

***'GIRLS JUST  
WANT TO  
HAVE FUN'***

**Case Study: Girls In Sport;  
A deconstruction of society.**

# INTRODUCTION

Gender is a socially constructed term referring to the differences between men and women, in conjunction with not only their individual identity and personality, but also with cultural ideals and stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. This term only has a meaning because society gives it one not because it is based on fact. Nevertheless in recent times this term has been under re-evaluation by many persons, organisations and institutions, which make up society. However in terms of sport girls participation between the ages of 13-15 is considerably lower than that of their male counterparts despite the presence of intervention programs within high schools.

Through my Personal Interest Project I hope to investigate the agents, which have contributed to this trend as well as investigate the purpose and successfulness of intervention programs within schools. Using The Girls In Sport Program endorsed by The Department of Education and Training, which is implemented within my school, my focus question is, "What are the barriers to girls in sport and why do intervention programs exist?" in this sense, my PIP also requires me to assess whether or not "intervention works?"

Both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies will be used in order to obtain information for the foundation of my personal interest project. Through the use of surveys and focus groups within my school I will be able to establish general stereotypes and prejudices within my school, an institution, which I believe, represents the broader beliefs and worldviews of society. Interviews with Project managers of the Girls in Sport program, Dr Lauren Puglisi and Dr Tony Okely as well as Vice President of WomenSport and recreation NSW, Heather Welch and Sue Meade of the Premier's Sporting Challenge will greatly help my understanding of why intervention programs exist as well as their purpose within society and culture. As an active teenage girl and coach of the girls touch teams at school from year 7 to 10, personal reflection as well as observation it is hoped will aid my focus group results and responses. However to assess whether intervention really works I am aiming to develop my own tests in the form of action research in which I will become heavily involved in the Girls in sport program within my school.

Secondary research consisting of journals, articles, and books as well as other findings on the net will add a rich qualitative layer to my PIP.

I intend to implement numerous cross cultural's in order to allow me gain a comprehensive understanding with differing worldviews regarding gender and sport. This includes conducting surveys and focus groups with teenage boys between 13-15 to gain a male perspective. Similarly I will compare the views of researchers in this field, which are sympathetic to ideologies such as feminism, to the views of my own, and other members of my school community, which I expect will alter of the course of my PIP.

Social continuity and change will be addressed through the changing interpretations of gender over time and throughout history as well as the progression of the girls in sport program within my school in attempting to change existing trends.

Very few ethical considerations need to be considered for my research, however the choice of questions which I will during surveys, focus groups or interviews may cause hostility if not asked with respect and bona fide, so I will need to keep that in mind. Similarly as I am a girl and have a very strong opinion regarding this issue objectivity must be withheld when addressing people with conflicting worldviews to my own.

By the time I conclude this research project, I hopefully will have greatly enhanced my social and cultural literacy helping me understand the implications of gender stereotypes on girls in sport as well as the reasons behind why intervention programs exist within my own society.

# LOG

From a young age I have always been interested in sports of all kind based on family influence and genuine enjoyment. Participation in all sports was a common norm throughout my primary school years and in many cases a key to popularity. Nevertheless when I moved onto high school, my participation levels dropped considerably and so to did other very active girls. This norm became even more prevalent to me as I began to coach the girl's touch football teams at school in which many of the girls began to loose interest in sport increasingly throughout year 8 and onward. When considering possible topics for my personal interest project this seemed a logical solution.

Initially from observation and personal experience I hypothesized that this norm was due to simple trends and effects of socialisation into a new school and becoming an adolescent. Specifically I simply put it down to the common myth that high school does not harbor a sporting environment as much as primary school.

However, after further research within my own micro world I discovered to my surprise that unbeknown to many and myself within my school, there was a girls in sport program distinctly designed to encourage and increase girls participation in sport specifically targeting girls in year 8 and 9. To understand the program a little more I took a trip to Wollongong University and interviewed by Dr Tony Okely and Dr Lauren Puglisi project managers of the girls in sport program. This interview became a very significant aspect of my PIP, as I was able to develop a relationship with them and maintain contact via email throughout the course of my PIP. Following this interview my focus question became "what influences girls participation in sport? And does intervention work?".

I formally began my secondary research when I visited the State Library of NSW and Fisher Library at Sydney University. This trip with my society and culture class taught me how to use the library facilities in which I was able to begin thinking about my PIP and what things I could do to make my PIP better.

Back at school I began distributing surveys and conducting focus groups. However it wasn't until I conducted a focus group on a group of year 8-10 boys that my PIP accrued a significant re-evaluation. Particular responses from the boys made me realize that my focus group was far



too broad and that I had not taken into consideration the obvious resemblance of the Girls in Sport program to ideologies such as feminism in an age of increasing political correctness. This led me to refine my question to include questioning the existence of intervention programs within school.

After collecting further secondary and primary research including interviews with Vice president of WomenSport NSW Heather Welch and Sue Meade of the Premier's Sporting Challenge I was able to start to see my PIP begin to develop cohesion. These interviews were very helpful in developing aspects of my cross-cultural.

In conducting my personal interest project I feel that I have become a more socially and culturally literate person as I have undergone a journey of understanding and appreciating perspectives that differ from my own social and cultural context.

# CHAPTER 1

Throughout time, gender has been socially constructed amongst numerous societies and cultures, determining the identity and hence accepted norms of all persons. Traditionally, this has come to mean that males are strong and boisterous and females shy and sensitive. Today in western cultures, these stereotypes of masculinity and femininity have been challenged in many aspects of the micro and macro world, for example the development of the 'Stay at home Dad' and 'Woman CEO'. This is largely due to the development and presence of ideologies such as feminism, political correctness and the inclusion of bureaucratic and adhoc campaigns which have imbedded themselves in the society and culture of which we live. However, ironically, the same stereotypes have been impeded in the participation of females in sport.

To understand the irony of this issue, the context and history of sport in modern, western society and its male hegemonic tendencies must first be addressed. "Since the middle of the nineteenth century sport has played an important part in the construction of masculinity in western society"<sup>1</sup>. Societies' idealized image of a man playing sport is best summarised by Pierre de Coubertin, the father of the modern Olympics who quoted in 1993. "The Olympic games must be reserved for men...we must continue to try to achieve the following definition: the solemn and periodic exaltation of male athleticism with internationalism as a base, loyalty as a means, art for its setting and female applause as its reward"<sup>2</sup>. To put it in layman's terms, the participation of females in sport is in many cases seen as insignificant when it comes to the main sporting arena. In this sense, "Gender as a social organizing principle has affected the meanings and experiences of sports for males and females throughout Australian sporting history"<sup>3</sup>.

Nevertheless, "Sport plays an important role in the way we define ourselves as Australians"<sup>4</sup>. Australian's both male and female are seen to be physically active in all areas of the sporting community, where globalisation has played a major role in portraying Australian life as heavily

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<sup>1</sup> Malaxos, Sue, and Sue Wedgwood. *Teenage Girls' Perceptions of Participation in Sport: girls want to play sport...but why don't they?* Floreat, W.A.: Women's Sport Foundation of W.A. (Inc), 1997. Pg 2. Print.

<sup>2</sup> Pierre de Coubertin, 1993 as quoted by: Koivula, Nathalie. "Sport Participation: Differences in Motivation and Actual Participation Due to Gender typing." *Journal of Sport Behaviour* 22.3 (1999): Pg 360+. Web. 19 March 2010. <[www.questia.com](http://www.questia.com)>

<sup>3</sup> (Stoddart, 1986: 135) as quoted by: Malaxos, Sue, and Sue Wedgwood. *Teenage Girls' Perceptions of Participation in Sport*. Floreat, W.A.: Women's Sport Foundation of W.A. (Inc), 1997. Pg 2. Print.

<sup>4</sup> "Why Don't Girls Play Sport?" Sport and Recreation Queensland, 2001. Web. 5 April 2010. <<http://fulltext.ausport.gov.au/fulltext/2001/qld/whydont.asp>>.

based around the beach, the cricket pitch, and the football field. Notice that netball, Australia's most prominent participant sport with the highest participation levels than any other team sport in Australia both male and female is not mentioned or recognized in the scheme of things. That being so, it can be argued that sport then as now has been merely used as a vehicle of maintaining social continuity.

Hence, studies within Australia<sup>5</sup> have shown that female and adolescent girls' participation in sport is considerably lower than that of their male counterparts. To many this would not seem unusual or surprising. However, this is ironic when compared to the 2008 Beijing Olympics Games where women won more gold medals for Australia than the men<sup>6</sup>. In fact, physical activity is an essential element of a healthy lifestyle, so the simple thought that our nation's women and more frightening, our nation's adolescent girls' are noted as predominantly inactive is an area of society which must be addressed. Institutions have played vital roles in dealing with this matter and bringing it to prominence as a need for change.

The Australian Government has implemented and endorsed a range of national and international covenants, aimed at fostering a gender inclusive culture within Australia in relation to women's participation in all areas of public life, sport included. "Women and sport emerged as an issue for the Federal Government following the tabling of the report *Women, Sport and the Media* (1985)."<sup>7</sup> From this Australia has become a signatory to a variety of declarations regarding women and sport in an attempt to combat the barriers to sport and physical activity that face women across the globe. These include the *Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport* and the *Windhoek Call for Action*, which were established as part of the first and second International Working Group (IWG) World Conference on Women and Sport in 1994 and 1998. Australia has maintained continuity in its involvement in such initiatives demonstrated by its hosting of the 5th IWG World Conference on Women and Sport in May of this year (2010). Amongst the many who spoke at the 3-day conference, Australia's Hon. Kate Ellis MP Federal Minister for Sport issued her concern in that "women's sport is treated differently and in many ways is seen as a poor cousin of men's sport in Australia"<sup>8</sup>. Despite her relegated perspective in accordance to

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<sup>5</sup> "Participation in Sport and Physical Activities, 1999-2000" and "Population Survey Monitor 1999-2000), Australian Bureau of statistics; Cat. No. 4177.0

Out of 14 gold medals for Australia women won 8 and men won 6

<sup>7</sup> "National Policy on Women and Girls in sport, recreation and physical activity 1999-2002." *Participant Division of the Australian sports commission* (1999):. Web. 26 Feb 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Hon. Kate Ellis MP Federal Minister For Sport; 5<sup>th</sup> IWG World Conference Women and Sport; Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2010



women sport she delivered a very promising key address regarding the future and development of sport and in particular women sport in Australia. This included a reaffirmation of Government funding in sport comprising of “a record \$1.2 billion for sport over the next four years including \$195 million in new funding-the biggest funding injection to sport in our nation’s history”<sup>9</sup> in which she stipulated clearly that women’s sport was firmly on the agenda. On a macro level these initiatives go close to fulfilling the criteria of a national campaign apropos to the issues facing women in sport.

In spite of this, my assumption is that not many people in Australia would know about these initiatives proving the lack of awareness and support women and girl’s sport receives in this supposed ‘sporting’ nation. Sadly this is only confirmed by women’s sport media coverage in which horse racing receives at least 1-2% more coverage on a daily basis than does news regarding female sport<sup>10</sup>. Similarly, in a survey I conducted amongst year 9 boys and girls, results showed that most young teenagers cannot even name a female golfer, cyclist, and soccer or basketball player despite knowing a male athlete of the same sport.<sup>11</sup>

As a teenage girl who’s life is and has been very much revolved around sport and physical activity this sort of statistical data is quite disturbing. Naturally you could imagine my excitement and delight when I found out that there was a program running within my micro world concerning solely girls in sport. Having had the experience of living in a world where sport is almost purely dominated by men, where every sport section in the library, newspaper, TV channels and magazines are overpoweringly male orientated and where girls specifically at school are either ignored or given special attention in sport i.e. more points during PE lessons or social sporting games, a Girls in Sport program at school came as a pleasant surprise.

“The Girls in Sport Intervention and Research project is a three-year study of girls’ involvement in sport and physical activity from years 8-10. The study is a strand of the Premier’s Sporting Challenge and is conducted by the University of Wollongong on behalf of the NSW Department of Education and Training”<sup>12</sup>. The project involves 12 intervention and 12 control NSW secondary schools selected based on their corresponding demographics. According to the

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<sup>9</sup> Hon. Kate Ellis MP Federal Minister For Sport; 5<sup>th</sup> IWG World Conference Women and Sport; Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2010

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Heather Welch, Vice President WomenSport and Recreation NSW, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2010

<sup>11</sup> Survey conducted with year 9 boys and girls, May 2010

<sup>12</sup> Girls in Sport intervention and research project information sheet for boys; A/Pr Tony Okely, Associate professor, faculty of education university of Wollongong; Sue Meade, premier’s sporting challenge project officer



Premier's Sporting Challenge outline of the Girls in Sport program, the aim of the project is "to increase the moderate to vigorous physical activity levels of adolescent girls (in years 8 and 9) in each of the intervention schools."<sup>13</sup> However, the ultimate aim, summarised by both Dr Lauren Puglisi of Wollongong and Sue Meade of the Premier's Sporting Challenge is to establish a successful school sports model that can be replicated across schools in NSW with similar demographics.<sup>14</sup>

Why? Why does a program like this exist or more pertinent why don't girls want to play sport?

A study conducted by Henny Oldenhove labels the trend concerning girls roughly 14 years of age dropping out of sport as the "Drop Out Phenomenon"<sup>15</sup>. This study highlights the importance of the implementation of a sustainable intervention program and notes that the phenomenon occurs more so in girls than boys and seems to happen in the transition of life stages i.e. child to teen; primary to secondary education. This is something I can relate to. During primary school, sport every recess, lunchtime and designated sporting times were met with ultimate enthusiasm by both boys and girls. It was considered a social norm to be involved in school teams and in many cases was the key to popularity right throughout my primary years. In spite of this when I moved onto high school, sport was not a norm even at my school, which is a leading public school in the sporting sphere. I noticed through participant observation that many talented sporting girls including myself became often reluctant to participate in school teams and at carnivals. Unfortunately this trend maintained continuity as the years went by and now, according to a survey I conducted, a vast majority (approximately 98%) of girls in year 12 at my school do NOT participate wholeheartedly in school sports including those who have taken SLR and PDHPE as subjects<sup>16</sup>. In comparison, according to similar studies, continuity in boys participation levels are almost completely maintained throughout the transition of life stages and only exhibit a significant change during the senior years when there is a higher emphasis on academia.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> NSW premier's sporting challenge, girls in sport intervention and research project presentation, slide 1 "aim of project"

<sup>14</sup> Interviews conducted with Sue Meade and Lauren Puglisi in March and July 2010

<sup>15</sup> Oldenhove, Henny. "Understanding the "dropout phenomenon" in sport." *research Challenge - Henny Oldenhove*. Web. Jan 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Survey conducted June 2010 year 12 girls

<sup>17</sup> Survey conducted June 2010 year 12 boys

The research unit based at Wollongong University has accumulated this trend concerning girls in sport due to a number of influences. In an interview with project managers of the Girls in Sport program, Dr Lauren Puglisi and Dr Tony Okely, both suggested that the nature and environment of school sports programs were “not very encouraging and motivating for girls”<sup>18</sup>. They perceived, as did many other studies such as *Teenage Girls Participation in Sport* (1993), *Sport...X Generation or Degeneration?* (1996) And *Girls' Achievement and Self-Esteem. The Contribution of Physical Education and Sport* (1987), that the attitudes of girls in relation to sport was innately a consequence of boredom, lack of confidence, self esteem, choice, resources and teacher expertise and fervor. “These factors do not stand alone but are interconnected making the task of engaging girls in lifelong physical activity an extremely difficult one”<sup>19</sup>.

Although the official report of the girls in sport program is not expected until June 2011, preliminary results according to Sue Meade suggest that, “we have some work to do”<sup>20</sup> in regards to increasing girls participation which was measured using accelerometers. The research unit at Wollongong defined this challenge in the formation of a participant pyramid.

Inactive  
Target

"Fence- sitters"

Motivated

21

This suggests that the majority of girls do want to play sport however; the program is targeting a rather small minority as well as the middle of the spectrum that will only participate if the sport appeals to them. According to Burton, “the dropping out of sport is a necessary part of the normal trial-and-error sampling procedure that youngsters employ in trying to find those activity

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Lauren Puglisi 12 July 2010

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Lauren Puglisi 12 July 2010

<sup>0</sup> Interview with Sue Meade 17 June 2010

<sup>1</sup> Interview with research unit Wollongong University Girls in Sport 9<sup>th</sup> March 2010



or achievement domains they enjoy the most"<sup>22</sup>. Similarly a number of studies have also alluded to the fact that many adolescents participate in a variety of sports per year pre-secondary education and hence when other priorities such as school work and part time jobs are established in the overall scheme of things, "it is highly unlikely that they can sustain [the same] breadth of commitment...with genuine quality of participation"<sup>23</sup> as they once did, causing them to limit the amount of sports they participate in but not necessarily their level of activity and participation. This proves the importance of distinguishing between "sport specific withdrawal (withdrawing from one sport to become or stay involved in another) and general drop-out (dropping out of all sport permanently)"<sup>24</sup> as this can affect qualitative results. However according to a focus group I conducted, comprising of 10 year 9 girls, an overall majority claimed that their levels of participation at school did not necessarily reflect those outside of school with 7 out of the 10 participants declaring that in their chosen sport they spent at least 1-2 hours of training or game time at least 4-5 times per week.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, the presence of what I call 'cosmetic' barriers in high schools regarding sport participation are still very prevalent amongst the majority of year 9 girls. By 'cosmetic' I mean issues that are only skin deep or on the surface, which affect the participation of girls in sport. It is these 'cosmetics' that the girls in sport program encourage schools to concentrate on changing in ways that would positively influence girls. Most of the 'cosmetic' barriers are gender based and hence the girls in sport program can be seen as attempting to redress gender imbalances in sporting programs within high schools. These include the issue of self consciousness via clingy sports uniforms, the physicality and hence results of physical activity, "many girls spoke about a fear of ruining their appearance (hair, makeup, and becoming sweaty and smelly)"<sup>26</sup> as well as the pressure to perform well in front of boys and other girls, "Many girls often felt embarrassed when participating in front of both boys and the confident 'sporty' girls"<sup>27</sup>. The

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<sup>22</sup> D. Burton as quoted by: Telama, Risto, and Xiaolin Yang. "Decline of physical activity from youth to young adulthood in Finland." *Medicine and Science in sports and exercise* 32.9 (2000): 1617-1622. Web. 22 April 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Kremer, John Earl, and Craig Mahoney. *Young People's involvement in Sport: chapter 5-age and sport participation*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1997. Pg 107. Print.

<sup>24</sup> Kremer, John Earl, Deirdre Scully, and Jackie Clarke. *Young People's involvement in Sport: chapter 2 gender issues in sport participation*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1997. Pg 51. Print.

<sup>25</sup> Focus group year 9 girls conducted 23 April 2010

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Lauren Puglisi 12 July 2010

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Lauren Puglisi 12 July 2010

“hypercompetitive trait”<sup>28</sup> often associated with males was considered a turn off when participating in sport with a common consensus amongst the year 9 girls within the study often claiming “competition doesn’t really motivate us like the boys”<sup>29</sup>.

In Australia sport has always been an integral part of school culture. It is generally accepted as a norm for one afternoon and at least 3-4 times per week during class time to be entirely designated to sport. After interviewing a NSW secondary education teacher from an entirely different context he remarked, “When I came to NSW I was absolutely shocked by the amount of time, energy and funding that was devoted to sport and PE. I came from a system that was academically biased and while PE was compulsory, it was on the periphery of the school culture.”<sup>30</sup> Despite the trends uncovered by the girls in sport program, historically Australian schools have always offered their children a wide variety of opportunities and an encouraging environment to excel in sport. The Drop Out Phenomenon however is an issue which haunts this culture and hence Australia’s eminence as a sporting nation. Yet, it makes one wonder that if Australian school sports models are amongst the best in the West then there must be a much more inveterate reason behind the participation in sport or rather lack of it amongst teenage girls.

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<sup>28</sup> Kremer, John Earl, Deirdre Scully, and Jackie Clarke. *Young People's involvement in Sport: chapter 2 gender issues in sport participation*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1997. 53. Print.

<sup>29</sup> Focus group year 9 girls conducted 23 April 2010

<sup>30</sup> Anon teacher at my school, July 2 2010



## CHAPTER 2

“To know more exactly why it is that women can muster only 90% of a man’s strength cannot help us to comprehend, explain or change the massive feeling in our society that a woman has no business flexing her muscles anyway”<sup>31</sup>

It seems that a recurring theme in this topic happens to naturally revolve around men versus women, or in the context of this PIP, boys versus girls. The ideas of what constitutes a female and what constitutes a male have heavily influenced how sport is played and defined. For example in a survey I conducted amongst 15 boys and 15 girls in year 9, roughly 14 years of age, responses to the question “What is Sport” varied based on precisely whether the answering participant was a boy or girl. Common responses of the girls involved sport as being, “exercise”, “something you do for fun or to socialize” that “helps us live longer and happier lives” by keeping yourself, “physically and mentally fit”. In contrast responses from boys labeled sport as primarily a “physical or strategic activity” which was “competitive” and played, “to accomplish a goal” one participant claimed that the “aim of sport is to win”<sup>32</sup>. These ideals also influence who is generally accepted in terms of society to be a more likely candidate of playing sport.

It is a very common response for girls and boys in year 9 to explain that the reason for girls dropping out in sport is due to social interests such as friends, boyfriends, parties and the simple fact that they, “are not interested” or “can’t be bothered” because they, “have better things to do”. However when asked was this because of “their sex or their gender?” the average reaction was of bewilderment with 23 out of the 30 participants claiming, “sex and gender is the same thing”<sup>33</sup>. According to Hargreaves this is not unusual as. “in everyday life these categories are used as if they are the same thing”<sup>34</sup>. However when regarding femininity or masculinity in terms of the ways of thinking of persons or a collective group within society the term that should be referred to is gender. In order to gain a full grasp of the reasons behind girl’s participation a clear distinction between the two must be made.

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<sup>31</sup> Hargreaves, Jennifer. *Sporting Females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sport*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1994. Pg 7. Print.

<sup>32</sup> Survey conducted with year 9 boys and girls, May 2010

<sup>33</sup> Survey conducted with year 9 boys and girls, May 2010

<sup>34</sup> Hargreaves, Jennifer. *Sporting Females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sport*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1994. Pg 146. Print.

...sex should properly refer to the biological aspects of male and female existence. Sex differences should therefore only be used to refer to physiology, anatomy, genetics, hormones and so forth. *Gender* should properly be used to refer to all the non biological aspects of differences between males and females – clothes, interests, attitudes, behaviour's and aptitudes, for example – which separate 'masculine' from 'feminine' life styles.<sup>35</sup>

(Delamont 1980: 5)

Nevertheless, as discussed earlier despite changes in social differentiation regarding gender over time, "we still persistently see the relegation of women's sport to second place"<sup>36</sup>. However this is not unique to just Australia in fact as mentioned in the last chapter Australian school environments and culture have placed a large emphasis on sport in times gone by, to the point where it is encouraged almost at the same level as academia in many cases. The issue rather of girls in sport and the 'drop out phenomenon' is a universal matter. Just like the government endorsed Girls in sport program, concern and incentive in attending to the problem can be seen in other western countries such as the UK by means of establishing a "Women's sport and fitness foundation" whose aim "is to create a nation of active women" through making "being active more attractive for women and girls"<sup>37</sup>. Similarly in America, "Title IX of the education amendments of 1972 required schools and colleges receiving federal money to provide the same opportunities for girls as they did for boys" of which, "just six years after the enactment...the percentage of girls playing team sports jumped... to 25% from about 4%"<sup>38</sup>.

This global dilemma has been attributed by, according to studies and literature from places like the UK and US, the so called 'cosmetic' barriers I mentioned in the last chapter such as boredom, and clingy uniforms, as well as social myths that have in respect, become norms within society, to the extent that many persons would be surprised to be mistaken them as truth. These include the belief that physical activity and sports participation is "harmful to female reproductive organs" causes girls to develop "bulky muscles", "stimulates aggressive behaviour, therefore girls who play sport become unfeminine" as well as ideas that girls have "weaker

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<sup>35</sup> Delamont as quoted by: Hargreaves, Jennifer. *Sporting Females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sport*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1994. Pg 146. Print.

<sup>36</sup> Hon. Kate Ellis MP Federal Minister For Sport; 5<sup>th</sup> IWG World Conference Women and Sport; Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2010

<sup>37</sup> "What we do." *Women's Sport and fitness foundation*. Women's Sport Foundation of W.A. (Inc), Web. 23 June 2010. <<http://wsff.org.uk/what-we-do>>.

<sup>38</sup> Parker-Pope, Tara, and Stuart J. Bradford. "As Girls Become Women, Sports pay dividends." 15 Feb 2010: Web. 1 Jun 2010.



bones” are “easily injured” “peak...in their teens then rapidly slide downhill” and cannot “fully participate” due to the effects of “menstruation”<sup>39</sup>.

Such stereotypes and assumptions have had rather negative influences on girls in terms of traditional sports programs at school. To quote a year 9 girl partaking in one of my focus groups, “we are good but the boys will always be better”<sup>40</sup> proves the fact that these stereotypes have encouraged, “girls to believe that they are less capable than boys of successfully participating in all but the traditionally ‘female’ sports, so that they themselves perpetuate the ‘myth of inferiority’”<sup>41</sup>.

So if “gender differences are so deep-seated and normalized within our society they are frequently subliminal”<sup>42</sup> then the most important question to ask is where did they come from?

In contrast to many beliefs that “differences between the sexes... must be biological”<sup>43</sup>, Beauvoir, “argues that expressions of masculinity and femininity are fundamentally historical, cultural, social and economic”<sup>44</sup>. The way boys and girls perceive how themselves should be is a direct influence of, “a rather complex dynamic between psychological, social and cultural considerations of learning and development” also known as the socialization process. This process acts in integrating persons into the roles society deems suitable by, “transmitting cultural values and traditions” otherwise known as ‘norms’ “from one generation to the next” . Institutions such as the family, school and the media, play a vital role in conveying “expectations pertaining to appropriate behaviour’s, attitudes and values in a wide range of situations”<sup>45</sup>. Similarly just like other institutions, sport forms a microcosm of the broader society in which it contributes to socializing persons into roles of which in many cases can be defined as sex or gender roles. This holds obvious parallels with functionalist theory, which sees society as a structure with interrelated parts.

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<sup>39</sup> *Strategies for change: creating new opportunities for girls in sport*. Canberra: Australian Sports Commission, 1991. Pg 5-7. Print.

<sup>40</sup> Focus group year 9 girls conducted 23 April 2010

<sup>41</sup> Coles, Elizabeth. *Sport in Schools: the participation of girls: a discussion paper*. Sydney: Social Development Unit, Ministry of Education, 1979. Pg 9. Print.

<sup>42</sup> “Why focus on girls.” n. page. Web. 9 Jan 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Erwin Strauss quoted by: Hargreaves, Jennifer. *Sporting Females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sport*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1994. Pg 148. Print.

<sup>44</sup> Simone de Beauvoir quoted by: Hargreaves, Jennifer. *Sporting Females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sport*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1994. Pg 148. Print.

<sup>45</sup> Cohen, Greta L., and Jackie Joyner-Kersey. *Women in Sport: issues and controversies*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1993. Pg 4. Print.

In this sense, sport socialisation becomes a form of gender socialisation as it is through sports “individuals learn the dominant norms and values of society”<sup>46</sup> specifically what it means to be a boy or girl i.e. boys are considered to be tough and athletically capable as compared to girls who are in many cases socialised to be nurturing, dependent and passive.

These ideals are virtually set in stone from an early age in which gender stereotypes such as what toys children play with, how they play, what they wear and how sport is portrayed to them impacting their perception of who they are and where they belong in society. “Many socialisation practices represent a type of systematic discrimination based on unfolded ideological beliefs about gender”<sup>47</sup>. Freud’s assessment of cognitive and identity development, ‘Anatomy is Destiny’ in which one’s sex determines one’s personality (gender) traits has been an underlying factor in the development of ones self. Nevertheless this ideology is rarely questioned as our, “ideological system has taught us to believe that differential treatment is not discrimination”<sup>48</sup>. However this theory ignores the fact that gender is a social construct and only has meaning because society gives it one. If the tables were turned and from a young age boys were taught to be nurturing and girls athletic then whose to say that the way we regard the notions of femininity and masculinity would still be the same? “If girls grew up doing the same things as boys, the result would be quite likely to be different”<sup>49</sup>.

Nevertheless this is not the case and girls like myself must learn to deal with the cards dealt to us. In terms of sport girls are socialised if at all into more feminine activities such as dance, netball, gymnastics or hockey whereas boys are often more or less introduced to more socially defined masculine sports such as football, rugby and cricket. This form of socialisation is often encouraged in the home by family in particularly parents and siblings who are unconsciously placing macro world concepts of sport upon children who do not know otherwise. It has been suggested that children both, boys and girls, “from families where mothers exhibited non-traditional attitudes to sexual equality have been found to exhibit less sex differentiated

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<sup>46</sup> Hargreaves, Jennifer. *Sporting Females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sport*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1994. Pg 9. Print.

<sup>47</sup> Cohen, Greta L., and Jackie Joyner-Kersey. *Women in Sport: issues and controversies*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1993. Pg 6. Print.

<sup>48</sup> Cohen, Greta L., and Jackie Joyner-Kersey. *Women in Sport: issues and controversies*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1993. Pg 7. Print.

<sup>49</sup> Malaxos, Sue, and Sue Wedgwood. *Teenage Girls' Perceptions of Participation in Sport: girls want to play sport...but why don't they?* Floreat, W.A.: Women's Sport Foundation of W.A. (Inc), 1997. Pg 3. Print.



behaviour”<sup>50</sup>. Similarly the presence of siblings has had a massive influence on the ideas children develop regarding sport. Reyner found that, “girls who had older brothers had the most masculine concept of sex roles – a concept which obviously includes sports’ involvement”<sup>50</sup>. From personal experience as an only child whose mother often worked long hours and who had spent much of my childhood with Dad going to football training and games and virtually surrounded by teenage boys from a young age, sport seemed a natural almost norm in my micro world. Touch football, netball and cricket were to me ‘normal’ things a girl did on her weekends and afternoons. Interestingly it had never occurred to me why I wasn’t allowed to join in with the boys in rugby league. I had never been told I couldn’t play, I just accepted that I couldn’t. Hence throughout this study it became apparent in terms of socialisation, gender differentiation, “is reinforced most often through the images of each sex as presented through the mass media, (films, books, television, newspaper and magazines)”<sup>51</sup>.

In today’s context of society, technology is a large aspect of our lives. Children specifically Generation Y, are inundated with gadgets and gizmos that previous generations did not have. Concepts such as consumerism and globalisation control the way they live their lives through social mediums and mainstream communication networks via the internet such as facebook, MySpace, and twitter, not to mention the invention of 3D television, and YouTube. Hence it is “impossible for anyone to develop gender-free images of everyday experience and conversation or to be unaffected by those institutions that shape our existence”<sup>52</sup>. In this sense children and teenagers have had gender ideology superimposed on them through their cultural sphere in which the notions of femininity and masculinity are a result of, “active engagement in a world of gender images which are put into practice on a day to day basis and hence become part of everyday life- a ‘lived condition’”<sup>52</sup>. The media portrays women as feminine and curvaceous rather than muscular or athletic. In terms of the program, these “gender stereotypes affected the participation of the girls with many of them feeling that they had to act and present themselves in

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<sup>50</sup> Coles, Elizabeth. *Sport in Schools: the participation of girls: a discussion paper*. Sydney: Social Development Unit, Ministry of Education, 1979. Pg 24. Print.

<sup>51</sup> Coles, Elizabeth. *Sport in Schools: the participation of girls: a discussion paper*. Sydney: Social Development Unit, Ministry of Education, 1979. Pg 39. Print.

<sup>52</sup> Hargreaves, Jennifer. *Sporting Females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sport*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1994. Pg 150. Print.

a certain way”<sup>53</sup>. Hence when asked about why the girls don’t play sport at school during a focus group, one girl replied, “sport is not sexy, and girls have to be sexy”<sup>54</sup> this was met with 100% compliance amongst the rest of the girls. Comparably at a time when these images will determine how they are accepted as a woman in society, these ideas of femininity are not and will not be cast aside all so easily.

By the time children enter school they already have a clear understanding about what is appropriate for their respective gender. The school is an institution of society, an influential socializing agency that “reflects the patterns of behavior in the larger culture”<sup>55</sup> and acts as guidance and a disciplinary agent to ensure that children who have not been properly socialized by the family, into what society deems acceptable are respectably done so. In many ways this accomplished through school sport. “Participation in sport...appears as an enculturative process which more often than not expands the sports’ roles of boys and limits the roles of girls”<sup>56</sup>. For example it is often considered that between the ages of 7 and 11 girls are noted for rejecting any notion that is perceived as feminine which is termed by psychoanalysis’ as ‘latency’. In this time she may climb trees, ride bikes, play male sports, everything that would regard her as a ‘tomboy’, however this is only acceptable behaviour according to Comer and Talbot, “on the condition that she grows out of it”<sup>57</sup>.

This explains why early adolescence is “characterized by an intensification of gender-related role expectations” in particularly for girls who as mentioned are expected to disregard how they distinguished themselves during the latency stage and adopt a more socially recognized female self which as we know frequently does not include sport. During this stage girls begin to mature some earlier than others and they are forced to make a connection between their physical bodies and their interests. More often than not this includes trading in their joggers or boots, bats and

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with Lauren Puglisi 12 July 2010

<sup>54</sup> Focus group year 9 girls conducted 23 April 2010

<sup>55</sup> Coles, Elizabeth. *Sport in Schools: the participation of girls: a discussion paper*. Sydney: Social Development Unit, Ministry of Education, 1979. Pg 36. Print.

<sup>56</sup> Coles, Elizabeth. *Sport in Schools: the participation of girls: a discussion paper*. Sydney: Social Development Unit, Ministry of Education, 1979. Pg 35. Print.

<sup>57</sup> Hargreaves, Jennifer. *Sporting Females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sport*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1994. Pg 148. Print.



caps for the more traditional female necessities such as makeup, hair straighteners and a pair of high heels. Sheila Scraton calls this “ideology of biology”<sup>58</sup>.

Therefore as girls become adolescents and their micro world begins to change and become heavily influenced by school culture versus reality, the role of the family begins to decline whilst the presence of a peer group, particularly of the same sex and often in that case gender becomes more noteworthy. According to Dr Puglisi the impact of friends and peers cannot be underestimated, “often girls will participate in an activity if their friends are doing it and if they don’t then they won’t. Girls do not want to embarrass themselves and not have their friends around to laugh with them. Also, if participating in an activity, whether it is for PE, sport or at lunchtime, is not seen to be the cool or ‘in’ thing to do then girls will not want to be seen doing this”<sup>59</sup>. At my school it has become apparent that handball is back in. Through observation I have noticed that on an ordinary school day many girls in the programs age bracket have begun to participate in this lunchtime activity however on the premise that it is with the boys and that they do not ruin any part of their appearance, as girls do. This peer culture, “accentuates images of femininity and sexuality which although circumscribed in many ways by practical and ideological influences is also a way of grasping power”<sup>60</sup> similar to how the boys gain power and status through sport.

As pressure from peer culture is so strong in high schools, for a girl to be successful in sport at school she must maintain a feminine composure as well as obtain male orientated characteristics hence, “it is little wonder that many adolescent girls find this type of conflict too difficult to handle and find it much easier to simply drop out of school sport”<sup>61</sup>.

This ideology regarding gender is a result of century old social constructs, which have undeniably outlined today’s norms, values and expectations. Nevertheless in more recent times there has been evidence of a disregard of these norms and the Girls in sport program can certainly be placed under this heading. However the most prominent example concerning the challenge of gender imbalances in society would have to undoubtedly be the development and

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<sup>58</sup> Sheila Scraton quoted by: Hargreaves, Jennifer. *Sporting Females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sport*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1994. Pg 155. Print.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Lauren Puglisi 12 July 2010

<sup>60</sup> Hargreaves, Jennifer. *Sporting Females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sport*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1994. Pg 157. Print.

<sup>61</sup> Coles, Elizabeth. *Sport in Schools: the participation of girls: a discussion paper*. Sydney: Social Development Unit, Ministry of Education, 1979. Pg 20. Print.

presence of feminism as an ideology, especially in the latter part of this century. It would be impossible to ignore the idea that feminism and Girls in sport have some similar characteristics and motives. In this sense how can macro world concepts and ideologies affect a small NSW funded, 24-school intervention program and in that case any school program that addresses gender disparity?



## CHAPTER 3

“Because sports are vastly popular and can be compelling and enjoyable they are important vehicles for the transmission of ideology”<sup>62</sup>

In this sense my PIP has through no fault of my own become a risk. Do I or don't I challenge some of the most common ideologies of, not only my micro world, most specifically my school, but also my macro world. The world of institutions, organisations, political advocacy, the power of bureaucracy and dare I say a world living in the social and cultural context of political correctness?

In this case I am referring to the language, behaviour, ideas and specifically, policies and programs that are implemented in society to combat and reduce social norms, which are for one reason or another considered offensive. In the context of my PIP this means the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century reaction to gender as a social construct and the development of sexist connotations, which have begun to emerge more prevalently in recent times. The ideology I am referring to is feminism.

This thinking developed largely from a focus group that I conducted with a group of year 9 and 10 boys which was originally aimed at developing a cross cultural analysis. Instead, through the responses of the boys, it was evident that the effects of the Girls in Sport program were more far reaching than just the focus of the participation of girls in sport. This was made clear through one participant's remark, “I don't know if I can answer that... is the principal or anyone going to hear about this?” or another participant stating, “we can't talk about how we really feel about girls and sport, especially to you because you're a girl”. When asked why they felt compelled not to say anything the consensus concluded that they didn't know why they just couldn't.<sup>63</sup>

In my perspective, due to the fact that I was a girl, uncertainty and confusion prevailed over two standards of thinking (i) from an early age boys like themselves and girls for that matter are taught or rather socialised to have a notion of gender which in terms of sport, masculinity was

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<sup>63</sup> Focus group year 9-10 boys conducted 24 May 2010

preeminent and; (ii) the idea that Australian society and culture is based on western liberal ideals and “values like fairness, equality and respect”<sup>64</sup> which sees egalitarianism as a social norm.

An obvious contradiction had then begun to overshadow the essence of my PIP, a factor that forced me to consider the implications of ideologies on a society. Christina Hoff Sommers argues that the feminist movement and other ideologies for that matter have been appropriated by “a cadre of party-line bureaucrats promoting an agenda of victimisation and victimology-based revolution with serious implications for the wider world”<sup>65</sup>. My interpretation of this along with the boy’s focus group made apparent the presence of power and authority in the girls in sport program. This is an example of functionalism in that there is a definite structure to explain how all these concepts interlink and how it is an “essentially social activity in which ideas and meanings cannot be separated from action”<sup>66</sup>. The best way to explain it is that ideology e.g. feminism, is separate from social systems such as bureaucracy until through the lobbying of persons and non government organisations by means of media and technology, it becomes popularized and hence is accepted as a part of the decision making of the system and thus embedding itself in the institutions. In turn, over time this functionalist theory of society has it that the ideology which was once interdependent eventually will have a direct affect on the culture and ways of thinking of the persons that make up the society. In this sense it can be said that bureaucracy and feminism influences the institutions such as “sport.... family, government, religion” and school, “where many women, and sometimes men are challenging sexist attitudes and discriminatory practices”<sup>67</sup>.

So, what is feminism and how does it interact with the social and cultural world of the girls in sport program?

“*Feminism* resists handy definition [as]...there is no single feminist school of thought but rather many feminist visions and practices”<sup>68</sup>. Nevertheless, known there is three specific waves of

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<sup>64</sup> Hon. Kate Ellis MP Federal Minister For Sport; 5<sup>th</sup> IWG World Conference Women and Sport; Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2010

<sup>65</sup> Starr, Tama. "Reactionary Feminism." *Reason.com: free minds and free markets* Oct 1994: 2. Web. 29<sup>th</sup> Jun 2010. <<http://reason.com/archives/1994/10/01/reactionary-feminism>>.

<sup>66</sup> Hargreaves, Jennifer. *Sporting Females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sport*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1994. Pg 22. Print.

<sup>67</sup> Cohen, Greta L., and Jackie Joyner-Kersey. *Women in Sport: issues and controversies*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1993. Pg 26. Print.

<sup>68</sup> Cohen, Greta L., and Jackie Joyner-Kersey. *Women in Sport: issues and controversies*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1993. Pg 4. Print.



feminism the first being heavily focused on women's rights e.g. suffrage and the other two being slightly more radical than the previous. This is due to the fact that over the decades each school of feminist theory loses sight of the original aims as social context differ and new problems begin to arise. Even so it would not be wrong in saying that feminism as an ideology can be referred to as "a movement that seeks to end sexist oppression"<sup>69</sup> despite the social and cultural differential circumstances. Feminist Anne Summers, believes that sexism in which her and fellow feminists are locked in a battle to the death with is an "ideology which has determined and limited the extent to which women have been really able to participate in Australian society"<sup>70</sup> and I assume sport would be included in which women have been ostracised from in many retrospect's. Yet according to an interview conducted with Vice President of WomenSport NSW, Heather Welch acknowledges that has been "a change in the attitude for feminism and women/girls sport. Women are now a target audience an opportunity not a minority as they once were."<sup>71</sup> The girls in sport program at my school and 11 other intervention schools in NSW proves this statement and is a specific exemplar of how feminist theory has to some extent made possible the existence of such a program.

There has been both criticism and support of the feminist position in regards to Girls in sport. Whilst according to Sue Meade, "in spite of decades of feminist information, research and education we still have a disparity in male/female participation/media reporting and funding in sport"<sup>72</sup>, Dr. Puglisi confirms that the presence of feminism is "positive [in that it] gives girls more rights to participate in physical activity"<sup>73</sup>.

However, in a time when the status and rights of women, especially in Australia, are soaring e.g. for the first time in the history of Australia the nation is run and governed by a female PM, the federal minister for Sports is also a female and when the effects of an office for the status of women are being recognized, it makes one ask is the girls in sport program truly about the girls for the girls? Or is it just another trend in Australia's obvious progression of women and an

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<sup>69</sup> Cohen, Greta L., and Jackie Joyner-Kersey. *Women in Sport: issues and controversies*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1993. Pg 4. Print.

<sup>70</sup> Summers, Anne. *Damned Whores and God's Police*. 1975 introduction. Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin Books, 1994. Print.

<sup>71</sup> Interview Heather Welch, 22 June 2010

<sup>72</sup> Interview Sue Meade, 17 June 2010

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Lauren Puglisi 12 July 2010



illustration of their growing power and authority in bureaucracy and institutions one of which is the school?

My personal answer to this is that feminism itself has lost its purpose in modern times as women, especially in Australia as mentioned above, have achieved the original aims of the first wave feminists and in some cases exceeded them. What exists today, much of what characterizes the girls in sport program within schools is evidence of women in positions of power and authority reinstating women's 'poor' circumstance within this society and culture, a form of what I believe is political correctness to some degree. My view corresponds with critic and anti feminist Christina Hoff Sommers who believes this particular ideology has diverged from 'equity feminism' to 'gender feminism', in which she defines 'gender feminism', "as the action of accenting the differences of genders for the purposes of what she believes is creating privilege for women in academia, government, industry, or advancing personal agendas."<sup>74</sup>

Nevertheless, the question 'is the program about the girls for the girls?' is in many ways a paradox as despite my personal view the program can be interpreted and commended on its ideals which is to some extent about changing society and empowering girls to break free from century old social constraints which our modern society has not yet been able to shake.

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<sup>74</sup> Starr, Tama. "Reactionary Feminism." *Reason.com: free minds and free markets* Oct 1994: 2. Web. 29<sup>th</sup> Jun 2010. <<http://reason.com/archives/1994/10/01/reactionary-feminism>>.

## CHAPTER 4

So far, using the girls in sport program as a case study, it is quite obvious that the reasons for gender based intervention programs within the institution of the school are results of the socialization process in which gender stereotypes are produced and perceived as well as the development and presence of ideologies which provide particular implications on micro world functions. Another example of this is the Boys in literacy program of which results have shown that there is a literacy and performance gap between boys and girls in school, "which takes into consideration the way in which various factors intersect with gender to affect literacy results."<sup>75</sup>

But what does all this mean?

Well, none of this means anything really unless it truly affects the success of intervention programs within high schools. Hence, can intervention work to provide a sustainable change in society or will continuity of trends prevail in the long run?

To test this question, I engaged in a series of action research at school. As school captain of my school I personally know how daunting it is to stand up in front of teachers and senior executive staff in order to be part of the decision-making process. As a student however I also know the difficulty and frustration that comes with disciplinary figures trying to work out from simple quantitative research, ways in which to overcome or change certain aspects of the school culture to what they believe will appeal to the student body. Throughout my research I came across a study written by Thomas Leren<sup>76</sup>, which outlined the importance of a student voice. Taking on board both personal experience and this public knowledge I joined the teacher's committee in charge of Girls in Sport at my school and quickly developed a Girls in Sport student committee which comprised of girls at my school of all ages, grades, participation levels in sport and most importantly ideas of which they believed girls like themselves and their friends would enjoy and feel encouraged by in terms of participation in sport.

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<sup>75</sup> "Boys and Literacy." *Gender Issues*. NSW Public Schools, Web. 15 Jul 2010.  
<<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/learning/yrk12focusareas/gendered/boyslitk6.php>>.

<sup>76</sup> Leren, Thomas. "The Importance of student voice." *International Journal of Leadership in Education: Theory and Practice* 9.4 (2006): 363-367. Web. 4 May 2010.  
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13603120600895502>>.

The simplest initiative that resulted from this study was the amazing race which involved getting all year 9 girls involved in interactive activities all over the school throughout a 2 class period time limit. Surprisingly despite previous observation and quantitative research conducted by Wollongong University, all the girls involved met this with full participation. However, this exercise proved that unlike the boys who are according to my surveys naturally competitive, the girls were motivated by the fact that the winning team would be granted with a \$15 gift voucher for Westfield's each. This begged the question whether it was the intervention strategy, which encouraged girls to participate, or whether the girls were only trying to win a trip to the shops, a female gender stereotype. If the answer were the latter of the two possibilities than this initiative whilst successful would not prove sustainable as sooner or later the funding distributed to each school especially for this program would eventually run out.

Another initiative I tested was a little more radical and involved an attempt to change school traditions and norms and do so by addressing the top bearers of power and socialization responsibility within my school, the principal and the school P&C. Derived from a variety of research methodologies such as surveys, focus groups and participant observation a highly considered barrier to girls participation in sport on a day to day basis at school was in fact the traditional school uniform which saw girls wear a tunic and boys shorts. To my surprise, the school principal was on board with the ideas of changing girl's uniforms if it meant that it would increase their participation levels in school sport. However, whilst to begin with, this initiative was considered rebellious by many of the girls who suggested it, once they found out that power and authority were not opposed to the idea, it soon became just that, an idea, of which consequently action and support began to weaken. This suggested to me that girl's specifically the teenage generation do not want to be associated with power and authority unless they are the ones controlling it. Perhaps the reason girls demonstrate such a high drop out rate is due to the fact that people with power and authority are imposing it on their lives to the extent that they don't participate in an act of rebellion. Similarly this can be seen as a total disregard for feminist theory in the younger generations. Maybe the real issue is that girls want to be empowered by their own means, not by what ideologies, bureaucracy or society made up of older generations and cultures consider necessary.

Nevertheless, based on my research I found out that many of the girls did not fully understand or even in some cases know about the Girls in Sport program that had been implemented for their benefit. Even so, when confronted about it most girls didn't understand what the concern was



about because they hadn't noticed their drop off rate and if they did they asserted it was only low at school. This proves that the institution of the school whilst although is seen to resemble the macro world and the culture, traditions, norms and values of the wider society, there seems to be a barrier and hence change in their attitude and approach to sport from when girls enter school grounds to when they leave them. I wonder why this is so? The only logical reason in my opinion is that again school sport in many cases does not provide the fun environment girls desire. Despite this, Dr Puglisi believes that "there are still the same issues for girls in the wider community, however, the peer pressure is not as bad as they often do not know the girls they are participating with or against and therefore embarrassment is not as bad"<sup>77</sup>.

Another reason, which has an impact on the success of intervention, is the lack of teacher support. According to Wollongong studies, "getting schools to form committees proved to be quite difficult. 10 out of the 12 intervention schools have a committee but only 3 have girls on their committee"<sup>78</sup>. This trend is emphasized by the views of one of my schools long running female PE teacher who believed that the girls in sport program was taking funding away from other areas of state sport which originally benefited kids who truly wanted to play. She believed there are simple intervention ways that could work within schools such as single sex PE classes, which does not cause so much disruption to the way school sport is conducted.<sup>79</sup>

In the opinion of Heather Welch, "it seems like we have a lot of adhoc programs being funded which are great however due to lack of funding or structure to be self sufficient they do not continue"<sup>80</sup>. If it is accepted that the Girls in Sport program is a bureaucratic ploy to enhance personal and political agendas as mentioned in the previous chapter then it seems that the Girls in sport program is an example of adhocracy in bureaucracy. Welch "would like to see a National campaign...to get more women and girls active playing sport and understanding the importance of an active lifestyle"<sup>80</sup>

In conclusion through my research I have acquired the impression that intervention programs like the Girls in sport program will continue to work on the postulation that a greater structure and funding is invested into the program in order to satisfy the motivational needs of the girls.

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<sup>77</sup> Interview with Lauren Puglisi 12 July 2010

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Lauren Puglisi 12 July 2010

<sup>79</sup> Anon PE teacher at my school

<sup>80</sup> Interview Heather Welch, 22 June 2010

Otherwise it is my personal opinion that this is unrealistic and at this stage of the program a sustainable outcome has not quite been reached much to my disappointment. In assisting with my opinion the cooperation of a large majority of the girls in the target group due to conflict with power, authority, ideology and stereotypes will quite possibly act as the major barrier to the success of the intervention within my school specifically. Maybe, "Girls just want to have fun".<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Cyndi Lauper, "Girls Just Want to Have Fun", released November 6, 1983

# CONCLUSION

As a consequence of this social investigation I have learnt that not even the power and authority of bureaucracy, the development of ideologies such as feminism nor the implementation of school based intervention programs are powerful enough to change traditional social and cultural constructs regarding gender in terms of femininity and masculinity especially, in the institution of sport. In this sense I have learnt the influence of sport and school as a socializing factor as well as both the positive and negative implications of macro world ideologies on micro world functions.

Whilst although my research did prove my original hypothesis that socialisation and adolescence were major barriers in the participation of sport for girls, it also threw light on other implications, which I did not consider prior to the construction of my research.

Nevertheless my research methodologies proved to be very successful and greatly aided the final outcome of my PIP. The use of both interviews and focus groups allowed me to gain a comprehensive understanding of different perspectives and attitudes surrounding school programs as well as gave me an insight into my society's idea regarding females playing sport. By conducting separate focus groups of both boys and girls I was able to gain both a male and female perspective, which significantly contributed to my understanding of different worldviews. Furthermore, I feel that in conducting my PIP I have gained an understanding of the nature of social research and its benefits to an individual. This ultimately has enhanced my social and cultural literacy making me a more valuable member of society.

However despite the fact that my PIP made me more aware of differing worldviews within my own society and culture it also allowed me to make sense of the society of which I live in. through the construction of my PIP I essentially was given the opportunity to deconstruct and address complex social theories and ideologies such as feminism, bureaucracy and functionalism and establish a connection between them and my micro world. Furthermore my PIP helped me understand their influence in my life.

I set out to discover what affected the participation of girls in sport together with the purpose of intervention programs and by the end of my research I would say that I am only one step closer to the answer. For a program so minuscule in the scheme of things to encompass such



controversial issues within our society such as the role of gender and ideologies cannot be entirely addressed or answered in such a cursory look at things. In this sense rather than forming a conclusion, my PIP has led me to question further the role of gender and ideology within my society. Hence will we ever know their role or purpose or will these things that systematically control our lives continue to lurk in our presence influencing decision-making and the consumption of power in our society and culture? This is a question I intend to research further into following the end of tertiary education.

# RESORCE LIST

## SECONDARY SOURCES

### BOOKS

**Scraton, Shelia, and Anne Flintoff. *Gender and sport: a reader*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2002. Print.**

This book was very helpful in introducing me to sports feminism, gender stereotypes and the notion that intervention programs including advertisements posted by sporting outlets such as Nike are examples of functionalism. Hence this book enabled my thought processes to encompass the girls in sport program as an aspect or effect of functionalism.

**Clarke, Gill, and Barbara Humberstone. *Researching Women and Sport*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1997. Print.**

Whilst I did not use this book explicitly in the central material of my PIP, it was extremely useful in that it enabled me to consider different ethical factors when it came to challenging “dominant ideologies” in the research process of girls in sport. As power structures i.e. bureaucracy and feminism were as I pointed out inherently linked to the concept of girls in sport Clarke and Humberstone showed me how to deal with them properly.

**Hargreaves, Jennifer. *Sporting Females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sport*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1994. Print.**

Hargreaves book became an integral aspect of my PIP as it touched on many themes I had originally intended on looking at. In doing so it also broaden my scope and enabled me to narrow my focus question down. Hargreaves’ introduced me to a number of prominent sociologists specialising in the issues of girls in sport and contributed majorly to my second chapter, which heavily

focused on gender stereotypes and socialisation processes and influences. Overall, a top-quality source.

**Coles, Elizabeth. *Sport in Schools: the participation of girls: a discussion paper*. Sydney: Social Development Unit, Ministry of Education, 1979. Print.**

This research was very in depth and was based around similar trends and issues as noted by Wollongong University research. This source was actually suggested to me by Dr Lauren Puglisi and turned out to be of great use in the overall construction of my PIP specifically in terms of issues and barriers that face participation for girls primarily within the school environment. It was also a great source for providing the background to reasons for the “cosmetic” needs of a girls in sport program in today’s society and culture.

***Strategies for change: creating new opportunities for girls in sport*. Canberra: Australian Sports Commission, 1991. Print.**

As one of the initial books I looked at, this book was specifically useful in providing me with common myths and stereotypes that face girls participation in sport. Similarly like the previous source it too provided excellent background information about Girls in sport.

**Malaxos, Sue, and Sue Wedgwood. *Teenage Girls' Perceptions of Participation in Sport: girls want to play sport...but why don't they?* Floreat, W.A.: Women's Sport Foundation of W.A. (Inc), 1997. Print.**

This book was a quantitative source in many ways as it provided me with results from surveys, questionnaires from other research and intervention programs. This book also provided me with an historical context to place my PIP in and introduced me to a number of questions relating to the constructs of gender including the concept that if girls grew up doing the same things as boys would the current trends exist? A very informative source.

**Cohen, Greta L., and Jackie Joyner-Kersey. *Women in Sport: issues and controversies*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1993. Print.**



My second and third chapters on socialisation and feminism would not have been so successful if it wasn't for this source. This book was very informative and written very concisely. Its ideas on child play were very useful in deconstructing the levels of influence in the socialisation process and the root to the social construct of gender. Similarly its analysis of feminism in terms of sport was very useful in helping me breakdown feminism's sphere of influence in my society and culture.

**Kremer, John. *Young People's Involvement in Sport*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1997. Print.**

This secondary source shed light further on the barriers and "cosmetic" issues for girl's lack of involvement in sport especially at school. In doing so it touched quite precisely on issues such as gender, socialisation and peer culture/ influence. The concept of competition as a "turn off" for girls in sport was elucidated in this book with its analysis of the "hypercompetitive trait" in males.

**OTHER SECONDARY SOURCES; including online journals, articles and web documents.**

**"Sport Participation: Differences in Motivation and Actual Participation Due to Gender typing." *Journal of Sport Behaviour* 22.3 (1999): Pg 360+. Web. 19 March 2010. <[www.questia.com](http://www.questia.com)>**

This source was useful in understanding the differences between motivations for both genders, which helped in my planning of the 'Amazing Race' at school. However it was the quote by Pierre de Coubertin the father of the modern Olympics only 17 years ago, which made this source highly valuable.

**"Why Don't Girls Play Sport?" Sport and Recreation Queensland, 2001. Web. 5 April 2010. <<http://fulltext.ausport.gov.au/fulltext/2001/qld/whydont.asp>>.**

This source was possibly one of the first sources I read when I was thinking about my PIP topic. Whilst although I did not fully access it until mid way through my PIP, it did prove very useful

when examining barriers to girls participation in sport from all different perspectives. It also introduced me via the references to other highly valuable sources.

**"Participation in Sport and Physical Activities, 1999-2000" and "Population Survey Monitor 1999-2000), Australian Bureau of Statistics; Cat. No. 4177.0**

This source was just a quantitative source, which showed statistically the difference in participation rates of boys and girls respectively. I did not cite the various statistics in my PIP however; as despite the fact that it was useful in showing that there was a problem I believed that these results did not reflect the trends within my school of which my case study was focused on.

**"National Policy on Women and Girls in sport, recreation and physical activity 1999-2002." *Participant Division of the Australian sports commission (1999):. Web. 26 Feb 2010.***

This large source was extremely useful in the first part of my chapter one in demonstrating Australia's continuity and change regarding women and girls in sport. It introduced me to a number of covenants that Australia is involved in that I was not aware of prior to the commencement of my PIP.

**"How to include women and girls in sport, recreation and physical activity: strategies and good practice." *Participant Division of the Australian sports commission. Web. 26 Feb. 2010.***

This source was a second part to the national policy on women in sport in which it outlined ideas and practices of organisations and institutions both government and non-government run which aimed at rectifying the problem of female inactivity by and large in Australia. It too like the first part of this study represented continuity and change within Australia regarding this topic.

**Hon. Kate Ellis MP Federal Minister For Sport; 5<sup>th</sup> IWG World Conference Women and Sport; Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

This speech made by Australia's federal minister for sport Kate Ellis, was hugely valuable as it outlined Australia's plans for the future regarding sport, as well as enforced the government's recognition that women in sport was an issue that needed to be addressed. The fact that the minister for sport, Australia's traditional favourite pastime as well as the fact that Australia hosted the 5<sup>th</sup> IWG conference was an extremely significant representation of change in Australian bureaucracy and political measures.

**Girls in Sport intervention and research project information sheet for boys; A/Pr Tony Okely, Associate professor, faculty of education university of Wollongong; Sue Meade, premier's sporting challenge project officer**

This note handed out to boys in my school who participated in the girls in sport program conducted by Wollongong university clearly outlined what the program was about and what it intended to achieve. This was useful in explaining the program not only in my PIP but also to people of whom I was interviewing which were not aware of it.

**NSW premier's sporting challenge, girls in sport intervention and research project presentation, slide 1 "aim of project"**

This slideshow was used at my school within a staff meeting to inform teaching staff at my school of the program. It was a model developed by Wollongong University of which the project manager at my school extended to give it relevance to our school's demographics. Nevertheless the first slide outlined simply the aim of the program.

**Oldenhove, Henny. "Understanding the "dropout phenomenon" in sport." *research Challenge - Henny Oldenhove*. Web. Jan 2010.**

This source collected from the WomenSport and Recreation website gave the trends a name as well as outlined the need for a sustainable intervention program to be implemented in order to reverse the trends. It was very useful in establishing a foundation to base my PIP on.

**Telama, Risto, and Xiaolin Yang. "Decline of physical activity from youth to young adulthood in Finland." *Medicine and Science in sports and exercise* 32.9 (2000): 1617-1622. Web. 22 April 2010.**



This source basically provided me with a quote by D. Burton, which outlined that the trends were only perceived as a problem, but is only a necessary part of life trial and error. It also outlined the de-motivation of competition for adolescent girls. .

**"What we do." *Women's Sport and fitness foundation. Women's Sport Foundation of W.A. (Inc), Web. 23 June 2010. <<http://wsff.org.uk/what-we-do>>.***

This site recommended to me by Heather Welch was useful in developing connections with Australia and other nations in the west to show that the problem had something to do with western ideals and constructs rather than Australian school environments.

**Parker-Pope, Tara, and Stuart J. Bradford. "As Girls Become Women, Sports pay dividends." 15 Feb 2010: Web. 1 Jun 2010.**

This article showed similarities and attempts of change in American society and culture regarding girls in sport throughout high school and college. It concentrated on title IX, a famous education amendment that increased girls participation in sport in America. This shows the need for a national government campaign in order to bring about change.

**"Why focus on girls." n. page. Web. 9 Jan 2010**

Why focus on girls, outlined the issues of femininity and masculinity in schools and what constitutes in successful cohesion of peers into the school community and or peer group. It was very useful in drawing on conclusions in my second chapter.

**Starr, Tama. "Reactionary Feminism." *Reason.com: free minds and free markets* Oct 1994: 2. Web. 29<sup>th</sup> Jun 2010. <<http://reason.com/archives/1994/10/01/reactionary-feminism>>.**

This article introduced me to anti-feminist Christina Hoff Sommer's who offered ideas on the role of feminism in society and in particularly its changing methods and aims. This article helped me develop an opinion on feminism in today's context and enabled me to establish my own

position on feminism. This source was very inspirational and was extremely important in the construction of my PIP.

**Summers, Anne. *Damned Whores and God's Police*. 1975 introduction. Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin Books, 1994. Print.**

I obtained an extract of this book from a readings book given to me for my History extension course. The ideas Summer's put forward in this extract were very powerful and offered a contrast to Hoff Sommer's and my evolving views. This was a valuable aspect of my feminism chapter.

**"Boys and Literacy." *Gender Issues*. NSW Public Schools, Web. 15 Jul 2010. <<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/learning/yrk12focusareas/gendered/boyslitk6.php>>.**

This source simply outlined the purpose of the boys in literacy program in NSW schools which I used as a contrast to and mini cross cultural for the girls in sport program in my final chapter. It was very clear and concisely explained and helped very much.

**Leren, Thomas. "The Importance of student voice." *International Journal of Leadership in Education: Theory and Practice* 9.4 (2006): 363-367. Web. 4 May 2010. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13603120600895502>>.**

This source summarised the importance of a student voice and became inspiration for me to develop the girls in sport student committee as part of action research for the primary research requirements of my PIP. Consequently this I believe gave my PIP an edge in which I became thoroughly involved in every aspect of my topic.

**Cyndi Lauper, "Girls Just Want to Have Fun", released November 6, 1983**

I used lyrics of this song to represent what I believe is the major barrier to the successfulness of school sports models and intervention programs, as they wish not to be controlled by authority figures like any other teenage majority and quite simply want to have fun by their own means

which may or may not include the participation in sport. In this sense I found it only fitting to become the title of my PIP.

**"Infosheet: female participation in sport, recreation and physical activity in New South Wales." *NSW sport and recreation*. Web. 14 march 2010. <[www.dsr.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dsr.nsw.gov.au)>.**

Although I did not quote any part of this source it was very helpful in concisely displaying trends in NSW regarding female participation in sport. It also broke down NSW's female population into subcategories including children, teenagers and adults and outlined barriers in each group.

**"Infosheet: media coverage of women in sport." *NSW sport and recreation*. Web. 14 march 2010. <[www.dsr.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dsr.nsw.gov.au)>.**

This source supported information relayed to me via an interview with Heather Welch and just simply showed the media's influence as an issue to girls lack of participation in sport.

**Taylor, John. "Evaluation of the girls on the move programme : summary report." *girls on the move: department of sports studies university of Stirling* (2008). Web. 13 may 2010.**

This source gave me ideas on what I could implement within my own school that would be sustainable. It continues to be of inspiration and motivation to the girls in sport student committee at my school.

**Casey, Meghan M., Rochelle M. Eime, Warren R. Payne, and Jack T. Harvey. "Using a socioecological approach to examine participation in sport and physical activity among rural adolescent girls." *Qualitative health research* (2009). Web. 8 Mar 2010. <<http://qhr.sagepub.com>>.**



This source was useful in examining the school environment as a barrier to participation in girls. Consequently it also helped me gain the opinion that environment wasn't the major issue which led to my second chapter.

**Allender, Steve, Gill Cowburn, and Charlie Foster. "Understanding participation in sport and physical activity among children and adults: a review of qualitative studies." *health education research theory and practice* 21.6 (2006): 826-835. Web. 19 Jan 2010.**

This opened my eyes to the issue of girl's uniforms at school and encouraged me to inquire about a possible change in uniforms at my school, which has been taken into consideration with a positive attitude.

## **PRIMARY SOURCES**

**Interview with Heather Welch, Vice President WomenSport and Recreation NSW, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June 2010**

I had two interviews with Heather Welch one via email and one via the telephone. These interviews were extremely useful and a significant aspect of my PIP. As Vice President of a non-Government organisation whose job solely concerns the participation of females in sport and physical activity across the state as part of a national group, her opinion was highly valuable in understanding the justification of intervention projects to encourage girls' participation. Her view that we need a national campaign and her ideas on "ad hoc" programs enabled me to place the girls in sport program into a spectrum of sustainable vs. non-sustainable programs. I also acquired a number of useful sources from this interview, which I used in the write up of my PIP. However I believe I left this interview too late in the PIP process, as I could have gained extra interviews from other specialists in this area after talking to her, which would have developed another rich qualitative layer to my PIP. Nevertheless this was an excellent resource.

**Interview with research unit Wollongong University Girls in Sport 9<sup>th</sup> March 2010;  
including Dr Tony Okely and Dr Lauren Puglisi**

**Interview with Lauren Puglisi 12 July 2010**

After visiting Wollongong early March 2010 and becoming heavily involved in the girls in sport program at school I eventually developed a relationship with Lauren Puglisi who maintained constant contact with me via email. This enabled me to ask questions as my PIP progressed and new questions from secondary research arose. Both interviews were extremely useful in the overall development of my PIP. IT is the work that these people do that inspired the very concept of my PIP and enabled me to continue work throughout the year without losing interest. From these interviews I gained a comprehensive knowledge and understanding about the programmes aims, issues, tasks and pressures. Their responses were specifically useful in chapters 1 and 2 in which I examined the need for a girls in sport program and the influences of gender stereotyping and socialisation on the participation of girls in sport. Also, in my first meeting with the team in Wollongong I was lucky enough to be given access into their resources, which they used to write up their reports. This was extremely important as it gave we a great push in the right direction and motivated further research. This was a premium source of information.

**Interview with Sue Meade 17 June 2010**

I gained this contact via Dr Puglisi who worked with Sue Meade part of the premier's sporting challenge. Sue Meade is the project manager of the premiers sporting challenge at the department of education in training in which she is heavily involved in the construction and progression of the girls in sport program. She was very useful in outlining the Department and Premier's purpose for creating such a program and also shed light on some important issues such as feminism in schools. I feel privileged to have had the chance to talk about these issues with her, and fund this interview very worthwhile.

**Interview with Alan Ashton MP member for East Hills, 31 May 2010**

Whilst although I did not cite this interview it was very useful in obtaining a member of parliament's perspective on the case who has much to do with the local schools in his area as well as local sporting organisations and community activity. The interview was very casual but he threw much light on the issue regarding the imbalance in figures in terms of participation

within school grounds compared to outside of school grounds and facilities. His experience supported my focus groups who insisted that they played more sport outside of school than they did in school.

### **Survey conducted with year 9 boys and girls, May 2010**

This survey was very useful in obtaining both qualitative and quantitative results from two different perspectives of the same age cohort. It was surprising to see such a divide between the genders over the issue of “what is sport”. Knowledge however on female sportswomen was generally very poor from both groups. This survey showed me gender stereotypes and the influence of the media in portraying females in sport.

### **Survey conducted June 2010 year 12 girls**

### **Survey conducted June 2010 year 12 boys**

Both surveys was a verbal spur of the moment decision which I conducted throughout my recesses and lunches one day in which I asked a number of general questions to my peers regarding participation and influence in terms of sport and developed a generalised consensus on ongoing trends.

### **Focus group year 9 girls conducted 23 April 2010**

This focus group was extremely useful as it gave me an in depth insight into the perspectives of the girls targeted by the girls in sport program. Their responses in this focus group, which went for a little over an hour in a conversational environment, influenced much of my secondary research and directed many of my later interview questions. Similarly their ideas were used as part of the planning processes of the girls in sport ‘amazing race’, which I helped organise as part of action research in the girls in sport student committee.

### **Focus group year 9-10 boys conducted 24 May 2010**

This focus group gave me an insight into a different perspective of the girls in sport program. It formed a major part of my cross-cultural assessment. It also provided ideas of which helped changed my PIP focus and narrow my research.



### **Interviews with two anon teacher's at my school 2010**

These interviews offered conflicting perspectives on the program one in which was shocked by the cultural difference and emphasis on sport at my school compared to their previous school and their overseas experiences as well as another view which believed the girls in sport program was a waste of money and time which could be spent in other areas of sport or schooling that would benefit the kids who actually want to excel at sport. These interviews were very helpful in developing and maintaining a cross cultural throughout my PIP.