involved in the study. I then sent them a participant information form and a consent form for their, and their families' consideration. At this point, 12 girls responded and confirmed their involvement in the study. The participants' names (pseudonyms) are shown below with more information on each provided in the appendix section of this study.

Study participants (pseudonyms)			
Bernadette	Amber	Sheryl	Beth
Camille	Molly	Rebecca	Margot
Andrea	Charlotte	Melissa	Marley

Figure 4.1 Study participants

The decision to advertise in this sporting centre was made, as it is the centre of the town where other activities of a non-sporting nature take place with many thousands of people of all ages and demographics frequenting. The facility has a large gaming area, bistro are and community areas that attract a wide variety of people with links to many adolescent girls in the community. It could be considered however that a

different set of participants may have responded to this advertisement if it had been placed in a different community facility resulting in possible variances to the experiences shared and data gathered.

Data Collection

Focus groups (Phase One)

Focus group interviews were conducted with the 12 participants in four groups of three participants each. The three key objectives for the use of focus groups were to collect a range of views on a topic, to understand a range of different perspectives, and to uncover factors that influenced behaviours and motivations (R. Krueger & Casey, 2000). Additionally, the use of focus groups creates a place for participants to safely share their perceptions, lived experiences and points of view (R. Krueger & Casey, 2000), while at the same time providing an opportunity for participants to ask questions of one another, thereby increasing the authenticity of information (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010). This method was selected to encourage the interaction process between the participants and the researcher and more so the participants themselves (Morgan, 1996). The discussions between the participants resulted in the sharing of detailed, in-depth information regarding the experiences of participants in the area of sport. Focus groups are an effective data collection tool, increasing the depth of the information provided (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005).

Every effort was made to ensure that the questions were asked and the discussion took place in a non-threatening, supportive environment encouraging all group members to share their lived experiences (R. Krueger & Casey, 2009; Morgan, 1996). My role with these groups was primarily allowing the participants to tease out and share experiences from their sporting and personal lives.

The four focus groups, each with three participants were held at the town's sports stadium and went for an average of 70-80 minutes. The venue was selected due to its central position, its comfortable surrounds and most importantly the openness of the boardroom in which the focus groups took place. The boardroom was accessible by a secured lift to protect the identity of the participants from passers-by. The room had clear glass windows that allowed any parents of the participants who wished to visually ensure their daughters were not being negatively affected by the questioning

in the group. There were no parents who took up this opportunity and no girl showed visible signs of discomfort.

The focus group interview began with several minutes of unrecorded rapport building, general chatter, the participants familiarising themselves with each other and discussion about the doctoral process in general and specifically with regards to this study. When the conversation dropped I asked the participants if they had any questions and if I could commence recording. This ensured all participants were ready and that they were comfortable to start the data collection. The recording took place via a voice recorder that was situated on the table central to all of the participants; written notes were recorded in a notebook by the researcher.

Participants were reminded that their involvement was completely voluntary and that they could withdraw if they felt uncomfortable; no one exercised this option. The briefing also included a reminder that the focus group discussions were to be recorded and would be subsequently transcribed, and that the participants would be referred to in the research as pseudonyms selected by the researcher (Renzetti, 1993). The focus group and interview process commenced with a request from me to outline their background and participation levels of sport throughout their lives.

The focus group discussion was based on five guiding questions that promoted discussion and the sharing of lived experiences. These questions were:

1. What organised sports have you played throughout your life?
2. What experiences (both positive and negative) have you gained from your involvement in sport?
3. What effect, if any has "being a girl" affected your participation or dropout from sport?
4. Tell me how any "other" influences have resulted in you dropping out of sport?
5. What can be done to lower the level of dropout of adolescent girls' from sport?

Additional probe questions were posed in response to participant's replies where further information or clarification was required. Additionally, these probe questions, allowed the researcher to organise an understanding of a participant's perceptions of

theirs and other people's experiences (Geanellos, 1999; R. Krueger & Casey, 2009; Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). The questions prompted further discussion and thinking regarding issues mentioned by the participants. This allowed for greater clarity providing a better opportunity for a more detailed interpretation.

Considering the focus group data

On completion of the focus group I followed the advice of Amlani (1998) and listened to each voice recording and what the participants said as soon as possible after the recording was taken. This took place in a comfortable area that allowed me to relax and to take in the information without distractions or interference (Amlani, Braud, & Anderson, 1998). This also allowed me to listen for silences and other signals such as nervous laughter or affirmations towards the experiences of others. These conversation elements provided further opportunities to interpret the experiences and the participant's feelings attached to them.

A rigorous regime then commenced that saw me re-listen on multiple occasions the recordings from each individual focus group in an attempt to analyse their lived experiences individually so that any additional topic could be identified. This allowed me to read and research further in the area and to continue my understanding of the topic. The effect of doing this was positive as it immersed me in the experiences of these participants and allowed me to continually think and tease out ideas and pair them with research already undertaken, as per the immersion phase of the data analysis (Aanstoos, 1986; Hycner, 1985; Karlsson, 1993).

After these multiple listenings to the transcripts from the focus groups I undertook a transcription process that turned the words spoken into pages of text. The use of an electronic voice recorder and word processing software allowed me to listen and type the words shared during the focus group. In addition to the spoken word, notes were made as to the silence and also other happenings such as laughter.

Visiting the spoken and non-spoken words in the transcripts provided greater context to the experiences of the participants. Conroy (2008) indicated that continually searching for understanding and meaning from the participants in the study can provide a greater level of insight into their lived experiences. Enquiring on what certain words or phrases meant when used by the participants allowed me to gather

further insight and provided with a greater appreciation of the language they used to tell their stories (Conroy, 2008). Two examples of this questioning of words and the participants' meanings were words like *fat*, *skinny* and *healthy*.

Although ensuring significant time and a change of activity between reads of the transcripts and listening to the voice recordings, I looked initially at trying to understand the experiences of the participants past just purely through the focus group. In the second and then third re-reading of this information I commenced trying to look at different experiences as part of the participants entire life and how imaginatively deleting, removing or altering an experience may have changed their experience in sport and ultimately their dropout from sport. In this instance I used the process called *free imaginative variation* to validate the topics uncovered, using it to allow me to build further understanding as to the experiences of the participants (Hein & Austin, 2001; Van Manen, 1997). My use of free imaginative variation saw me change the sports the girls played, changed the cities they played in and changed the age and gender of the participants in my own mind and during my thinking about the study. These alterations allowed me to imagine what their experiences may have been if these changes were real. This method allowed me to explore the stories further and to gain a better understanding of them for interpretation.

Individual interviews (Phase Two)

Research likened exploration into human action as an "intriguing quest into the unknown" (Gergen, 1990, p. 29), and this is certainly my experience of the interview process. Not only in terms of what information would be explored but also in terms of the interview process and the way in which they progressed (Gergen, 1990).

In order to identify topics and areas where more information was required, transcripts were taken from the focus group and used to develop questions for the interviews, as shown to be successful in several other research studies (Huberman & Miles, 2002; R. Krueger & Casey, 2000; Lee & Renzetti, 1993; Mason, 2002; Turley, Monro, & King, 2016), an extract of this interview guide if presented in appendix E. The interview guide was used flexibly allowing me to explore the lived experiences of the participants to a greater extent, increasing my understanding and ability to interpret them.

The individual interviews took place in the participant's homes or at an agreed venue

of each of the twelve participants and went for on average an hour. The times and dates were organised with the participant (parents/guardians if under 18) and occurred between four and five weeks after the focus groups. This delay was due to the need to transcribe the original group sessions, identify topics and develop questions to provide clarity and increase understanding.

Ethical considerations

Before commencing this study and before recruiting participants for the study the ethical process outlined by the University of Southern Queensland was followed. Dealing with human participants who are female and in some instances, below 18 years of age required an ethical clearance according to these guidelines with this also being gained before commencement took place. Continuing to ensure these requirements were not breached involved constant revisiting to the rules and stringent management of my actions and the design of the data collection and analysis process.

The ethics process identified several possible considerations in the study. All efforts were taken to ensure that these considerations were minimised, through the completion of the ethics process and through clear and concise communication with the participants and their families. These considerations have been identified as the following:

1. **Male researcher interviewing adolescent female participants.**

Several issues were identified in relation to a male researcher interviewing adolescent females. Firstly, potential power issues could arise with underage and adolescent, female participants feeling intimidated when questioned about personal lived experiences, and being nervous when expressing their personal thoughts and feelings. No pressure was added to the participants to respond or talk during the data collection process and if any visible or verbal cues showed that a girl felt uncomfortable the interview/focus group was to be ceased. If any of the participants felt uncomfortable it was not verbalised and wasn't visual, with all participating in the data collection phases.

The first of the proactive actions undertaken to minimise this limitation was with the focus groups taking place in the local sports stadium boardroom that has clear window walls. This provided the participants with the opportunity to have significant

others see the interviews taking place. Finally, in the unlikely situation where a participant would not speak to me, but would only speak to a female interviewer I had a female colleague prepared to step in for me. This measure was not required with all participants involved in the focus groups and interviews not showing any signs of discomfort and if a participant felt this was a limitation it was not verbalised and no other clear behaviours were shown to suggest any concern.

Another of the identified potential limitations was the power relationship of me being a male who was interviewing females. In order to minimise this perception, I removed the notion of ownership of the research from me as the researcher to a shared ownership of the research with the participants. The feeling of shared ownership was important in ensuring that the participants felt more comfortable with me as a male, decreasing the limitation.

This process commenced with an open conversation with the participants regarding their involvement and the fact that the chance to improve opportunities for other participants sat in "our hands". The idea of sharing this responsibility and ownership was discussed with several of the participants showing pride in the idea of their empowerment and the fact that they could possibly stop another girl experiencing what they had. In addition to this, a discussion occurred that talked about the importance that the participants stories would be the "voice" of the study and I would be the vehicle that put it to paper with success impossible without these shared roles and a partnership.

Several discrete risk issues exist in the possible unease of the participants whilst being interviewed by a male in a confined space such as the boardroom of the sports stadium. An offer was made to the participants that they were able to speak to a female researcher if they wished or felt uneasy speaking to me. Additionally, during the initial discussion with the girls to introduce the session and the rules governing it, I offered them an alternative to the room if they felt uncomfortable in it. None of the participants took up either of these offers, suggesting they were comfortable with the environment and the risks identified had been managed effectively.

2. **Limitations of participants discussing 'lived experiences' in front of peers and the researcher.**

When designing the study it was important that I acknowledged that potentially some of the experiences and, in turn, the underlying issues as to the dropout of sport, may not be uncovered due to the participants not wanting or feeling comfortable divulging this information in front of other people.

Before commencing any of the data collection phases of the study it was outlined that participation in the study was completely voluntary and that there are no obligations to answer every question or to participate in every conversation or discussion. In order to provide clarity to the participants, it was indicated that all participants had the opportunity to withdraw at any time without retribution. None of the girls took up this offer.

A reminder of the focus group and interview process was provided before commencing the data collection. This occurred in order to ensure informed consent and that the participants were not surprised when a focus group or interview took place. Additionally, the process followed was outlined in order for the participants to identify times they may wish to divulge information, there may have been information a participant felt more comfortable discussing in the interview environment rather than in front of peers during the focus group. Information regarding this process is presented in the appendix section of the thesis where consent and the participation information sheets are shown.

In an additional attempt to minimise the feeling of vulnerability of the participants when sharing their experiences in front of others, an initial statement to the participants at the start of each focus group was used. This statement was in relation to the need for privacy and confidentiality and the fact that many of the participants may continue to have relationships outside of the study and that this must be considered when sharing and listening to others stories. The statement also referred to the use of pseudonyms in the thesis to ensure that anonymity was presented, hopefully making the participant more comfortable in sharing.

The use of focus group and individual interviews paired with the use of open-ended questions rather than structured questions minimised the risk of the participants feeling uncomfortable. This allowed them to answer what they wanted and how they wanted and abstain from answering if they felt the need. The involvement of others in

the focus group also assisted in this area as if one participant was reluctant to answer a question, the answering of the question by another participant may prompt them to get involved.

The phases of data analysis

The development of this process created to complete the data analysis for this study is based on and informed by the work of many researchers and has occurred after reviewing many studies using phenomenology and its many forms The process was informed by not only pioneer researchers in the field but also the work of Conroy (2003) and Crist (2003) and also the work of Heideggerian researchers (Dreyfus, 1989; Gadamer, 1989; Hall, 1993; Heidegger, 1925, 1927, 1998; Taylor, 1989, 1993) and interpretative phenomenology researchers (Smith, 2004, 2007) and (Smith, Flowers, Larkin (2009).

Exploring and considering the structures used by these researchers to analyse data allowed me to formulate the analysis process shown in diagram 1. Identifying the need to link the principles of IPA, phenomenology and hermeneutics and the principles of complete immersion into the experiences of the participants, I set out a framework to guide my analysis (Conroy, 2008). The figure illustrates a very challenging and complex process that moved backward and forward and was in no way linear. The coloured lines on the diagram attempt to show the way these movements took place and how the process was an iterative one.

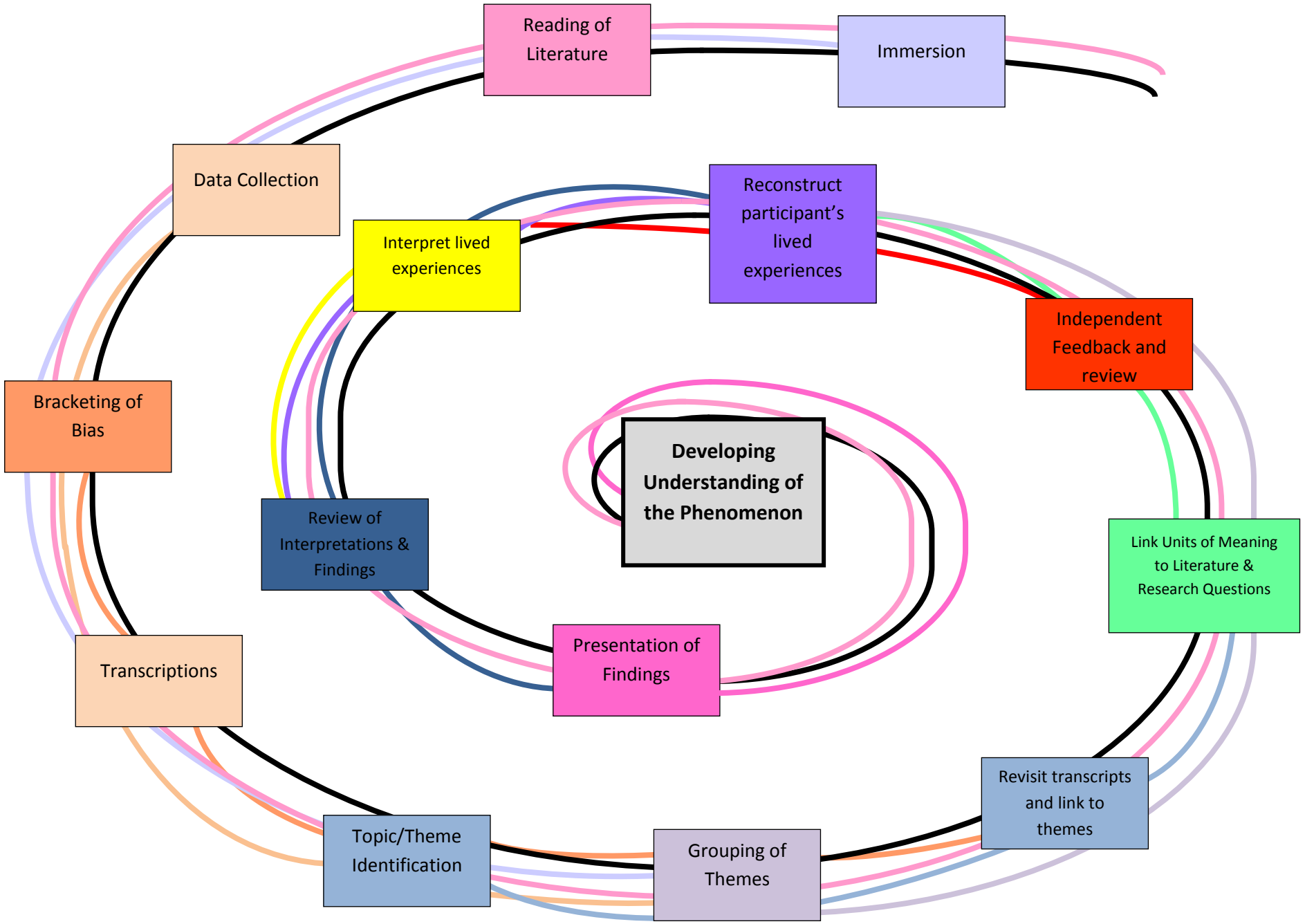

Figure 4.2: Phases of Data Analysis

Immersion in the study

The study commenced with me immersing myself in every aspect of the phenomenon and all elements of the research that had been presented in this field. This immersion for me commenced prior to the study due to my involvement in female sport as a coach, manager and father and inevitably resulted in me wanting to undertake this type of study. To further immerse myself in the topic I commenced a large-scale reading regime into the phenomenon of dropout and the reasons girls participated in sport. This immersion leads to the exploration of the topics identified further and coming up with possible ways to explore them through further study and research.

Not only did I immerse myself in the topics regarding dropout from sport but I also immersed myself in the ways I could collect and analyse data and how I could represent it for readers and interested stakeholders. Initially, I undertook this immersion for my own knowledge and interest but then found importance in data analysis design and interpretation and its link to theory and practice in research both in Australia and internationally. The primary idea of immersion appears in IPA and hermeneutic phenomenology and expresses the need for the researcher to seek understandings of the participants' world and experiences and the phenomenon they face through immersion in their world (Addison, 1992; Allen et al., 1986; Benner, 1994).

Before commencing the transcriptions of the first phase of the data collection, the focus group, I saw the need to acknowledge the biases and beliefs that my years of experience had formed in my mind in relation to dropout from sport. With over 25 years in the female sporting industry in numerous roles both personally and professionally, these biases were important to identify but almost impossible to completely put aside. Having seen first hand the challenges females face as athletes I have formed ideas as to the reasons these challenges occur. Writing these down and acknowledging them has been shown in research to be important before commencing the transcriptions and during the numerous re-reads of them, required for interpretation.

The work of Razack (1993) showed that in order to gain a better understanding of the stories shared by participants I had to listen to them without having my preconceived

notions alter their stories (Razack, 1993). These notions, although discussed by Razack (1993) and Conroy (2003) were based on the Heideggerian ideas of immersion in order to interpret information using hermeneutic and phenomenological principles. It could be argued that the complete shelving of my preconceived notions was difficult, if not impossible, to completely achieve; and in some ways, not a negative, as it allowed for a point of view to be taken into the interpretations (LeVasseur, 2003). This was important to consider in the process as it set the track for better understanding of the experiences of the participants and allowed me to utilise interpretative and hermeneutic phenomenology to position myself to interpret them (Gearing, 2004; Heidegger, 1962b; Hein & Austin, 2001; Hycner, 1985; Merleau-Ponty, 1962). My use of bracketing and its relevance in research has been informed by IPA, hermeneutics and many of the forms of phenomenology and has allowed for my biases to be set aside for constant consideration to allow and assist me to approach the data analysis with a level of clarity (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013; Gearing, 2004). The bracketing method outlined by Hycner (1995) to ensure the maximum effectiveness in the recognition of the researcher's predispositions suggested that the researcher should list these at the commencement of the dialogue and continue to add them as the process continued (Hycner, Bryman, & Burgess, 1999; Hycner & Jacobs, 1995). An example of the bracketing process and some of my biases, beliefs and experiences from phase two of the data collection process is shown in a transcription of these written notes in appendix F. The identified biases had some influence in the way I went about the interviewing of participants and the management of the focus groups. I continually revisited my position as a man asking these questions and avoided asking some questions relating to after hours activities, sexuality and engagement with the opposite sex and also let the participants lead the body image discussion.

On completion of the first stage of the data collections, the focus groups, I reviewed the information provided by the participants and undertook the transcription process. This resulted in me listening to the recorded focus groups on several occasions and typing the complete stories and experiences shared by the girls. In addition to the spoken words of the girls, the transcription process required me to make note of the verbal and non-verbal cues the girls were displaying during the focus group discussion. Things such as sighing, crossing arms, smiling or nodding all added to

the lived experience and the message being expressed by the participant and required inclusion in the transcription process. This step has been shown to be an important one, primarily in the work of Van Manen (1944, 1982, 1990, 1997, 2002), Gadamer (1989) and Heidegger, (1925, 1927, 1998). The literal statements and the non-verbal communications of the participant's experiences are just as important as each other in gaining full understanding and appreciation of the experiences of the participants (Addison, 1992; Conroy, 2008; Ellis & Flaherty, 1992; Razack, 1993; Reid et al., 2005; Ricoeur, 1991; Van Manen, 1990).

On completion of transcriptions I revisited them and reanalysed the recorded voices to search for topics that may have been identified by the girls that may require further exploration, research or clarification by the girls in the next stage of the data analysis, the interviews. These topics lead to the development of questions specific to each participant that could further develop my understanding as to their experiences and also to the influence they had over their dropout from sport. These questions were designed in a more structured way to gain clarity from topics identified from the focus groups. A sample of these questions is shown in Appendix E.

The use of these questions to complete the interview section of the data collection process was completed with the transcription phase close behind. Following the same process for transcription of the focus group where biases were recognised and considered and verbal and no verbal signs considered and recorded, it was time to again identify further topics that appeared at this stage. These topics were then linked with the topics identified from the focus groups, referred back to literature in the area and were paired and put together if commonality occurred. The initial way to complete this task was to complete a review of each focus group and interview and to put together a set of notes for each recording the commonality.

As indicated in Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) it was important to construct a text and set of notes for each participant and each interview and focus group during the data collection focus groups and interviews to assist in the identification of topics for further consideration or research. This phase discussed by Van Manen (1997) allowed for understanding to be gained from the experiences of the participants and for the verbal and non-verbal to be considered while doing this.

The process of identifying and grouping topics was the next stage of the data collection and analysis process. It was important to pair the identified topics together in groups and to link them together into a set of themes for further exploration using the literature as a guide to how some other studies had linked or had questioned previous links. Although used as a guide these other studies were not used to define the groupings. The process followed to move from the identification of topics in the focus groups and interviews through to themes is shown in figure two.

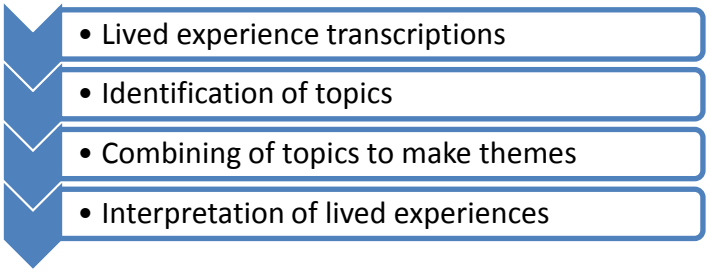

Figure 4.3: Process for the construction of themes

On completion of the grouping of topics into themes I then revisited the transcriptions and recording of the data collection to ensure I had correctly represented the theme. Although this stage was yet another repetition it was important to consider that if the transcriptions were not accurate then the themes would be flawed making the interpretation stage challenging and possibly not factual. The progression from identifying a topic to the forming of a theme was an extensive one that required constant revisiting to the transcriptions, my biases and the notes made from each of the data collection stages. The term accuracy is a challenging one when using the lived experiences of others and making interpretations from the word and actions of third parties. My interpretation of the word 'accurate' in the case of this study was to attempt to replay or retell the lived experience of the participant in as close a version as to how it was told to me by them.

Examples of this process were the development of topics of body image and self-esteem into themes. Both of these individual topics have been shown in research to have a link to each other. The linkages between the two topics highlight the idea that they may be able to be linked to form a larger grouping, a theme. The naming of this theme and the other themes was informed by the literature, resulting in labels given to the themes that were easy to link to further literature. This combination of the

topics of body image and self-esteem were labelled as a theme called "self-concept." The same combination of topics such as radio, television and magazines were merged into the theme of "media" showing that some of the grouping of topics into themes is easier than others.

Hycner (1999), Moustakis (1994) and Holloway (1997) used the term 'clustering' to describe the collection of common lived experiences into themes. By looking closely and rigorously at each theme and grouping them from topics into themes allowed me to gain a better and clearer understanding as to the meaning of those units within a holistic context (Hycner et al., 1999; Moustakas, 1994).

Hycner (1999) discusses the identification of themes from transcripts and lived experiences where he noted the importance to "look for the themes common to most or all of the interviews as well as any individual variations" (Hycner, 1999, p. 154) was used as the premise for the topic and theme identification and theme grouping elements of the data analysis. This need for care, highlighted by Hycner (1999) and again by Moustakas (1994) was considered so that common themes were only grouped together if they were, in fact, common in whole and not by portions only (Groenewald, 2004). The work of Van Manen (1982, 1990, 1997, 2002) highlighted the importance and process to be followed after theme grouping from experiences of participants. The process outlined the need to ensure that themes could be identified and grouped with other similar themes and that themes that did not fit were also recorded for consideration and interpretation.

At this phase of the process, I found that I had bracketed my own biases toward the work and had gained a holistic feel for the lived experiences of the participants and the themes identified from their stories. This allowed me to then use the transcriptions and the themes I gained from them as starting points for the creation of units of meaning (Groenewald, 2004; Heidegger, 1975; Holloway, 1997; Hycner, 1991). The 'units of meaning' phase of the data analysis was been developed from the works of Moustakis (1994) and Hycner (1995); and is linked to reviews undertaken by Groenewald (2004) and Finlay (1999) and again inspired by IPA, hermeneutics and the various forms of phenomenology.

This task was by far the longest part of the process and involved working through

each word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and non-verbal communication that the groups and individuals expressed during the focus group and interviews. The working through each of these structures has been referred to in the work of Hycner as delineating units of meaning (Hycner, 1985, 1991; Hycner et al., 1999). These units, which were the combined theme groups, were then linked back to the literature in the area to ensure quality and relevance to the study. This stage again, difficult to represent on the spiral diagram of this study, occurred numerous times throughout the data collection and analysis process. Completing this action on numerous occasions ensured the clarity and reliability of the units of meaning and that they represented the experiences of the participants who shared them. During this phase, a challenge existed where the ability to identify a unit of meaning fell squarely onto the shoulders of me as a researcher (Holloway, 1997). As identified by Hycner (1985, 1991, 1999), it is acceptable and expected that identifying and interpreting units of meaning varied from researcher to researcher and that the interpretation and implication of principles from IPA, hermeneutics and phenomenology also varied from researcher to researcher. Hycner (1999) indicated that given the different perspectives among phenomenological researchers there are bound to be minor differences in developing units of meaning even when utilising the same general research method (Holloway, 1997; Hycner et al., 1999).

The linking of these units to not only the literature from the field but back to the research questions occurred at this phase of the process and formed almost a mid-study landmark to ensure that the work done to this point met the desired requirements of the research questions. The importance of the questions and in turn the link between them and the created units of meaning was essential and was a step that researchers such as Hycner (1995), Giorgi (1997) and Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) used to ensure authenticity in their own studies. Work undertaken by Hycner and reviewed extensively by Groeneward (2004) and Klieman (2004) showed that a link between the units of meaning and the research questions is important as it highlights what the participants have said illuminates and provides insight into the research question (Hycner et al., 1999; Kleiman, 2004).

In accordance with the work undertaken by Ajjawi, Higgs and Hunt (2005), Giorgi (1997) and Haggman-Laitila (1999), the themes and links to the research question

and literature were then presented to a critical friend who reviewed these links and questioned some elements of them. The critical friend, who is a female in the age bracket of 24-30 years, has an interest in Australian sport and currently plays in local sport. She shares my interest and passion for topic, is trustworthy, is someone I respect and also has significant post-graduate experience and remained a sounding post throughout all points of the study. She was chosen to ensure that I received feedback from a trusted source and someone who understood the passion I have for this study and allowed me to be more critical with my thinking and presentation of information. The name of the person will remain anonymous, but the assistance offered allowed me to also verbalise the process I followed and the message I am attempting to portray through my writing, ideas and provided me with a list of areas I could consider to build the strength of this research.

After receiving the feedback from the critical friend it again signalled a further review of the complete study from data collection through to the current point. Reviewing the collection and transcription of the data, the bracketed biases and also the themes and units of meaning derived not only assisted in looking for redundancies but also areas in which alterations, additions or subtractions could be made (Chan et al., 2013; Gearing, 2004; Groenewald, 2004; Heidegger, 1975; Hycner et al., 1999; Spinelli, 2005; Van Manen, 2003). This phase of the data analysis process was paramount for quality control for the work and gave me the opportunity to receive feedback from someone other than the supervisors of the study. An excerpt from the feedback from the critical friend is included in Appendix G in the final part of this thesis and shows some of the considerations undertaken when reviewing the document at this stage of the study.

The next phase of the process, after again revisiting the theme groupings, was to reconstruct the lived experience of the participants, IPA and other species of phenomenology again informed this process. The work of Hycner (1999) and Giorgi (1997) outlined the importance of reconstructing lived experiences that had been altered or analysed in order to ensure not only a higher level of authenticity in the study but also an audit trail that ensured that what has been interpreted was as close a representation of the experiences shared by the participant as possible. The reconstructing of the experiences was another of the steps that was not a linear one

and was challenging. The process involved taking the grouped themes and putting the breakdown process in reverse and rebuilding them to become the original lived experiences that had been shared by the participants (Giorgi, 1997). This process ensured again the authenticity and that the grouping of themes met the experience that were shared in the initial data collection focus groups and interviews (Giorgi, 1997; Holloway, 1997; Hycner et al., 1999; Hycner & Jacobs, 1995). The process of continuously moving backwards and forwards between the transcripts, notes and literature allowed me to ensure that the interpretations I was about to make and were making were on the entire experience of the participants and not just parts of them (Ajjawi, Higgs, & Hunt, 2005; J. Macdonald, 1981; Pelusi, 1997; Reid et al., 2005).

After finalising the reconstruction it was again time to revisit the biases I had bracketed earlier on in the study. This phase again showed the complexity of the data analysis process and its non-linear status. This revisiting was to set the frame for me to commence the interpretations of the lived experiences of the participants and placed me in a position to again use IPA and other aspects of phenomenology to commence the final interpretations. Hycner (1999), indicated that as a researcher undertaking this section of the data analysis I could not just depend on the literal content of the transcription, but also must rely on the number of times a meaning was mentioned and how it was mentioned by the participants. An important element that needed noting, and assisted in me including this process into the data analysis was that the actual number of times the relevant meaning appeared in the transcript being recorded to show how important it was in the experiences of the participants in this study (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Hycner et al., 1999; Hycner & Jacobs, 1995). The more a theme was discussed provided a sense of its importance, assisting with the interpretation. Work undertaken by Hycner (1995, 1999) indicated the importance of noting the number of themes that repeated themselves through the experiences of the participants as these repeats may be important and have significance for the analysis. Additionally, it was important to acknowledge that even though two words used by the participants in their lived experiences may be identified as themes, they may have very different meanings in the lives of other participants. Some gender and body concept related words such as *"skinny"* and *"fat"* were two examples of this where simple interpretation of the word use may not indicate the actual meaning being expressed by the participant (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Ellis & Flaherty, 1992;

Häggman-Laitila, 1999; Ricoeur, 1991; Van Manen, 1990).

The ability to completely shelve the experiences and biases that I had toward the dropout of sport was difficult and as suggested in IPA practice almost impossible (Gearing, 2004; Heidegger, 1975; Holloway, 1997; Hycner, 1991). However, being able to consider the themes and their importance to the participants and to interpret them was of paramount importance to this study. The interpretation process allowed me to use portions of the experiences of the girls to develop a larger "story" to the identified themes. For example, I was able to use excerpts from the shared experiences of the participants to develop a section displaying the influence coaches had over the players and in turn their ongoing participation. This same process took place across all of the identified themes, allowing a narrative to be painted using the voices of the participants (Reid et al., 2005; Ricoeur, 1991; Van Manen, 1990). This narrative then allowed me to make interpretations as to the importance of the experiences of the participants and also the influence they had over them. These interpretations then expanded further to allow a set of recommendations and suggestions to be developed as to how best to deal with the phenomenon in the community. The words of Kidder and Fine (1998), along with research into phenomenology inspired the development of this section of the data analysis and framed the position I found myself in, in order to interpret the experiences of the participants.

> There is a responsibility to hear what informants are saying about their lives and the meaning of their experiences, and a responsibility to construct interpretations that may or may not conform to what informants have told us. Whether we agree with the words of informants or not, whether we even like them or not, we have an obligation to surround their words with analyses for which we are the authors ... Partial, temporary and tentative, we have a responsibility to position ourselves in relation to our data, and our position will not necessarily be the same as our informants (Kidder & Fine, 1998, pp. 48-49)

Once these interpretations and recommendations had been developed an extensive review of them was required. This again displayed the non-linear process undertaken and returned to an earlier phase of the data analysis where all themes and interpretations were again linked to the experiences of the participants (Larkin & Thompson, 2003; Larkin et al., 2006). The review at this point became two-fold, with a critical friend undertaking a review of the linkages from the themes through to

the interpretations and recommendations made. This feedback ensured that the interpretations were made behind factual information shared by the participants and that the recommendations had the support of literature and again the stories of the participants. The second stream of this review process was one undertaken by me. In order to review the documentation and the same links the critical friend reviewed, I took a two-week break from reading this section of the work and continued to read further literature and work on other sections of the thesis. I then returned to the data analysis and interpretations section of the work and was able to review it through re-energised eyes (Crist & Tanner, 2003). There was no way I was able to review the document through completely fresh eyes due to the five years invested in it, but the break allowed for a reinvigorated review of the work undertaken. These reviews resulted in minimal changes being required to the interpretations but some small changes required providing better linkages in the writing.

In qualitative research, especially that use the lived experiences of others, research rigour and credibility go hand in hand (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Considering the work of Lincoln and Guba (2000), Van Manen (1997) and Hycner (1999) I ensured that in order to make my work credible during not only this presentation phase but every phase of this process I needed to remain as rigorous as possible with my use of data collection and analysis techniques. Additionally, following ideas shared by previous researchers who used IPA, hermeneutics and other forms of phenomenology assisted me in identifying and confirming the level of transparency in documentation, bracketing of assumptions, prolonged engagement of the participants and phenomenon and the development of an authentic data analysis process that took place in this study (Hycner et al., 1999; Hycner & Jacobs, 1995). In the case of this study, the thesis was then finalised, reviewed by a proofreader and then submitted for the examination process.

Turning lived experience into written words

The role of the writer

As a writer who has traditionally struggled to turn thoughts and ideas into text, this area became a challenge that I was determined to overcome. In order to do so, I did extensive reading in this area to ensure I had the theoretical backing for my writing approach. Van Manen (1997) proposed that as a researcher commencing writing that

I move away from simply writing up a research report to authoring the text (Van Manen, 1997). The differences between writing up a thesis, compared to authoring a text are intricate and individual. Writing up a thesis is done so from a disconnected position held by the author, where words are written onto a page outlining what they want the reader to see or share (Van Manen, 1997). However, the authoring of a text involves the sharing of a positioning and the construction of a particular story in which the author has explored and wishes to share (Smythe, Rolfe, & Larmer, 2016; Van Manen, 1997). The personal link to the story is the most obvious difference, but the intricate knowledge and expanded understanding behind the thesis make the "authoring" of a text a greater outcome for both the readers and participants as the quality ownership in the work is higher. This not only took a change in mindset but also a change in my entire approach to the language I used to describe the work I was doing. This change has been and will remain one of the must poignant changes in myself as a writer, student and researcher.

The final analysis and interpretation of the research and data collected were paramount to the thesis and in again in accordance with Van Manen (2002), my intention has been to "lead the reader to wonder"(van Manen, 2002c, p. 5). Additionally, this writing was guided by Crotty (1996), whose work insisted that the final written piece not be tainted by participants' attributes that were not attached to the lived experience (Crotty, 1996; Van Manen, 1990, 1997, 2002).

Writing up the data analysis

The analysis of the data collected in this study has been informed by interpretative phenomenology (IPA), hermeneutics and phenomenology. Reading other studies that utilised these types of methods was undertaken to gain an understanding as to the processes followed providing me with a greater understanding as to their use (Burgess et al., 2016; Carlen, 2009; Joseph, 2014; Larkin & Thompson, 2003). It was at this time that I first started to identify that each method had its own strengths and parts that resonated with me, whilst also having portions that did not. Each of the phenomenological processes, specifically interpretative phenomenology expresses the importance to remain unbiased with the collection, analyse and interpretation of the data (J. Smith, 2004; J. Smith et al., 2009). With this in mind, I reviewed research where these methods were used in order to develop a process that I believed provided the best opportunity to review and analysis the data collected. I merged some of these

ideas inspired by interpretative phenomenology and phenomenological studies to form a process that allowed for the ongoing development of my understanding of the phenomenon in this study. The data analysis process was informed by the work of Van Manen (1994, 1997), Hycner (1995) and through the more recent work of Ajjawi and Higgs (2007), Gearing (2004) and Smith (2004, 2007) and a series of other researchers (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Gearing, 2004; Häggman-Laitila, 1999; Hycner, 1985; Lincoln et al., 2011; J. Smith, 2004, 2007; Van Manen, 1997).

Conclusion

This chapter provides details as to the methodology and the chosen approach for the completion of this research thesis. Information regarding the use of focus groups and interviews as a method of data collection is also outlined along with the benefits for their use. The recruitment of the participants in this study is described with detail involving how and where this was undertaken and the ethical considerations identified for the consideration for the completion of this study. A large part of this chapter relates to the analysis of the data collected from the focus groups. A detailed diagram outlines the complex nature of analysing the experiences of participants and the backwards and forwards nature of the analysis. The chapter closes with information on how it is anticipated that lived experience is turned into written words.

Chapter 5 – The individual themes

Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the methodology chosen for this study and also outlined the process to analyse the lived experiences of the participants, as reflected in their focus group and individual interviews. This chapter commences the exploration of the data collected as part of the research, with the first discussed being the individual themes that influenced the dropout from sport by the participants. The individual themes identified via the experiences of the participants will be unpacked with the stories of the participants being linked to these themes. Chapter 6 and 7 further explore the collected data and discuss the community and context themes that were identified from the experiences of the participants.

Theme classification

The data collected from the lived experiences of the participants in this study provided insights into their experiences relating to sport and their subsequent withdrawal from it. During the data collection, themes were identified and the experiences of the participants were classified based upon those experiences. The three classifications identified to separate the themes were: individual themes, community themes and society themes.

The theme classification, although not designed to replicate, has similarities to the work of Bronfenbrenner (1992) and his Ecological theory of development. The Ecological theory of development uses theme classifications similar to those used in this study with Bronfenbrenner's with the individual themes classification made by me being very similar to the Mesosystem and Microsystem highlighted in his work. Additionally, the next chapter discusses community themes, which also has similarities to Bronfenbrenner's Mesosystem and some lesser links to the Exosystem. Additionally, the society themes discussed in chapter 7 represent a closeness to the Exosystem theme classification used in the Ecological theory of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1992).

The Mesosystem element of Bronfenbrenner's work encompasses the interaction of the different microsystems such a friends, peers, school and family in which a

developing child or adolescent find himself or herself in. The Mesosystem is a group of microsystems that involve relationships and links between home and school, between peers and families and between partners and families (Bronfenbrenner, 1992; Darling, 2015).

If an adolescent's parents are actively involved in the friendships of their child and their pursuits, are involved in their friends' relationships, invite friends over to their house and spend time with them at events or following pursuits then a positive influence occurs. However, if the parents dislike their child's peers or pursuits and openly criticise them, then the child may experience conflicting emotions and possibly be negatively influenced (Christens & Peterson, 2012; Darling, 2015; Duell, Icenogle, & Steinberg, 2016; Shek, 2016).

The first of the classifications to be explored was the grouping labelled as Individual themes. These themes were identified as issues the participants faced that made them question their own individual involvement in sport. These themes were individual for each of the participants and were focused on the participants' perception of them. Similar to the work undertaken by Bronfenbrenner (1992) there are crossovers between the individual and community themes with some able to appear in either or both theme grouping. The theme classifications are shown in Table 1.

The second of the classifications is the Community themes where the influence of others in the community influenced their participation and in turn dropout from sport. This classification again shares similarities with the work of Bronfenbrenner (1992) specifically the exosystem and macrosystem discussed in his Ecological systems theory. The community themes classification from this study based on the communities' perceptions toward the participant's involvement in sport and the influence they extended to the participant. The groups included in this classification are common to all of the participants in some way or another and come from external sources, unlike the intrinsic nature of the individual theme classification.

The third of the theme classification was the Society themes grouping. The society themes are those that the participants have little control over that are based on their lives and function in the environment around them.

Table 5.1: Data analysis theme breakdown

Participation in a range of sports

An individual theme that is evident in the descriptions and lived experiences of the research participants is that they have experienced participation in a wide-range of sports and at differing levels. They have played a large number of sports with the level of play varying from local and domestic play through to international and national competition. Margot and Molly outlined their diverse involvement in sport in their focus groups.

> I played basketball, netball, tennis, swimming, football, badminton and athletics. (Margot, Focus group, 5/3/15)
>
> I did Taekwondo, Aussie rules [Australian rules mini game for small children], netta [netball mini game for small children], milo cricket [cricket mini game for small children, soccer, ozyhoops [basketabll mini game for small children], tennis and swimming, badminton. (Molly, Focus group, 3/3/15)

Some sports labelled as "non-traditional" sports have also been played by the participants, with all of them involved heavily in team sports, with a small number involved in a mixture of team and individual sports. Additionally, several of the participants indicated their involvement in modified sport developed by the sports governing body to increase participation and to keep children engaged. Such modified sports programs designed to develop play by small children as Milo Cricket, Auskick (Australian Football League), Netta (Netball) and Aussie Hoops (Basketball) played a large role in their sport involvement by engaging small children to become life long consumers of the sport.

Positive experiences from sport

Responses from the participants during their focus groups and interviews have outlined that they all experienced many positives from their involvement in sport. These positives varied the development of interpersonal friendships and relationships through to the development of life skills through travel and social interactions. Camille's thoughts on friendship and sport were shared during her focus group discussion;

> I gained a lot of positive experiences such as like friends. They would be the number one positive experience from sport as I have friends that have been my friend's for seven years from sport and they are now my friends out of sport and that's massive (smile). We had that common interest that we continued to stick around together even if other priorities took over. I have learnt characteristics such as time management and being organized and leadership as well all because of sport. (Camille, Focus group, 3/3/2015)

Camille indicated the importance of friendship amongst the participants and the positive role it had in their lives. The participants indicated that being able to share common interests was important to them and that it allowed them to find a group of friends that met at the same time and place to share the experiences of playing sport. The importance of not only the initial development of these friendships and the skills associated with developing friendships, but also the longevity of these friendships was indicated by the participants to have played an important role in their lives and their ongoing involvement in sport. Sheryl also had strong thoughts on her friendships in sport; she shared these during her focus group.

> I have school friends and basketball friends. I feel like I was always playing basketball or netball or going to training and I didn't really see my school friends outside of school. Every Tuesday and Thursday we would train [sigh]. Then I would play Friday night and sometimes if I was doing seniors I would then play again Saturday night or Sunday. Possibly I had more similar interests to the people I was playing basketball as I was with them almost every day and it is possible that that were probably going to be my friends for longer term (Sheryl, Focus group, 5/3/16).

Sheryl identified that the friendships that developed through involvement in sport were and remain important. This theme was clearly outlined in the other participants' stories and the importance of many of those friends remain in the participants' lives well after their departure from sport and the sporting arena. Melissa's experiences showed that the reliance on teammates becoming friends saw her classify them higher that friends she had developed during her schooling. Margot, Charlotte,

Andrea, Molly, Sheryl and Amber explained that these friends not only shared similar likes, in this instance the sport, but that they were often in situations of stress and pressure and found that the support of their teammates made their friendships and their reliance on their support stronger. During their focus groups Margot and Melissa shared their lived experiences about friendships;

> Positives for me would definitely be the friendships from playing an organised sport where you get to see the same people, their families and you become part of their family and your team becomes a family in itself. Two of the girls I became friends with I ended up feeling like part of their family. I would go to their house for dinner regularly and felt like they loved me like a daughter [visual emotion – rub eyes]. They had nicknames for me and I felt like I was part of the family. In a way it was a stronger bond than my own family. (Margot, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> My friends from sport are my life. I am still friends with them years after finishing. My two best friends I played basketball with when we were twelve and they are still my friends now. We don't see each other every day but they get me and I get them, its like I saw them yesterday, even if we haven't seen each other for months. They understand what I am about and what I do. I am a strong willed person and sometimes I don't do things others expect me to, but my old mates get me and they don't judge. (Melissa, Focus group, 15/6/15)

Margot and Melissa were vocal in their sharing of the importance not only of the friendship of their team-mates but their development of a sporting "family unit" and their inclusion into their friends family units. The structure of some of the participant's families and the pressure this put onto the participants is identified under the family section later in the thesis. It is important to acknowledge the participant's desire and happiness to be accepted as "family" by other teammates. Additionally, the indication by the participants that played team sport indicated that they were involved in a "family". This showed the importance that the participants placed on the team unit and the importance of their involvement in that "family". Margot shared her story of family challenges and how sport influenced her as a part of her focus group discussion;

> Sometimes I look back and wish I still were playing, where I could use sport as a distraction away from things shit family happenings in my life. I had a fairly shit family life where mum and dad couldn't be in the same place or at the same stadium. It was fucked [angry facial expression]. They had issues where there were police involvements and they just didn't get along. Now I am not playing sport that situation still exists. Lucky I am a little older and

> see it for what it is now. Looking back and being out of sport is a bit of a regret I think. (Margot, Focus group, 5/3/15)

Interestingly the experiences of Margot indicated the positivity of her experiences in sport and her dependence on them to provide stability in her life. The ability for Margot, Amber and Camille to put aside their life concerns and struggles they faced inside their family units to be involved in sport and to find links they needed in the families of their team-mates is an interesting topic for further exploration at a later date. These participants shared experiences that highlighted the importance of sport from a physical and mental standpoint to also an area of safety and inclusion for some of its participants. Bernadette, Molly, Andrea and Margot all shared their experiences about the lessons they learnt during sport in their focus groups and interviews.

> In all sport, you get to learn how to cope cause there are so many different personalities you meet. You learn how to deal with so many different types of people; you build your confidence learning to talk to different people, putting up with different people. I have had teammates I didn't like and teammates I loved, people I learnt from and people I struggled with. I remember one girl that was a nice person to my face but a bitch behind it; I struggled with her but learnt to see her as a teammate and not a friend. That was a lesson from my parents and it worked. (Bernadette, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> Positives are definitely meeting new people and the variety of people you meet. You learn a lot about yourself and you get to see things you wouldn't usually see outside of sport, you get structure and learn to cope with things through sport and it keeps you mentally and physical healthy. My involvement in state and development programs taught me to manage my time with things like school work and work. Playing sport taught me about winning and losing and also dealing with challenging teammates and their families. This helps for life after sport and I am seeing that now. (Molly, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> Other positives it gives you structure in your life. You would go to training, then to school then and then homework and shit like that around sport. I would have training Tuesday, Thursday, play Friday and Saturday night and sometimes Sunday [shake of head]. I knew what I was doing and when I was doing it. Homework would fit around that so would family and also going out time. (Margot, Interview, 7/7/15)

> Social skills and friendships would be positives from playing sport, you learn how to socialise, rules and sticking to them and how to take turns with people and how to coordinate things. I learnt how to win and lose and how to face challenges like could I make the last shot when everyone was watching and could I be depended on to win a game for my team. While another positive would be time management and things like that. When we would be training

> all the time I had to manage my time and fit in homework and stuff. (Andrea, Focus group, 3/3/15)

The lessons learnt from sport not only exist in the coping mechanisms identified but also include personal skills and to how to deal with a variety of people and their own differences The development of confidence, ability to speak to others, and managing different peoples' expectations, to manage one's time and to cope with winning and losing, were all identified positives from involvement in sport. The importance of friendship was identified and the positives of sport that provided a vehicle for the development of friendship skills and the development of personal attributes that made people in the team want to be your friend were not to be undervalued. The balance of sport and life was a challenge identified by all of the participants' in the study. However, the ability to learn skills to deal with these challenges was also identified by all as a positive in some way or another. Marley learnt lessons about winning but also indicated the importance to her of winning as an individual athlete rather than as a team athlete. These experiences were shared with others in her focus group.

> I wanted to win everything. Individual sport is up to me. I don't have to depend on anyone else. It is all about me and what I can do in that environment. When I was playing netball I had to depend on others to make a pass or stop their player or shoot a goal, or turn up focussed to win. With athletics I don't it is up to me. I either get the score I want and qualify or I don't and I can blame myself for not getting it done. (Marley, Focus group, 5/3/15)

Marley's description of her experiences indicated her desire to win. However, the majority of responses from other participants indicated that they did not participate in order to win. All of the participants who solely play team sports indicated other areas such as friendship, acceptance and fun for their involvement in sport was a large reason that they remained involved in sport. Marley dropped out of team sport to undertake individual sport. She indicated that her desire to win and her willingness to not need to depend on the performance and relationships of others were some of the prime reasons. The experiences shared by Marley provided another example of diversity in the experiences of the participants who dropped out of sport.

Negative experiences from sport

Not all of the experiences the participants shared in relation to their involvement in sport were positive. A number of negative experiences were discussed with these

topics indicating a consistent link to pressure and to compromise and sacrifice the participants had to make in order to play sport. These compromises and sacrifices were shown in some areas of this study to be exclusive to sport. However, the lived experiences of the participants showed that these compromises and sacrifices were complex and diverse and were deeper than just sport itself. Beth outlined the compromises and sacrifices she experienced in continuing her involvement in sport, she shared these experiences as part of her focus group;

> The negatives are you have to compromise a lot of things and give up a lot of things socially. There were heaps of social events that I wanted to go to that I had to make the decision to put sport first. I missed my friends' parties, family events such as birthdays and also just chilling at home. [Long pause] I remember missing one of my best friends sixteenth birthday parties because I had a game in the state capital city. My friends weren't happy for a while and it made me feel bad. (Beth, Focus group, 3/3/15)

The idea of compromise and sacrifice was shown through almost every experience shared by the participants and data analysis. Beth's experiences were similar to the majority of the other participants indicating that they were put under significant levels of pressure to make selections between participating in sport and other things such as family, friends, partners, education and work. This pressure was a reoccurring thread through all of the stories shared by the participants and played a large part in their dropout from sport.

Data from this study and the research of others has shown that progressing through the school years and into university the importance of "being social" continued to grow (Currie et al., 2007; Thorne, 1993; Vertinsky, 1994). The experiences of the participations linked with research show that the expectations put onto adolescent girls were much higher than many of them could deal with. The pressure from peers often a deciding factor when making sacrifices, often resulting in them withdrawing from sport (Daniels & Leaper, 2006; Engel, 1994; James, 1999, 2000). Socialising was shown to be important to many of the participants with Marley sharing her experiences in both her interview and focus group while Sheryl provided experiences she shared in her focus group.

> I don't see the benefits of wasting it all on a night out to feel bad the next day and I think my personality, like I don't need alcohol to have fun. I can just chat to people and still have a good time. Many of my friends go out and

> drink and waste the next day recovering or sleeping. I don't get that. I would prefer to have breakfast or a coffee or relax. (Marley, Focus group, 5/3/15)
>
> I love my Saturday nights. I dress up; hang out with the girls and we dance and drink. I love it. Many of my other friends would stay at home and not go out because they had Sunday training. I went the other way and went with friends and socialising first. I would then go out and dress up, I love it and still do [huge smile]. Nothing beats a good Saturday night with the girls, dancing and having fun. (Sheryl, Focus group, 5/3/15)
>
> My socialising would be like going out for breakfast, or for coffee. I much prefer to just sit down and chat with my friends and discuss stuff, rather than going out for a late night and getting absolutely hammered, not remembering the night and then wasting the next day because you feel like crap. I don't want to sound judgmental but I would often look at friends who would spend all Saturday night and hundreds of dollars drinking at a club and then sleeping it off and wasting their Sunday. I would prefer a good feed, gym with my dad and then relax. (Marley, Interview, 15/7/15)

Socialising, according to participants, especially Marley and Sheryl, appeared in several different forms varying from parties, meals, hanging out with friends and travelling. Each was shown to be as important as each other with Marley and Sheryl showing that differences between participants in regards to their preferences for socialising can vary. Most of the participants indicated that their involvement in socialising was based on alcohol and going to after hours venues with friends with these relationships formed during sporting days, high school and now university.

With limited time available due to varying and conflicting priorities such as school, work, family, partners and friends, the time to socialise was referred to as something that had to be compromised. The excerpts from Marley and Sheryl's interviews display the required compromises that these participants have had to undertake and the different opinion of socialising that that individual has when compared to her peers. It could be argued that their shortage of time in general life left them preferring to have social opportunities that were quality, and involved conversation and spending time with friends over a meal or coffee rather than extensive alcohol use and then dealing with the hangover consequences afterwards. This pressure to compromise other activities and find time to socialise was one of the key themes identified in the individual themes that could have also been allocated to the community themes grouping in the study. The sacrifices and compromises faced by Andrea and Margot and their feelings toward them were shared in their focus group and interview.

> I felt personally that I put in so much effort and time and didn't get out of it what I wanted. I gave up a lot of things. I missed friend's birthdays, parties, social events, family birthdays and just hanging out with friends. I look back and that makes me angry now because I didn't get out of sport what I wanted. I remember missing one friend's party and she hated me for a while. She didn't get the whole sport thing. I am sort of angry with myself for what I gave up. I look back and it was way too much of a sacrifice for a shitty game. (Andrea, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> I loved basketball and shared it with my family. It took so much away from me through sacrifices I had to make. I missed family things, missed friend's things and watched the sacrifices my family made to allow me to play basketball. My mother moved cities and my parents fought over paying sporting fees and for overseas sporting trips and for what? Now I fucking hate basketball with a passion [anger in expression]. Seriously, I doubt I will ever play again; it took so much away from me. (Margot, Interview, 15/7/15)

Margot and Andrea led the sentiment of anger and disappointment as to the sacrifices and compromises they had to make and the things they lost along the way in doing so. This overarching theme again showing that it was prevalent in almost every area of the lived experiences shared by the participants. A sense of anger was also linked to the sport the participants played due to this, with all of the participants indicating they would be very reluctant to return to the sport they dropped out of, saying they had either "lost interest" (Sheryl, Interview, 18/6/15), 'blamed the sport for losing friends and other chances' (Melissa, Interview, 15/6/15) or actually "hated the sport" (Camille, Interview, 2/7/15). The power of the statements from Andrea and especially Margot, showed a distinct blame toward the sport for taking away things they cared for. This resulted in a powerful disdain for the sport and a demonstration of anger in the same breath by Margot through the use of the term "I fucking hate it (basketball) with a passion" Camille shared her experiences regarding her disappointment in the way her club dealt with her and her coaches. She shared these experiences in her individual interview;

> I was training two three or four times a week and working hard and then to be given a choice between basketball and netball made me feel like why would I give up all this to then basically get kicked out. To have a coach I liked and respected lie to our faces and then make us chose between two sports we loved was tough [disappointment in face]. I look back now and can't believe she would have done that. The coach lied to us and said it would be ok, she then changed her mind and it got several of us the chance to play the sport we loved [raised voice]. The politics in sport is nuts and the way clubs support their coaches above players is crazy. I don't know if it is all clubs but the way she was supported when she lied and we got sacrificed will stay with me forever. (Camille, Interview, 2/7/15)

The data shows that a link exists between these sacrifices and the happenings inside sporting clubs occurred when Camille identified her sacrifices and felt politics played a part in her negative experiences in sport. Camille indicated that she sacrificed many hours per week to train and improve her sport and to then be given a choice to make in relation to selecting sport was unfair and that she felt like a victim of the politics of the club system. The mention of coaches and committee by Camille was the first of a long line of negatives, from several of the participants, directed toward coaches and club and the role that they played in their withdrawal from sport. Sheryl initially only mentioned this story in passing during her focus group but shared in much greater depth during the individual interview;

> I think it can feel really, really good to know you are good at something. I sound arrogant but I was a good basketballer and loved playing at the highest level and seeing people watch me play. You can either be on top of the world or low as hell. I had nothing in the middle, I was either shit hot or shit house and I blame coaches for that and didn't want it anymore. I remember these ups and downs, I won a game in the state capital city when I scored on the buzzer and then I remember a coach abusing me for losing the game after missing a shot. I didn't know how to deal with that and hold a level of resentment that I had to even deal with it while I was a kid [tone of voice changed to angry]. (Sheryl, Interview, 18/6/15)

The indication here, by Sheryl, that a coach controls the perception of others and feelings of their players. Amber and Marley expressed concerns regarding being compared to others by coaching, parents and people in their sports. They shared these experiences in their focus groups;

> Negative experiences in sport would be competitiveness and being compared to other people. I was compared to girls better than me, older than me and more developed than me and that wasn't fair. I was compared to what they do for training or their scores and their life in general. If Mary (pseudonym) scored more than me then people would be talking about how I got picked for teams and she didn't. If Jane (pseudonym) trained four times a week and I trained three times parents and people would talk and I would be compared to them. Also getting compared to what they are doing or they are not doing something was frustrating. when I would take a session off for school people would say I was being lazy and when Jane or Mary would train and I didn't I would get grief [anger in facial expression]. (Amber, Focus group, 5/3/16)

> Comparisons to your competitors and other female athletes are something happens a lot. I have seen it happen in team sport but more so in my athletics now. If I train a certain way and score a result, that is compared to the way someone else trains and the result they have. Comments like "she does this it must be good or bad are common". I have never really worried about but

> have started to cause I have been injured and that has caused strain on me. My athletics friends have experienced the same and comparisons are made by people whom questioning you. This makes you start questioning yourself and then you question if that is what other people are thinking. This slowly breaks you down and you wonder if you have what it takes to succeed and if you are as good as you think you are. (Marley, Focus group, 5/6/15)

Extensive research has shown that a large part of a girl's mental and emotional development occurs during her adolescent years (Clark & Paechter, 2007; Currie et al., 2007; Reay, 2001). The way in which she is perceived during that time was very important and impacted on her self-esteem, self-belief and self-efficacy. Amber and Marley were representative of the comments of several of the participants and identified that during their sport participation they were often compared to others unfairly and in negative and destructive ways. The participants explained that parents and coaches compared the girls to each other, compared players with less ability to the mistakes made by the more skilled and also made destructive comparisons regarding life experiences and events out of the sporting arena. These comparisons and incidents were described by the participants to have had a large influence on their continued involvement and in turn dropout from sport. The responses and emotions displayed by the participants during discussions regarding this topic were raw and open. Some expressed their frustration and emotion as to their memories of those times, while others had progressed this emotion into anger and disdain toward the perpetrators and in some instances the sport itself. Sheryl shared her experiences about this and about her feelings on expectations and the thoughts of others in her individual interview;

> I put expectation on myself to be good at things I do. I always want to be the best at school and the best with things I do, like I want to have a good job when I am older and I expect t get the marks to go to uni. Some of those expectations I put on myself though, not just in basketball but in everything else as well. Everyone has expectations on themselves but it is the expectations of others that really got to me. I was a good basketballer but I remember several times when I would play a bad game and I felt embarrassed because I had. Not because I didn't score but because I was at a higher level than those I played against and it embarrassed me that people were looking at me expecting more and the expectations were crazy. The pressure from these expectations just kept building and when I didn't meet the expectations of others or the expectations of myself it just kept building and made me not sleep or feel sick or try and stay away from playing sport. [Sigh, long pause] The pressure just got nuts and that's the main reason I quit sport. I didn't tell anyone that before and even now feel a little silly that I felt this way. (Sheryl, Interview, 18/6/15)

Comparisons were not the only issue the participants, especially Sheryl, expressed concern with. Having expectations set for them and having others form expectations for them created a large area of discussion within the focus group section of the data collection phase. Each of the participants expressed that they had not only expectations placed upon them by coaches, family and friends but also from the parents of other children competing against them and more importantly expectations from within themselves. The expectations placed upon the participants throughout their time as sportswoman, regardless of level and age, was seen as a major constraint for their ongoing involvement in sport and had a strong influence on their dropout. Rebecca shared her experiences on expectations of others and her experiences through sport in her focus group;

> I wasn't real good at netball and worked that out at a young age. I remember going to training and girls could pass longer and shoot better than me, one girl just kept making goals when she shooting and I struggled to do that. I played with some great players, some of which I remain friends with today. The level that we were at I was expected to be as good as them. I felt that pressure because I just wasn't. The players didn't really put pressure or expectations on me. I did that myself because I didn't want to let down the team, but their parents expected me to be as good as their daughters and when I missed a pass or turned over the ball by stepping or something they laughed and made me feel shit. I look back now and realise I wasn't terrible, just not as good as some of the girls I played with who were really good. (Rebecca, Focus group, 3/3/15)

The expectations from the parents of the better players toward the lower skilled players was that of expecting more than they were physically capable of and that they were expected to be as good as them. Rebecca outlined her experiences in this area and that the expectations took the enjoyment away from the participants. This was shown in the literature review that it increased the prevalence of dropout of sport from this group of participants.

While the expectations of the lower skilled player's parents, in many cases were also negative, where based on the feeling that their own child was better than the more skilled and possibly elite program, identified athletes. This saw the mistakes and errors of the more skilled girl unfairly put under a microscope, raising the pressure on her to perform at her absolute best at all times, even in a domestic game.

Reasons for dropout from sport

The reasons for the dropout of sport in the study were clearly enunciated at various times through the interview and focus groups by several of the participants. It was important to address this question early in the group sessions to identify the immediate thoughts of the participants and their perceived reasons for dropping out. To ask this question for the first time late in the study may not have given a true indication of the participant's thoughts and may have seen their idea of their own dropout influenced by the responses of others.

Some of the participants were very clear and were able to clearly identify the reasons for their dropout. They had explored their feelings and had a greater understanding of the actions of others, their own feelings, the situations they were in and their influence over their withdrawal from sport. Others had a far lower level of self-understanding and understanding of this situation that resulted in them withdrawing from sport. Their answers were detailed, but often displayed that more than one reason could be identified as to the reason for her dropout. A part of this comes from shared experiences similar to those shared by Melissa and Camille in their focus groups;

> If you're told you're shit over and over again then you will think you're shit. That's one of the main reasons I quit, I was sick of coaches putting me down and not thinking about maybe she had a shit day at school or is dealing with something you don't know about. I remember one coach that continued to put me and my teammates down. She (coach) would tell us we were no good and would individually blame us for losses or bad performances. Seriously, by name it used to be "Melissa you're shit why the hell couldn't you dribble or shoot or pass" or whatever it was. When you keep hearing it you start believing it and it goes away from the coach and makes you question all things you do. I even started thinking I was shit at other sports and things in general. (Melissa, Interview, 15/6/15)

> My basketball coach at the time made me pick between the two sports I loved so I picked against her out of spite. My mother and I spoke to the coach about me playing netball as well as basketball and she agreed that it was ok to do both and that she would not cause any issues with it. Some time after the team wasn't going well and she changed her mind and called a team and parents meeting and made me and some of my teammates make a choice. After growing up a bit I look back and I picked netball to spite her, eventually I was going to have to pick I know that but because she made me pick I went against her. I went with principle rather than a passion. I would have stuck with basketball but I said screw you I am playing netball. I won't play basketball seriously again but I may play fun. [Pause] She lied and ended mine and others playing career. (Camille, Focus group, 3/3/15)

A large portion of the lived experiences shared by the participants, highlighted by responses from Melissa and Camille indicating negativity regarding the coaches they had experienced along their playing journey. The participants, who identified basketball as one of their main sports, shared more negative experiences than those who identified other sports. All of the basketball participants identified their involvement in the same major representative club in town, but indicated a different set of coaches who contributed to their dropout. One senior coach, still involved at the club, was common to all of the basketball respondents, except one, in this area with the coaches' negativity and influence a major source of emotion, anger and fear for the participants. The challenges faced by the participants went beyond coaches and also involved sacrifice and duelling priorities. Andrea and Molly shared these experiences in their focus group discussions;

> The reason for dropping out of sport for me was mainly because of school. I wanted to do really well in school and that was more of a priority to me than playing sport. When playing basketball and netball took up Monday. Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and all weekend it got silly and realistically I had to chose to try become a pro sportsperson or get a real career and I have known since I was little that school was the number one, so I knuckled down and concentrated on that. (Andrea, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> I dropped out of playing basketball because I had to sacrifice that to work and earn money, but being paid to play that sport would have influenced me to not have pulled out. I was doing seniors and juniors as well as state and was seriously full on training and playing seven days a week. That couldn't continue as school and family and friends was suffering as well. I had to get out of something and with netball paying me a small amount to play made the decision easy. (Molly, Focus group, 3/3/15)

An overarching idea that appeared in almost all of the experiences of the participants were the idea of sacrifice to meet the duelling priorities growing up had made them experience. These experiences were shared and highlighted in the stories of Andrea and Molly. Linking sport, education and family with relatively new experiences in their lives such as work, higher education, relationships and peers, the participants felt a high level of pressure to "do everything" and "please everyone". This pressure in many instances resulted in the commencement of the participants' withdrawal from sport and has resulted in many feeling very negative toward the sport and the coaches they were involved with. Linked with this was the disappearance of fun in many of the participants' experiences. Melissa, Margot and Bernadette shared their own experiences in the focus groups they participated in;

> When the fun disappeared I didn't want to play anymore and didn't want to be there, her abusing us continually and then her lying and making us choose a sport after being told for months we were supported was the first and final straw. It was too much and it affected me a lot. I didn't want to go to training or go to games so I didn't want to play anymore. She is still coaching basketball and has put other girls through the same thing. I can name at least 12 other girls that this has happened to. Seriously, though when all you do is punishments and running at training and you don't have fun it made each session more painful to attend. (Melissa, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> My physical and mental wellbeing was actually at risk with this coach. The pressure was so bad, like if we did something small we were given unnecessary punishments. When we were attacked for making mistakes and punished until we were physically ill it made me wonder why I would do this. When the fun was gone and I was going to training to get my ass kicked for no reason it became shattering to my confidence and love for the sport. [pause] I remember us having to run 12 suicides [a running penalty given to players] after we gave up an offensive rebound at training and didn't reach a rebound goal. Seriously one fucking offensive rebound and we get flogged like dogs. No fun, why bother going? (Margot, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> I think it was because basketball was so intense from such a young age. I started doing squad basketball at under twelve. So I did six years of that crazy three times a week and games stuff. I was training juniors and seniors and had two coaches that demanded a lot. Not in a bad way but they expected me to be at everything and it became a job more than an enjoyment thing. In the end it was so much, so full on and then once I kinda stopped liking it was kinda like what is the point anymore and I was done. I had enough, as I wasn't enjoying it. (Bernadette, Focus group, 3/3/15)

Melissa, Margot and Bernadette expressed their concern over reasons for their dropout being the idea of "having fun" and "enjoyment" and its removal from their sporting experiences. Once the fun and enjoyment element of being involved in sport was seen to stop it resulted in several of the participants linking it to their dropout from sport. In one of the experiences, the losing of fun was linked to the coach of the team. The fun element of sport is something that could traditionally be lost when the degree of seriousness and competition increased, usually around the age of adolescence and the introduction of state and representative level competition. Someone who looked past this fun element and was driven by success was Marley. She shared her lived experiences of her desire to be individual successful over team success in her focus group discussion;

> I did play team sport (Netball) on the side of my individual sport (Athletics); I stopped because of higher injury risk in the team sport. In pole vaulting if you want to better yourself you have to work, if you want to jump higher, you train harder, or not. I would know when my next qualifying nationals were

> and I would bust myself to get the time I needed to make it happen. It is a definite measure, where in team sport it is political and if someone does something wrong then the whole team can miss out. I remember losing several games when teammates didn't hook-up right and we lost because of it. (Marley, Focus group, 5/3/15)

A variation in the experiences of the girls is shown in the shared stories of Marley who left team sport to participate exclusively in individual sport. Her desire to not depend on others and to challenge herself was identified as a key influencer in her dropout from team sport, as was her desire to remove the idea of injury away from her individual pursuits. The responses given by Marley in the focus group and also the individual interview had a distinct individual differences to the majority of other participants. This difference between Marley and the others displayed a well-developed level of self-understanding and self-efficacy in the decisions she had made and a sense of contentment in her choice. This was very different from the majority of the other participants who did not have the self-knowledge of her. It could be interpreted that her decision to move away from team sport occurred on her own volition and was not caused by others.

Changing priorities in the lives of the participants

Changing priorities played a large part in the experiences shared by the participants in this study. Margot in her focus group and Andrea in her interview shared their experiences and discussed the things they had to sacrifice to be involved in sport;

> That word compromise is so true. I had to compromise lots of things to be involved in sport. I missed parties, family things and just hanging out because I had basketball all the time. It seemed like that was all that I was doing so something had to give, so sport it was. I couldn't keep doing it all so unfortunately I had to make a compromise. (Margot, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> I wish I could do sport, school, friends, boyfriend and everything else but I can't and I have to sacrifice something. I was playing sport almost everyday and when I wasn't at sport I was training for basketball, soccer and football. I was thinking it all the time and it took over my life. I had to sacrifice something, as I couldn't do it all. I wish I could but I couldn't so I had to sacrifice playing. (Andrea, Interview, 11/6/15)

Through the many months of reading and listening to the lived experiences of the participants involved in this study, two words, sacrifice and compromise, continued to be evident throughout the data. The experiences of participants like Molly and Beth and Margot and Andrea show the daily battles being faced by participants as they continue playing sport and handling day-to-day life. Margot and Andrea

outlined their compromise and sacrifice and highlighted the words of many of the other participants. The experiences of the participants displayed a detailed snapshot of the challenges they faced in their day-to-day lives. Molly shared her experiences in her interview;

> My attitude has changed towards sport a little bit. I was one hundred percent all about netball and basketball. I liked to push myself in it, but at the same time now I have other priorities in my life with uni coming first to me now. I am studying nutrition and I look back at my past sporting stuff and wonder how I fitted it all in. I was lucky I was good at school, but it took its toll on me mentally. Now sport is a distant second. I'd rather have a good job and a uni degree, than travelling to the state capital city to play netball or to other cities for basketball [smile]. (Molly, Interview, 17/6/15)

Each participant in this study faced the daily challenges of education (secondary and tertiary), employment, family, friends / peers, partners and boys, and adding sport to this mix put the participants in very disadvantageous positions. Each of these elements are discussed individually throughout this chapter. However, this section looked at the changing priorities the participants faced as they moved from life as minimally challenged children, to a constantly challenged adolescent. This change in life experiences opened the door to a variety of new challenges and provided the first of many life decisions for the participants. These decisions required a change to priorities resulting in sacrifices and compromises, often meaning certain elements of a girl's life being reduced or deleted completely and other elements being re-prioritised, requiring more time and effort. One of the main sacrifices identified by the participants was the need to find suitable employment; Beth, Andrea, Molly and Rebecca spoke of their experiences in relation to this in their focus group, and the trouble they felt in dealing with employment;

> Because I was playing basketball and netball and was training for both, I didn't have time to work and needed money to live. My parents didn't really support me in that way so I had to work. Sports made me have to compromise work hours, meaning I couldn't make money to do the things I wanted to do. (Beth, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> When I was applying for jobs and working part it was made pretty clear to me that employers don't care about sport; I had to quit working at KFC because my boss didn't get it and really didn't care. It was weekend work and with me being at school I couldn't work after school. I had to work all weekend, every weekend. That made it impossible to really live my life, as I couldn't get any money to do anything I wanted to do. (Andrea, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> I agree, I need money for alcohol, petrol, phone bills, cars, uni books, saving to move out of home. If I can't work then I can't live, especially now I am living out of home going to uni. I live three hours away from home and just to go home on a weekend costs me a heap. I need to work and if I want to have a life like my uni and sport friends I need money to drink and go out. (Molly, Interview, 17/6/15)

> Work would class as something that has influenced me. When I turned fifteen I wanted to get a part time job and that is really something I wanted to do. Everywhere you apply they asked were you available Saturday or weeknights and if you play sport then you're not available on weekends. When I was young and playing sport and applied at Kmart and Coles, I couldn't work weekends and I went to school and couldn't work then either. Work has always been more important to me than sport, as I had to live and wasn't really good at sport, so I got out and now work fulltime and love it. (Rebecca, Interview, 15/6/15)

The battle for independence by adolescents was identified as an ongoing and challenging one. The challenges of employment and changing priorities have discussed via the above quotes from Beth, Andrea, Molly and Rebecca. Their words, taken direct from their lived experience stories, highlight very visible issues being experienced amongst all of the participants. With the majority of children being supported by their parents and families, resulting in limited liability for bills and other living expenses, their responsibilities were minimum. These participants, along with the others identified that the life of an adolescent brings with it certain internal and socially driven expectations that require not only increased responsibilities but also a change in priorities. As this independence increases and the prevalence of mobile phones, technology, cars and social events increases, so does the requirement for money and further independence.

Rebecca and some of the other participants identified that they felt the need for their own money and to not have to depend on their parents. She wanted to have the ability to "not have to ask them all the time" and wanted the ability to feel that "it is my money I will spend it on whatever I want". In order to do this, she and the other participants required some sort of employment that allowed this independence to be gained and for these activities to be undertaken. All participants, except for Charlotte, indicated their desire to participate in part-time employment at an early age, with her indicating a deal she had with parents where she would concentrate on school and her parents would "cover her" until then (Charlotte, Interview, 7/7/15).

She did indicate that she felt "that had to stop as a teenager as it was a bit ridiculous to expect them [parents] to pay for everything" (Charlotte, Interview, 7/7/15).

Coming with this expectation of work was often one of the more serious sacrifices and compromises the participants were faced with in their transition from childhood to adolescence. More often weekend work and after school hours work were required, often clashing with sporting practice or games, resulting in clashes that required a priority decision to be made by the participant.

In an overwhelming number of respondents it was shown that the requirements to work was a strong one so the participants could afford the things they wanted and that generally this work occurred at the sacrifice of some other type of activity generally sport participation. The most common point raised during discussion of work was that a large number of the participants' employers were inflexible and that they required a commitment to their workplace and an expectation that the workplace would take priority over other things, such as sport. As discussed in the coaching section outlined in the community themes (chapter six) shows that, in many instances, coaches installed the same expectations and pressure when it came to training and the participants' attendance. Real life and day-to-day living was a pressure that several of the participants spoke about during their interviews and focus groups. Sheryl shared her experiences on her pressure to be successful during her interview;

> I have grown up a lot. Now I look at siblings and parents who say they have to pay this bill, in my head it now tells me get a good school score, go to uni, get a good job and I won't have to worry about this sort of thing when I'm older. I don't want to live paycheck to pay check like a lot of people I know and hear about. (Sheryl, Interview, 18/6/15)

Another pressure that was identified by Sheryl and some of the other participants was the pressure they were already feeling to be successful in their lives post school. To suggest that a 14, 15 or 16 year old girl is feeling pressure that makes her change her decisions due to worrying about future employment and income requires future research and could be seen as being a growing concern

This simple challenge to the time that the participants allocate to complete these activities became a matter of 'what gives?' This challenge as to the requirements of work and sport as the participants mature is a common one and one that has shown to

be a major influence as to dropout from sport. One of the participants indicated that the only way she was able to get around this expectation and challenge was to work with the business of a family member that did not impose a decision as to the use of time to be made by her or to compromise other things such as sport participation. This arrangement allowed for flexible hours and work conditions that could be built around training and games and social events. In the majority of instances this was not possible and was not in the reach of the participants who commenced or continued work with either multinational or many small businesses across regional Victoria. Some of the participants however received some form of income for playing sport in their own towns or with their own teams, resulting in them not requiring as much employment as the other participants. Beth outlined her lived experience in her focus group, while Molly discussed her experiences in her interview;

> Although I get paid jackshit, the few bucks I get from playing sport helps me pay for my phone, petrol and socialising. The money I get for playing netball in the club I play for now and the money I get for coaching a junior team helps me pays the bills and may actually be the only reason I keep playing. That cash goes straight to my petrol tank. It makes it a lot easier to keep playing sport and to go to work Saturdays or Sundays to try and make enough to live. It makes it easier for me to continue, my club knows that and provides money to a lot of us uni girls that play sport. So much better and more organised than the clubs I played for at home in both basketball and netball. (Molly, Interview, 17/6/15)

> I was good at netball at junior level but I am not good enough to ever get paid to play. If I was able to get any type of money at all to play sport it would have allowed me to live and keep playing netball. But I had to work Saturday and Sundays due to school that meant that netball was difficult to keep doing. A few bucks to play maybe would have kept me in the sport longer, who knows? (Beth, Focus group, 3/3/15)

An interesting finding in this discussion was the position held by the participants who were paid to play sport. This provided participants such as Molly, Bernadette and Beth with some more flexibility to have some form of independence and also the flexibility to not be locked into the working hours required to make the money needed to meet the participants' requirements. Although a very visible disparity between the amount paid to boys and girls existed, the small amount paid to the participants changed their perceptions of themselves. The perception assisted in making the decision to remain or withdraw due to work as they were gaining the money others needed to work to earn. Ongoing employment is also challenged by the inclusion in social events with family and friends. Amber, Beth and Bernadette

shared their experiences in reaction to their involvement in social elements in their focus group discussions;

> I had to make some sacrifices as well to prioritise things. I had heaps of times when friends had parties or family had birthdays and I had to miss them because I had a game or training. It has been a big issue for me when I miss family events, those little things build up and it feels like you're missing out. I can remember missing a cousin's birthday, mum's party and also a grandparent's birthday. This really hurt and started me in resenting sport. Although it was hard to miss these family events, it made my friendships with my basketball, soccer and football mates much stronger and made me realise who I wanted to be friends with and who, if I was going to be normal, I had socialised with. It made me realise who I really wanted and needed to be friends with. (Amber, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> Priorities changed for me when I got to about twelve or thirteen. Sport and family were a priority but around that time you find friends and also some of us found boys. I was a little different; I wanted to also be able to have experiences in life. I started thinking of the dream of traveling and also getting away from my hometown, so something had to be sacrificed. (Beth, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> You can't work 20 hours, play sport, do sport, have a boyfriend, go to parties, there ain't just enough hours in the week. If you want to have a job and have an employer that doesn't have the flexibility, you can't do it. I worked at Subway and KFC and they made it tough on me to work as they wanted weekends and I couldn't 'cause of sport. I ended up working crazy and short shifts and then had to squeeze in schoolwork and life. Not ideal. (Bernadette, Focus group, 3/3/15)

The importance of social events and remaining actively part of the social network with friends was highlighted as important by a large majority of the participants'. Beth and Bernadette, who discussed their experiences that resulted in them having to sacrifice other things, highlighted this. Their willingness to miss out on these social events initially was strong, but waned as they approached adolescence and older. Amber however shared her own experiences in her individual interview regarding the difficulties she faced in putting sport before family and friends;

> I sacrificed a lot of friendships, the best friendships I have ever had because of sport. It also jeopardised a lot of friendships with those people who didn't have the same kind of passion I did for basketball and soccer. Even spending time with my family became a stretch and made some family second guess my love for them. We were playing late Friday nights and training early Sunday mornings, and I was tired on a Saturday so I didn't get time to spend with them. Especially after Dad moved away, I couldn't commit time to him or my family as I had basketball training or an away game or a soccer game

> or training. Overall, you don't get to spend that time with your family and friends. (Amber, Interview, 2/7/15)

It was widely identified that playing sport involved some weekend and after hours training and playing which decreased the time the participants could allocate to socialising and spending time with friends. Amber and many of the other participants identified their willingness to miss these social events because they had a shared level of friendship with their sport playing teammates. These friendships were seen as very important by some participants and were based on a greater level of mutual interests than those of friendships that were formed in the schooling environment. The strength of these relationships often allowed the participants to sacrifice seeing others without feeling they had 'missed out'. The importance and interaction with friends was shared by Beth in her interview and also by Andrea in her focus group;

> Having had basketball and to some degree soccer make me miss other events like birthdays and friends parties it really showed who your real friends are and who is there for you. I missed my good friends party and she made a whole deal about it saying I was selfish and stuff, while other people's events I have missed have understood and have not made anything of it. Making sacrifices to miss those events strained my friendships and was tough, missing events and making decisions as to what to go to and what not to go to has been tough with basketball and sometimes soccer being the first one chosen on so many occasions. (Beth, Interview, 11/7/15)

> It got to a point where I just needed to make time to hang out with friends or I would have gone crazy. I was playing sport so much and was always on edge with worrying about the next session or next game and when I was going to get abused next. My friends were a buffer from that and I didn't see them enough during the time I played netball and basketball. Now I look back and cannot have imagined sport being as big a part of the life as it was, 'cause I am lots more content with my life now, I don't feel nearly as stressed and don't have nearly as many burdens on my shoulders. I can see my friends, boyfriend or family anytime I wish and if I do anything sporty it is on my terms, when I want and with who I want. (Andrea, Focus group, 3/3/15)

The idea of sacrifice again was preeminent throughout the participants' experiences and discussions between the participants. Beth and Andrea were the forerunners in this discussion and identified that the idea that friendships had to be put aside for sport for many of the participants were shown to have a negative effect on their continued participation. In many instances it also made them question their friendships and have their friendships questioned by those not playing in the sporting teams with them. This pressure, especially during adolescent years, played a huge role in the decision making of Andrea, Beth and the other participants. The

participants showed that this pressure on the participants had a large influence on their continued involvement in sport and linked with the ideas of peer pressure, may require further study in the area to uncover greater understanding. The release of pressure was not always a negative for the participants. Charlotte and Andrea waited until their interviews to share their experiences in this area;

> I was playing sport full on and it was really important to me at the time, but now I have completely ditched sport and I am just hanging out with friends, getting schoolwork done and partying. I have been out the last four weekends on Friday and Saturday and it is great I get to dance and drink and hang out with mates that I haven't done for ages [laugh]. It has been a huge change of my priorities and I love it [smile]. (Charlotte, Interview, 7/7/15)

> I would never have though this while I was doing it but now I reckon when you dropout from sport you find something else your life is lacking. I look back and was missing family, friends and life in general. I have filled that hole with seeing those guys more and doing the things I want to do. I mean I went to a movie with a friend on Friday just gone; I couldn't have done that when I played basketball and netball. I also now have the chance to work during weekends and other times and make money to do those sort of things. I miss playing sport sometimes but overall I am really relieved and happy with the decision I made. (Andrea, Interview, 11/6/15)

Not all of the participants found the dropout of sport to be dramatic, again highlighting the complexity and individual diversity of the phenomenon. Charlotte and several others felt it was a release of pressure and their lives in general, while others, such as Andrea, felt it gave them the opportunity to do others things that they had to sacrifice previously. Several of the participants, Andrea, Bernadette and Rebecca being the most prominent, indicated that the new found time with no sport allowed them to spend more time with their boyfriends, family and friends. However, the two activities predominantly identified by the participants that would fill this new found time were work and also schoolwork.

Another key element influencing the dropout of girls from sport has been shown to be the actions of coaches. Bernadette and Margot shared the influence that coaches play over the continued involvement of the participants in sport and their lived experiences of their interactions with coaches, in their focus group discussions;

> I played domestic basketball and netball for ages and that was really fun. There was not much pressure and it was a good chance to spend with friends doing the sports we loved and I enjoyed that. I might do it again in the future because I know it wouldn't be with the coach that ruined my playing career. She made me choose between two sports I loved after lying to me, my mother

> and friends. She made the whole basketball experience terrible and I stopped enjoying it as much as I did before that. I mean I wasn't a bad basketballer and played state (competition) but the enjoyment was taken away by that one coach who treated me and my friends so badly. I don't know if I would want to do the high level stuff again, [pause] especially knowing she is still around and abusing other girls who are to scared to say anything about her. (Bernadette, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> A few of my closer friends withdrew after some very questionable occurrences by a coach that made them commit to a team under a set of rules relaying to playing netball and then changed her mind because the team had lost some games. These girls did the right thing and put their cards on the table but you know superstar WNBA [Women's National Basketball Association – highest women's league in the world] coach [sarcasm] was losing so why not throw the blame at the kids and not her methods of abuse and put downs and punishment. This made me angry you know, but I still had the moral compass to keep doing what I started, so I played out the season after seeing the coach blame those girls for the teams slide after they had gone. This team first lesson was something I was taught as a child. (Margot, Focus group, 5/3/15)

A reoccurring theme throughout all of the responses of the participants was the influence and the effect coaches had over their decisions to continue sport. Bernadette and Margot discussed their disdain and concern of the way their previous coaches worked and how they affected them and their friends. The others in the group supported these comments and their feelings almost unanimously. Although explored in greater depth later in this chapter it is important to understand that when a coach makes a decision its effects are often shared by other teammates who see their friendship as more important than the coaches decision. This resulted in the participants often defending their teammates through actions or attitude. Discussions throughout the focus groups regarding coaches highlighted several coaches who actually started the dropout process for many participants.

Bernadette, Margot, Camille, Molly and Sheryl all shared stories that indicated that their dropout journey started after coaching actions made one of their teammates or friends question their own continued involvement. Basically, the participants saw their ongoing friendship as more important than continuing to play sport under that coach. However, it could also be suggested that some of the participants who indicated they pulled out due to the occurrences of others may have been looking for an opportunity or even an excuse themselves to dropout. Although only an Interpretative suggestion by me as a researcher, the idea was rejected by one

participant who said it was more based on morals and her lessons as a child rather than her own wishes to dropout.

The influence of participants' self concept

Although covered throughout several of the themes already discussed in this chapter, it is important that self-concept has its own section, as it was evident throughout both the individual and focus group data collection phases. Large amounts of literature, over many years, have outlined the topic of self-concept and the many complications and challenge that branch from them (Adams, 2005; Andrew et al., 2016; Beltran-Carillo et al., 2012; Biddle et al., 1998; Biddle & Wang, 2003).

Adolescent girls have been shown to have many body image issues that revolve around their perception of themselves and how others perceive them. Additionally, as discussed in depth by the participants, media has a major role in the promotion of 'acceptable' body images and for presenting unattainable images for girls. The participants in this study had long detailed discussions regarding body image and shared stories of the pain that they felt as young girls right through to today. Many of the topics already discussed related to body image, with the participants, suggesting that negative body image issues played a major role in participants, not only questioning they way they look, but also what they did and do. Camille indicated she had body issues growing up and they influenced a lot of things she did in her life. Camille shared her experiences in the focus group she was involved in:

> I go back to my kid days when people thought I was chubby and big and I think others not my age saw that more than kids my own age. My Mum's friends would say aren't you tall or above average, but it was never my peers until I got to high school. The boys there were scrawny and I was bigger than them and at that age would point it out and highlight the fact that I was bigger than them. [pause] When I developed early I thought I was like abnormal because like I went into year seven and I had boobs, I had my period, I was like bigger than all the boys, I kinda thought I was a bit gross, because like girls aren't meant to be bigger than boys. Since everyone started catching up and I wasn't the one that stood out all the time, I feel better, like I'm actually proud to be tall. [smile] Before I used to hate it but now I'm like yeah I'm tall. I wear high heels and I'm proud about it. (Camille, Focus group, 3/3/15)

Body image issues identified by the participants started early in their lives and could be sourced back to primary school, generally when puberty and related body changes commenced. Camille was very honest and open about her feelings and experiences where she identified and was supported by others, that "having boobs" and "having

your period" were two major changes that made the participants feel different to other girls. Additionally, the larger physical size of a couple of the participants was indicated in their discussions. As taller girls in primary and high school, the participants felt they were looked at and were different from the other girls.

This challenge is one that many participants faced as they grew and entered school age and started mixing more with boys. Amber, Molly, Beth, Camille and Charlotte all indicated that the majority of them entered puberty earlier than their male friends who remained *"scrawny"* and *"small"*, meaning the girls stood out more, something that the participants indicated they did not want to do and felt "awkward" about. These participants as well as Margot and Marley, indicated that that had changed as they got older and the participants who remained tall are now "happy to be tall" and "have accepted being taller than some of the boys". Charlotte, Amber and Beth even believed that now "being tall is a bonus" as "they stand out, especially when wearing heels". Being tall was a body issue for these participants but being short was also a major issue for Andrea. She shared her experiences about the pain and suffering she experienced due to her height in her focus group discussion;

> A massive issue for me was more than actually being short; it was other people's perceptions of me being short. It was more, not so much for me when I was playing basketball and netball, but more my mindset. In my mind it was it doesn't matter how short I am, to me I know I can overcome that, I know I can still play on big girls. But it's was more, if I was trying out for something or wanting to be selected, the like, anxiety and almost like depression I felt before going in like thinking I'm not even going to get looked at. When I tried out at under fourteens the coach mentioned my lack of height on nearly a dozen occasions during tryouts and that made me physically ill and put so much mental pressure on me. I had the same expectations when I went to tryouts for netball and basketball regardless of the age level or coach. Most of them didn't make an issue of it just the under-fourteen basketball coach. (Andrea, Focus group, 3/3/15).

Being tall and noticed was not the only body image issue discussed by the participants in this study. Although being tall and standing out was an issue, the participants generally said it was a bonus for their sporting performances and something they now feel comfortable with. However, Andrea had a completely different body image issue still related to height, but more the lack of, rather than the excess. The challenges Andrea has faced have been discussed earlier in this chapter, however, the body image issues faced in her pursuit of sport and the perceptions of other people were the major driver to her dropping out of sport. The importance to

highlight skill rather than physical status in sport is something that Andrea and the other participants indicated was missing, and was something that they felt should be more of a focus for all involved in sport.

The experiences of Andrea, and the anxiety her body image caused her as she arrived to try out for teams and squads, were unbearable for her. She told the group of the many hours she was physically ill thinking about trying out and the jokes that would be made about her height and others thoughts on her playing against bigger kids. This constant pressure built up resulted in Andrea considering and withdrawing from sport after extensive, radical exploration as to how to grow taller. Melissa, Charlotte and Margot also shared their own private experiences regarding their own body image challenges during their interview;

> When I was playing sport all the time I felt like I had not a bad looking body and I was fairly happy with it. When I stopped playing sport I started to become less happy with it and felt that some things got a little less tight than what I wanted and I wasn't happy with that. Looking back now it was a positive from playing sport that I was fit and felt more attractive to boys and others and within myself. (Melissa, Interview, 7/7/15)
>
> Only bad thing about not playing sport now is that I ain't as fit as I used to be and my own body image is now at a place I am not happy with. I have parts of my body I am not happy with that I used to think were ok. My legs, butt and thighs I hate right now. (Charlotte, Focus Group, 3/3/15)
>
> My boobs are too big, my ass is too big and so is my gut. [other girls laugh] Well that's what the television and magazines tell me in movies and articles on line and since I stopped playing sport I am starting to agree with them. (Margot, Interview, 7/7/15)

It is clear that all of the participants were well aware of their body image and that the ones who have stayed away from team sports completely, showed concern about the way they look, now they are not playing sport. Melissa, Margot and Charlotte were strong in their comments and concern in relation to the way they look now that they have finished sport participation. The fact that these participants were aware that their body image had changed since they had finished sport was important to acknowledge, however it is important to consider how the participants came up with the ideal of what a 'non sport playing body looks like'. The media plays a major role in this through both sublime and obvious messages in their advertising and promotions and has a defined influence over the actions of girls, especially

adolescent girls and young girls (J. Brown, 2008; Bruce, 2016; Carlisle-Duncan & Messner, 1998; M. Messner et al., 2003; Mitchell, 1997).

Conclusion

This chapter used the lived experiences of the participants to explore their positive and negative experiences from their involvement in sport that resulted in their dropout from sport. The positives revolved around comradery, mateship and inclusion while the negatives discussed pressure and the negative influence of others. Their experiences also highlighted several reasons for dropout such as pressure to do other things and a loss of enjoyment. Additionally, the changing priorities of the participants from purely sport to a life of school, work, and significant others was shown to be of importance to the participants. Finally, their stories outlined concern regarding their own self-concept and how they believed others saw them and how this negatively influenced their ongoing involvement in sport.

The next chapter will explore the community themes classification and the influence of parents, families, partners, peers, femininity, coaches, competency and pressure. This information has been derived from the data collection and data analysis for the study. Again using the experiences of the participants these ideas will be highlighted as influencers as to the dropout from sport by adolescent girls.

Chapter 6 – The community related themes

Introduction

The previous chapter related to the individual themes identified from the lived experiences of the participants. These themes were drawn from the shared stories of the participants and provided an insight into some of the influencers, resulting in their dropout from sport. Lived experiences of the participants and developed further through the use of excerpts from the participants.

This chapter explores the community-related themes grouped from the themes that were also drawn from the experiences shared by the participants during the data collection. The themes identified in this section are of a wider span than the individual and have an influence over their participation and in turn their dropout from sport. These themes are the influence of parents and family, the influence of boys, attraction and their partners, the influence of peers, the influences of community expectations on femininity, the influence of coaches, the influence of perceive competence and responding to pressure. The themes identified in this section link with the work of Bronfenbrenner (1992) and his ecological systems model and have some minor ties to the Mesosystem section of his work built a stronger link to the Exosystem part of the theory.

The exosystem discusses links between settings that a child or in this case an adolescent find themselves and how the settings influence their development. The settings discussed by Bronfenbrenner (1992) include places they visit with their parents, their neighbourhoods, and schools and in terms of this study, sporting clubs.

The influence of parents and family

Throughout literature, the role of parents in the participation of their children has been shown to be of great importance. Parental support and the role they played are pivotal to the length of time their children remain involved in sport. The participants outlined both positive and negative roles their parents played in their involvement in sport and indicated that regardless of influence that their role was important. Marley and Melissa led the conversation in this area and shared their experiences in the focus group section of the data collection phase;

> My parents have kept me going because they drive me three times a week from home to [the state capital city]. Even though they are split up they both still do everything possible to help me get to my training sessions and weights sessions. When I feel like giving up I think of the effort they have put in and I do it for them to show them gratitude for their sacrifices and for what they have done for me, I owe them. (Marley, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> Mum has probably been my number one supporter. She would do everything for me; she would take me to netball and basketball anywhere around the state that was often many hours in the car. I didn't appreciate it at the time and would usually just get out and go train then get in and go home but she paid for petrol, would be there for anything. She even took extra work to pay for me to go on a USA basketball trip and don't know how many other parents would do that. (Melissa, Focus group, 5/3/15)

The initial and most common response when discussing the role of parents was the provision of money to assist them to play sport and providing travel. Responses from Marley and Melissa highlighted the importance of parents and the roles that they played in their sports participation. The comments from these two participants represented a large portion of the other participants and confirmed years of literature highlighting the role of the parents.

Research has shown that sport is often a very expensive past time and can result in significant investment required for equipment, coaching and fees. This can be substantially increased if a regional athlete participates at the highest level and is required to travel to major cities or capital cities regularly for training or play as outlined in the experiences of participants in this study. Marley was required to live in the state capital city for her elite coaching, causing a substantial financial toll on her family. This required an increase in the role played by the family and the financial support they provided. Charlotte, Melissa, Camille, Molly, Amber and Sheryl shared lived experiences that involved overseas travel for their sport, which saw an even greater level of financial investment required by their families. Margot indicated and shared in her experiences the sacrifices her family made to move in order to allow her to participant and excel in sport, she did this in the forum of her focus group;

> My mother worked a lot to make sure we had the money so I could go on basketball and netball tournaments. My mother and father couldn't be at the same game due to legal issues and separation difficulties, so they coordinated through me so they wouldn't interact, which was kind of awkward and used to make me upset and be put in a bad situation. One constant was my mother's support with her being at games no matter what and also her being

> the one that would sacrifice watching if my father turned up. She turned her life upside down when I got serious about sport and she moved down to [Victownville] from a smaller town. (Margot, Focus group, 5/3/15)

Shared experiences from Margot indicated the travel element for her and others in sport reached high levels and often required extensive travel up to five days a week. This travel resulted in her parents deciding to move their family and lives to a major city to be closer to better facilities and better coaching for their daughter. The sacrifices made by parents for the sporting pursuits of their children is an area where further research is needed and where inconsistencies exist

In the stories of Margot and Melissa where parents moved for their children, the participants were very appreciative and understood that the opportunities for them in the smaller country towns were limited and that larger cities may be able to provide opportunities to flourish. However, neither participant mentioned anything of the challenges being faced by the family due to making the move. Parental sacrifices in the instances of the participants' stories exist, as is career and friendships sacrifices, undertaken to enable their children to succeed. Charlotte highlighted the role of parents, in the participation of the participants in sport, in her focus group. It was here that she spoke of her mother and father's participation in sport and the influence they played in her involvement;

> My mum was a massive role model for me and I know for a lot of my friends; she played in WNBL (Women's National Basketball League) for a few years and wanted to be like her, which probably got me more interested and serious about my sport, especially basketball. She was always encouraging and would drive me, would pay for things, never made a big deal of things if it was expensive she just did it and was always willing to help improve me in any way she could and was never negative about it. [smile] Being a single mum and doing all that stuff was tough for her, but she just made it happen and had me covered no matter what. I got the chance through her to go to every tournament I wanted to go on and to every game across the state that I needed to be at, even if she was interstate playing her own game. My dad coached the best season I ever had. I may not have been the best player but it was the most fun I have ever had and that made me want to keep playing. He included all my friends and he didn't favour me and if I was doing crap he would let me know and if I were doing well he would do the same. I remember he grilled me about talking to a teammate during a time out and at the time I looked at it and felt like this hurts a little more than another coach doing it, but I deserved it and respect him more for doing it the same as he would to any other teammate. (Charlotte, Focus group, 3/3/15)

Charlotte shared her experiences about her mother who had succeeded in her own chosen sport at the highest level in this country, and her pursuits provided great direction for her. Charlotte recognised her mother as not only a good sportsperson and the reason that she became interested in sport, but also linked her willingness to support her financially and with resources to her own sports participation, somehow lifting it above the feats of the other parents, in her eyes. Being proud of her mother was something clearly shown by Charlotte as was her desire to not be like her in the sporting arena. She felt proud of her mother's involvement in sport but also she was more proud of her mother's work and life away from the sporting field and the role she provided to her.

Playing the role of coach by a parent is a common practice in regional settings due to the availability of coaches in many of those areas. It has been shown throughout the literature that many fathers coach their children at some point in time, while mothers do so on a smaller scale. Charlotte, Amber, Andrea, Bernadette and Margot's responses in this study indicated that they have had parents who were involved as coaches and that these experiences varied in the lives of each of the participants. The positivity of Charlotte's dad was shown with her identifying that season as the 'best season' she had ever had. That was then linked to her father promoting inclusion and positivity, unlike Margot and Amber's fathers who displayed some negative characteristics and increasing the pressure on their relationships while coaching their daughters' teams in sport.

An interesting acknowledgement that appeared in many of the lived experiences shared by the participants revolved around the idea that their parents were not negative toward them in relation to sport and their involvement and performance. Cumming (2002), highlighted that parents that remained positive in relation to sport have a more positive effect on their children's ongoing participation, while those who paint sport in a negative light have a higher prevalence of their children finishing sport at an earlier age or developing negative experiences about it themselves.

The levels of gratitude of almost all of the participants have been highlighted in discussions throughout the data chapters. The participants, lead by Charlotte, Bernadette and Sheryl, showed a desire to thank their parents and to acknowledge

their efforts. The participants indicated that their parents provided a sense of the importance of sport and the important role they played in their sporting lives. Even in the negative discussions regarding parent involvement, the participants often prefaced their comments with positive, caring statements to attempt to not make them look selfish or not appreciative.

Bernadette and Amber indicated that the roles played by their parents were mostly positively, but their continual provision of feedback often came across as negative, making sport often less enjoyable. Bernadette and Margot discussed parental involvement and influence in greater depth in their individual interviews;

> I love my mum and dad with all my heart but mum she could get a little bit pushy, especially after netball. I would get in the car and she would tell me straight away about things I could have done differently or things I could have done better. [pause] I remember one game we lost against a team that we were better than and I was playing centre and I wasn't getting into the right position to receive the ball coming from defence to attack and she talked about it for the whole way home in the car. It takes the fun out of it. I should get support about losing the game and if I was ok and stuff, not questions about what I could have and should have done. Makes me not enjoy the trip home sometimes after games we lose, lucky I have my licence now. (Bernadette, Interview, 2/7/15)

> My dad has put lots of pressure on me pressure on me as well because he is coach and he thinks he knows best. He played decent level sport but talks to me like he was Michael Jordan or Lebron. I couldn't do anything right and everything was fucking shit in his eyes. Sometimes when I needed a nice word, hug or just to have my Dad to love me after a bad game I would get coach Dad who would rip my ass about a turnover or bad shot or pass. It hurt and still does that he put sport before me. (Margot, Interview, 7/7/15)

Although prefaced with positives, not all of the participants were happy with the influence their parents' involvement had on their lives, especially when coaching or in leadership positions within the club they were playing in. Amber, Margot and Bernadette indicated that they have had additional pressure placed on them by parents who questioned their performances on the sporting field. These participants said that this type of pressure did add to the pressure already being received from other areas. It also indicated that when they required support from their parent after a bad game or bad performance they were not receiving it. Instead, they were receiving game and match appraisals and in some instances less than positive feedback, making them feel negative about the whole sporting experience. Amber provided

further examples as to the effect the actions of her parents had over her in her individual interview.

> I have never told anyone this but other parents made me question my ability but my dad made me hate the game a lot because when I called him up all he would talk about was basketball, never how has your day been or how was school, nothing outside basketball it was constant. He was living several hours away from me and I missed him. Every time I would call him or he would call me all he would talk about was basketball and who was doing what and what training I was doing. How bout asking me how school was or how my boyfriend or how work was or anything. Nope, just basketball. Did he love me or just love basketball? I know the answer to that; it just felt like that you know what I mean? (Amber, Interview, 2/7/15)

In one experience shared by Amber she mentioned that the role of the parent coach overstepping the mark in her eyes. This resulted in her keeping this secret about the relationship with her father for many years in relation to her involvement in the sport of basketball. This occurred when she started questioning her love for the sport after her father, living some hours away, would call her only to discuss basketball. In her eyes she felt that her father was putting the sport before their relationship and that in order to keep her father for herself she would need to drop basketball, or at a minimum, keep it at arm's length. The pressure felt by Amber was described as ‘immense’ and almost brought her close to tears during the focus group. Other participants showed empathy but did not seem to have experienced similar things in their own lives.

The influence of others parents over the situations many of the participants found themselves in was highlighted and further discussed in the focus groups undertaken by Sheryl and Melissa. The feeling of these participants whilst sharing their experiences was clear to see, as was the effect other parents had on their continued involvement in sport;

> There is niggling parents sitting in the grandstand putting you down, I am just trying to have fun, I do this seven days a week, this is my fun time and you’re calling me shit and saying I shouldn’t be where I am. They don’t realise that it’s my fun time, there is the constant put down from other parents. I remember playing a team called Phoenix and all their parents would be abusing players and laughing when they turned the ball over or did something. Every game against them they treated like it was game seven of the WNBA finals and it was just a domestic fun game that didn’t mean anything. (Sheryl, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> Their child is god's gift to the sport, doesn't matter if they are fucking terrible, even if they get 30 seconds a game their parents still think they are great. I remember playing a netball game and the team wasn't as good as our team. I mean they were younger and not as experienced. The girls' parents were sledging us all and they shouldn't be, teenagers get hammered by parents who might be twenty years older than them; they should be better than that. Imagine someone doing it to their little Olympian? Please. (Melissa, Focus group, 5/3/15)

A large portion of participants, led by experiences of Sheryl and Melissa, indicated their negative feelings toward these parents and the actions they undertook to make them feel 'horrible' during their sports participation. The participants indicated that regardless of skill and ability, a large number of parents involved in the clubs that these participants were involved in, were verbally and physically challenging and confronting to opposition children who played against or with their own child. Sheryl, Melissa, Amber, Bernadette and Camille suggest that these parents undertake these actions to 'put further pressure on you' and to 'discredit you and your abilities', all in the hope of making their own daughter look more impressive by putting down others. The work of Bronfenbrenner (1992) discussed the influence of parents as part of the Mesosystem area of his ecological systems model. This section of the model discusses the overall intertwined influence that family, parents, siblings, peers, school and work has over the development of individuals.

Stories shared by the participants indicated their concern as to the actions of opposition parents and the expectations and pressure they put on the players from the other team by behaving badly. Negative behaviour seemed to increase if their daughter was playing against a player who had been selected for elite teams or the like. These behaviours involved speaking loudly about the participants to others in order for the girls to hear it, cheering loudly and excessively when an opposition player missed a shot, goal or basket or turned the ball over, and jeering and abusive language when referring to the skill level of the opposition. Concerning enough that these behaviours occur toward the more skilled players, but the fact that the participants were aware of this and it took away the fun of the game and their participation added further pressure to them wanting to remain in sport.

The influence of boys and partners

This theme covers a number of elements that revolve around the participant's attraction to others. It also explores their desire to find a partner of the same or opposite sex and the expectations of being in relationships with others.

A large part of adolescent life is the commencement and development of sexual attraction to the opposite sex and in some instances the same sex (R. Connell, 1996; Currie et al., 2007). The development of those feelings and learning about attraction to others were all challenges faced by adolescent girls (M. A. Messner, 2000). In the majority of the participants in this study, they felt that it was expected that they were attracted to boys and that the participants' actions as sports people often reflected the level of this. Camille, Andrea and Melissa shared their experiences about the boys' influence over the actions of the participants in their focus group sessions as part of the data collection for this study;

> I think boys have a lot to do with the way I see myself. I had a boyfriend once and I used to go to the gym with my mum every single night. We would work out and I was toned and happy with my body but he used say don't go lifting too many weights you will be bulk and look like a man. This guy was a stick figure [other girls laugh] and didn't get the whole weights thing. I wasn't lifting weights like a man. I was hanging with my mum doing some toning weights and that's it. At the time I thought wow don't want him to think I am weird so I started to slow down doing it and I wish I didn't as I used to love hanging out with my mum. (Camille, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> Back then we obviously had a look at boys at school and at netball when they were there for footy or even at basketball camps and training, but never a serious relationship. Now I have a boyfriend and couldn't even imagine trying to play basketball or netball, doing school and seeing him as much as I need to keep our relationship working. (Andrea, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> Other girls have changed their life for boys. One girl I know moved out of her home to play husband and wife with her boyfriend. Others have done everything their boy wants them to or have done other things because their boyfriend wanted them too. One girl I know was playing representative netball and was a natural athlete that could have played like ANZ trophy or whatever it is called, but I reckon she gave it up because her boy wanted to start playing country level crap footy and he felt less of a guy because she wasn't there supporting him. (Melissa, Focus group, 5/5/15)

The importance of looking at and impressing boys during the adolescent years, especially in regional areas, is something all of the participants joked about and fully acknowledged as very important to them. Their desire to be seen as attractive to boys in their sporting club, social group and school was important and was something that

required large amounts of time and effort to do hair, makeup and dealing with enhancing personal presentation. This was indicated to the participants being of high importance to them and their examples shared in their focus groups were snapshots as to the importance of rural location. The importance of rural location was discussed in the work of Lennon (2012) where the construction and displays of gender varied depending upon the site in which they were being shown (Lennon, 2012).

Camille, Andrea, Melissa and Bernadette explained the importance of encouraging this type of attraction and is something that they enjoyed doing, and still do. However, some of the other lived experiences shared displayed a negative element to this attraction and the level of influence a boy could have over changing their decision-making regarding their performance or appearance. Feedback from Sheryl and Melissa indicated that they knew of or had had boyfriends in the past who expressed concern toward the participants' body shape and size in order for her to undertake more physical activity to "get fit". Additionally, the same can be said for Camille who indicated that her boyfriend at the time did not understand fitness and put pressure on her to stop the gym because he was scared she would 'bulk up' and 'look like a man'.

The pressure felt by participants to adhere to these expectations could be described as being stereotypical. These stereotypical expectations aligned to them by some of their partners and boys they were attracted to as 'intense'. Many boys that the participants had been involved with over their lives did not have a level of education as to realistic and attainable body images of girls. This resulted in boys increasing the pressure on the participants to reach these attainable levels. Some of these boyfriends put pressure on the participants to attend the gym for physical presentation while others did not want them to 'work too hard at the gym' in case the age-old myth came true and their girlfriend 'bulked up like a man'. Again, the influence of boys over the actions of the girls in this group were demonstrated via the experiences shared during their focus groups and interviews by Rebecca, Margot and Beth;

> I wasn't paying attention to the boy's side of things until much later on, but then I built my relationships through sport. Sport was an influence on that side of things for me as it showed me how to get along with others before I even looked at boys. The whole boy thing would have a factor now as an 18 and 19 year old; you now need to spend time with someone to create a relationship with them. I have friends who now spend much more time with

> their boyfriends than they did when they were younger, I think it is a natural progression and makes sense. (Margot, Focus group, 5/3/15)
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> I tried to impress boys when I was at school but not because I was attracted to them bit because if they liked me they wouldn't pick on me or bag me out. I have a partner now but during high school wasn't really interested at all, to be honest. I tried to dress well and look good but not to impress just to try and stop any picking on happening. (Rebecca, Interview, 15/6/15)
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> Boys weren't really important to me initially when I was at high school. Well they were but there was no real link between them and sport for me. I just played sport because I wanted to and would talk to a boy if I wanted to, but it wasn't the be all and end all. I remember being at a basketball tournament and had been talking to a boy for ages and he asked my friend if I liked him, I didn't even think anything about it, I was just talking. They weren't my world, you get what I mean? (Beth, Interview, 11/6/15)

Beth, Rebecca, and Margot displayed that they were not overly interested in attracting boys during their early years. However, they stated that the importance to spend more time with a partner to build relationships and that the seriousness of them increased with age. However, even when discussing relationships and boys, the idea of sacrifice again appeared in the lived experiences of the participants in this study, with girls faced with another challenge where they had to compromise their wishes and other tasks with spending time with their boyfriends or partners. The influence of boyfriends and partners were shared and further outlined in the experiences of Marley and Molly. These stories were shared during their focus group and interviews undertaken as part of the data collection phase of this study.

> I was pretty serious with sport, living in Victownville and training in the state capital city. I had a boyfriend who I was pretty serious with at the time. It often played on my mind as I wanted to move to the state capital city to better my sport but it played on my mind what would happen with him and me. The more I started training and being away I was worried about where the relationship would go but didn't want to hurt him as he is a good guy. I can see that maybe sometime in the future there will be a challenge with a partner as training is six times a week, including weekends and it is rough both physically and mentally. My hands are ripped up and rough, my core and upper body ache and I get tired very easily. My whole dream is to be a [sport name deleted] Olympian so it is clear that is me and that is who I am and I will do what it takes to make that happen. (Marley, Focus group, 5/3/15)
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> My boyfriend has been a positive influence on my sporting career because my partner plays a lot of sport. He has played junior and senior representative basketball and now plays senior football. His influence has made me want to stay in sport longer because it is important with what we do together. We both play for the same club in the city we live in. We go to training, we play, we know the same people in the club and have functions together and we

> catch up about what happened during the game and during training, it is an important part of our relationship and forms a strong link for us as a couple. (Molly, Interview, 17/6/15)

Several of the participants in this study mentioned boyfriends both past and present and discussed their influence on their involvement in sport. The majority of the participants who mentioned a partner indicated that their partner's influence was positive and that has assisted them in either staying in the sport they currently played or going back to a sport that they originally dropped out of earlier in their life. Shared experiences and shared topics of conversation about a club or sport were a common discussion point with partners who played sport at the same club resulting in a more positive experience about the sport at both her home and at the club.

Once again highlighting trends different to the other participants was Marley, who showed a desire to put her own sporting needs above the needs of having a partner. Her desire and need to train at an elite level were the foundation for many of the decisions she made and resulted in her moving to the state capital city for greater opportunities. This move saw her boyfriend at the time and their relationship became a required sacrifice by her. These sacrifices may have been difficult at the time, but Marley indicated that after the initial hurt, her sport and her own achievements took priority and control. She identified that she would like a partner but that they had to meet the requirements of her training load and that any boy in the future who wanted to date her would need to understand and appreciate this as it is 'part of her'. Andrea then shared her experiences relating to the influence her boyfriend had over her participation in sport. These experiences were shared during the focus group she participated in.

> My boyfriend has probably influenced me not to return to sport because with work and everything. He is not really a sportsperson but is involved in boat racing for fun and he does that during small portions of the year, There is already such a limited time to see each other with both of our university timetables, work and friends and our schedules don't really meet up that well. We have to plan time to be together so it's just like another thing you have to sacrifice to be able to earn a living and have a boyfriend. It's a bit hard but it is working for us because we are both not actively involved in sport. (Andrea, Focus group, 3/3/15)

Andrea, whose partner does not participate in sport, has mentioned the "positive influence" her partner played in encouraging her to not return to sport. The importance that the couple have put on their relationship has lead to every spare

minute being spent together, rather than playing sport. Bernadette, Amber and Sheryl mentioned that they were moving to that position and indicated that a possible point where a discussion regarding their involvement in sport may be ahead of them. Andrea's lived experience suggests that her boyfriend has a greater influence over her involvement in her participation in sport than she may actually realise. It could be suggested that his willingness to be involved in sport himself may have provided her with the support she needed to dropout and remain out of sport. The influence that the boys had over the participants was shown to extend to more than just the participant's partners. The influence of boys who the participants trained or played against was an important experience that Bernadette shared during her focus group.

> I played basketball and got into IADP (Intensive athlete development program,) in which we would go to overnight camps with boys and do drills with boys. As a girl I was always comparing myself to the boys and their athleticism and the things that they did that you couldn't do. As a girl that made you feel crappy because as a girl my standard was good but compared to boys it was pretty lame. Being compared to them sucked, especially at that age when your self-esteem isn't great anyway. I remember a camp drill we did where the boys and girl were in two lines and had to drive at each other, draw contact and score. How is that fair to have a boy and girl physically competing in that way? It not only hurt me physical but some of the boys thought it was funny to show us physically how much stronger they were. (Bernadette, Focus group, 3/3/15)

Not all of the influence boys have on girls is driven by attraction. In some instances, especially in sport, boys and girls were required to train together to meet the needs of governing sports organisations and elite training programs. Research has shown that in some regional settings this occurred more often than those in metropolitan areas due to the number of athletes in those cities and the level to which they are competent (Casey et al., 2009; Pierce, Liaw, Dobell, & Anderson, 2010). In the instance of the participants of this study, Bernadette, Sheryl, Amber, Molly and Charlotte explained that it was a common occurrence in basketball and that the feelings and experiences from training with boys often started their negativity toward the sport as it often embarrassed them and provided unfair comparisons making them feel poor about their abilities. Sheryl and Camille shared their experiences in relation to their experiences with boys during their sport playing time in their focus group discussions.

> I felt sick for days before camp. I am not a boy, will never be a boy, don't have the muscles of a boy so shouldn't be compared to a boy. I don't have the

> ability to shoot a full jump shot, as I'm not physically set up that way. Compare them to a girl's ability to have a baby, not fair is it?; I reckon we would have them covered in that area. (Sheryl, Focus group, 5/3/15)
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> When we were at netball camps it was girl versus girl with people even in skill and strength. Basketball camps were boys versus girls and I got hurt a few times by stringer and bigger guys. Coaches would say it would help our athleticism. It didn't it just hurt us physically and emotionally. (Camille, Focus group, 3/3/15)

Being compared physically to boys with greater levels of strength and athleticism, although designed to better the development of the girls, often had a negative effect on the girls, lowering their effort levels in the effort to not look 'silly' or 'like a dickhead'. This problematic approach was exacerbated when coaches would often compare the girls testing levels to those of the boys, putting down not only the individual girls but also the other girls that had tried to achieve their best against boys that are athletically and physically more developed than them. In several instances, these were the first negative connotations the participants experienced and started the negative move toward dropout from this elite type of training and sport. Sheryl and Camille shared their experiences and were supported by several other participants. Sheryl and Camille had these experiences with boys not only at sport and sports camps but also in the school setting. Rebecca also shared her experiences regarding boys and her experiences with them in a school environment. She shared these lived experiences in her interview;

> At school I would not want to get involved and participate with the boys in sport or PE [Physical Education] class because I would always worry that they would judge me if I mucked up something. I remember playing basketball on the courts or even footy on the oval and it was intimidating for me to be involved. Then during class when the numbers were smaller and the focus greater I found it easier to sit back or fake a sickie or not do sport because I was worried about what the boys would think and how they would judge me. (Rebecca, Interview, 15/6/15)

The pressure applied by boys and their actions not only has implications for girls at sporting clubs and within mixed-sex sporting camps, but also in sporting actions undertaken at school. The experiences of the participants indicate that the day-to-day involvement and mixing of girls and boys in sporting environments in mainstream physical education classes is inevitable. However, the pressure applied in this situation has shown through research and the lived experience of these participants to

be a mentally unsafe place where actions of the girls required changing in order 'to save face' and not be emotionally hurt (C. Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Reay, 2001).

The challenges of participating in sport and physical education classes at school were further shared by Rebecca and Bernadette in their focus group discussions. These experiences showed the challenges faced by the participants in this study and the pressure felt by them;

> PE class was challenging, as we would have only a few on each team and would be competing against each other in sports I was not good at. The boys didn't really bag us out but it was more of a built in worry that I would be judged or they would think of me in a lesser light. I would stop trying in sport classes because I didn't want to look bad to the boys who we were friends with; especially when some of my other friends were excellent at sport and could hold their own against the boys. (Rebecca, Focus group, 3/6/15)

> I looked like I didn't try in PE and even sometimes during sport training while the boys were around because I didn't want the boys to think I was shit and I tried to impress them. Although a fairly good sportsperson I was still not as strong or as good as the boys and it made me feel safer to not try as hard. (Bernadette, Focus group, 3/6/15)

Although not specifically linked with attraction, the need to be accepted by peers was discussed by Rebecca, Bernadette and others to be at its strongest during the adolescent years and during school times. Some of the participants were challenged to perform like a boy, or not perform to the best of their ability to save face. This saw many participants alter their whole demeanour to dodge situations that involved them playing sport. Rebecca and Camille even said that they faked an injury, while others faked illness or menstruation to not have to participate, in order to 'not be embarrassed' and to 'not be shown up' or 'picked on by the boys'. Rebecca, Charlotte and Margot further shared their lived experiences in relation to this as part of their interviews and focus groups;

> I would happily go to the swimming pool and do laps but when it came to school or class time I wouldn't want to be judged by the boys. I have seen what those boys could do if they didn't like a girl or guy. They would bag them out and make them look stupid. I didn't want to be one of them so there was no way I was going to show my body to anyone other than my friends or people I don't know. A few of the other girls felt the same way and they felt they were either going to be looked at or laughed at which isn't cool. (Rebecca, Interview, 15/6/15)

> I am happy with my body but I don't want the boys thinking I am fat or don't have big enough tits and then them making a joke about it. They can be really

> mean, I remember seeing a girl come to swimming sports and was laughed at and made to feel so terrible by the boys. I didn't want that happening to me or my friends. (Charlotte, Interview, 7/7/15)
>
> I know my body isn't the worst and I have been told by boys it is good, but I don't want to be judged by those fuckheads, so I just won't swim in front of them. I will go to a mates place, and usually do during summer and swim with them but not the rest of the boys. I have seen and heard what they say at swimming carnivals and when we are out so I won't be putting myself in that position. (Margot, Focus group, 5/3/15)

This perception is not only linked to the competency of skills and the ability to perform without ridicule at school but is also linked to body image. Rebecca and Margot identified that they felt comfortable swimming in bathers away from the school setting but felt that doing so during school class time opened them up to ridicule and judgment. Camille and Melissa shared their fears of these judgments, and in turn jokes. Camille and Melissa expressed concern about this type of ridicule and bagging. Body image is explored further in this chapter. Again, it could be said that the choice to leave a sport or a boyfriend is the responsibility of the female in the relationship. It could also be said that boys seem to feel that they are pardoned from making this type of decision and that the decision is expected from the female and not them.

The influence of peers

Peers and friendships form a large part of the life of an adolescent, especially female adolescents (Bukowski, Hoza, & Boivin, 1994; Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1993). Social inclusion and social interaction have been shown through literature to be of a high level of importance for girls and of much higher importance than their male counterparts (Hey, 1997; MacPherson et al., 2016; McElroy & Kirkendall, 1980). The participants in this study indicated the important role friendships and peers played in their day-to-day lives and the importance that peers both at school, sporting clubs and work play. Beth shared her experiences as part of her focus group discussion;

> So many of my friends experienced the whole peer pressure thing. I tried all the things teenagers try but I had supportive friends so nothing went crazy or got out of control. With sport as a platform for us all we knew about health and good decisions, this shared understanding sort of took away the whole peer pressure thing from our group. (Beth, Focus group, 3/3/15)

Peer pressure is an occurrence that is commonly linked to the lives of adolescent girls. This is where peers, and in some instances friends, put pressure onto individuals to make decisions and undertake actions that they wish for them to do, rather than decisions that they wish to make themselves (Clasen & Brown, 1985). Peer pressure was something that Beth, Rebecca and Andrea highlighted as an influence in their sporting and regular life. These participants and others acknowledged that peer pressure existed and that their friendships with girls they believed to be their good friends assisted them to navigate the challenges they faced. These pressures included, but were not limited to, undertaking risk taking activities such as the consumption of alcohol, drugs and unsafe sexual practices. Beth shared her experiences in relation to this and the pressure she felt, she shared these during her focus group;

> I think you have pressure from friends that don't play as much sport as you do, as they don't understand the level of pressure you're getting from coaches and teammates to play rather than socialise. I remember having disagreements with some friends about missing parties and stuff due to sport. One specific one was I missed a seventeenth party and lost a friend over it. She didn't get the fact that I had a state game in the state capital city and couldn't get back another way but team bus. The sports girls got it but the non-sports girls didn't. It's hard to commit to them, your school friends and work friends. They don't understand the commitment you have to sport and they put pressure on you to give up sport to see them. It all adds up into one massive pile and it sometimes becomes too much and makes you not want to do any sport at all anymore. (Beth, Focus group, 3/3/15)

The pressure felt by the girls was highlighted in Beth's description of her lived experience. It is clear from comments and experiences shared by Charlotte, Andrea and Molly that friends were classified by them depending upon where the friendships were formed (e.g. school, work, sport) and that the requirements of each of these classifications were different to each other. According to Bernadette, Molly, Charlotte and Marley, friendships formed in sport seem to be deemed as more important than other friendships and were perceived in general as being stronger than the other forms of friendships. The experiences of the participants suggest that the pressure from sport and the people involved in it, such as coaches and team managers is at a higher level than the pressure put on by friends and that in most instances the friends from non-sporting environments "just don't get it" (Sheryl, Focus group, 5/3/15). Amber, Sheryl, Margot, Charlotte, Bernadette and Molly indicated in their experiences that pressure from coaches existed to drop friends and drop social events

with these friends and that this became a uniting factor with sporting teammates and sport related peers. They shared the pressure as they are under pressure themselves and this has been shown to be a link that often drove the girls at sport to socialise with teammates. This situation made Molly, Charlotte, Bernadette and Margot uncomfortable and agreed with by the majority of the other girls in the focus groups. Almost all suggesting that they lost friends or had to choose to cease friendships due to participation in sport. This pressure resulted in many of the participants questioning the importance of friendships versus their participation in sport, with the friendships gained at sport keeping the participants in sport longer. Beth and Bernadette provided greater detail into their lived experiences whilst sharing information in the focus group and interview sections of the data collection for this study.

> I had really good friends from sport but many are still around as close friends. We have the same morals, values and I think that has shaped who I am, and they made me a better person. My three closest friends all came from sport and were at either different schools or in different year levels at school. This sort of told me that sport friends are stronger than school friends. Many years later and with us all not at school anymore some of us are still great friends, strong friends. (Beth, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> The girls you spend sport time with and you spend weekends and games and everything with your basketball friends and you see your school friends for five hours a day and they don't particularly have the same interests as you. My good friends are sport friends, both netball and basketball and they like the same things as me. We may not see each other every week but things remain as strong as ever when we do. I have played with some girls I didn't really like initially but being mutually involved in netball I sort of grew to like them because we liked the same things. (Bernadette, Interview, 2/7/15)

Friends have been shown to be important to all of the participants in this study with Molly, Camille, Beth and Margot suggesting through their experiences that being a good friend and having good friends are also of high importance. These participants were supported throughout all of the other focus groups where it was that indicated they felt that they had made solid friendships through their experience in sport and that those friendships have remained intact regardless of their dropout from sport. Molly, Charlotte and Bernadette indicated that the same cannot be said for school friends and that many have had these friendships cease or slow in their intensity after they finished their high school education. The girls indicated that the friendships they made during sport could be stronger than those made during school as they are built

on shared interests (sport) with greater investment into a shared goal or result binding the friendships together.

The influence of community expectations about femininity on dropout from sport

Femininity is a challenging and diverse topic for discussion and is often shaped by others. This theme explores the expectations of the community in relation to femininity and the influence it had on the participants.

A strong link exists between the stereotyping the community displays in relation to the females and the idea of 'femininity'. Although describing themselves as 'athletic' the girls also referred to themselves as 'feminine with a like for girly things' such as makeup and dressing up. Being seen as a 'girl' was important for all respondents and they did not see their involvement in sport as not being feminine. They did, however, indicate that others "didn't understand sport and the participation of females' and that many, especially boys, thought that girls who played sport were not feminine" (Charlotte, Interview, 7/7/15). Sheryl and Amber used the focus group and interview they were involved in to share their personal experiences in relation to what they felt were the stereotypes they faced and the challenges the participants faced while wanting to remain feminine;

> You know I feel like I have been stereotyped. I like to dress nice, I like to wear makeup, do my hair and dress nice even when I play basketball I would get judged on that because I was supposed to be some basketballer. You are allowed to be a girl and play sport, you are allowed to like makeup, you are allowed to like boys, and you're allowed to want to go to a party without some stereotype or weird look or bad reaction from a coach. Even if you go to a formal dinner for that sport you still get bagged out because look she is wearing a dress or wearing heels and all that stuff. How can we win?, we get bagged for being athletic and we get bagged for dressing nice. I love Saturday nights now cause I can be a girly girl, which means high heels, short skirt, make up, hair extensions. [smile] I love it but couldn't be both an athlete and a girly girl in the eye of the small-minded people I live and play sport around. I have been a girly girl since I was born and love it, so I chose being the girly girl. (Sheryl, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> I have never been a dress-wearing girl who puts on make up and goes out. I do like to look pretty though when I do but not for anyone else other than me. I reckon I have been stereotyped as an athlete and people think it is strange when I wear girl's clothes, do my hair and stuff like that. I think that is crap. Also, as a female sport player people automatically think I am a lesbian. When I was playing soccer I had many girls hit on me as they thought I was

> automatically a lesbian. People stereotype female athletes as not being able to feminine and more so gay. The majority of times they are wrong completely, especially in my case. (Amber, Interview, 2/7/15)

Sheryl and Amber felt that they were vilified through their desire to be an athlete and also a girl and that being both was not only possible, but also a reality, and something they enjoyed. These girls along with Camille and Bernadette mentioned on numerous occasions their love for dressing up and spending time being a girl by putting on make up, hair extensions and dressing up to go out to parties and to socialise with friends, leaving their athletic apparel and appearance behind. The desire to do this, the constant questioning the girls faced due to this and being deemed unacceptable by others in the clubs were driving reasons for Sheryl to question and then cease her involvement in sport. Again, the terms *sacrifice* and *compromise* were prevalent, with the girls having to make these to fulfil the ideals of others. This resulted in them leading two separate lives of being an athlete and a girl, as separate from each other as possible. Sheryl continued to share her experiences in this area in both her focus group and interview where she painted the picture of the challenges she faced while dealing with her femininity.

> I just feel like in sport especially basketball there is an expectation that you will rock up, no make up, hair up, not care and just be there to play the sport and not worry about whether you look good or bad. I've always taken pride in my appearance whether I'm going to bed or going to school and basketball was never an exception for me, people used to pick that out and take as a negative thing. They would pick it out in a way that would be teasing me, they knew they were trying to tease me but they would try and say it in a way that was just pointing it out. Seriously, no matter how many training sessions I would rock up to every week, I would get a comment. One that stands out that is like tom-boy-ish and stuff and to her; she probably didn't realise she was putting me down. One morning in particular, she came to state tryouts and I had make up on (I always wear make up to basketball) and she goes ''ohhhh clearly you got up early enough to put your face on''. Like just in front of a heap of people. I was like all self-conscious to ever wear make up in front of her again and that was probably like a big thing that stood out. (Sheryl, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> Ever since I was a little girl I've just, I like it (wearing makeup), I like the way it makes me feel and look and I do it no matter where I go. I have been dressing up since I was a little girl and never grew out of it, I love it and I love looking good. I don't ever apologize for that and won't ever let anyone stop me from being me. (Sheryl, Interview, 18/6/15)

Sheryl's sharing of experiences in this area was often emotional and was very heart felt and her experiences were shared and agreed to by members in her focus group.

Being picked on for wanting to go to sport looking 'good' with makeup and hair having been done was seen by the coaches and other players as something negative and something that they didn't wish to do. Sheryl was teased and the coaches made constant comments about her appearance, making her feel uncomfortable. Amber and Melissa shared the focus group with Sheryl and acknowledged similar instances in their own teams but did not identify it happening to them. This constant feeling of pressure and not being safe inside her own team was one of the most prominent driving factors for Sheryl to withdraw from her initial chosen team sport. Her ability was recognised by governing bodies with her having represented the state and the region in her chosen sport of basketball but now plays only netball, where this type of femininity she indicated was 'accepted' and 'normal'. Additionally, in two years of playing Netball with her current club not a single instance of bullying or taunting regarding her appearance has occurred. The issue of femininity was discussed further with the lived experiences of Melissa and Amber shared throughout their focus groups;

> I was more interested in playing in our tree house outside and rather playing cricket with the boys than sitting inside playing with dolls. I hardly had dolls. Never really cared for them, I'd rather be outside. I love being out on the farm and you know being a little feral pretty much. We used to have a piggery [other girls laugh] so… that could say a lot. (Melissa, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> You don't have to wear a dress and makeup to be a girl and feminine. I can be a girl wearing track pants and a jumper. I will do my hair but wear trackies, jumper, and uggs and chill, it's your own choice, live with it. (Amber, Focus group, 5/3/15)

Not all of the girls expressed similar desires to be seen as a 'girly girl' or to do the 'whole make up and dress thing'. Melissa, one of the more outspoken members of the group, displayed her displeasure for the whole 'girly thing' and outlined in depth her own experiences. Melissa almost had a level of disdain for the story being told by Sheryl, because of her desire to remain feminine, indicating that 'each person had a choice to make and that they had to live with it'. This did not foster any anger or aggression with both girls acknowledging the opinion and experiences of each other and suggesting in concert that it was 'wrong that a girl should have to feel bad for how she looks'. The self labelled, 'non feminine girl', Melissa also indicated that she would not like to have the shoe on the other foot and had actually been tormented for not being a 'dress wearer' and for not 'doing the whole Saturday night dress up

thing'. Although not directly impacting on her withdrawal from sport, Melissa felt it important to acknowledge that she had seen girls in her own experiences suffer pain and anguish due to the torment of others caused by differing opinions of 'what is being feminine and what isn't' and what others 'expected people to look like in certain circumstances'. Charlotte and Margot experienced these differing opinions of others and shared their experiences in their focus groups discussions.

> I have had people tell me that when I have been lifting weights that I don't want to lift to much as I will start looking like a guy or will look manly. This comes from mainly boys; it was a boyfriend initially but has been other male friends. They don't understand the whole thing and feel threatened I reckon. In order to get where I want I need to be strong and people who don't do sport don't get it. (Charlotte, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> You can get girls that go to gym and do light machines because they don't want go get too muscly and all those type of male words. They might want to do heavy weights but girls don't want to take the stereotype from boys that they will end up muscly. It is dumb as hell but boys will be boys. (Margot, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> Males feel threatened and they don't want to be with someone that is fitter than them or has more definition or muscles. I know several boys that make jokes about a girls arms and shoulders being like a guy when realistically they are just toned. The media is then portrayed that men should be muscly and us pretty, look at WAGS (Wives And Girlfriends) on the Brownlow, how many of them play sport. I see footballers wives that are skinny as hell and look unhealthy; girls think they should look like that too. (Margot, Focus group, 5/3/15)

The feminine body image ideal is something that has been discussed earlier in the area of community expectations regarding to femininity. However, I felt it important to be discussed again under the section of femininity. The lack of education in the community regarding females' use of gym and weights is something the girls felt affected them negatively. Charlotte, Margot and Camille were put under pressure by boys to not be more 'manly' than them, and to not change their body shape to make them 'not look like a girl anymore'. They felt the media also displayed this message to not look muscly, but to look like 'WAGS'.

This study took place prior to the first female UFC [Ultimate Fighting Championship] fight in Australia where advocate for female health and fitness Rhonda Rousey, made numerous statements regarding her femininity and her ability to mix this with fitness and hand to hand combat. Regardless of people's political opinion on the sport and its place in the community, the words she mentions and

shares with the media during the months October and November 2015 (Oates, 2015; Pandaram, 2015), should be used to assist and educate girls and men. Again, although not a definitive factor in relation to the dropout of girls from sport, another layer of complexity is added to a complex situation the girls face and required the girls to again sacrifice their own happiness and in some instances health to adhere to the stereotype expectations of others. Marley's personal experiences differed somewhat from those of the other participants and she shared these in her focus group session;

> I am not what other people expect me to be body wise. When you go on camp and see people for the first time in months you wonder what they are thinking and if they are saying 'shit she looks so unfit' or my competitors look and think she is out of the sport, great. I have lumps and bumps and that is just me being a women. [other girls smile and nod heads in agreement] You can take it two ways though, cower out and have fun or come back and be better. I had a training partner who was an amazing athlete, broke records, jumped amazing heights before the age of sixteen and she then hit puberty and when she got boobs a butt. People kept telling her she needed to lose weight to continue because you need to be thin and athletic to do pole vault. She took that negatively and found it difficult having people tell her what to do. Having that in her head I think drove her away from the sport. (Marley, Focus group, 5/3/15)

Another of the great battles that the participants faced was when their bodies did not allow them to cover up anymore and their body shape was visible to all. It is commonly accepted that puberty changes the way a girl looks and changes her body, often resulting in the girl not being happy with these changes or the way in which they were perceived (Buchholz et al., 2008; Carron et al., 2004). In this instance, Charlotte and Rebecca shared their concern in relation to others perception of their changing bodies and the fact that their femininity was on show. Discussion regarding girls who have dropped out due to this type of experience was strong with at least ten girls being identified across each of the groups as having dropped out of sport due to the perceptions of others questioning their body changes and the visible elements of femininity. These instances were defined to belong to athletics and swimming, both using uniforms that showed off large parts of the body. Charlotte and Margot indicated that potentially a change in uniform may have saved these girls from negative experiences and allowed them to remain in sport longer. It could also be perceived that this problem is larger with the acceptance of the female body in the

community not being as prevalent as they should be. Sheryl and Melissa took these experiences further and shared them in their focus group sessions;

> A lot of my friends are dancers or models, I play basketball, and I felt like a man when compared to them. My friends are very petite and I was this tall basketballer who has to wear ugly jerseys, yellow and these girls get to wear pretty little dance costumes. [other girls laugh] I felt that feminine difference and that they were able to be girls all the time and I didn't. I had to wear masculine uniforms and people stereotyped me as a man because of that. (Sheryl, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> How can you be feminine when you're wearing big ass jerseys and shorts and look like gangsters playing soccer and basketball? The gear we wore to play is seriously based on the men's outfits and it doesn't make you look good in anyway at all. At least I look like a girl when I play netball. (Melissa, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> I don't want to look like a hooker but I have a good kit so I want to show it off, but can't in the men's basketball uniform I wear now. They are jerseys that are massive and are cut badly while the shorts are horribly oversized and feel like three quarter track pants. Yuk. (Sheryl, Focus group, 5/3/15)

A discussion point during the group discussions was uniforms and how some sporting uniforms did not flatter a girls' figure and allow them to look feminine, while others overly show the female body and don't leave anything to the imagination. Bernadette, Camille, Molly, Sheryl and Charlotte who are involved in netball stated that their uniforms were more feminine than basketball and other sports. They indicated that their uniforms were the most feminine across the sports and that they allowed for a girl to remain feminine and to display feminine attributes. While Amber, Beth, Margot and Melissa who played soccer, basketball and AFL felt that their uniforms were the exact same uniforms of those worn by men, deleting any possible element of femininity and making them often feel like they had minimal or zero femininity.

Recently the American National Lingerie League commenced play in the United States and has been replicated here in Australia and has been called the Legends Football League. This is where the female players wear only underwear and protective gear and play American football and play in indoor stadiums in front of large crowds (Knapp, 2015). When it was suggested by me that the girls should change uniforms to something like this for their sports the resounding response was no, with two girls expressing their instant dismay with the responses "fuck that shit" (Margot, Interview, 7/7/15) and "no thanks I will stick to my manly uniform rather

than look like that" (Melissa, Focus group, 5/3/15), again showing the influence body image has over the girls, even in their times of jest.

A furore has occurred in the media in regards to the sexualisation of the Legends League athletes and their skimpy uniforms. Melissa, Amber and Rebecca felt that there must be a happy medium but no one has found it yet. The WNBL (Women's National Basketball League) tried body suits for many years and that did not work and the WNBA (Woman's National Basketball Association) resisted this trend and stuck to jerseys and shorts, driving the trend across the world in women's sport. Current sporting leagues show that there is yet to be a happy medium found and there are only extremes, the lingerie league extreme and the WNBA extreme, where one completely displays the female form and its femininity while the other drapes it in an oversized jersey and shorts.

The influence of coaches

The influence of coaches on the participants in this study was a conversation point that evoked considerable emotion. The experiences from the participants in relation to coaches has been shown to be negative with coaches placing large levels of pressure onto players, often resulting in them dropping out of sport.

The positioning of this theme is open for debate and it could be deemed that it could be positioned in the individual themes area of the study. After revision of the lived experiences of the participants the influence of individual coaches was strong on the girls individually, however the influence of coaches was larger as it took place in club contexts and involved multiple girls. Using this rationale it was decided that it would be positioned in the community themes area of the thesis.

Coaches play the largest role in the lives of many young athletes, second often only to their parents (Hellstedt, 1987; McMeeking & Purkayastha, 1995). In the case of these participants, their experiences with coaches varied dependant on the level of sport they had been involved in. The girls played a combination of elite junior, elite senior, semi-elite junior and domestic competitions with all levels having different coaches who had their own individual personalities that were shown in their coaching style. A number of these coaches provided negative experiences to the

girls, while very few displayed characteristics that inspired and kept the girls in sport. The lived experiences of the girls in this section were particularly extensive and the experiences shared by them were done so in both focus group and interviews. Beth and Sheryl were able to share their own experiences in both of these forums;

> I think a lot of coaches can put a lot of pressure on people, especially young girls. But to be a coach I think you need to not only know how to coach the sport but also be able to deal with emotions, be more understanding and be more on the players level rather than just yell at them. I have had two great coaches that did that, both in netball. They understood their players and what they had to do to get the best out of them. I didn't see that in any other sport I played, the netball coaches seemed to be the most rounded and skilled. (Beth, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> I can list may times after VJBL [Victorian Junior Basketball League] games where I had a coach, who would literally sit me down and point to me tell me I was the reason we lost that game. He literally pointed me in the chest and said that. We were playing a game in the state capital city and my mum and dad didn't go to the game because they had work and I went down on the team bus. I missed two shots late in the game and was verbally abused afterwards for losing the game. Those two must have been the only two shots missed in the game hey? I didn't take that type of coaching as a let's go and get better and fix this, I took it as a fuck you and it started the process to me quitting the sport. (Sheryl, Interview, 18/6/15)

Many coaches that the girls have experienced brought such negativity and vitriolic approaches to their coaching that had negative influences on the girls in this study. Abuse and verbal attacks seemed to be commonplace amongst some of the coaches the girls had experienced, especially in the sports of basketball and soccer. The experiences of the research participants suggested that netball coaches had fewer incidents of abuse and displayed characteristics the girls felt were far more conducive to promoting good play and improvement. The participants who identified their main sport as netball were Beth, Bernadette, Camille and Molly and they felt their coaches showed patience, understanding, and empathy and shared results (both good and bad) with the players. The girls playing in more than one sport, Amber, Charlotte, Bernadette, Melissa and Andrea indicated that their coaches missed a lot of these attributes and that the majority of their experiences with them was negative. Bernadette, Beth and Sheryl shared their experiences in their focus group and interviews in relation to the coaches they had over their sporting journeys;

> I did have a coach, initially I thought she was amazing, she played WNBL she told us all these stories about her experiences when she played college

> and senior representative level and it was awesome and a little inspirational. But then her wanting to win overruled that and she took the fun out of the sport. We were punished for everything, weren't allowed to play and the whole mood of the team and squad lost all of its full and became anything but I remember being punished for the team dropping ball in a drill we were doing. I have been punished before using that drill that concentrates on ball control but this, her punishment was excessive and even though players were pulling out injured or physically sick she kept on punishing us. This was the first of many times. (Bernadette, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> One of the reasons was the coach and I remember when I used to play against him and I remember clearly, he used to scream out on the sidelines "she can only drive, make her shoot, she can't shoot". He used to yell "she can't shoot, make her shoot, make her shoot" and it used to make me so sad and I'd try and like prove him wrong and when I missed I used to just feel like an idiot. (Sheryl, Interview, 18/6/15)

> I remember one coach I had at netball who made everything fun and just cared about us getting better. The netball coaches I had were so much better than the basketball ones. They cared about each of us individually and helped us get better before winning was even discussed. It was so much fun, I loved it. (Beth, Interview, 11/6/15)

As the conversation progressed, several of the girls, Bernadette, Sheryl and Beth indicated their concern over the degree of focus on winning that some of their coaches displayed. Several of their coaches displayed attributes that were about developing players and allowing them to have fun while they played sport, while many of the others did not display these attributes and showed an interest in only winning. This win at all cost attitude shown by the coaches took the fun away from the game and made these girls dislike going to games and training. The types of attributes mentioned by Sheryl, Charlotte, Camille and Andrea were the tone used by the coach and also the way in which the coaches spoke to the players. The use of abusive language, intimidating tones, obscenities and also threatening body language was commonplace in some of the coaches who these girls had experienced. The majority of these negative coaches were shown to be involved in basketball, resulting in a significant level of negativity toward those coaches and the sport by the girls. For the first of many instances several of the girls, Camille, Andrea, Molly, Amber, Sheryl, Melissa and Margot said that they felt concern that some of the coaches that made their sporting experiences 'hell' were still involved and doing it to others who currently played.

The participant's indicated that the attributes they saw in a positive light were an interest in the players to a higher level than an interest in themselves and their own needs. They showed care for the players and when providing direction did so in an energetic, caring and educational way that made the players feel better about themselves and better about the learning experiences that had just occurred. There was no clear delineation between the genders of the coaches and whether they showed negative or positive attributes, both genders were represented on each side of the coaching line. Both male and female coaches were shown to have the ability to be both a positive and negative coach who has a massive hold over the future of their players. Research and the lived experiences of the participants indicated that the negative coaches had a higher prevalence of commencing or causing dropout from sport amongst their players, with the positive coaches being held in great light by the girls involved and not having such a negative influence (Bennie & O'Connor, 2010; Goudas et al., 2001; I. Robertson, 1987). Charlotte, Sheryl and Margot shared their experiences about the negativity they dealt with in their experiences in sport.

> With the coach making me feel horrible about the sport and basically causing me to dropout I don't like basketball at all anymore. She broke me down through her lying and making me leave my teammates and friends after they knew the situation I was in with my netball commitments. I really liked basketball and I felt I was good at it, until that season. She would abuse us and punish us and then make sneaky comments to others in earshot to belittle girls in the team. She just made me feel shit about it. I just didn't feel confident while she was constantly cutting me and my friends down and it made me hate something that I loved. I resent her for that and always will and so does my friends. (Charlotte, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> I remember I used to go to state tryouts and camps, whenever a camp was coming up I would literally cry the night before, I would cry my eyes out and say I don't want to go, and mum would say just do, it'll be over and done with. [long pause] Mum literally had to drag me out the door to get me to go. I literally used to cry like a baby before a camp. The coaches were horrible, especially the head coach who made I think at least 30 girls cry and she enjoyed it. (Sheryl, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> I was kinda upset at first when I quit basketball. When the whole bullshit happened where that bitch made my friends choose between sports after saying things were ok made me sad because she lied to some really honest and trusting people. I can count more than 10 girls that have quit because of her and the club has put her back in coaching again. I now have a fuck you attitude toward anything to do with that club and her. They don't care about the people that have had their lives changed and some of the girls are still dealing with the pain of having to give away a sport that they or their families had played forever. It would have been easier in a metro town as the girls

> could have changed clubs but in the country, we don't have that luxury. (Margot, Interview, 7/7/15)

The experiences of Sheryl and Margot highlighted the way a coach can make the participants feel when they do express those negative attributes. The actions of this type of coach were described as concerning by Melissa who believed that action should be taken to ensure this type of person does not have access to children, regardless of their experience. To have numerous girls express the fact that they cried and felt that the sport they loved had been taken away from them by coaches who are still involved in the sport and the club was a major concern for Margot, Charlotte, Andrea, Sheryl and Melissa. Margot and Melissa in separate focus groups displayed concern that these type of coaches were still involved in clubs and that they were worried about the amount of other negative experiences they were forcing upon girls. They implored the basketball and other sporting clubs to review the behaviours of these coaches and asked me to look at dropout of girls in the last two years in the club at some time in the future. Coaches are in positions of responsibility, and besides a parent, have been shown in the literature to have major influences over the actions of the players they care for.

The experiences of the girls in this study vary immensely. Many of the girls played multiple sports and these experiences put them in the position to compare sports and the coaches they had in those sports. Amber and Bernadette were two of the girls who played more than one sport and they shared their experiences during their focus group discussions.

> I had a coach once that would make me pay for the things that I didn't do right in her sense. If I missed training or something, I had something else on, and then she wouldn't play me for a couple of quarters. I remember when my parents were in the process of divorcing they would fight and I would end up at training late. I would get punished for it as the coach said it was my fault I should organise my parents. Um so yeah, it sort of seemed like she was like trying to get back at me sort of thing and it really hurt. She didn't take the time or show the care to actually see if I was ok, she just punished me. (Amber, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> I was playing netball in the state capital city for a like, development Victorian Netball League (VNL) team, so I had to train down in the state capital city twice a week and one of those days was the same day we trained with the hometown team. So I would obviously put the state capital city team first, you know, going down to training because it was a higher intensity and a higher level, playing netball. And I thought that she might be supportive of

> that because I was playing at a higher level and maybe that someone in her team was trying to improve or whatever. But she just sort of saw it as me not being a team player for her and me um, ditching her team to play for a better team. And like when I would miss the training she would yeah, play me for one quarter of a game and stuff. (Bernadette, Focus group, 3/3/15)

Many of the girls indicated that they were involved in numerous sports with many of them excelling in more than one. Charlotte, Margot, Marley and Bernadette excelled in two sports, Camille, Molly, Amber and Beth also excelled in multiple sports. As they continued to develop their games and moved closer to senior sport many of them were challenged to make a choice between sports. Many of the girls involved in this study seemed to have the decision to make between netball and basketball with one of the other girls making the choice between netball and athletics. Some coaches and some administrators of clubs, through their actions, showed that they supported literature that suggested that early specialisation was recommended (Baker, 2003; Hensch, 2006; Moesch, Elbe, Hauge, & Wikman, 2011). While other coaches and clubs did not have their own position on the selection of one sport and of early or late specialization, the pressure they put on girls to choose a sport often influenced their overall dropout. Charlotte, Bernadette, Amber and Sheryl experienced this first hand and shared these experiences during their focus groups and interviews;

> She (coach) called the meeting with all the parents and the players and started talking to us about commitment and how we have got to be committed to the program and she said your priorities should be your family, school, and your sport of choice and then apart from that you should eat and sleep. That is what she said to us, and I will never forget that. She then pulled me and the other girls aside and attacked us about our choice and told us that a final decision on which was our sport of choice was overdue and needed now. To be honest if netball would have made me choose then, I probably would have chosen basketball, just because I think it was the fact that she had said at the start of the season its fine and its doesn't matter, and then turned back around and said you have to choose now. (Charlotte, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> That coach ruined mine and a lot of other girls' whole basketball experience. I really liked her at the start of the season. I thought she was really enthusiastic and I liked the way that she coached. I thought she was really tough, I thought that she was really helping us improve and everything and then little things that started to happen and the other girls started to pick up on stuff. Because I didn't see what was happening to the other girls and it wasn't happening to me, I sort of turned a blind eye. Then when it did start happening to me, I was really upset and I remember it was game that we played, it was my first game back from injury and I didn't play well. She attacked me on. I was upset and that was the first time I'd really noticed what the other girls were talking about with her. I was very upset after the game. I

> was young and she forcefully made me call her up and apologise to her for crying and then I really didn't want to go the next day but I thought it was the best thing to do because we had a double header (two games on a weekend) that week. (Bernadette, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> With D league I remember I trained for a while and I used to get so scared when she would text me and wanted me to train, and I used to literally like if my phone buzzed I would freak out. I wouldn't want to look at the message and I didn't want to train because I was terrified of it and more so her. (Sheryl, Interview, 18/6/15)

> I remember one time at a D league training we were doing a drill and I dropped a ball. I don't know I fucked up the drill basically, and I just remember her screaming at me and I honestly think that's when I stopped coming to training. (Amber, Interview, 2/7/15)

Unfortunately, in the situation of Bernadette, Charlotte and Margot, a coach went against proven literature and forced them to make a choice between sports well before the suggested age of specialisation (Baker, 2003; Hensch, 2006; Strachan, 2009). According to the experiences of Bernadette, Charlotte and Margot, that same coach made promises to the players and their parents to allow them to keep playing both sports and that the coach would take additional players to cover any clashes between the sports. This was shown to be a mistruth and the girls were made to make a decision regarding their sporting futures. The decision and inconsistent position of the coach was backed by the administration of the club and according to these girls over 10 girls left the sport because of this. The lived experiences of the participants indicated concern that the coach still remains active in the club to this day and none of the girls she coach remained involved in the sport. Charlotte and Margot felt very strong about that coach still being involved and had dire concerns for other girls that may have experienced the same pressure to dropout due to this coach's action. These actions and the negative actions of other coaches were shared in the experiences of Bernadette, Sheryl and Margot during their focus group meetings;

> I have sacrificed homework to play sport, I remember staying awake until two in the morning on many school nights to finish homework because I had training and was scared to ask for a session off to finish the work. Especially in year twelve, the coaches one-way mind to win didn't make it easy to actually get homework done on time as you couldn't miss a session, our expected time to arrive at training got earlier and our finish time later. I was scared to call and ask to miss a session due to homework I needed to finish. (Bernadette, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> You're too scared to tell the coach you can't come to training because you know their reaction won't be supportive. I asked once when I had an exam the

> next day and she screamed at me and then punished the rest of the team when I didn't go to the session. I passed the exam but couldn't stop feeling bad about the fact I made my friends be punished. (Sheryl, Focus group, 5/3/15)
>
> I was really sick one time and was so scared of this coach that I didn't want to deal with the repercussions of not attending a session, I was so sick I was vomiting in the bin on the side of the court. [other girls shake heads] She came over to me and told me to stop being soft and to harden up and that was pretty much where I lost it and gave up. Then when I went home and was ill for the next three days she talked me down to my teammates and suggested I was faking. (Margot, Focus group, 5/3/15)

As discussed earlier in this chapter, adolescent girls face the challenges of changing priorities, especially school and work commitments. Some coaches were interested in compromising with some of the girls such as Sheryl and Amber, regarding homework and work clashes, while some other coaches were so negative that they made the girls feel terrible about the conflicts they faced. The girls outlined several instances where some coaches did not provide any form of assistance or compromise with the girls who had homework to do or study to achieve that clashed with training. Andrea, Beth and Margot shared this issue and other issues relating to the actions of coaches and the influence they had on the girls in this study;

> I remember being shit scared of the older woman that coached me at under fourteen when I was playing basketball, As I am a bit older now it just makes me wonder how the hell someone like that could be in charge of children playing sport. She would never swear but would abuse and talk down to us all the time. We were little girls and it was scary and I look back now and honestly think it bordered on child abuse. [head nods from others] Seriously we were twelve and she used to just abuse us, seriously clubs should look into that sort of stuff it goes undealt with. Crazy thing is she is still coaching now. (Andrea, Focus group, 3/3/15)
>
> I wonder how those sorts of people can actually be allowed to coach kids. I see that she is still involved now; clubs just don't realise the damage long term that these sorts of coaches actually do to kids. (Beth, Interview, 11/6/15)
>
> They will literally let any Tim, Bob or Jerry come in and coach and not even know who they were. Each season a new coach or assistant coach would just lob up and be coaching the next minute. I remember two assistant coaches coming in and out one season; no one knew if they were here for good or just five minutes. It felt like people could just walk off the street and get a coaching job. I would never want my children to be put under the supervision of these people. Worst thing is several of them still coach and the basketball club has done nothing about it. The netball club have stronger rules in place as does the footy club, but basketball does not. (Margot, Interview, 7/7/15)

Being scared of their coaches again seemed to be something that was exclusive to the basketballers in the group such as Andrea, Molly, Camille, Charlotte and Margot. Other sport-playing girls such as Beth and Amber did not share these experiences of being scared of their coaches. The participants who identified basketball as one of their sports felt that many of the coaches knew that players in their team, were scared of them and that they enjoyed and bragged about it to other coaches. When Sheryl, Melissa and Camille discussed being forced to train while sick and having pressure put on them while ill, resulted in them training because of their fear for the coach, a level of anger surfaced. They supported the club and backed this abuse, didn't support the girls and felt they did not receive support from the club in stopping this type of action. The participants also stated that this sort of action, shown by specifically one female coach bordered on abuse, and they suggested she promoted it by telling other coaches who "her players were shit scared of her" (Melissa, Focus group, 5/3/15). Yet again Melissa and Camille expressed their emotional concern for other girls this coach has had an influence on. Charlotte indicated that although her (the coach) 'WNBL experience and college experience was impressive' they were worried that her 'involvement in the set up of a new club, would expose lots of others girls to her abusive and narcissistic behaviour and would result in her killing the career of many other girls'.

Again, the girls, specifically Margot questioned how a club, and in fact a sport, could allow this to take place and how 'those coaches are still coaching and doing the same thing now'. It begs the question as to how many girls have stayed away from sport because of this type of coach and how many other girls, that have not signed up for this study, have withdrawn due to abusive, negative and self-centred coaching attitudes from this coach and coaches like her. Sheryl and Margot shared their experiences in relation to this topic and the negativity they dealt with during their sport participation period;

> It was like a big cycle sort of thing. Like being yelled at, feeling like shit and then trying hard and being run into the ground. It was just a constant cycle of trying and not being good enough, not feeling good enough, and eventually it just got too much. One night after a VJBL (basketball) game I was the captain and I didn't play very well but the coach kept me on the whole game expecting that I would eventually do something and I just had a shit game. He just said in front of everyone Sheryl you are the reason we lost that game, and just screamed at me in front of everyone. I then worked harder in the next

> training and the same thing happened. Why bother trying when you were gonna get hammered by the coach anyway? (Sheryl, Interview, 18/6/15)

> Not just in sport but in everything, if a girl is called dumb at fourteen they might laugh and think its funny, but for it to be ongoing then it gets to you, and for a coach to say you're shit is different to saying you need to do things better, which we all need to do. A basketball coach I had would yell and scream and say I was shit to my face and then again to my teammates when I wasn't even there to defend myself. I couldn't keep doing it, I had to leave, and she was slowly killing my spirit and insides. (Margot, Interview, 7/7/15)

Sheryl referred to this type of ongoing abuse as the "circle of abuse". That term, and others similar to it, became a common reference point for the other girls during their discussions regarding coaches. Comments similar to this in other focus groups from Margot, Camille and Andrea uncovered a level of abuse from basketball coaches that was ongoing and had a major influence on the girls under their control. These girls, especially Melissa, indicated that 'numerous instances of constant abuse, then apologies, then abuse again' in front of others had occurred that resulted in this type of activity becoming 'acceptable' to people surrounding the team as they often only saw the apology and not the abuse. The types of abuse outlined by Bernadette, Camille, Andrea, Molly and Melissa varied from verbal abuse in front of others, to emotional abuse also in front of teammates and other people. These girls displayed their concern and mentioned the disturbing effect that it had on girls. Melissa, Beth and Camille stated that this type of behaviour and the apparent non-action from the club begged the question as to if player welfare is a priority of the clubs;

> My netball coach yelled at us once and was up in front of the club committee straight away and hauled over the coals. The welfare of the players was always paramount by the netball club. That lady was sacked from coaching at the end of the season and all the parents were summoned to meet and the issue discussed. The way other sports run things up here is second rate. (Beth, Interview, 11/6/15)

The experience of netballers and other, non-basketball, sports players in this study showed a far more positive experience than those participants who indicated basketball a their prime sport, with the player's welfare seemingly higher on the agenda of their clubs and associations of the non-basketballers. A seemingly innocuous incident where a netball coach yelled at Beth and her teammates in public resulted in disciplinary action against the coach.

The influence of the participants perceived competence

The ability to complete a sporting task at a level acceptable to others was identified as competency by the participants involved in this study. Completing their sporting pursuits in front of others, the participants felt it important to not stand out in a negative way. The pressure to be competent in front of others made some girls select to not participate at all and sit out and in some instances not play sport at all in places where girls and boys mixed their participation. This competency issue was discussed during several interviews and focus groups. Rebecca, Bernadette and Sheryl shared their lived experiences in their interviews in relation to their view of competency;

> I was never going to be the best at sport. I know I wasn't really good but I tried my best. I just wasn't going to try my best in front of boys, as I just didn't want to look like a retard. I would pull out or just not try at school sports to stay under the radar and away from the attention of the boys. (Rebecca, Interview, 15/6/15)

> I started all of my sports young and feel as though I continued on with those sports because I had the confidence and didn't seem to be one of those kids that were on the bench. Right the way through my junior sport I was either one of the best players or was one of the players that picked up the games pretty quick. Right from under twelve netball and basketball I played a fair bit and didn't spend too much time on the bench. I felt like I was good at it and without a doubt if I didn't feel like I was good at it I would have stopped. (Bernadette, Interview, 2/7/15)

> I felt like sometimes if you look like you're trying and you're an absolute dud that it looks better than when you're just not trying at all. I was not as good as the other girls so if I looked like I was trying it would shine through that I wasn't. So I just didn't try so I didn't look bad. (Sheryl, Interview, 18/7/15)

The importance of girls showing themselves as being competent has been highlighted through the experiences from these focus groups and interviews. Bernadette and Rebecca were the two main voices in this area that were concerned with the way their skill levels came across in front of others. They linked looking competent to looking attractive to others or being socially acceptable to others. These girls believed that they looked competent when they showed skills and abilities that didn't make them stand out' and allowed them to not provide any fuel for people to pick on them. Additionally, not wanting to look like bad in front of friends or boys was shown by Rebecca, Bernadette and Andrea to be very important, as they wanted to remain as attractive to the boys and to not have their position in their social groups influenced;

> You personally get the glory for what you do in an individual sport like pole vault and in a team sport like netball you have to depend on others as well. So I think maybe that's why I prefer pole vaulting to netball. I like knowing that it's just up to me. Its not up to if someone gets a goal in or does a bad pass. I either jump the height or make an international team/representation or I don't. And that's all on me (Marley, Focus group, 5/3/15)

Marley strongly indicated that her desire to trust the skills of others often waned and that she could only trust her own skills. She didn't want that to paint her teammates badly as she loved them, but her dropout from team sport and inclusion into individual sport allowed her to not have to trust the performances of others. Showing her own competence in her sport, and being seen as successful in that sport, took that pressure away from Marley. Her national and international achievements have proved her competency and her high level of success in the eyes of her peers and her family and friends has also proven it to them. This made Marley feel positive and respected justifying her decision to move to an individual sport.

Responding to pressure

The word "pressure" has been linked to almost every lived experience of the girls in this study. Three types of pressure were identified through the experiences of the participants, these were personal pressure, pressure from others and pressure applied to meet community and sport expectations. These experiences suggest that the pressure being felt by adolescent girls is immense and growing, and is having a negative effect on their continued involvement in sport. The girls in this study have discussed pressure and its multitude of origins toward playing sport, continuing in sport and *'how'* they should play sport. Other life pressures exist and have been experienced by these girls and combined together have had a negative effect on the girls and have lead to premature dropout from sport. Sheryl, Beth and Camille all further shared information in their interviews regarding the experiences they had dealt with throughout their sport involvement. The shared stories of the participants talked about pressure and what they had dealt with;

> I have never felt as many pressures as I have in the last three years with school, sport and my boyfriend. I had to get rid of a few things, namely my boyfriend and sport. In the social netball I am playing there is no pressure to do well, there is no pressure to win or lose, and you go to have a bit of fun. The coach and teammates just are there for the same reason, enjoyment. Something I haven't experienced in a long time. (Sheryl, Interview, 18/6/15)

> Playing fun sport on weekends was great after I pulled out before I left for overseas. I am hoping it will be fun again when I get back and if I decide to play. There is no one there to judge your performance, so it is just a lot more carefree and no one to have a go at you if you do something wrong. You just laugh about it instead of getting yelled at or even just feeling shit about yourself. I am thinking I will play netball when I get back to Australia; it just depends on where I end up for netball. (Beth, Interview, 11/6/15)

> Playing netball there is no pressure to make a squad team and you don't go to training and be yelled at and do fitness testing. It's country league and you just play your game and afterwards your coach says oh bad luck, good job, we will do this at training next week and get better and then that's it, you go home or go have a drink in the bar. The mix of fun and friendship paired with socialising is a perfect mix for me at this time of my life. (Camille, Interview, 2/7/15)

Camille, Sheryl, Andrea, Melissa and Charlotte have indicated that pressure on them came from many sources, with the most prevalent that altered their desires to play sport being the interactions with the sport itself and the coaches involved in the sports. Additionally, they indicated that the pressure from boys and peers also played a large role in their dropout from sport. This type of pressure continued to rise from both school, family and sporting environments and these lived experiences showed that this pressure had a distinct influence on the girls and shaped their decision-making, in this case their decisions to dropout of sport. Charlotte and Sheryl talked about the pressures they faced and shared these experiences during their interviews.

> My mum played WNBL, my dad coached in the NBL and I had no pressure from either of them, they supported me and never questioned what I did. The pressure I had was from coaches who thought I should be as good as my mum. The other pressure was from myself, not to be as good as her put to try and meet the expectations of the other people. (Charlotte, Interview, 7/7/15)

> I started to fell the pressure probably bottom age under fourteens. I used to play a little bit of netball but I never played it at a level where people had high enough expectations of me, so that was just sort of my fun sport, whereas basketball was my serious sport and I put up with the pressure. I was selected as a talented athlete in basketball and with that came a huge level of pressure. I had to be the best player on court all the time and I couldn't do that. The pressure was crippling. (Sheryl, Interview, 18/6/15)

Coaches continue to be a major issue in the decisions of these girls toward dropout from sport. The role of the coach remained a prime influencer for the girls, such as Charlotte, Camille, Margot and Melissa, who withdrew from sport. The pressure they placed on players was shown to be often the deciding factor that caused dropout. In these instances, it was not one distinct action, but the ongoing actions of a set of

coaches, that put the girls under pressure resulting in them second-guessing themselves and their skills, and then finally dropping out of sport to stop that from happening. Marley and Amber shared their personal experiences in relation to the pressure they felt during their time playing sport;

> I wouldn't pull out or stop doing anything because of pressure; I actually enjoy being under pressure. My personality isn't like that; I would fight back rather than throw it in. I would say that I like to prove people wrong; if I am told I can't do things them I will work double hard to do it. I wouldn't let the basketball coach beat me, not a fucking chance; I wanted to prove her wrong. (Marley, Interview, 15/6/15)

> The pressure from others and the pressure to fail is a massive thing in my mind and for a lot of my friends involved in soccer and football. So many of the girls I know have had this happen to them and it has caused them to quit sport altogether. I can understand why this has happened to so many; the pressure is unbearable and consumes you completely. (Amber, Interview, 2/7/15)

The pressure felt by the majority of girls was shared by many of the participants. Marley and Amber used the pressure and the actions of their coaches as a motivational factor to succeed in their pursuits. These girls indicated that the lessons passed on from their parents and their own personality traits would not allow them to pull out of sport due to the pressure of others, especially coaches. Marley and Amber were strong in their expression of their use of these coach actions to 'drive them further'. The girls who drove themselves, questioned the personalities of the girls that dropped out and although appreciated their positions and their actions, did not agree with them and felt that maybe some of the girls needed to be a little harder with their efforts and not give up so easily.

The experiences of the participants have shown that the influence of the community and community expectations has played a negative role in the participation and, in turn, dropout of this group of participants. The influence of family, parents, partners, peers and coaches linked with what the community and the participants perceived as being competent were all pressures piled onto the participants, influencing their dropout from sport.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the community-related themes that were identified from the lived experiences of the participants in this study. These themes had a greater

influence over the participant than the individual themes identified in the previous chapter. The influence of parents, family, peers as well as boys and partners were outlined and were shown to have a strong influence over the actions of the participants in this study. Femininity was shown to also have a strong influence over the development of the participants and in turn their dropout from sport. Additionally, the influence of coaches was shown to be a major influencer in the participant's decision to continue their involvement in sport. The idea of pressure and also perceived competence were also discussed and held a strong influence over the decision making of the participants.

The following chapter looks at the society themes identified from the experiences of the participants that influenced their dropout from sport. These themes look at regional life, social drivers to comply, inequalities in sport and also negotiating media and its many reaches and how they influenced the participants to dropout from playing organised sport.

Chapter 7 – The Society related themes

Introduction

Chapter 6 reported on the community-based themes identified from the participants lived experiences collected via focus groups and individual interviews. A series of community-based themes were identified from the experiences of the participants in which they shared their stories relating to their dropout from sport.

This chapter continues looking at the themes identified from the data analysis of the experiences of the participants, this time the focus is on the Society related themes. The society themes that were identified and are discussed in this chapter look at themes that are based around the context in which the participants found themselves. The individuality of each set of lived experiences shared highlighted that the grouping of these themes could be interpreted differently depending upon the researcher making the interpretations.

The society related themes identified during the data analysis look at context that the participants found themselves in and how that influenced their dropout from sport. These themes although independently identified throughout the data analysis have an element of similarity to the work of Bronfenbrenner (1992) and the exosystem section of his ecological systems theory. The exosystem section of the theory is based on the linkages between two or more settings and includes at least one setting that indirectly influences the development of a child or adolescent. Bronfenbrenner discussed that places and people that may influence the development of the child or adolescent may include the parents' workplaces, the larger neighbourhood, and extended family members (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Taking this into consideration it could be suggested that none of these themes have worked solely to result in the participant dropping out of sport but may have worked in concert to do so.

The influence of living in a regional setting

Research has highlighted that lifestyle differences that include sporting differences exist between metropolitan and regional life (J. Connell, 2016; Craike, Symons, Eime, Payne, & Harvey, 2011; Dollman et al., 2012; Eime et al., 2010). Sporting participation varies from city to country with differences existing in club structure, sport choice and opportunities offered, expected behaviours within clubs and also the

remuneration of athletes (Mooney et al., 2012; Mugford, 2001a; Pearce, Innes, O'Driscoll, & Morse, 1981; J. Phillips & Young, 2009). Margot and Melissa shared their experiences regarding these issues during their focus group sessions. Although possibly stereotypical, they must be considered and interpreted;

> Ah, country life, the boys play footy and they will drink and their little netballer girlfriends will come and support the club or if they're not playing netball they will be there like little bitches watching and supporting, they don't have their own sport, they are just footy girlfriends. [other girls nod heads and smile] I see it every week I go to my local games and it is pathetic. Seriously you're going to follow a boy around like that each day and put your own life completely to one side to follow around a footballer that is playing in a substandard league and is probably a substandard player himself [other girls' laughter] (Margot, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> There is an expectation that girls will just follow guys around and they can't play sport pretty much. That expectation comes from everyone over a hundred years but is more country; it is seen as a social norm, in country life. I am not like that, I will watch my boyfriend play footy but not at the cost of my own sport. The club I played at and even the current club I play at have a heap of girls that do it. I just don't get it. (Melissa, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> In metropolitan areas the netball in played separately from the football, mostly so it is not associated with each other. It is in our country society, women can't be priests, women get paid less, it is changing but some expectations still remain that the male is the dominant and that comes from generations of it. (Margot, Focus group, 5/5/15)

Margot and Melissa discussed in depth their expected role and the roles of the other girls, to be 'girlfriends to footballers' (Margot, Focus group, 5/5/15) and to attend and support their boyfriends or partner no matter what. Analysis of the lived experiences of the participants showed that the underlying challenges they faced in being expected to support their boyfriends often influenced their willingness to remain involved in sport, often resulting in them dropping out during adolescence. Additionally, they felt that they were different from some of the other girls as they played sport with or were their teammates in sport as they did not follow the stereotype and played their own sport first, attended social functions with their own team and then provided support to partners.

One of the factors identified by the majority of girls, highlighted by the experiences of Molly, Charlotte, Margot and Amber, was the greater level of opportunities for girls to play sport if they lived in a metropolitan area. Margot, Molly and Amber indicated that they needed to play sport in metropolitan areas due to better coaching

and a greater level of teams in order for them to improve their sport and possible future sporting outcomes. The same participants indicated that their opportunities were limited in regional areas and in order to succeed and to keep improving they needed to make the move to metropolitan areas. Several of the other participants did not feel the need to make these moves and suggested that the teams and in turn level they played in their own towns was acceptable for them.

Research and the experiences of girls who have played in metropolitan leagues suggested that the structure of sporting teams in metropolitan and country areas often varied with the majority of netball and football clubs in country areas linked together with the roles and responsibilities for the running of the club shared (Mooney et al., 2012; Mugford, 2001a), while the majority of metropolitan teams have separate male and female clubs with independent governance structures and committees that influences the stereotypical roles expected in those clubs.

Complying and conforming

Research and the experiences of the participants has shown that one of the most influential, both negative and positive, element affecting adolescent girls is the development of stereotypes (Lavy, 2008; Salvy, Romero, Paluch, & Epstein, 2007). The type and number of groups and in some instances stereotypes that influenced these participants are numerous and were promoted by media, other peers and the community in general similar to those discussed by Bronfenbrenner in his ecological systems theory, more specifically the exosystem section of the theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). The girls in this study discussed stereotypes with the major focus on body image, playing sport, sexuality, being healthy and being a girl. Melissa and Amber shared their own experiences during their interview;

> If you play sport as a girl you're a lesbian if you don't play sport and your pretty you're a Barbie, what can we do without getting bagged? (Melissa, Interview, 15/7/15)

> Playing sport opens you up to more stereotypes about your sexuality. If you wear shorts and runners instead of a dress and makeup you're a butch or a leso. I see it every day in my football and soccer playing and it wears you down slowly. (Amber, Interview, 2/7/15)

Melissa and Amber led a strong voice from their focus groups that indicated that stereotypes played a major part in their lives and that playing sport often elicited a different set of stereotypes to those girls that did not play sport. The participants

indicated that often their sexuality was questioned due to the fact that they played high-level sport and suggested that this was a trend that was common to them and girls they knew and had played sport with. Amber and Andrea shared their experiences with sexuality being questioned due to their involvement in sport;

> I play soccer which is well known for lesbian activity and I was hit on heaps of times that made me feel uncomfortable. There didn't seem to be as many homosexual girls in footy or basketball, but it doesn't worry me what your preference is, you are what you are. It even made my mum question my sexuality because I don't like wearing dresses and that was purely the fact that I was always playing sport. I wore sports clothes to my sports and not a huge amount of dresses and stuff. My mum thought I was gay because of that. (Amber, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> Oh, she's a footy player or basketballer. She is gay, boys have them too, though, a footy player in the country has to drink beer, stereotypes won't go but they need to. You see stereotypes in practice every Saturday at football or netball and it really frustrates me. (Andrea, Focus group, 3/5/15)

During their focus groups and interviews the participants, especially Amber and Melissa showed verbal and nom verbal queues such as smiling and nodding that suggested that they had become accustomed to the idea that they were going to have their sexuality questioned. They suggested that some of the girls they knew had tried to overcompensate their risk taking and sexually driven activities at social events to try and persuade people that they were heterosexual. It was indicated in research that potentially where you live and what sport you actually played also had stereotypical elements attached to it (McAndrew et al., 2000; Mooney et al., 2012; Mugford, 2001a; Pini, 2006). If you played football, soccer or other sports deemed by others as being non-feminine it was just a given that you were gay. Andrea was even challenged by her own mother as to her sexuality because of her involvement in those sports. Bernadette, Charlotte and Amber shared that their involvement in netball but did not make the same link to being questioned as to their sexuality. However, a differing set of stereotypes was expected from them in their club environment.

The majority of participants used many terms that required further clarification and exploring during their individual interviews. Words used by the participants that had stereotypes linked to them revolved around *body image, fitness, health* and general appearance. Rebecca and Bernadette discussed their own experiences in relation to this in their interviews;

> Being fit means they could run for ages and looked healthier than I did, I saw myself as less than them. They were skinny and that is healthy, where I am not skinny. (Rebecca, Interview, 15/6/15)
>
> Being fit means having some meat on you and not looking hungry. The attractiveness for a boy is important to me and some of my friends. (Bernadette, Interview, 2/7/15)

The link of fitness to being *skinny* is something that the girls, highlighted by Margot, Marley and Charlotte, suggested is displayed daily in the media and affects what girls believe they should look like (media section will explore this further). The link of fitness to being able to "run for ages" (Charlotte, Interview, 7/7/15) also painted a stereotype on to girls and showed that the media and educational institutions had not provided significant enough educational opportunities for adolescent girls as to what fitness and a fit body is and what it could look like.

Also, as suggested by some of the participants being fit is not only for the girls themselves but also an attempt to attract boys and to make themselves possible partners for the boys. The idea of not 'looking hungry' (Rebecca, Interview, 15/6/15) is another stereotype, discussed by Rebecca, and was met with head nods and agreeing smiles by Camille and Bernadette. The participants showed that they faced these types of expectations and stereotype daily and highlighted this though the stories they shared in their interviews and focus group. Rebecca and Charlotte shared their lived experiences relating to this in their individual interview;

> Someone healthy would be like you see them eating healthy. They are out exercising, not smoking, they are walking instead of driving a car like they go for a walk of a night time. (Rebecca, Interview, 15/6/15)
>
> I am healthy cause I don't smoke or drink and I am active most days. Well, the media tells me I am healthy cause I do those things. (Charlotte, Interview, 7/7/15)

The words *healthy* and *health* were often used by the girls with each of them having their own idea in their head of what the words mean to them. The ideas shared here by the participants show both a negative and positive stereotype in play with smoking linked to bad health and physical activity and sport linked to good health. The idea and reality of stereotypes was discussed in the interviews of Rebecca and Sheryl;

> Skinny, is someone who hasn't got fat on them. Umm, and they are probably toned as well. Like skinny and toned, so they are skinny and fit. I think it is a good thing. (Rebecca, Interview, 15/6/15)
>
> Fat is someone overweight. Or someone you see eating McDonalds and they are not a fit looking person, or healthy. (Sheryl, Interview, 18/6/15)

Skinny and *fat* are two words that were also used within the focus group discussions extensively when talking stereotypes. Rebecca indicated that being fat was shown to be negative and the way she described fat was described as being harsh by Margot. The majority of participants classed themselves as 'fat', when in actual fact it could be suggested that none of the participants would actually have high BMI (Body Mass Index) results. The link again of being overweight and a famous business (McDonalds) via a stereotype, again displays the media strength in promoting food choices and other stereotype behaviours and also the influence it had and continues to have over the day-to-day decisions and perceptions of the girls. The word *'skinny'* was linked to the word *'fit'* by both Rebecca and also Andrea, this indicated that some of these participants could think that being overtly skinny was actually healthy. Camille and Margot discussed body image and stereotype building in the media during their focus groups;

> I think they should advocate that successful people don't have to be a size six and am skinny and can have lumps and bumps and be curvy and be a success. It puts pressure on people to look and think they can't be successful unless I am a size six. (Camille, Focus group, 3/5/15)
>
> I have an ass and tits. Does that mean I am shit at what I do? Chicks who can see their own ribs get celebrated and put on TV, normal chicks like me don't unless I do something skanky like the Kardashians. [girls laughed loudly] (Margot, Focus group, 5/3/15)

Another discussion point by the participants was about being successful, with one of the groups consisting of Margot, Marley and Charlotte, spending time discussing what it 'looks like' to be successful. This discussion was not based on results for work or results for games, but purely what you looked like. It was felt by Margot, Marley and Charlotte, that being large was a negative and that if large they were not as successful as a smaller girl could or would be. The girls in this focus group indicated that they identified that this was displayed continuously in the media and that celebrations of success only occurred when you were skinnier or undertook a "questionable act", such as those undertaken in the popular television show, the *Kardashians*. This begged the question, in relation to the unrealistic body image

expectations being placed on girls and the mental effects it was over their thoughts and their day-to-day activities. Sheryl shared her own experiences that showed the mental challenges sport provides for girls participating in sport.

> I just think like these days you can't just play a sport because you want to play that sport. You have to play a sport that suits you, your body and the way you look. I feel like basketball didn't love me, either did football or soccer. Netball was the sport that suited me and it feels like it loves me and me it. (Sheryl, Interview, 18/6/15)

All of these examples and the pressure being placed on to these participants, and on other girls yet to enter the sporting environment, was regarded as being excessive and had them questioning their involvement in sport far before they actually withdrew. With girls such as Sheryl and Camille feeling that a sport needed to fit their body type before they could even play, was seen by others in the groups as a concern. One of the participants with a greater understanding of this and her own being, Marley showed concern, 'if this becomes a mainstream thought amongst young girls, the amount of them playing could go down even more than now' (Marley, Interview, 15/6/15).

The pressure linked specifically to sport and the expectations of specific sport related positions was a topic of discussion for some of the girls during their focus groups and interviews. Bernadette and Margot shared their experiences in relation to the pressure they felt after being stereotyped into positions in their sport.

> With basketball there are five positions e.g., Point guard, centre and if you were the post it is kind of expected that you are bigger, larger. Most times you weren't fat you were just bulkier or stronger and had muscles. If you are the point guard you are expected to be small, fit and to be able to run forever. [long pause] Stereotypes exist in everything I just said. The game and people involved in it stereotype people depending upon their body size or skill level at one thing or another. It's not right. (Bernadette, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> Coaches are making stereotypes as to what a specific position should look like. I started playing in year seven when I was thirteen. I was told she is tall, she is long, she is larger and has a little bit extra around here (points to stomach and backside), she will be a post player. I didn't grow much from there but was pigeon-holed and didn't get to learn the other skills required to play other spots so my choices were taken away from me. (Margot, Interview, 7/7/15)

Stereotypes are not selective and reach the sporting field and sporting arena as well as general life (Billings, 2001; Plaza, Boiché, Brunel, & Ruchaud, 2016; Schmalz &

Kerstetter, 2006). Coaches, administrators and managers are often influenced by stereotypes they see in the media or that are built up over years in clubs and leagues settings (Bennie & O'Connor, 2010). Stereotypes were linked to the selection of players and what those players should 'look like'. The height, body shape, size and skill of players were suggested by Andrea, Bernadette and Beth in their focus groups and interviews as parts of stereotypes they saw more prevalently in their sporting lives. These girls identified that players who displayed these characteristics are looked at more favourably than those who do not, often resulting in their selection to the team ahead of them.

Charlotte, Bernadette, Margot and Sheryl, who identified themselves as basketballers reflected on the prevalence of stereotypes in their sport and talked about the pressure that these stereotypes provided;

> I think it was easy to go to the Saturday night girl. I felt I was able to look nice and feel good about looking nice. Whereas if I was at basketball and I looked nice I would fell bad about it because basketballers are not supposed to wear makeup and look pretty. They are supposed to look manly. It was definitely easier going to a Saturday night when I could be me, and it was harder going back to the basketball after the weekend because the stereotypes I was expected to fulfil just weren't me. Yeah, like if I was a dancer and I rocked up to dancing wearing makeup and my hair nice, they would compliment me and they would think that it is a positive thing. Whereas if you rock up to basketball like it's stereotyped, you don't do that for netball. I think sports are so stereotyped these days and that's why it's so hard for young people to pick one that they like and to pick one that people accept them into. I just always felt like I wasn't a basketballer. I would look at the other girls and they wouldn't care and they would sweat it out, but I never like felt like basketball loved me sort of thing. I was never that type of girl that should be playing basketball. (Sheryl, Interview, 18/6/15)

The indication that some of the participants like Sheryl were required to 'not be feminine' and 'not look attractive' while training or playing was something shared by several respondents. The pressure of the stereotypes in this sport is a representation of other sports and that the pressure for girls to feel 'left out' or to 'not belong' increased the level of pressure on them dramatically to not be involved in sport.

The safety of the girls in this environment was also a discussion that the girls participated in, with Andrea and Sheryl being prominent in their concerns for the mental and physical safety of themselves and others. They mentioned in their lived

experiences that coaches and parents adhered to this type of stereotype and that there were ‘dozens’ of their friends and teammates who were ‘feeling shit’ because of these stereotypes. The majority of girls indicated that they knew of ‘heaps of girls’ who had dropped out of sport because they were ‘made to feel like shit’ and that they ‘can’t be themselves’ in the local club with pressure placed on them from coaches and other club officials to adhere to the stereotypes of their club and sport.

One of the experiences that derived emotion from several of the members of the focus group was the story of Andrea, who felt the pressure of her sport to be taller, and that ‘short people can’t play basketball’. Her absolute desire to be included in the sport she loved resulted in her mental wellbeing being questioned by her parents and herself, with her whole family searching for medical solutions to make her taller.

> I was under a lot of pressure when I was younger from coaches and others at the club. The pressure got so bad to me from coaches that I tried to get growth hormones to make me taller and other ridiculous things. I had to leave basketball in the end and move to netball. They didn’t care how big I was and my mental health was more important than playing the sport I loved. Honestly, one of the coaches I had bordered on mental abuse they way she prodded me about my height. (Andrea, Interview, 11/6/15)

The pressure put on Andrea by club coaches and also club administrators with suggestions that she ‘wouldn’t be picked due to her size’ affected her mental health and made her undertake ‘ridiculous things’ to try and grow, so she met the body size and height stereotypes of these people. So much so that the Andrea referred to the interactions with her and her coach about her height as ‘mental abuse’ and that she considered taking the incidence to the club administrators. Andrea and her family decided against this, as they believed that at the time the coach would have been supported no matter as the club took the side of this coach in several other instances and they felt that they would do so again.

To think that this type of pressure could be put onto an adolescent girl that resulted in her attempting to find surgical or chemical solutions to a body problem could be considered as a concern. The experiences of Andrea suggests that the pressure and abuse inflicted by these coaches resulted in her questioning her own size and inevitably influencing her decision to dropout from sport. The question of mental abuse, raised by Andrea is one that club administrators have never been asked, nor ever will be asked, to deal with. Andrea indicated that she thought that the club

probably ‘wouldn’t have even known about the issue’ that coach’s behaviour raised and the pressure they put on her and other girls. The experiences of the participants suggested that this was of a concern to them as past players but more so to the girls entering the sport or in the sport now.

The placement of this group of themes could again be interpreted to belong in another of the theme grouping areas that appear in this study. The positioning of the theme into the society theme grouping is due to the individuals’ sense of self being influenced by social pressures to comply and conform.

Inequality and inequity in sport in society

Several of the girls have identified that opportunities for them in relation to a career, gaining income through sport and also the reputation of their sport are not equal to their male counterparts. This inequality occurred at the sporting clubs they play in, the sporting associations they are involved in, and their workplaces and in some instances their own homes as highlighted through the work of Bertozzi (2008) and Schell et. al (2000). The lived experiences of the participants indicated that it felt like being a girl playing sport always ‘had a shelf life’ and ‘girls will always lose to boys in a competition for a sporting career’. The girls showed throughout their discussions that they all valued careers and being successful, and with such inequality in career opportunities and pay opportunities leading to many of the girls questioning their continued involvement and subsequently their dropout from sport.

The trend of inequality in payment for female athletes starts internationally and flows through to Australian markets (Baruch, Wheeler, & Zhao, 2004; Bertozzi, 2008; J. Hargreaves, 2002; Pastore, 1991; Schell & Rodriguez, 2000). A large number of girls, led by comments from Molly, Amber, Marley and Charlotte indicated their desire to play sport as a career, but the inability to make a full-time wage *‘shot down that idea’*.

> All I wanted to do was be a basketballer; I didn’t worry about career or anything at all. If I was a boy who was good at sport I wouldn’t have to worry about money, family, kids, they just play sport and get paid. But as a girl you have to worry about money and stuff, you have to be the best in the world to get paid and not work. I look at Lauren Jackson and Liz Cambage, probably the only to girls making full-time wages from basketball and with no AFL league I have no chance to make a living in sport. (Amber, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> If you make it to the highest level of basketball in America, the minimum NBA (National Basketball Association) package is in the millions while the girls probably have to pay to get on the court. You can't make a career in women's sport. Even the highest level you still have to have another job, men can make careers from sport and girls can't. My mum was playing WNBL (Woman's National Basketball League) and was still working full time to try and pay for it. While some end of bench boys get paid enough to live in the men's NBL. It's not fair and doesn't paint a great story for us girls to do anything in sport does it? (Camille, Focus group, 3/3/15)

The major sports that the girls identified themselves in, where this inequality is at the forefront, are basketball, soccer and athletics. The only sport where full time wages were available for female athletes is the ANZ (Australia and New Zealand) trophy that plays netball across Australia and New Zealand and has players from countries such as England, Jamaica and South Africa playing in it. Bernadette, Beth and Molly stated that netball was their main sport and identified themselves as netballers. They expressed their happiness with playing that sport ahead of the sports being played by some other participants as they felt netball was more positive than some. Facing the reality of inequalities every day, adolescent girls making career decisions started to automatically put sport at the end of their importance list, again showing the pressure placed on these girls to sacrifice the things they love as their priorities for their futures change, an inequality that boys do not experience.

> There are far more paid sporting opportunities for boys rather than girls; boys get paid in the town's football league just to play a game whereas any of the netballers don't get paid at all. It is pretty ordinary that boys get paid thousands of dollars for one game and girls get nothing. I know so many boys that are average footballers get paid and great netballers get nothing [other girls nod heads]. Actually, it costs them to pay after they pay for fees and uniforms and stuff. (Beth, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> I get paid fifty dollars a game to play and it is really motivating to go to training because I know I feel valued by the club because of that money. Although not big it tells me I am valued and good at what I do. Plus it makes me want to keep playing next season because I know I will get some money out of it. The money is a bonus to playing sport. (Molly, Interview, 17/6/15)

A similar story occurred with the majority of the participants in this study. All of the participants, except Rebecca, progressed to play senior sport whilst being involved in junior grades or after they had completed junior grades or school. They discussed the pay inequalities between themselves and boys and their requirement to have to work more to 'be able to live'. The comparison of payment between the boys and girls playing the same level sport in their towns is not equal and seems to have no

rationale as to why. Many thousands of dollars difference and a massive difference in status have added to the pressure on these girls to remain involved in sport. The reality that girls needed to work to make money, while some boys, not at the standard of the girls did not and made money from playing sport. This increased the decision to dropout of sport more prevalent amongst the participants in this study. The inequality of moneymaking opportunities for the participants playing sport were highlighted by several of the experiences in this study. With the participants sharing their need for more disposable income for things such as phones, cars and socialis ing resulted in them making decisions to dropout from sport to work and make money. Many of the males in the participant's lives did not have to do this as they were paid to play sport. Beth and Andrea shared their personal experiences in relation to the inequality of payments linked to sport for themselves and their siblings;

> If a guy is looking for more money they can work harder and try and get a gig playing footy for extra money, but whereas a girl who doesn't get paid would have to sacrifice her sport completely to make that same type of extra money in a job rather than sport. (Beth, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> My brother was always good at sport but not ever brilliant at it, probably on the same level as I was. But there were more opportunities for him. Whereas for me it was just like, once you are out of the age groups, once you are out of your junior age groups there is nowhere really for you to go. Even though he is not overly good at football, he is still offered one hundred fifty dollars a game to play two's (Second level football) at some random country club. Whereas for girls, you have got to fork out of pocket expense to go there. It is unfair that he is getting paid more than you know some elite female sports people. Like people playing in the women's basketball league, they wouldn't be on one hundred fifty dollars a game some of them. And he is getting paid that to play, you know, sometimes 10 minutes of football in the reserves team. (Andrea, Focus group, 3/3/15)

Research has shown that boys in regional areas have been shown to make more money playing sport than their female counterparts (Dollman et al., 2012; Mooney et al., 2012). This not only added pressure to the participants in relation to needing to work to live, rather than playing sport, but also added to the continuing impression in the community that female sport is not equal to that of male sport. To know that a girl who is playing the top level of sport in her town is being underpaid when compared to a boy playing numerous levels below is something that, in the experiences of the participants, paints a negative picture of women's sport across the entire country.

Molly is an elite netballer who has represented the state and is dating a second or third-grade footballer allowing her to compare her sporting involvement with that of her partner. She explained that she plays on second-rate courts and does not have a change room, while her boyfriend plays on newly resurfaced grounds and has a recently renovated change room to change in. Finally, he plays a much lower grade than she does, but is paid thousands of dollars more over the season. She gets a small amount of money and he gets paid hundreds of dollars per game. This inequality makes the seriousness in which women sports are perceived as second-rate something for consideration. This happens across the entire country, but is magnified in regional cities and makes girls question their long-term involvement in sport (Craike et al., 2011; Dollman et al., 2012; Eime et al., 2010). Amber and Bernadette indicated that inequality was one of the major reasons they finished playing sport and that the need for money became a priority. They needed to work to make money to live and in order to do this left sport, while their boyfriends were less talented, but were paid more and did not need to stop work. The participants indicated that they would have remained playing and the pressure to dropout would have ceased if they were paid to play. Molly, Bernadette, Andrea and Beth shared their own experiences in relation to this issue;

> I think also a lot of boys do the whole 'girls basketball what a joke', they are so down to women's sport, you're always hearing that like why would you waste your time playing woman's basketball. You're never going to make it anywhere. You know they might be joking but there is a massive truth in it and you're never going to make it anywhere. The amount of boys at school would laugh when we said we played girls basketball, to really put down your efforts. (Molly, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> When I was at school there was a group of footy boys that played with an (elite junior team). A few of them were really talented. Most of the teachers and school kids used to say they will make AFL and everything. I can't really imagine anyone saying that about a girl in the same environment. I have never heard it about girls but only boys. (Bernadette, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> I feel there is more pressure on me as a girl to get a career or job as people see you can't get anywhere with sport, so start now and actually do something with your life sort of thing. Whereas boys, if they are taking time off to play sport people turn a blind eye to it because they are at least earning money. My brother doesn't need to work because he is getting football money and took a year off from going to uni. I wasn't getting paid so had to go to uni, as I didn't have that luxury. (Andrea, Interview, 11/6/15)

> I think in a way inequality had an effect on me dropping out of sport, because I would have rathered been earning money, instead of wasting my time playing sports, when I could have been earning money. But I think if I had have been paid to play somewhere or do something, I definitely wouldn't have dropped out, as soon as I did, because you know, I wouldn't have had to sacrifice… like I felt like I had to sacrifice money to play whereas they are getting paid to do it. (Beth, Interview, 11/6/15)

A continuing theme throughout the data was the importance of careers in the eyes of girls and the pressure on girls to be successful. This pressure and again inequality was an ongoing theme throughout the participants' stories that were shown to start during teen and adolescent years and expanded from general areas of life to include sport. This influence of multiple settings highlights the work of Bronfenbrenner (1992) and more specifically the exosystem area of his Ecological systems theory. Linkages between multiple settings, in this instance the workplace and sporting areas as well as the sport and work areas of their partners has played a role in the development of their decision to dropout from sport.

The girls, lead by Charlotte, Amber and Molly, indicated that their experiences in relation to inequality and their desire to make money to live were shared by numerous friends who suffered the same pressure. They indicated that this was a pressure they didn't see boys having to deal with and that they faced greater pressure to compromise or sacrifices the things they wanted to do in order to achieve. Participants experiences and stories indicated that pay inequality between girls and boys as sportspeople allowed the boys to remain playing sport when their priorities changed to include more social activities and requirements to pay for other things, while for a girl the pay inequality required her to commence part-time work. This work generally took place during weekends and after hours and was often worked around school hours, resulted in the girls needing to again sacrifice something. In most of these instances, the majority of girls' experiences indicated that sport was the one thing they had to sacrifice, resulting again in female dropout from sport.

Negotiating with the media monster

The role of the media influencing the life of an adolescent girl was keenly discussed in the focus groups in this study. The term "media monster" is one that has been used in research to describe the spread it has and the influence it possesses over the community and the people in it (J. Brown, 2008; A. Nelson, 2000; Wiest, 2016). Through electronic media such as television and movies, images and characters are

presented that display certain characteristics both physical and throughout actions that influence a girl into believing what is acceptable and what standard she would attempt to attain. These images vary from clothes to hairstyles, through to what a body should look like and some of the things a girl "should do". The displays of differing styles or body shapes or actions were in many instances not attainable for the participants with several of them suggesting it was impossible to meet the standards being shown and in some instances required by their peers.

In addition to electronic media, print media and social media, similar images are shown and ideals promoted of what a girl 'should' be doing and what a girl 'should' look like. Again the majority of girls, especially the focus group consisting of Charlotte, Marley and Margot, indicated that many of these images and actions were clearly unattainable, but they knew of many girls who starved themselves, changed their actions and changed their clothing to try and meet these standards.

> Media has played a role for me, as I look at movies and magazines and they show pictures of skinny chicks that I could never be. Watching my favourite movies, reading magazines and seeing pictures online built up my desire to look that way. I won't say I didn't try; it just made me feel and look sick. (Charlotte, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> I am different to other girls I think, having a bum and tits is ok. Also so is eating food. Women's health magazines have changed a little recently and are showing more real women. It's great but it has only just started. More is needed to make girls who are not wafer thin to feel ok about themselves. (Margot, Focus group, 3/3/15)

These girls as well as Camille, Molly and Melissa acknowledged the role of media and the positive and negative messages that are portrayed to them on a day-to-day basis. Margot, Marley and Charlotte were very outspoken on this issue, far more than any of the other groups showing that the issue is one that evokes strong feelings and thoughts and this instance discussion and is important to the participants. They indicated that showing 'skinny chicks' had become the norm for media across the world with Photoshop and other types of image altering software often used to make changes. These changes and the selected images often used in the media make it difficult for girls to attain the standards displayed and raised the pressure on the participants to make changes in their lives to try and reach these unrealistic goals. An extended conversation took place in this group about their lived experiences and the efforts made by the girls and many of their friends to adhere to the levels set in the

press and television media, often resulting in them becoming sick, making them physically unable to do many other things in their lives.

Beth, Sheryl and Margot identified that the perceptions of the media are different between girls and boys, as are the expectations. The participants indicated that the images depicting girls, have painted an unattainable expectation into boys heads as to what they 'want a girl to look like'. This image is usually constructed by images of supermodels or actresses who have the luxury of full-time appearance specialists and the ability to have their images altered before distribution. Margot, Charlotte and Marley talked about the 'ideal girl' and how in their world many boys now 'expect' this. The stories of the participants again showed the increased pressure on adolescent girls to look a certain way and to alter their behaviour to look that way. Charlotte believed that this was 'hard to do', while Margot believed it was 'unfucken fair'. Beth, Sheryl and Margot provided an insight into what they had to deal with;

> Girls and boys see the media differently and frankly it's shit. Boys see what the media is telling them that we as girls should look like, skinny and ditzy. Yes boys are being told they need to be muscly and metrosexual but I don't think that influences them as much as the girl's side of it affects us. (Beth, Interview, 11/6/15)

> Boys expect us to be sticks; we don't expect them to be Channing Tatum. The expectations we face daily from boys is crazy. It is a cycle that starts and we as girls kept trying to be skinnier and it makes us sick. I know so many girls that are competing with each other for who eats less or who is skinniest. It's not healthy. (Sheryl, Interview, 18/6/15)

> Girls have it bad with the way we are portrayed in the media. Every boy I meet expects me to be a size six and look like a cheerleader twenty-four seven. We all know that is impossible and I don't want to make myself sick to meet the twisted expectations of a boy that doesn't know anything about what it means to be healthy. (Margot, Interview, 7/7/15)

Melissa, Margot and Charlotte, indicated that this type of expectation was 'unfair' and they felt that they did not express the same unfair expectations on boys, and that they are also exposed to in the media. The use of an actor, Channing Tatum in one of the girl's stories highlighted that although girls have a list of preferable attributes they would like in a partner, that they are more realistic than boys and do not overtly pass this pressure onto boys, unlike what boys do to girls. This pressure again had an effect on the girls with many questioning their own bodies, what they wanted to look like and what others expected them to look like.

> We have a friend that has larger legs. She has 'Beyoncé legs'. You don't look at Beyoncé and say she is fat you say she is built, healthy and I think that is what everyone should promote through women's sport. (Camille, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> The tennis (Australian open) is on at the moment and we are all talking about wanting to look like Maria Sharapova. She doesn't even play my sport, but I want to look like her, which is nuts but is something that the media tells me I should be aspiring to do. (Charlotte, Focus group, 5/3/15)

> I love that Rebel Wilson gets media coverage. However, it portrays her as a joke rather than serious like someone like Mila Kunis who does ads and plays a variety of roles in movies and TV. (Margot, Focus group, 5/3/15)

The importance of role models was highlighted by the girls in this study who mentioned several names and linked them to only physical elements of that person, not other attributes such as achievements. Even in one instance, Charlotte used a person's name to describe a body part of a friend - *'Beyoncé legs'.* The linking of a celebrity such as Beyoncé, Maria Sharapova and Channing Tatum displayed in the media to physical attributes was something that Charlotte, Margot and Marley referred to constantly and indicated that social media coined terms such as *'A Tatum Ass'* and *'Beyoncé legs'.* This in itself showed that the use of celebrities by the media to promote body image is an issue in itself and as indicated by the lived experiences of the participants to make reaching the expectations shown by the media difficult and almost impossible. Charlotte, Margot and Marley then further shared their experiences during their interviews in relation to role models in their lives;

> I don't see any role models in the media that I want to be like. They are TV show characters rather than real people. Someone like Jessica from Suits that is a lawyer and gorgeous would be one. I don't see them walking around my town every day and the media is biased in the way they present females making it a real challenge to find one that I can follow and base my life and actions on. (Charlotte, Interview, 7/7/15)

> Athletes are my role models as I am one, not actresses because they are not real. I don't get to see many famous ones as women's athletics is not covered much on TV but I have a serious of role models that are at the lower level of athletics that I know and can access. (Marley, Interview, 15/6/15)

> I ain't a fucking stick and chicks on TV are. Any danger of getting a role model that looks like me, a real girl, not a stick? (Margot, Interview, 7/7/15)

A position that every girl involved in this study agreed upon is the lack of quality female role models for girls in Australia. Every girl indicated that the role models were presented with unrealistic body images, undertook behaviours they would not

wish to undertake or were not real and were characters from television shows or movies. Charlotte ‘didn’t have a role model, Marley ‘couldn’t find a sporting role model, Amber ‘struggled to see herself in a sporting role model’ and Margot ‘didn’t feel she related to those presented in the media today for girls’. Margot and Melissa indicated that actors could not be seen as role models as they are ‘not real’ and are characters in television shows. The same girls felt that this left them with a distinct shortage of ‘real’ role models in which themselves and other girls could mirror their behaviours or use to blaze the trail for their success.

This shortage of female role models was of high concern to the girls. The focus groups of Margot, Marley, Charlotte and Bernadette, Camille and Rebecca indicated that they these role models might exist in sporting arenas, but due to the lack of coverage of many leagues and of female athletes, that they may never actually find them or whether they actually exist. Molly suggested that boys, on the other hand, have male sport displayed on free to air television and on numerous other outlets, as well as hearing stories about their stars and their lives. Andrea agreed with this assertion and felt that ‘girls do not have this under the current media coverage in this country and across the world’. Molly, Amber, Sheryl and Margot shared their lived experiences about how media influenced them and others they knew;

> The media in relation to woman’s basketball and sport in Australia is terrible. The WNBL [Women’s National Basketball League] in Australia has greater followings that the NBL [National Basketball League] which is different to many other countries. Media doesn’t cover it enough. Games are not even on line and people who have followed the sport for years cannot follow it. Little girls are something that worries me, as they don’t have role models. (Molly, Focus group, 3/3/15)

> Bad thing is as a girl I couldn’t even tell you who played in the WNBA [Woman’s National Basketball Association] in America but I would tell you all the NBA [National Basketball Association] players, because of the media coverage and the culture. So in effect, I have no one to look at to compare my body and to what I should look like. I don’t do that but other sports such as surfing, athletics, netball all have those girls to look at, while we don’t, we need to compare to men. (Amber, Interview, 2/7/15)

> All you have to do is turn on the TV and you have the American jocks playing footy and the little cheerleaders. It is everywhere in the media. Who cares about a woman’s sport, but the men’s game, wow holy shit get your ticket. The basketball club I played at had their men’s game after the women and everything was pitted toward the men’s game and the women got left

> with nothing. Pay, media, crowd, sponsors, even airline classes. It's pathetic and unfair. (Sheryl, Interview, 18/6/15)
>
> AFL [Australian Football League] and cricket that are both male-dominated sports they are very high profile in our local society and in Australia, it feels like those guys were worshipped and the female athletes and sports get nothing. This spreads down to the local level elite sports as well with footy getting more of everything compared to netball that fits in with the footy game and the footy players. Wrong wrong wrong. [other girls nod head] (Margot, Focus group, 5/5/15)
>
> Netball or the WNBL [Women's National Basketball League] are main women's sports at a professional or semi-professional level and not as many people are going to watch that grand final as the men's games. Unfortunately, it is just the way it is in our world. It spreads to the local level as well with the female team being more successful at my old club but gets no credit. (Molly, Interview, 17/6/15)

Media coverage of sport in Australia is also something that the girls discussed and had strong opinions about. Again the focus group and interviews of Marley, Margot and Charlotte were very strong in their feelings toward male sport and it being shown on free to air and pay per view television, while most women's sport is not. Margot was strong in her feelings in relation to television slots and Molly and Camille expressed similar themes during their interviews and in their focus groups. They indicated that all major male sporting leagues had regular time slots for games and also "back of house" shows that told the stories of the male athletes and their leagues, while the majority of female leagues did not. The narrative shows from behind the scenes provided a level of exposure that allowed for males to have full access to their role models and to allow them to make educated and informed decisions as to the type of person they wish to use as their role model. This opportunity was missing for women and was something that was concerning to several, with Margot, Melissa and Camille being the most outspoken.

Molly and Bernadette played netball and seemed to be proud of the fact that their sport and ANZ Netball championships had a regular television presence. The Woman's National Basketball League (WNBL) and Women's A League (Soccer) has recently been removed from television by the ABC and does not have a regular media presence. The girls playing these sports, Charlotte, Amber, Margot and Camille, felt the pressure of the lack of coverage of their sport, basketball, on television and the lack of presence of the WNBL taking away the opportunity for

younger girls to identify and make a decision as to the type of role model they wish to follow; this was described as ‘disturbing’ and also ‘unfair’.

Media disparity not only occurs in the national media but also at the local level within electronic and print media. Men’s sport is covered extensively on news and during local television coverage with interest stories on male athletes and personalities a regular, with female sport receiving significantly less coverage (Cooky et al., 2013; Hull, 2016; M. Messner et al., 2003; O'Neill & Franks, 2016a; Tuggle, 1997). This media coverage was then also reflected in the actually sporting events being covered, as indicated by Molly, who has lived in two major regional cities and played netball in metropolitan Victoria and has experienced the variety of media coverage. The men and women teams in basketball often play one after the other and it is advertised in the media that the women’s game is a curtain raiser for the men’s game, rather than games of an equivalent standard. The same can be said for football and netball games played at the same venue, without the same coverage or promotion. Sheryl, Margot and Amber were adamant that this should change and that promotion should be equal with the games being promoted equally. These girls felt that this negativity painted the picture to girls of all ages that being involved in female sport is second rate and that male sport took priority, something that is a real issue in regional areas, often resulting in girls dropping out of sport.

Conclusion

The experiences of the participants have shown that individual, community and society themes influenced the participants’ involvement in sport and their inevitable dropout. This chapter has explored the society themes that influenced the participants to dropout of sport. These influences were living in a regional setting, responding to social drivers to comply and confirm, inequality and inequity in sport and the participations challenges to negotiate the media monster. These settings did not influence the participants in exclusion to each other but in accordance with the work of Bronfenbrenner two or more potentially worked in concert to influence the decision making of the participant in relation to their dropping out of sport

The following chapter will bring together all of the data analysis undertaken from the lived experiences of the participants and will provide a set of recommendations aimed to decrease the prevalence of dropout from sport by adolescent girls.

Chapter 8 – The Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 discussed the themes that had been analysed after collection from the lived experiences shared by the participants in this study. These themes discussed the individual, community and contextual issues that influenced the participants' dropout from sport during their adolescent years. The allocation of these themes into those three classifications was informed by the work of Bronfenbrenner (1992) and his Ecological Theory of development. His work that had the most visible links with this study were the areas of exosystem, ecosystem and mesosystem that to some extent mirrored some of the themes identified from the data analysis. These sections of the ecological development theory discuss the elements and settings that influence the development of children. These settings were very similar in nature to those identified in the data analysis undertaken in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

This chapter presents the overall findings of the research and brings together the themes identified through the experiences of the participants and the literature presented in previous studies. The chapter also presents a set of recommendations that if implemented will assist in decreasing the prevalence of dropout from sport by adolescent girls in regional areas. Additionally, the chapter synthesis the study's contribution to multiple forms of knowledge and revisits my reflection as a biographically situated researcher that was presented in chapter 1.

The set of recommendations from this chapter was made by the participants and was based on their experiences in sport, and they indicated that if these recommendations were implemented they would decrease the prevalence of dropout from sport by adolescent girls in regional areas. The experiences of the participants guided these recommendations and highlighted the complexities being faced by the individuals and in turn by adolescent girls as a whole. In addition to the stories of the participants, analysis of the data and in some instances from previous research has been used to strengthen the recommendations. Additionally, the contributions to the knowledge in the field were also presented in this chapter.

The chapters in review

Chapter 1 of this thesis provided an introduction and discussed the health impacts of physical activity and sport participation and introduced the reasons previously linked with the dropout from sport. Additionally, the chapter outlined the structure of the thesis and also presented the research questions on which the study was based. The second chapter further developed the phenomenon being studied and provided a detailed literature review that outlined the previous research that has been conducted in relation to the phenomenon of the dropout from sport by adolescent girls.

Chapter 3 provided an outline of the research principles utilised in this study. Information regarding the development and use of interpretative phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology, other types of phenomenology and lived experience were also reviewed in this chapter. The chapter outlined that interpretative and hermeneutic phenomenologies were used as the guiding methodologies for this study in which the lived experiences of adolescent girls in regional Victoria who have dropped out of sport were explored.

Additionally, information regarding the role of the researcher was outlined in this chapter and the role that I played in completing this study. The following chapter, Chapter 4, outlined the methodology chosen for use in this study and discussed the phases of data collection and data analysis designed for managing the data used in this research. The participation process used to advertise for and recruit participants for this study was also outlined in this chapter. A set of ethical considerations identified in the study was also outlined in this chapter and the actions undertaken to minimise these risks was also discussed.

Chapter 5 was the individual themes chapter that initially provided clarification and rationale as to the classification of the themes identified from the lived experiences of the participants in this study. Chapter 6 continued to provide insight into the themes identified via the experiences of the participants. These themes were related to the community and they were discussed and supported by the experiences of the participants; these community-related themes included such groups in the community as coaches, families, peers and partners.

Chapter 7 of the thesis was based on the contextually related themes identified via the interpretation of the lived experiences shared by the participants in this study.

These themes were based on larger influences such as stereotypes and regional life, with these being explored further in this chapter.

The final chapter, Chapter 8, provides an insight into the overall findings, a set of recommendations and a set of conclusions. The chapter provides an insight into the recommendations provided by the participants and also recommendations identified from the researcher's interpretation of the experiences and stories of the participants. The chapter also provides a concise conclusion as to the major findings, the implications of the research, possible future research opportunities and the contributions that this study makes to the field. Following this chapters is a detailed list of references and appendices that provide additional information to assist in the reader's understanding of the study.

The research study

The research set out to explore the lived experiences of participants who dropped out of sport during their adolescent years. In order to do this, a framework was designed for the study and questions were developed to retrieve data to bring these experiences to life. The research provides an insight into the phenomenon of adolescent girls' dropout from sport in regional Victoria.

The main question:

What are the lived experiences in relation to participation in and dropout from sport by regional adolescent girls?

The sub-questions:

- How do adolescent girls explain the reasons for their dropout from sport?
- What can we learn from the experiences of adolescent girls to make a difference towards increasing their participation in sport?

These questions guided the research and allowed a set of questions to be developed to be asked of the participants in their focus groups. These questions derived from the research questions were developed to promote conversation between the participants and provided prompts for them to commence their discussions. The themes discussed in the focus groups were then broken into individual questions for the interview phase of the data collection process. The individual questions used in the interview phase varied for each participant and were designed to extract

information for clarification from the experiences that were shared during the focus group phase.

Major themes and findings

The themes identified from the experiences were divided into individual, community and society themes and themes were allocated to these subheadings. The themes identified and derived from the experiences of the participants provide insights into the complexity of the research question and adolescent girls' dropout from sport and the variety of influences that they experience in making the decision to dropout. The lived experiences also provided further insights into the sub-questions posed regarding the phenomenon of adolescent girls' dropout from sport. These subheadings, themes and findings are listed below:

Individual themes

Participation in sport was identified as an individual theme that influenced the participants' ongoing involvement in sport. The participants' experiences identified that they played a variety of sports at a variety of levels. This participation allowed them to experience sport locally, nationally and internationally and to come into contact with both positive and negative experiences.

The lived experiences of the participants suggested that they had experienced large levels of positivity whilst being involved in sport that kept them returning to play. These positive experiences were shown to include fun, friendships, camaraderie, life lessons and personal development. The importance that was placed on these positives, especially fun and friendships was high in the eyes of the participants and went a long way to keeping them involved in sport.

The experiences of the participants also highlighted a large number of negative experiences faced by the participants during their sporting lives. These negative experiences that had negative effects on their continuing in sport were shown to be coaches, being stereotyped, inequality, lack of enjoyment and having to compromise and sacrifice actions in their lives to remain involved in sport. One of the more surprising findings in this area was the extent that the participants were concerned and in many ways annoyed at the inequality they faced during their sport involvement and the challenges the same inequality put on them as they moved into the workforce.

The reasons for dropout identified through these lived experiences had some similarities but no two participants had exactly the same story. The reasons for their dropout from sport were identified via their personal experiences as being based primarily around coaches, having to sacrifice activities, changing priorities, compromising themselves and their actions, the pressure placed on them and inequality between males and females. These reasons mixed together in an individual pattern for each participant could be seen as a unique print defining the reasons for each of the participants dropping out of sport.

One of the more common ideas discussed by the participants throughout their lived experiences that resulted in their dropping out from sport was their changing priorities as they grew older. "Growing up" required changing priorities whereby school, partners, employment and higher education became of higher importance to the participants, resulting in their changing their priorities from playing sport only to completing other tasks in their lives. These changing priorities were a major challenge for the participants, with many of them still facing these challenges today.

Self-concept and body image were also identified through the experiences of the participants as a major influence over their decision about dropping out of sport. The way that each of the participants portrayed herself, how boys perceived them and how female bodies in the media developed their body image were all key themes that had a negative influence on the participants, resulting in their dropout from sport. Each of the participants saw herself differently but was strongly influenced by the thoughts of others and the way in which the media portrayed girls of their age and other women in all forms of the media. These findings link strongly with the findings in the literature review but take these finding a little further by providing context via the lived experiences shared by the participants. As indicated throughout the thesis the findings are very individually-based and consequently may not achieve the same outcome if replicated under different conditions e.g. different city, state of place.

Community related themes

Community themes were identified as being of major importance in influencing the participants to dropout from sport. The influence of parents and family was identified through the lived experiences of the participants to be one of the more prominent influencers on the participants in their dropout from sport. Although not identified

solely as a factor in causing the dropout by girls, the role of parents and family was identified as a factor that laid the foundations for the participants' involvement. Active parents in the sports participation of their daughters played roles such as coaches or managers, with this influence being shown to be both positive and negative, depending on the individual participant, in relation to her ongoing participation.

The influence of boys, attraction and partners was also shown through the lived experiences of the participants to have played a large role in their dropout from sport. The influence that the girls' boyfriends and partners had over their participation and in turn their dropout was shown to be at a high level through their shared experiences. These personal experiences also identified that the pressure that many of the girls felt from boys and in some instances their partners both directly and indirectly played a large role in their changing their actions and in some instances deciding to dropout of sport completely. A surprising finding in this section of the study was the level of independence shown in some of the participants when discussing their boyfriend / partners influence over their sport involvement.

The participants in this study also identified that their friends and peers were major influencers on their day-to-day decisions in life. The actions of their friends instigated peer pressure and made some of the girls alter their actions to feed those pressures, often resulting in dropout from sport. Additionally, the positive actions of their friends started many of the girls' journeys in sport and the relationships shared with those peers were identified as one of the most important elements of being involved in sport. The lived experiences of the participants also referred to the many sacrifices and compromises that they felt that they needed to make to remain accepted by peers and partners and to remain part of their lives away from sport. The theme of sacrifice and compromise continued to appear throughout the entire study through the experiences of the participants and through the sundry discussions that the participants had in relation to their stories and experiences.

One of the most commonly discussed themes from the lived experiences of the participants was the influence of community expectations on femininity and its portrayal through the media. Many of the participants struggled with and questioned the messages that the media were attempting to portray in relation to femininity and

being a girl. The experiences of the participants suggested that the messages displayed by all forms of media were unrealistic and unattainable and made them question their own body shape; their body size and in many instances their own behaviours and the activities that they were undertaking. The participants identified that the messages and images portrayed in the media were leading to their peers, partners, families and others in the community developing an expectation of femininity that they expected others to attain. The experiences of the participants identified that often the pressure to meet these perceived community expectations in relation to femininity was instigated by peers and partners and was often linked to weight use in training and exercise and instances where others thought that a change in their body might occur that did not meet what the media was portraying to them. Additionally, the role of femininity in regional areas was an issue for the participants as the definition of femininity for them in these areas was seen as being different from that for their friends living in metropolitan areas. The lived experiences and conversations with the participants discussed occurrences and expected roles at their own sporting clubs that expected them to undertake, in many instances, subservient behaviours such as cooking for male sporting teams, serving in the canteen and participating in fundraising events for the male teams and not their own. Additionally, the ramifications and in some instances the shaming by others in relation to those not undertaking these behaviours were negative and often portrayed the females as being selfish or as not wanting to support the club. The experiences of many of the participants suggested that this expectation was not forced upon the male players in the clubs and suggested that their friends who played in individual netball clubs not linked to male football clubs in metropolitan areas did not have the same expectations forced upon them.

The most commonly discussed influencer on the dropout of the participants was the influence of coaches. The lived experiences of the majority of the participants saw verbal abuse, mental torment and emotional victimisation as a normal experience. These actions were shown to be responsible for the greatest influence on the participants' continuing participation and also on their general feelings now towards the sport from which they had withdrawn. The way that some of the participants expressed their treatment by coaches and the way in which their clubs did not act on this negativity are still an emotional item for some of the participants with which to

deal and the experiences of the participants suggested that it is an issue that is still occurring in some of these clubs, with clubs often turning a blind eye to it or not having resources allocated to the female section of the club.

Perceived competence was also an item that appeared through the experiences of the participants. The participants' perception of their own ability was a key determinant of dropout from sport in several of the girls' lives and often was highlighted by others who were watching or playing the sport with them. Lived experiences suggested that if being seen as not competent or not up to the standard expected of others resulted in some of the participants either completely withdrawing from team sport or changing their level of effort to show that they were bad at sport because they were not trying rather than being bad owing to a lack of skill. The experiences of several of the participants, especially those who did not progress to representative sport, were that if they felt that their lack of skill or competency was to be questioned they either withdrew or used other excuses such as menstruation and illness not to have to participate.

The experiences of the participants suggested strongly that responding to pressure was an issue that they felt had significant influence over their participation in sport but also spread to day-to-day life away from sport. The word *pressure* has been linked with almost every experience expressed in this study, with the level of pressure being placed on to the girls from their families, friends, coaches and the community having been shown to be a huge influence on the participants. The lived experiences of the participants showed that they had pressure placed on them in a variety of settings and from diverse groups of people. These settings were the sporting clubs for which they played, the workplaces in which they were employed, the schools in which they studied, the media that they watched, the social venues that they attended in the homes of their families, partners and friends. This pressure has played a large part in the dropout of many of the participants, who felt that relieving this pressure by dropping out has made their lives easier. These community related themes are very individual in their nature but do link with the literature discussed in the literature review chapter of this thesis.

Society related themes

Many of the participants had experience of playing sport in both regional and metropolitan areas and their experiences suggested that a difference between the two existed. This difference in location influenced their participation in sport and their lives in general, with the experiences of the participants suggesting that they had fewer opportunities than metropolitan girls and that they have to adhere to different club structures that saw football and netball sharing club structures in regional areas but often being played separately in metropolitan areas. These club differences often saw the female branch of the sport being overshadowed by male sport, resulting in the importance of the female sport being lessened. The pressure of the regional sporting context mixed with fewer opportunities to train, to be coached and to succeed was shared in the participants' lived experiences and resulted in some of the participants moving to metropolitan areas to continue their involvement.

Another of the influencers identified from the participants' stories that affected their ongoing participation in sport was the pressure to respond to social drivers to comply and conform. The stereotypes that the participants experienced and shared throughout their sporting experiences varied from sexuality and body shape and size to sport participation and being female sportswomen. The pressure that these participants felt to justify their sexuality because they were female athletes was an undue pressure that the participants suggested derived from not only friends but also in some instances from their parents and families. The stereotypes to which some of the participants' families and parents often attempted to adhere were driven by media and added significant pressure to some of the participants. The lived experiences of the participants identified that this type of questioning was seen by them as being unnecessary and often the pressure became so strong that it encouraged them to withdrawn from sport so that the questioning would stop. Additionally, the pressure added by their friends to adhere to social expectations of their actions such as what they should do on weekends and with whom they should socialise often resulted in the participants' withdrawing from sport to meet those standards. Additionally, the stereotypes placed on these participants by boys, the community and, in several instances, their families added to the pressure placed on them. This pressure, while not the sole reason for dropout, was definitely an influential factor.

Another of the themes that was consistent through the experiences and stories of the participants was the existence of inequities and inequalities in the sporting arena. Sporting opportunities, career opportunities in sport, payment to play sport, work and study flexibility, parental expectations and media coverage were the main areas identified by the participants in which the inequalities in sport existed. The lived experiences also suggested, however, that the sporting area inequalities were only a snapshot as to the world as a whole and that the same inequities occurred across other areas. The participants indicated that they did not have the same opportunities in a variety of areas and this caused a lot of concern among the participants, who expressed worry as to what would happen with their careers and sporting lives moving forward. The desire for them to work in the sporting industry and to be involved on the same level as their boyfriends and brothers was also a defining factor towards girls' dropout in order to raise money by finding employment.

Once of the most prominent influencers that the experiences of the participants indicated affected the entire mindsets and behaviours of the participants was the media and negotiating the messages that it portrays. A link exists between the images that the media portrays of the bodies and expectations of females and the self-esteem of the girls seeing these images. The experiences and stories of the participants indicated that many of them struggled to identify with realistic role models and portrayals of their gender expectations in the mainstream media. Regional media and international media have also provided mixed messages to these participants and have expelled unrealistic expectations for girls to achieve. The experiences of the participants who lived in regional areas indicated that regional media had little to no interest in presenting female sport as part of its mainstream news. Additionally, the participants indicated that throughout their experiences the regional media did not celebrate or promote female sport equally to male sport, and that if they did so the coverage was minimal and usually hidden in the back pages or smaller parts of the media coverage that were non-mainstream. The participants indicated that this uneven media coverage made female sport marginalised in the opinions of their non-sport playing friends, their families and in some instances their partners. This put further pressure onto the participants to remain involved in sport, as it was not seen as serious when compared with the sports played by males. This finding was a surprising one for me and although I had bracketed some thoughts on media and its

influence I did not appreciate the influence and effect that media has over people of this age and makes me wonder if media outlets understand this influence and that they are often responsible for the actions of many in the community.

The lived experiences of the participants have also shown that the media presents unrealistic and unattainable images of bodies, attitudes and activities in the mainstream. These images have been discussed previously in this chapter but they increased pressure from numerous areas on the participants to change their own activities to meet these media images that guide the expectations of the mainstream community. The participants identified this type of pressure as being a large issue, not only in the influence on their sport participation but also as a key influencer of the numerous other day-to-day activities that they undertook.

Although these findings are somewhat consistent with the literature outlined in the review chapter, the variations are likely due to the wholly regional focus in which the study has been undertaken. Some of the literature reviewed looked briefly at regional issues but this study took these further and looked at differences between metropolitan and regional society.

Recommendations and implications

The participants and also myself as the researcher have listed a series of practical recommendations identified via the participants' stories and experiences. These recommendations are all directed towards decreasing the prevalence of adolescent girls' dropout from sport in regional Victoria and although the issues explored focus on regional areas many of these recommendations will influence overall female participation in sport. It is also hoped that, despite featuring regional Victorian participants, this list of recommendations will assist all girls across the country and potentially overseas and although several would require extensive resources to be allocated that the problem well outweighs the allocation of resources.

Participant suggested recommendations

1. Improved development, education and recruitment of coaches

The lived experiences of the participants in this study highlighted extensive concerns relating to the coaching to which they had been exposed throughout their involvement in sport. This recommendation uses these experiences to highlight the

participants' perceived importance in the expansion of the development of coaches. Margot, Andrea and Amber told their stories to back up the recommendations of the group:

> I coach basketball at the moment and I have age groups of thirteen, fourteen and fifteen-year-old girls. I have a lot of girls that are heavily involved with netball and basketball. From my experiences, I think it is a balance by coaches to let the girls do as many things as they can. Clubs need to hire coaches that are not biased; you get coaches who can't look past a certain player. They need to be fair and more open to different players and stuff. They need to be able to know about more than just the sport they are playing; they need to be able to understand the things that teenagers may be going through as well as the other outside factors that affect them. (Margot, focus group, 5/3/15)

> Clubs should be more responsible and select their coaches a little more strictly and watch over them a little more. They need to look over at their coaches to see if the girls are responding. The club needs to be proactive in looking at their coaches before it is too late. It worries me that some of the abuse that we suffered as players may continue with other coaches that are currently coaching in the club. (Amber, focus group, 5/3/15)

> Not all girls are the same; I am proof of that. Coaches need to understand the way we think and are as girls with our body issues and stuff. Some sort of course done by Basketball Australia that coaches have to do would be great rather than just anyone in can coach. (Andrea, interview, 11/6/15)

Margot, Amber and Andrea indicated the need to increase the training of the coaches who are at the clubs in which they played. They indicated that the current level of training and development of the coaches currently appointed to coach do not have the skills to coach girls specifically and suggested that training in the area should be included in the standard professional development that the coaches are required to undertake. The development of coaches is an ongoing process that does not happen quickly (Allison et al., 2016; Erickson, Côté, & Fraser-Thomas, 2016), but the development of a systematic plan of delivery could assist in dealing with the dropout from sport of adolescent girls (Hämäläinen et al., 2016; North, 2016).

Additionally, Margot, Melissa and Camille felt that the recruitment processes and qualification requirements as to the recruitment of coaches in their sports were not extensive enough. They indicated that many non-skilled and non-competent coaches are in the coaching system and continue to be recycled from team to team and in some instances from club to club. Margot advocated strongly for a more stringent process to be implemented to ensure that the coaches selected to coach and direct

children and young adults are of a greater quality and that those with questionable practices are removed from selection (Erickson et al., 2016; D. Gould, 2016).

This recommendation can be taken further after interpreting the experiences of the participants. It was indicated by the participants that they felt that coaches with whom they had worked during their sporting lives did not understand female athletes and did not have the skills to deal with the challenges that girls face (Grahn, 2015). It was unanimously acknowledged that dealing with girls has differences from dealing with boys. In order to assist in dealing with these differences, a development program should be implemented by sport governing bodies and national sporting bodies to develop skills specific to coaching females (Sinclair, 2016).

Using expert knowledge and information from health and psychological groups as well as from elite coaches, regardless of sport, to develop a program that coaches involved in female sport were required to undertake nationwide would assist (Co˘te´, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 2003; D. Gould, 2016; Hämäläinen et al., 2016). It would ensure that a baseline set of skills is taught to coaches and that the club would be able to assess their adherence to these skills through ongoing development and assessment. Using the research of coaching experts such as Erickson (2016) and Côté (2003), it is recommended that a structured and prolonged coaching development plan be developed that is visible and delivered across various sites and that covers varying topics specific to the sports and also the gender being coached.

2. Increase school-based educational opportunities for girls and boys about health and exercise

The participants displayed a strong intent through their lived experiences to improve the education of themselves, boys and other girls in the area of health, exercise and weight training. They indicated that this lack of education resulted in their being put into challenging positions where they had to explain or change their behaviour because of a boy, partner or peer. Their experiences and stories highlighted the complexity of the phenomenon and the idea of increasing educational opportunities.

> There should be education from grade two and onwards about how kids, especially girls, should exercise, eat and feel it is okay to be bigger, smaller and skinnier as long as you're confident. If schools started a program where someone from the outside who is a bit well-known comes to the school, someone that the kids look up to - it needs to be for both genders - this will get those kids involved. It is important that boys learn too so they don't put pressure on us when they are older as to what they think we should be rather than what we are. (Molly, focus group, 3/3/15)

> I think government subsidies are definitely a priority for programs that get more girls involved in sport at school. For these kinds of programs to be up and coming, and if there was more money put into these, then maybe the media would follow. This would then show girls that playing sport is okay and that they are as important as boys. (Beth, focus group, 3/3/15)

Molly and Beth shared their stories that indicated that the level of education that they and others had received regarding their health and exercise was lacking. These girls indicated that education into the area of exercise for boys and girls was limited and that this lack of knowledge was causing undue pressure on them and their body image (Sabo et al., 2004).

In order to educate more effectively the current cohort of children and adolescents in the areas of health, body image and exercise, a school-based program is required (Arnett, 2003; Depper & Howe, 2016). Charlotte, Marley and Margot felt that, if they had been armed with more knowledge about what "healthy is" and what "exercise does", it would have allowed them to make better choices and to understand the results of their actions (Eldredge, Markham, Kok, Ruiter, & Parcel, 2016).

Additionally, they felt that teaching boys the same thing would alleviate some of the body image pressures that they placed on the girls at later ages (Felton et al., 2005).

This program could start in Years 2-3 and could progress as children mature. The program could operate until the end of high school (Eldredge et al., 2016; McCrone, 1984; Pate et al., 2007) and could continue through to tertiary education, but the tertiary element would be an extension to the program rather than a core requirement.

The tertiary element of the education program could be developed not only to improve the understanding of health and exercise by the students but also to provide opportunities for females to continue their participation in sport at all levels (Eldredge et al., 2016; Franks et al., 2015). The United States has a well-developed college education and athletics system that provides opportunities for female athletes to play and study owing to the Title IX laws that operate in that country (K. Krueger, 2016). The Title IX laws require all colleges and Universities in the United States to provide equal scholarship opportunities for male and females in academics and sport (Stevenson, 2010). Australia is in its infancy in this area and an urgent push must be made to provide opportunities for females as well as males.

Several universities across the country provide structured programs where student athletes are able to alter their learning programs to fit in with their own high-level and elite training sessions. This flexibility allows the athletes to continue playing sport while studying, keeping them in the sport and not requiring them to have to sacrifice one or the other. This process could provide scholarships to elite female athletes in order to encourage them to become student athletes, similar to the American collegiate system (Gavora, 2002; Heckman, 1992) and some Australian Universities such as Deakin University, James Cook University and The University of Sydney. These universities not only provide scholarships for elite female athletes but also sponsor teams in the WNBL (Women's National Basketball League) and state-based competitions in a variety of sports.

It is essential that this type of program be expanded across more tertiary institutions and across more states in order to develop it further and to promote to female athletes at all levels across the country (McNamee et al., 2016). Although scholarships could not be offered to all females who play sport, the opportunity for flexible enrolment to fit around sport and the offering of sport and recreation pursuits on campus could increase female participation. If female athletes realise that they can continue their sporting journeys while being able to study at their own pace, as indicated through

the experiences of the participants in this study, continued involvement in sport may occur, reducing dropout.

The lived experiences of the participants indicated that the inequality of their own sports being perceived as lesser than male sports was an issue that concerned them. This type of university program would not only increase the opportunities for females but also increase the profile of female sport not only on university campuses but also in the community. If female sport had the same programs and educational opportunities as male sports, then the profile would be seen as being equal at grassroots and university levels, which may then continue to flow to elite and senior sport.

In order for this to occur, large scale university and educational sector buy-in would be required. The effort to put together this type of approach is not centralised and it is dependent upon the marketing and promotional goals and desires of each university. In the USA the decision to promote female sport and to provide scholarships to females is not left to any one school or institution (Stevenson, 2010; Weber et al., 2016). The Title IX bill discussed earlier requires adherence by all colleges in the USA in the equal provision of male and female teams at college level and also in the number of scholarships offered to each sex. This ensures that females are provided with the opportunity to continue their education while playing sport, the same as their male counterparts (Heckman, 1992; Kane, 1988).

Currently in Australia scholarships for athletic prowess are only infantile in universities, but they are very prevalent in private and sporting high schools. Private schools offer scholarships for many sports for boys in such sports as football, cricket, rugby, swimming, basketball and soccer (Sotiriadou, Brouwers, & De Bosscher, 2016), while private schools offer only minimal sport scholarships for girls in such sports as basketball, netball and swimming. Many co-educational schools that offered scholarships to both sexes did so in a very lopsided manner, with the number of scholarships offered to boys being significantly higher than that offered to girls (S. Gould, 2016).

If a Title IX type bill, similar to the American version discussed in the literature review chapter, were introduced in Australia, it would offer equality and again put male and female sport on an equal playing field. It would allow female athletes to

continue their education while also having the opportunity to play sport. This type of Title IX would differ slightly from the USA systems and would include highs and secondary schools. This slight difference would bring a proven legal means to deal with an increasing phenomenon in all parts of the country and would assist in keeping girls in sport longer.

3. Increased and honest coverage and promotion of women's sport and the female body

The promotion of female sport in Australia and the way in which body image and women are shown were of concern to every girl in this study. The participants provided insight into their experiences in the coverage of sport and they indicated that an honest and open broadcasting standard is required and that promotion should also increase:

> The media needs to get better at promoting women's sport and women's health. Both men and women's health magazines have the same type of muscly person on the cover or they have a chick in a bra and panties that is slim and gorgeous. These pics are not real, don't fucking Photoshop, let a woman look like a woman. (Melissa, focus group, 5/3/15)

> Increased promotion for young girls could let them have role models in sport. I found my role models outside of sport and the people I look up to have more priorities than just sport, I look up to people who can focus on more and are more open-minded. Maybe programs that teach kids about role models could be good. I don't know how they would work - I suppose some government funding or funding from a business or something. (Marley, focus group, 5/3/15)

> Overall clubs, leagues and everyone need to make sport cool for girls. The media should do it. I mean the NBA and NBL are all on the popular TV channels while half the world wouldn't even know that the women's stuff is on TV. The WNBL is the best league in country, chicks' golf and soccer is cool and girls' netball doesn't get the coverage it should. If we want girls to think it is good to keep playing sport, it needs to be shown on TV and to be publicised. (Andrea, focus group, 3/3/15)

One of the most prominent of the recommendations is the improved coverage of female sport and of the female body in the media in Australia. The participants' lived experiences suggested that currently, the media coverage of female sport in Australia is insufficient and that the display of the female body is often not honest or a true representation and sets young girls and women up for failure (Carlisle-Duncan & Messner, 1998).

Media coverage of female sporting events could definitely increase in Australia, bringing with it increased popularity for female sport and also for the athletes who play it. With constant media coverage on mainstream television and in print media, the opportunity for girls to find common ground with the players and stars would increase the confidence of girls and also their belief in its equality with boys' sport (D. Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2004). Additionally, increased media coverage would bring further sponsorship dollars (Fujak & Frawley, 2016; Watson, Brunner, Wellard, & Hughes, 2016), meaning that the girls could be *"paid to play, like the boys are"* and that their sports and their sports profiles could be developed further.

The coverage of female body images and their requirement to be shown honestly were also a major concern to the participants and more so to the younger girls below them. It was their belief that the fake and often altered pictures of the female form in magazines (Daniels, 2009; Mitchell, 1997) and on television were making the achievement of those ideals almost impossible for girls and misunderstood by boys (Daniels, 2009; Duncan & Messner, 2000; K. Hall & Lucal, 1999). Charlotte, Camille, Margot and Melissa indicated that this would take away the misinformation about things such as their *"turning into men"* if they lift weights and what a *"healthy girl actually looks like"*.

The experiences and shared stories of the participants highlighted that not only were the images being shown on television and in the media providing them with unattainable expectations of how they should look and act but also the type and amount of coverage were a concern as well (MacCallum & Widdows, 2016; Taveras et al., 2004). The experiences of the participants indicated that the lack of media coverage of female sports in the mainstream media in Australia is having a profound effect on girls and their families. Sports such as basketball and soccer that do not have coverage in the media add to the perception inside the general community that female sport is "second rate" in relation to male sport and that it is not equal and should be treated that way. This inequality then added weight to the participants when their pursuits in sport were not taken seriously as the community is being "taught" to undervalue women's sport and in some instances females themselves (Crittenden, 2016). It also has an ongoing influence on girls not choosing to play sport, as the promotion options are lower than those of "male" sports.

Another of the challenges highlighted by the participants' lived experiences was their inability to see and to choose role models. The participants suggested that their ability to select role models in their sports or in other sports was becoming more difficult to develop as girls are not seeing girls similar to them on television or in print media (Frederick et al., 2016; MacCallum & Widdows, 2016). Boys and young men have the opportunity to see their own role models on television and in the media on a daily basis (Jackson, Goddard, & Cossens, 2016), making it easier for them to select their role models, whilst girls do not.

In order to provide promotion of female sport and in terms of female role models, it is imperative that leagues such as the WNBL and the Women's A League gain television deals similar to that of the ANZ trophy Netball league. Regular coverage in the media will allow girls and their sports to be seen by the community on an equal level as male sports and will encourage girls to commence playing and to play longer (Tuggle, 1997). Additionally, the media coverage on television will prompt coverage via print media, which will provide another avenue for girls to view and assist in selecting their role models (Sherwood et al., 2016).

The ability to present role models is the responsibility not only of the media but also of associations and local sporting clubs. The role models may not be international athletes or successful business people but they can show characteristics that young girls may want to emulate in their own lives (Sherry, Osborne, & Nicholson, 2016). The presentation of more female role models for girls is essential and is something that clubs and associations need to foster. Many of the associations for which the participants played had elite female teams; however, the clubs did not do an adequate job of promoting them and of allowing the junior girls access to them. This took the opportunity away from the participants to identify role models and to familiarise themselves with the pathways of female athletes who had travelled similar journeys to their own.

The true influence that the media in all of its forms has over adolescent girls requires additional research (Sherry, Osborne, et al., 2016). With the increase in the usage of social media, a new set of challenges has appeared that changes young people's dealings with the media (Hull, 2016). Traditionally research has been based on the television, movie and radio influence on people; however, the landscape is changing,

and accordingly requiring more in-depth research could be useful (Hull, 2016; MacArthur et al., 2016). The experiences of the participants suggested that they were and are affected by the media and that what shapes their actions is often presented to them via the media. Their use of social media was briefly discussed but a worthwhile note existed that almost all of the participants engaged with social media either prior to or post the focus group phase. The influence of these types of media requires further work to ascertain more comprehensively.

4. The recruitment, education and development of programs and advocates in grassroots sporting clubs for girls to share their experiences and concerns

The lack of advocates in positions of support for girls at sporting clubs was an issue about which the participants expressed concern. The presence of a support mechanism for girls playing at clubs is missed at the moment in the lived experiences of these participants. Developing this position in local clubs and associations was indicated by the participants as a possible solution to the negative experiences shared within their own local clubs.

> I developed really early; I was like nine and had boobs and everything. I felt self-conscious and felt really big and different to other girls because they were still little and hadn't had their periods for like another five years. I felt really different and really weird and had no one to talk to about it with. I feel if I had a maybe a coach, maybe not a coach, but someone that I could go to and talk about how I felt different or I felt weird because I couldn't talk to the girls about it because they weren't going through what I was going through. (Charlotte, interview, 7/7/15)

> If you feel self-conscious and have no one to talk to, it makes you feel terrible. If you have someone to talk to, they can help you explain that you have developed quicker, then you will understand more and you would have stayed in sport longer, instead of leaving sport. (Rebecca, interview, 15/6/15)

The experiences and stories of the adolescent girls indicated that they experienced significant changes to their bodies and emotions and that that influenced their self-esteem and the ways in which they saw themselves. These changes put pressure on the girls and made them highly concerned about their appearance and the ways that others perceived them. Bernadette, Camille, Andrea, Molly, Amber, Sheryl, Melissa, Margot and Charlotte felt that many of the coaches with whom they had worked in their clubs did not have the ability to share these problems and that in many instances

the team managers or the other parents did not have the independence away from their own children to assist the other girls with their issues.

It was said by Camille and Molly that possibly a girls' advocate could be put in place within the clubs where they could be of assistance to the girls dealing with issues. The advocate position could be designed in a way similar to support officers employed in most schools (Cribb & Haase, 2016). They would provide support to the girls and be there for the girls to talk to about any issues that they felt were important while they were playing. These issues included but were not limited to menstruation, injury, coach and teammate behaviour, home life and personal life. These types of programs have been shown to be successful in education across not only Australia, but also the world (Ambat, 2016; Douglas, Chan, & Sampilo, 2016; Havaris & Danylchuk, 2007; Lai, Guo, Ijadi-Maghsoodi, Puffer, & Kataoka, 2016).

The lived experiences of the participants indicated that developing an advocate program for clubs could be effectively paired with an increase in grassroots funding for development programs for junior female sport. This funding could provide resources to sporting associations to employ these types of positions as well as formally developing programs to continue the education and development of female sport.

Large amounts of money continue to be injected into the development of sport at junior levels of sport from major sporting associations and governing bodies (Burroughs & Nauright, 2000; Taylor, 2001). Sports such as AFL (Australian Football League) and soccer inject millions of dollars into the development of their games across the country and in turn the world. This money is directed to many programs, with the majority of it being allocated to male sport and to the development of sport not specialised for females.

Just the simple allocation of funds to sports is not enough; specific planning and development of the application of these resources to programs for girls are also required (Havaris & Danylchuk, 2007; Taylor, 2001). In a recent development, the AFL has allocated more money to female football and its development and has plans to commence a national competition. Previously, they allocated money to general game development; however, they have now taken the lead and they have commenced specific development of the sport for girls (Wedgwood, 2005). It is now

time for other sports to follow this lead and to provide funding for specific female sporting development programs.

5. Work with players to design training and practices that increase the enjoyment of sport and make it fun again.

The experiences and stories of the participants in this study highlighted the importance of fun to them and the importance of fun to other girls. With the fun removed, the participants and the literature indicated that dropout from sport became more prevalent (Nesti, 2016; Visek et al., 2016). The participants stated that, if fun and enjoyment were to return systematically to teams, the dropout of girls might decrease. This recommendation highlights the challenges faced by the participants and in this instance by the stakeholders attempting to deal with dropout. Additionally, the individuality of fun and enjoyment is another challenge to be considered when discussing this and all of the recommendations (Te Riele, Plows, & Bottrell, 2016; Visek et al., 2016). As outlined by the lived experiences of the participants, it was shown that what could be seen as fun by one girl may be completely different for another:

> Enjoyment is so important. A lot of people I know have dropped out because they either didn't enjoy the sport they were playing or enjoyed something else more. It comes down to what you enjoy doing. It is simply if you don't enjoy it you won't do it. If sport was made to be more enjoyable then heaps of the girls I know might have stayed involved. (Andrea, focus group, 3/5/15)

> We need to realise that things in sport are not the be all and end all, like if you don't make this team you're done - world ended. If you don't make that training session, you're done. Things need to allow girls to make a decision that, if they do miss a session to see friends or some other things, then they can still come back to training tomorrow. If we get to enjoy training and games, we would keep playing; no fun to me equals no play. (Margot, focus group, 5/3/15)

This recommendation highlights the challenges of attempting to deal with an issue as complex as adolescent girls' dropout from sport. Increasing the fun for players often goes against the beliefs of coaches and often depends on the level of play being undertaken (Kimiecik & Harris, 1996; A. Phillips & Weiss, 2016). Margot echoed the words of Andrea and Sheryl, who felt that numerous representative coaches believed that fun was not a priority and that if fun were wanted the girls should play domestic sport; this was also shown in research in the area (Te Riele et al., 2016).

Several of the participants mentioned fun as being important to them and that without fun, regardless of level; their enjoyment would slowly disappear.

The majority of girls indicated that they felt the desire to cease their playing when the sport in which they were involved was no longer fun; this has been shown to be an issue not only with these participants but also with other girls around the world (Fairclough, 2003; Jaakkola et al., 2016). The recruitment of coaches sharing this philosophy or even the organisation of several team and club-based social and fun events may alter the mindset of the girls, possibly resulting in their remaining in sport longer (J. Young, 2001).

6. Develop and enforce a code of conduct for parents.

The participants identified the behaviour of parents as an issue that influenced their ongoing participation in sport (Côté, 1999; Côté & Hay, 2004; Cumming & Ewing, 2002). The behaviour displayed by parents towards their own children and other children regarding their performances and often the child's selection in elite teams were a concern to the participants. The experiences and stories of the participants stated that these behaviours often went unchecked and unpoliced by the sporting clubs and associations. The participants shared their experiences regarding the parents whom they encountered:

> I saw and was on the end of so much sledging from parents. Sledging from parents needs to be outlawed at clubs; there are no winners from it. The parents that do it need to make themselves feel big and better; things like that need to change. The way I have seen them act is scary and makes the victims and actually their own daughters feel crap. (Sheryl, interview, 18/6/15)

> There is no way a parent can yell and scream the way I have seen without them breaching a code of some variety. The clubs just don't do shit about it. They don't care what the girl thinks or feels; they just turn a blind eye. Don't they have a code of conduct? If they don't, they should. (Melissa, interview, 15/6/15)

Sheryl and Margot were very strong with their feelings towards this issue whereby they identified the behaviour of parents at sporting games and training as being a *"major and growing concern"* and something that had a major influence on them, a number of their friends and girls whom they knew. Parents using foul language and generally looking to put down anyone else's child were *"everywhere I went"* and made a whole lot of girls "*feel horrible"* and "*dread going to games"*. The behaviour

generally took place during games and training where parents of other players would attempt to downplay the performances of others on both the opposition team and the same team as their own children. This was done to try to lower the profile of the other players and to raise the profile of their own child or children.

Sheryl, Margot and Charlotte shared their stories that showed support regarding this recommendation. The girls felt that some clubs had codes of conduct but did not think that they actually enforced them (Donnelly, Kerr, Heron, & DiCarlo, 2016). They believed that a stronger code could be put together and that the actions revolving around any breaches would punish the parents. One girl discussed the punishment of the child of the parent, but the majority of the other participants indicated that it "*wasn't her fault and that the parent was being a prick, not them"*. The redeveloped code of conduct would provide protection for the girls playing the game and would be a strong weapon in the regulation of negative behaviour influencing many girls to stop playing sport (Donnelly et al., 2016; Kochanska, Brock, & Boldt, 2016).

7. Higher coaching standards to be implemented across clubs and associations

The behaviours of coaches were also shown through the experiences of the participants to be an issue that influenced the dropout of girls from sport. The participants indicated that standards that coaches are required to fulfil while in their positions either were non-existent or were not being met. The participants shared their experiences and their desire for a higher standard of expected behaviours to be developed in clubs and associations:

> The way some coaches speak to players is horrible and I think that if they knew how to talk to them in a constructive way you can get more out of them. I didn't really have it a lot to me but I saw it to other girls and it was pretty bad. Maybe a set of language terms that can be used across all girls' teams in the club could help that? (Molly, focus group, 3/3/15)

> The clubs need to be aware and the coaches need to be aware that their goals may not be our goals. This can happen with more one on one time with their players where they get to know them more, talk to them and see how they like being treated. Some will like getting yelled at; some will like being spoken to on the side of the court after the game. This stuff should be done across the whole club and before the season starts; when preseason is done, these meetings should take place. (Bernadette, focus group, 3/3/15)

With the majority of girls and research indicating that the behaviour of coaches was questionable and often threatening, it is important that the standards that they are required to meet were raised to ensure that this type of behaviour is managed (Erickson & Côté, 2016; Goudas et al., 2001). Charlotte, Sheryl, Bernadette and Andrea led the discussions in their groups and took the conversation about this topic further in their interviews. The girls who had played across several clubs in regional and metropolitan Victoria indicated that many of the current clubs were shown to have no visible standard for the coaches to adhere to. The participants' experiences indicated that this made it difficult for the clubs to manage the behaviours of their coaches and to manage the actions that they undertook while coaching players.

The lived experiences of the participants indicated that, in order to ensure that a higher set of standards could be met, a change in mindset and education should occur in the state and national governing bodies of the sport (Martin et al., 2001). With coach development being a key requirement of receiving funding from state and federal bodies, an improvement in the coaching standards could be linked with this funding making it an important move for the longevity of their specific sports and their coaches (Super et al., 2016; Trninic et al., 2009). If this review occurred at national governing body level, it would allow state bodies to educate further their associations, who could then do the same with their coaches. Once this educational trickle down took place, it should decrease the negative types of coach behaviour experienced by the girls participating in this study.

These recommendations have been based on the experiences of the participants in this study and they have been linked with my own interpretations and in turn with literature from the field. The individuality of each of these recommendations remains a challenge and is something that must be considered. What could be deemed as being fun or important by one person may not be so for another, making blanket recommendations difficult. These recommendations are guiding ones and require further consideration by those implementing the changes and in relation to the sports in which they are implementing them.

Researcher suggested recommendations

Television deals and coverage for elite female sport - The Women's National Basketball League, W League and other major female sports do not have television

deals, meaning that they are not shown on television. Implementing television deals for these sports and others will allow girls to see their sports on television and to identify role models whom they can use as the basis for their own actions. These deals will ensure the financial viability of the clubs and in turn the leagues, something that is currently in a precarious position.

Increase grassroots funding for junior female development programs - Currently, large levels of junior funding for sport are linked with performances of seniors at Olympic Games? level and world championship level. A review of this process is urgently required and must recognise the importance of junior participation and development and fund it without any link with the senior performance.

Development of coach improvement programs specific to the coaching of young female athletes – It is widely recognised that coaching females requires different skills from those for coaching men and boys. If the governing body liaises with female health and education specialists, it will allow a program to be developed for implementation in state and local associations and clubs. This program would have accreditation attached to it and be included in the national coaching accreditation scheme in order to formalise and recognise its worth.

Development of higher education programs that provide incentives to female athletes to attend university and tertiary training – Taking a leaf from the WNBL, a higher education program should be expanded from just elite level basketball to incorporate other sports. This would require a funding increase from the government, a commitment to female sport by tertiary institutions and an allocation of scholarships for female athletes. The promotion of this program could then be linked with high school and sporting clubs through governing bodies and associations.

Further research should be undertaken into the influence of media on the long-term involvement of females and their participation in sport – Undertaking further research into the media influence on long-term involvement would require university support for this and identifying funding that would provide a scholarship

and study support to a researcher. Alternatively a private industry or government department could sanction and fund this study, which would provide important information to assist further to decrease rates of female dropout.

Promotion and employment of female role models/advocates for adolescent girls playing club sport – Programs exist in the United States and Europe where female athletes and role models are employed to visit schools and clubs and are promoted in the media. The WNBA program "She got next" promotes key players on and off the court and promotes stories of their lives. This type of program should be implemented to include not only sportspeople but also businesswomen and other successful females.

Implementation of a Title IX (USA) program for private and public high school sporting program and scholarship delivery - This is the most difficult of the researcher's recommendations with the greatest level of implications. A government bill would be required for this to be implemented, as would an increase in government education funding to ensure female opportunities. A major change in mindset is required at the federal level and at several levels below that to ensure implementation of the sporting equality program at all levels. The opportunity for all in metropolitan areas will improve with this type of change; however, the large opportunity increase would take place in regional areas owing to the possibility for girls in smaller areas to move to larger towns to join scholarship programs and to develop their skills.

Contributions by this study to knowledge

This study, the methodology used and also the findings have made a contribution to the knowledge in the field. This knowledge, although it is outlined throughout the thesis, appears in three distinct categories, all of which will provide a reference for those completing study in the area of sport, female participation, and sport. These categories are:

Contribution to practically related knowledge

The recommendations made from the findings from this study and from their interpretations have highlighted several actions that if undertaken could improve the opportunities for girls currently participating in sport. These recommendations and

this study as a whole inform groups that are in positions to direct change such as sport governing bodies, sporting managers, coaches, parents, families and most importantly adolescent girls themselves. These groups can assist in directing change to programs, procedures and policies across not only clubs but also sporting bodies countrywide. Families and friends can assist girls in developing strategies and in identifying behaviours and experiences that may commence or add to the pressure to remain or to dropout from sport.

These recommendations and recommended actions have been derived from the lived experiences of girls over their lifetime and provide important additions to the knowledge pool about this topic. Additionally, the practical implementation of these recommendations will provide further practical examples for use in future studies in a wide variety of areas involving female participation in sport and adolescent girls' involvement in sport.

Contribution to methodological knowledge

Using methodologies such as IPA, hermeneutics and phenomenology to design a data analysis process that was used in this study is the prime example of a contribution to the methodology in the field. An extensive review of the methods used in other similar studies encouraged me to design my own data analysis process that could tackle the complex nature of the phenomenon and the experiences and stories of the participants in the study. The data analysis phase uniquely designed by me paired with the combined use of focus groups and interviews to collect data provides an additional methodology that could be used by other researchers in this field and in others.

Contribution to theoretical knowledge

The use of lived experience by girls in a regional Victorian setting is the first of a number of contributions being made to theoretical knowledge in the area. Pairing the use of this with interpretative and hermeneutic phenomenology with the cohort of adolescent female participants is also a contribution to the field. Additionally, the application of Bronfenbrenner (1992, 1999) to the sporting field and to the development of adolescents is a contribution to the field.

Specific findings and information gathered from the experiences of the girls in the area of self-concept is one of the largest contributions being made to theoretical

knowledge. The understanding that self-concept varies from individual to individual and varies from location to location and is played out in different ways for each participant is an important contribution to the field. The individuality of these lived experiences and the complicated nature of the influences that the identified themes have over people in the community is also a unique contribution to the field.

Additionally, the role of coaches and the importance they play in the lives of young people can also vary depending upon the context each individual girl was experiencing. The contribution of coaching behaviours and characteristics and how each individual perceives them is also an important theoretical contribution.

Possibilities for future research

This study identified several areas in the current literature where further information and study are required and it also highlighted many opportunities for future studies. The experiences and stories of individual girls and their shared experiences highlighted several themes and ideas that were either yet to be studied in depth or had not been identified for study in an Australian context. The future areas for potential future research are as follows:

Do adolescent boys face similar challenges in their involvement in sport? – This study has focused solely on adolescent girls; however, in order truly to gain a greater understanding of the challenges faced by adolescents, the same type of study could take place with male participants.

What are the perspectives of dropout from people on the other side? – Other people have played important roles in the dropout of adolescent girls from sport. People such as coaches, club officials, parents, teachers and partners all have lived experiences of their own that could paint a larger picture of dropout.

What influence does being a single parent or being from a family with two married parents have on sports participation? – Participants in this study shared different family structures, with some coming from split families and others with two parents remaining together. Differences between girls from each family unit type existed and form the possibility of an interesting study into differences between family structures and the influence that they have on involvement in sport.

What drives numerous girls to move from team sport to individual sport? – Marley was the individual outlier when it came to data collection about her lived experiences. She left team sport for individual sport and had different experiences from those of many of the other girls. A detailed study of her experiences and journey would provide an interesting and valuable case study that could assist in the further understanding of girls' participation in sport.

Do dropout rates vary from individual and team sports? – The girls who played individual and group sport shared a variety of different lived experiences. A study looking specifically at their experiences and comparing them would be valuable in relation to decreasing the pertinence of adolescent girls' dropping out of sport.

What is the influence of media influence on long-term sports participation? – It was shown by the participants that media played an important role; the extent of this role was not fully explored as part of this study. A long-term study that follows several girls and their interactions with and influence by the media would assist in understanding the role that it plays in the sporting lives of girls. Such a study would provide further understanding of the effect of all types of media on girls' dropout from sport.

Do differences exist when comparing metropolitan with regional with rural girls' participation in sport? – Differences exist in participation levels and sporting opportunities for metropolitan, regional and rural girls. A comparative study that compares the experiences of a cohort from each area would be beneficial to developing understanding as to the participation of girls in sport. Additionally, this study would increase the understanding of the mechanisms that influence the dropout of girls in these areas.

What examples of female inequity in sport exist in Australian sport? – This possibility for future study of examples of female inequity could be much larger than just in sport; however, owing to the focus of this study, sport remains the recommended option. The roles played in clubs, the structure of clubs, coach and manager employment, the allocation of resources in clubs and the opportunities provided are some of the many areas where inequality could be seen to appear and to be explored.

What are the retention rates of altered games (e.g., Auskick) over a prolonged period of time in boys and girls? – Altered and minor games are the basis for many of the sport governing body development and introduction to sports programs. These games let children try the sports and then connect and progress through the age groups and levels. A study of the retention rates of boys and girls commencing these programs across a three, five, ten and 15-year timespan would provide empirical evidence as to their success. The study could then be expanded to focus solely on female retention, providing further detail that could assist in the fight against adolescent female dropout from sport.

What influence does having a male researcher have on the sharing of the lived experiences of female participants? – Identified as a risk to this study and possibly a risk identified in other similar studies, research into the actual influence that male researchers have on female participants is imperative. A study could look at a comparison between answers provided to male and female researchers and investigate any differences, inclusions or exclusions.

Each of these studies would require support from universities and sporting governing bodies. The provision of this support would require university scholarships or financial support for the students undertaking the studies. Support from the sporting fraternity would allow academics to gain access to their players and information in order to undertake the studies. Implications for the players, coaches, teams and clubs exist and will require communication and the sharing of resources to achieve better opportunities for all females moving forwards.

Additionally, making changes to the structure and environment in which females play sport will provide greater opportunity for girls of all ages. Allowing girls to share their stories regarding a wide variety of topics in a way similar to this study will continue to provide information on ways that their experiences in sport can be fostered and improved and will allow them to benefit from prolonged involvement in sport.

The biographically situated researcher revisited

After wondering why my daughter and her friends dropped out of sport during their adolescent years I now have a greater understanding as to why. The pressure on them and expectations for them to compromise what they do and how they do it is

immense as shown by the lived experiences of these participants. The influence of media, the sporting clubs they play in and the sexual and gender expectations placed on them honestly blew my mind and makes me understand why so many across the country and the world dropout when they do. The parents of my daughter's friends who started this whole conversation will hopefully gain some solace from the findings in this study and it will provide them and the girls themselves with some comfort that their decisions to quit are understood in some part by their families.

Final words

Dropout from sport by adolescent girls is a continually growing problem in many areas across Australia. The reasons for this dropout are very individually based and can vary depending on the context and circumstance in which they find themselves. The influence of the environments in which individuals can find themselves or of people with whom the individual spends time can influence their participation, as can external factors such as media, stereotypes and community expectations. The experiences and stories of these participants highlight the complexity of these influencers and the individuality of the responses that these influencers had on their behaviours. In this instance, all of the participants responded similarly and dropped out of sport. The lived experiences and their interpretations have allowed a set of recommendations and conclusions to be drawn hopefully to assist in decreasing the prevalence of adolescent female dropout from sport. The challenge will be how the decision-makers and sporting organisations take these recommendations and if they see the problem in the same light as the participants and many other girls and their families see the problem.

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The Appendicies

Appendix A: Ethics Approval Letter

OFFICE OF RESEARCH
Human Research Ethics Committee
PHONE +61 7 4631 2690| FAX +61 7 4631 5555
EMAIL ethics@usq.edu.au

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND AUSTRALIA

9 December 2014

Mr Lukas Carey

Dear Lukas

The USQ Human Research Ethics Committee has recently reviewed your responses to the conditions placed upon the ethical approval for the project outlined below. Your proposal is now deemed to meet the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)* and full ethical approval has been granted.

Approval No.	**H14REA212**
Project Title	So I play like a girl?: The lived experiences of regional Victorian adolescent girls who have dropped out of sport
Approval date	16 December 2014
Expiry date	16 December 2017
HREC Decision	**Approved**

The standard conditions of this approval are:

(a) conduct the project strictly in accordance with the proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments made to the proposal required by the HREC
(b) advise (email: ethics@usq.edu.au) immediately of any complaints or other issues in relation to the project which may warrant review of the ethical approval of the project
(c) make submission for approval of amendments to the approved project before implementing such changes
(d) provide a 'progress report' for every year of approval
(e) provide a 'final report' when the project is complete
(f) advise in writing if the project has been discontinued.

For (c) to (e) forms are available on the USQ ethics website:
http://www.usq.edu.au/research/ethicsbio/human

Please note that failure to comply with the conditions of approval and the *National Statement (2007)* may result in withdrawal of approval for the project.

You may now commence your project. I wish you all the best for the conduct of the project.

Annmaree Jackson
Ethics Coordinator

Copies to: careyss@westnet.com.au

Appendix B: Consent form – Focus group

University of Southern Queensland

Consent Form for USQ Research Project Focus Group

Project Details

Title of Project: **"So I play like a girl?' – The lived experiences of regional Victorian adolescent girls who have dropped out of sport.**

Human Research Ethics Approval Number:

Research Team Contact Details

Principal Investigator Details

Mr. Lukas Carey
Email: careyss@westnet.com.au
Mobile: 0437258528

Supervisor Details

Ass. Professor Robyn Henderson
Email: robyn.henderson@usq.edu.au
Mobile: 0401 560 397

Statement of Consent

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- Have read and understood the information document regarding your participation in this project.
- You have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.
- Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team.
- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part in the study.
- I understand that you may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that if I withdrawn from the study after the focus group sessions that my lived experiences cannot be withdrawn from the study.
- I confirm that I am over 18 years of age and agree to participate in the study.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published and I will be identified by the use of a pseudonym.
- I understand that I will be audio recorded during the study.
- I understand that any audio recording of my interviews or focus groups will be retained and transferred to written form for the entirety of the study. The recording will then be stored in a locked cupboard for 5 years with only myself having access.
- Understand that you, or your child, are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty.
- Understand that you can contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Coordinator on (07) 4631 2690 or email ethics@usq.edu.au if you do have any concern or complaint about the ethical conduct of this project.
- I understand that my involvement in completely voluntary with no remuneration forthcoming.

Participant Name	
Participant Signature	
Date	

Please return this sheet to a Research Team member prior to undertaking the interview.

Appendix C: Consent form - Interview

University of Southern Queensland

Consent Form for USQ Research Project Interview

Project Details

Title of Project: **"So I play like a girl?' – The lived experiences of regional Victorian adolescent girls who have dropped out of sport.**

Human Research Ethics Approval Number:

Research Team Contact Details

Principal Investigator Details

Mr. Lukas Carey
Email: careyss@westnet.com.au
Mobile: 0437258528

Supervisor Details

Ass. Professor Robyn Henderson
Email: robyn.henderson@usq.edu.au
Mobile: 0401 560 397

Statement of Consent

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- Have read and understood the information document regarding your participation in this project.
- You have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.
- Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team.
- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part in the study.
- I understand that you may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that if I withdrawn from the study after the focus group sessions that my lived experiences cannot be withdrawn from the study.
- I confirm that I am over 18 years of age and agree to participate in the study.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published and I will be identified by the use of a pseudonym.
- I understand that I will be audio recorded during the study.
- I understand that any audio recording of my interviews or focus groups will be retained and transferred to written form for the entirety of the study. The recording will then be stored in a locked cupboard for 5 years with only myself having access.
- Understand that you, or your child, are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty.
- Understand that you can contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Coordinator on (07) 4631 2690 or email ethics@usq.edu.au if you do have any concern or complaint about the ethical conduct of this project.
- I understand that my involvement in completely voluntary with no remuneration forthcoming.

Participant Name	
Participant Signature	
Date	

Please return this sheet to a Research Team member prior to undertaking the interview.

Appendix D: Participant information sheet

University of Southern Queensland

Participant Information for USQ Research Project Information Sheet

Project Details

Title of Project: **"So I play like a girl?' – The lived experiences of regional Victorian adolescent girls who have dropped out of sport.**

Human Research Ethics Approval Number:

Research Team Contact Details

Principal Investigator Details

Mr Lukas Carey
Email: careyss@westnet.com.au
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Supervisor Details

Ass. Professor Robyn Henderson
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Mobile: 0401 560 397

Description

The physical and psychological advantages of physical activity and participation in sport are widely recognized, particularly for adolescent girls. However, with dropout rates of adolescent girls from sport increasing, there is a concern growing among researchers and practitioners that not enough information specific to sport dropout is being collated. Recent research has focussed on withdrawal from physical activity, without a distinct focus on sport. It has also been undertaken in large major cities in the US. In this study, being undertaken as part of a Doctorate of Education the focus is on gathering the 'lived experiences' of the adolescent girl participants who have withdrawn from sport and are in regional Australia. The research team requests your assistance because you have experienced this phenomenon and your lived experiences can help identify reasons the phenomenon occurs.

Participation

Your participation will involve contributing your thoughts and ideas in a group discussion (focus group) that will take approximately 1.5 Hours of your time.

The focus group session will take place late in 2014 and early 2015 with dates and times to be negotiated with the participants recruited for the study.

1. I will be exploring the lived experiences of adolescent girls who have dropped out of sport,

   but before we chat all of your experiences I would be interesting to know about:

- When did you start playing sport?
- Why did you start playing sport?

- What sports have you played?

2. Can you please tell me a about some of the positive experiences you had with your involvement in sport?
3. Can you tell me about some of the negative experiences you had with your involvement in sport?
4. What experiences effected your involvement in sport?
5. Have any of your experiences in your time in sport affected you in later life?
6. Would you return to the sport you dropped out of? (Why/Why not?)

The focus group will be audio recorded.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. You will be unable to withdraw data collected about yourself after you have participated in the focus group. If you wish to withdraw from the project, please contact the Research Team (contact details at the top of this form).

Participation is entirely voluntary. **If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged too.** If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project, however it must be noted that if you withdrawn after the focus group stage your data will remain in the study and you will be referred to as a pseudonym. If your decision to withdrawn takes place after the interview stage, your information from the focus group will remain but your interview information can be removed, if you wish.

Expected Benefits

The benefits of involvement in this study outweigh the risks. The opportunity for participants to share stories with their peers on a similar topic may be seen as therapeutic. Additionally, the ability for the participants to potentially decrease dropout or help another adolescent girls stay in sport longer by educating and informing governing bodies, sports organisations and clubs as to what they can do to decrease dropout would be an anticipated benefit to this study.

Risks

Involvement in this research is one with some risk. Time implications, psychological and social risks forr the main risk categories. Time imposition for involvement in this study exists and requires three hour maximum involvement. The second risk element of the study is the social risk, where information that ma be shared may cause discomfort or distress to the participant in their relationships with peers or friend after the study has been completed. While the other risk element is the psychological risk wher participants sharing their lived experience may feel anxious or uncomfortable. Participants will be provide the chance to withdraw if the discussion makes them feel uncomfortable and should any participant fe distressed they will be directed to Lifeline 13 11 14, where professional help is available.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law.

The recording of both the focus groups and also individual interviews will take place to ensure no information is missed and to provide greater ease to turn the information into written format. Additionally, voice recordings will be listened to more than once in accordance with the methodology being used in the study. I will be the sole person transcriber of this information to ensure confidentiality with the information stored in a locked cupboard in my home office in Bendigo, Victoria, in accordance as per University of Southern Queensland's Research Data Management policy.

Consent to Participate

We would like to ask you to sign a written consent form (enclosed) to confirm your agreement to participate in this project. Please return your signed consent form to a member of the Research Team prior to participating in your focus group.

Questions or Further Information about the Project

Please refer to the Research Team Contact Details at the top of the form to have any questions answered or to request further information about this project.

Concerns or Complaints Regarding the Conduct of the Project

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Coordinator on (07) 4631 2690 or email ethics@usq.edu.au. The Ethics Coordinator is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an unbiased manner.

Thank you for taking the time to help with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.

Appendix E: Focus group / Interview questions

Focus Group Questions

1. What organised sports have you played throughout your life?
2. What experiences (both positive and negative) have you gained from your involvement in sport?
3. What effect, if any has 'being a girl' affected your participation or dropout from sport?
4. Tell me how any 'other' influences have resulted in you dropping out of sport?
5. What can be done to lower the level of dropout of adolescent girls' from sport?

Interview question samples

*** You talked about girls and boys and their passion for sport, you mentioned that you didn't think that girls had as much passion for sport as boys do, I just want you to talk about that a little bit more, tell me what you mean?**

*** Lets talk about the fact that you are enjoying that sport and you are enjoying what you are doing there now. What is the difference between when you were playing sport and pulled out, compared to now? Why are you enjoying it now and not then?**

*** So you mentioned your father, is that any bigger issues with your father, with him involving in your sport or you just using that as an example?**

*** So you are now back playing sport again, what are the benefits now of playing sport now compared to when you were playing at the elite level?**

*** Did it affect any of your relationships with your friends/family? Did you pick up any of those jeopardized friendships after you finished sport?**

*** You so talk about sacrifice, before hand you pulled the pin because you were sacrificing friends and other stuff, now it has gone the other way. So now its sacrificing time with your boyfriend and friends to play sport, talk to me about that?**

*** I want to pick you up on something you just said, you said that now that you are playing sport and you have to sacrifice time with your boyfriend and work, to play sport. Whereas previously it was everything went out so you play sport, have you done a complete 360?**

*** You talked about in your previously interview, you height. From what you said previously, that had a massive mental drag on your involvement in sport. Tell me about that lived experience?**

*** That is a pretty big revelation that you have had (about your body and changing it). Was it just pressure from coaches or was it pressures from who else?**

*** Talk about what you mean by being the Odd one out?**

*** Why do you think you quit sport, what influenced it?**

*** In your previous discussion, you mentioned coaches over your time that put you down and made you feel not real good in yourself, can you think about that and talk to me about those experiences**

*** So those sort of things then, right and I know you talked about a lot of that stuff built up on you, like that pressure builds up on you. So am I guessing to say that you have 100 of those stories where things built up on you? So what do you think, is there a story or a thing that was sort of the breaking point?**

***Was it a combination of parents, coaches, pressure, all those things you were talking about, that made you pull out or was it something else?**

*** Is there anything else like that that stick in your head? Any other things that coaches have said or done that stick in your head?**

*** How about on the netball side of things? Are there any positive things that stick in your head?**

*** You spoke about tonight, and mentioned it previously, about you wearing make up and you being a girl and looking like a girl, and that that has caused you some untold discomfort with coaches, parents and others. Can you tell me a little bit about that?**

*** Lets talk a little bit about that basketballer and the dance/model type thing right. You talk about that you love getting out, that you can do your hair, put your make up on, put a short skirt on and go. So how did you go about switching from basketballer to Saturday night go-out-girl? You talked about having to sacrifice a lot of the partying because of sport?**

*** So lets say your netball team, you playing Saturday? You get a call from the coach saying, you can only play if you are not wearing make up, and you would play? You wouldn't play? What would it be?**

*** You mentioned boys and boyfriends. So lets talk previous boys or previous boyfriends, any affect from them for you playing/dropping out of sport?**

*** Did he ever contemplate not doing sport to hang out with you? Or was it always you expected to make the sacrifice?**

Appendix F: Reflective journal excert

Bias identified

Bias	**Further information**
Role of the coach in dropout	Basing my thoughts off the experiences of my daughter I have bias toward the role of the coach in dropout and the negative influence they have.
Role of media in dropout	I have formed strong opinions on the role of the media in girls' sport and the negative role it plays. Especially in regional areas.
Big fish in small pond syndrome	A bias existed in my thinking that some of the girls dropout of sport due to prima donna status and of them being big fish in the regional small pond and them not having their inflated egos met.
That netball and basketball were the main sports played in the country	This bias was a narrow view and made me think that only netball and basketball were the sports I would see in this study. The experience of being a parent to a netballer and basketballer painted a bias in my mind that issues in those sports would be the same across all sports.

Appendix G: Critical friend feedback

Initial review of transcriptions and themes

The transcriptions of the focus groups seem to have uncovered some interesting topics for consideration. I think the body image and self-esteem topics could be combined, not sure what the topic would be but there seems to be a lot of crossovers in what the girls talked about. Not sure what you could call it but I think it makes sense to link the two together.

Interesting the amount of discussion regarding coaches, have you considered just making the study about the coaches only and their influence over the girls? Not sure if there is enough but something that seemed interesting and thought I should mention it. Also I think you need to remove the name of the coaches the girls talked about from the transcriptions just in case the name gets out. From what the girls say they didn't treat them right but I am not sure I would want to see my name written up as the cause of misfortune for people.

The topics of partners seem a little problematic for me, as you have only mentioned boys as partners. I noticed none of the girls mentioned having a partner of the same sex but some didn't make mention of the sex of their partners at all. Not saying that any did have partners of the same sex but it is a fair point to refer to partners of both sexes in your work. It could be problematic and open you to questioning if you do not include same sex relationship reference, especially when one of the girls' talks about having her own sexuality questioned. Potentially there are girls who have dropped out due to this issue both in your study and out.

In relation to your discussion regarding families, I really like the fact that you have identified both separated and non-separated families. There is minimal separation between the influences a broken family has compared to a 'regular' family, is this something you can discuss and research or is that a different study? I am not into the study enough to say but thought it was worthwhile throwing it up there.

The transcriptions of the girls' interviews and questioning groups' looks great, I can't imagine this would have been a quick or easy process. I like the way you showed their non-verbal actions as well as it really showed their real feelings. It seemed that there were a lot of agreeance from the girls in relation to their stories, can I suggest you make note of those so it shows possible similar occurrences happening to those girls? Is that a possibility, might help?

The biases you wrote down make a lot of sense and it is good to see the honest with them. I would never have thought about putting these things down to be considered. The idea of a man interviewing a young girl has so many elements to it; I like how you dealt with them and how you positioned the interviews to deal with this. Can I suggest a little more discussion about these in the work and maybe even including something in the literature review as to their use?

Also what you call reductions seems to be a good way to take away the extra bits of the things the girls said. The list of themes you have from those reductions is a good way of doing it. I like the way you have joined them together, but think that maybe a revisit to focus of them is important as you have a lot and it could make your study way to big and you may miss the point. I know that is a holistic thing but something I think you might want to talk to your supervisor about. Other than that I honestly can't wait to read it when it's done.

Second review – Link to literature and research questions

The literature review is definitely a lot more detailed than what it was when I first read the work. The cover of topics has increased and I love the term self concept rather than self esteem and body image, much more catchy and incorporates the whole body and mind. I like the fact it links directly to the literature and also the research question and remains a massive topic that I think you have covered but may need to give some more attention to in this study or even in a further one.

I am not a researcher and am only making my suggestions but initially I had some concerns about the link between the groups and then the interviews, I didn't understand the process and thought some repetition may have occurred but after seeing the process it makes a lot of sense. It clearly lets the girls talk initially and then gives you the chance to get further information from them in the interviews, also doing it at their house is a great idea as I'm sure it would have made them more comfortable and possible got them to open up more. The design of the interview questions from information from the focus groups was a good idea and provided clarity for you and for the gathering of information. It is a really well formed process that took away some of the risk you identified and were identified in the ethics part of the work.

Having been involved from the initial provision of input through to this point I can see the change in the work and the link now from research question development right through data collection, interpretation and the recommendations given. I think though that the only part needing more development is the section about the implementation of the recommendations. I think you are missing a chunk about who needs to do what to put these recommendations into practice. Sporting organisations, schools and the like need to mention so that they can clearly see their role in improving the opportunities for girls playing sport.

I have said this to you off the record but I want you to know that as a women who has played high level sport and I really see the value in this study and also the value to how the study was undertaken. The girls and their honesty must be congratulated, as must you for taking this study on board. Girls in the future will be better for this work and thanks for allowing me to have a small part in it.

Appendix H: Biographical sketches of the participants

In order to truly appreciate the lived experiences of the participants in this study, a section dedicated to introducing them has been prepared. Maintaining the anonymity of the participants was and remains paramount so I gave each participant a pseudonym that had no identifiable features to anyone but me. The names reflected other people I have known who displayed similar personal characteristics. Additionally, the cities in which they live have also been allocated a pseudonym to attempt to keep the identity of the participants and the cities in which they live and play sort in. These cities and towns varied in size and were allocated a pseudonym dependant upon that size, these pseudonyms and their approximate populations are, Largetownville (200k), Victownville (100k), Bordertown (100k) and Eurekaville (15k). All ages and details of the pseudonyms were correct at the time of the data collection phase but the circumstances and ages of the participants may have changed since this time.

Amber

Amber is a multi sport, high-level representative athlete who has excelled at all sports she has pursued. Having played state basketball, soccer and AFL and is a natural sportswoman who has great physical skills and attributes. Currently, Amber plays AFL and has been identified as a future senior elite player and has commenced the pathway to this.

Amber resides in Victownville with her mother, stepfather and younger siblings, with her father living in a large regional centre, Borderville, some hours away. Her mother has limited sporting experience but her stepfather is an ex elite athlete who has been a strong positive role model toward her actions as a sportsperson. Her father lives some hours away but remains actively involved in her life. Although this involvement provides a challenge for Amber, her father has coached her and has been involved in all levels of her sporting life.

Study is important to Amber with her recently being accepted to the local university in Victownville to study in the education field. Her partner, of many years, has played elite junior and senior sport and works as an apprentice in the building industry. Amber has experienced a diverse set of opportunities with each of them bringing challenges. Her sexuality has been challenged on numerous occasions due

to her involvement in sport, however she remains a female AFL footballer, but has no link to basketball or soccer.

Andrea

Andrea is also a Victownville native currently residing in that town. She lives with one biological parent, a stepparent and an older brother. Her brother is currently a country footballer who plays predominately reserves football and is paid to do so. Her stepparent and biological parent have been involved in the management of a large amount of both Andrea and her brothers sporting teams while they have been growing up.

Basketball and netball were the two main sports that attractive her attention with her playing representative basketball in her hometown of Victownville. Her involvement in netball was at club level at the club in which her brother plays football and her parents have been involved at committee level. One major issue has challenged Andrea through her sport and it has influenced her mental wellbeing. This has been her height. She is well below expected height levels for a girl her age and has experienced considerable emotional and mental challenges dealing with it.

Currently, Andrea has a supportive partner and is not involved in any sport at all. Her partner does not participate in sport and she feels this is a positive for both of them and their relationship. Andrea is at university in Victownville studying in the medical area and is hoping for a career in this area.

Bernadette

Bernadette lives in Victownville and has been involved in high level, representative netball in her town and also in the state capital city. Her abilities have been recognised and identified by Basketball Victoria and Netball Victoria and she has represented her state in both sports. Previously she has played representative and domestic basketball in Victownville and has been involved in the Basketball Australia development program for potential elite players. She has ceased this involvement and concentrates on netball now as her chosen sport. She plays netball at the highest level possible in Victownville and has family involvement in that club with both her mother and father involved in coaching and administration roles and her brother and sister also playing netball and football at the club.

Currently she is studying at university in Victownville and has intentions to enter the health industry. She works currently in the retail industry in a large franchised company and has done so for the last few years. Her siblings attend a regional high school also in Victownville and play basketball, netball and football. Her partner plays first division grade football for the same club that she plays netball for. Bernadette follows in the footsteps of her sporting parents who also played elite level netball and football and are known in their hometown for their sporting pursuits and endeavours.

Beth

Beth currently lives overseas in fulltime employment. She completed high school in her hometown of Victownville and wanted to gain international travelling experience, resulting in her taking up an opportunity to work overseas.

She has played numerous sports while growing up but concentrated her efforts on basketball and netball in her hometown. She played both sports at domestic level and was then selected for a talent identification squad for netball, decreasing her involvement in basketball. Her involvement in this squad took her away from representative basketball and involved travel to the state capital city and other cities around the state for training and games.

Before moving overseas, Beth lived with her mother and younger brother. Her brother is an active junior footballer while her mother is not involved in sport. Her father, who she remains in close contact with, is supportive of sport and has been involved in official capacity in both her and her brothers clubs in the past. Now based overseas she is not involved in any sport at all but intends to re-enter domestic sport when and if she returns to Australia.

Camille

Camille is currently also studying at a tertiary institution in her hometown of Victownville. She has desires to be a teacher and is working toward a career in physical education teaching at primary school level. She is the first in her family to attend university and is very proud of that achievement. Education is important to her and she feels that it has become her priority in life.

Currently, Camille lives with her parents and two siblings (an older brother and younger sister). They live in Victownville with neither parent having any real

involvement in sport, other than playing with friends. Her older brother plays paid football in the state capital city and her younger sister plays netball and swims.

Camille currently plays club level volleyball and basketball with friends but prefers to run or work out with friends than compete in organised sport. Additionally, she spends her time working in retail to save money to buy a house.

Charlotte

Charlotte currently lives in Victownville with her mother, stepfather and brother. She has previously lived interstate following a parent's elite sporting pursuits at the highest level in basketball. Although playing no role in her life at this point in time, her father displayed promise as a sportsman and played at senior competition levels. Her stepfather has played and coached at elite levels across several sports.

Charlotte has progressed through high school and now attends university in Victownville, studying in the medical field. She works two part time jobs and has a desire to work in the medical field on completion of her studies.

Having played netball, football, table tennis and basketball as she went through school allowed her to decide and focus on netball and basketball. She played state level, representative and domestic basketball and also played senior elite level basketball while still at school. Her netball pursuits were not as successful, however she continues today to play senior competition with the local club in Victownville. Her desire to return to any other more serious type of sport does not exist at this point.

Margot

Margot currently lives with her mother, stepfather and older brother in Victownville. Prior to living in Victownville, Margot and her family lived in the smaller country town of Eurekaville. Eurekaville was the base for both her mother and stepfathers careers but the family moved to provide Margot with greater opportunity for her sporting pursuits. Her mother and stepfather remain active in their chose field and her father, although remaining in Eurekaville works in a government setting and plays a small part in Margot's life now but has coached her as a younger sportsperson.

Having played domestic netball, badminton, and basketball through her older teen years she settled on playing domestic netball and was selected for senior representative basketball. Her netball commitment was with one of the local clubs and her basketball selection into the senior team made it difficult to continue playing both sports. Having ceased playing sport of any variety she now has taken up coaching underage players and also her younger sister in Eurekaville.

Currently Margot has deferred from university in Victownville and works part time in local restaurant but is considering returning to full time university study after she works for a year. Margot is also contemplating moving out with friends and is saving up to be in a position to make this decision when the time arises.

Marley

Marley has experienced a large level of domestic and international travel due to her sporting exploits. She has played team netball, basketball and athletics and during this time fell in love with track and field sports. This love turned into a burning desire to be the best and to make the Olympics, resulting in her not being involved in any team sports after that period. Marley has a great drive to succeed and would do anything to be individually successful.

Currently Marley lives with her older sister and her sister's partner in Victownville after stints of living in the state capital city for high level coaching and training, and with her mother in Victownville. Her relationship with her mother and father are strong and although they do not live together support her immensely throughout all aspects of her journey in sport. Her father is the only person in the family with any form of sporting success in life with him playing high-level soccer in Europe as a boy.

Marley completed her Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) in Victownville and deferred her first offer for university in order to focus solely on her individual sporting pursuits. She works currently in several jobs at her father's restaurant and also in a large, multi national retail franchise in the state capital city, but is considering part time University, depending upon her qualification score in the upcoming world championships qualification period.

Melissa

Melissa originates from a small Victorian, country town, Smallishville. Currently, she lives in Victownville with one biological parent, a stepparent and older brother. Her mother and stepfather work as schoolteachers in two local secondary schools and her twin older siblings both attend the local university, also studying secondary education. Melissa's family has not excelled at sport with neither her brothers nor mother playing any form of high-level sport. Her stepfather played local level cricket in the lower grades but never took it seriously and did it for fun.

Netball, football, basketball, soccer and badminton were the main sports that Melissa has been involved in throughout her time. Her real focus was on netball and football; she played both of these sports at domestic and representative levels in Victownville. Her ability in netball was identified and she commenced playing senior domestic netball but this didn't progress further than a few games until she returned to play social netball with friends.

Currently, Melissa works full time in hospitality in Victownville, after deferring from university to spend twelve months making money and travelling. She works long and irregular hours making it difficult for her to continue her involvement in regular organised sport. She is currently single with no partner but enjoys spending that time socialising with friends and family.

Molly

Molly has been an elite netballer and basketballer at junior and senior level. Having been bought up in Victownville as a child she now lives in a larger regional town of Largecityville with her sport-playing partner of many years. As a state representative in netball and basketball, Molly has a reputation in her home city as a quality sportswomen, as does her sibling who is a renowned sportsperson, her mother who is an ex state representative and elite level umpire and her father who is a well respected and revered country sportsman.

Sport has played a large role in Molly's life and the life of her long time partner who has also played state basketball and junior representative football. Molly believes that sport has played a large role in making their relationship what it is and remains the glue that keeps them close. They both now attend university in Largecityville and have future desires to enter the medical and physical therapy fields.

Currently, Molly plays senior, high level netball in Largecityville and is paid to do so. She also coaches junior netballers for that club and sees a lot of her and her experiences in the girls she coaches. She has ceased her state league representation but is involved at interleague level netball in country Victoria. She has no involvement in basketball or any other sport now besides netball.

Rebecca

Rebecca currently lives with her parents and sister in Victownville. Her father is heavily involved in his own sporting pursuits with bicycle riding while her mother continues to swim recreationally. Her sister also remains an active swimmer and bike rider, whilst Rebecca and her father share sporting opportunities at every chance.

Currently Rebecca is an employee of a local company and works full time. She has a partner who is a full time student and is involved in local sport. Rebecca has been involved in sport from an early age trying netball and basketball but felt she wasn't very good at sport and her skills weren't as good as her friends. She currently does not participate in any organised sport but remains a follower of football and other sports and regularly attends the gym.

Sheryl

Sheryl lives at home in Victownville with her mother, father and younger brother. She also has an older brother that lives out of home with his partner. Currently she is competing year 12 at a secondary college in her hometown and hopes to study business when she graduates from school.

Her family has a long past of sporting success, especially in basketball and football. Her mother played and coached at the highest level available to girls at the time in Victownville and represented the area in the Australia wide competition at senior level. She has also been involved for many years as a coach to both Sheryl and her other siblings at domestic and elite development levels. Her younger brother and older brother have followed the same path as Sheryl and have both played representative and domestic sports, with her older brother playing senior basketball and senior football in the A grade competition. Her father has had a high level of involvement as an administrator and club sponsor and played sport as a younger boy and young man but not at any high level.

Sheryl now plays domestic netball with her friends in a very small country town, Tinyville. Her involvement in this team is purely for fun and is based on enjoyment and socialising, rather than the high demands of winning that she experienced in basketball.