2001

Girls Playing Netball: Factors Influencing Participation In Community Sport During A Transition Phase

Suzanne Sharp

*Edith Cowan University*

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GIRLS PLAYING NETBALL: FACTORS INFLUENCING PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY SPORT DURING A TRANSITION PHASE

By

Suzanne Sharp

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the Award of

Master of Education

At the School of Education in the Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University

Perth, Western Australia

2001
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USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.
This study describes the influences on continued sporting participation in netball for a group of adolescent girls as they make the transition from primary to secondary school and between sub-junior and junior sporting structures. A qualitative research design using one to one and semi structured focus group interviews was applied. The research describes how these meanings and identities both influence decisions about ongoing sporting participation and are influenced by situations, events and people as the participants move from primary to secondary school.

Individual and focus group interview and survey data, indicate that for this group of young adolescent girls a variety of influences and factors impacted on their decisions to continue or not in the sport of netball. While evidence in this study supports the literature findings that competence, friends, team aspects, competition and fun are all strong motivations for continued participation, it has also highlighted the sensitive nature of these factors to external or structural changes in the girls lives.

In particular, the transition to high school intensified the influence of many of the above mentioned factors. For participants who did not have a high level of perceived competence or the security of friends with which to seek new avenues for playing, continued participation in this particular sport was less likely. Allocating discretionary time to the sport of netball for those who continued in the sport, related to the sport meeting their needs, of which, challenge, skill development, achievement and most importantly social dimensions were paramount.

Feedback obtained from the participants can help sport providers gain
a better understanding of what influences young female adolescent's decisions about continuance or discontinuance in the specific sport of netball. If we want less drop-out in sport by young adolescent girls during these transition periods the challenge to schools, junior coaches, community sport providers and parents will be to develop strategies to minimise the effects of these transition factors.

Perspective's gained will help direct the efforts of sport providers in establishing sporting experiences and intervention programs that retain young girls in sport particularly netball, as they make the transition from primary to secondary school and through to adulthood.
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

i incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree of diploma in any institution of higher education;

ii contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

iii contain any defamatory material

FULL NAME: Suzanne Sharp
SIGNATURE: 
DATE: Monday, May 14, 2001
My sincerest and deepest gratitude goes to the many people who have helped turn this study into its final finished form. There are many people who have helped me personally and academically, throughout the years of my graduate study.

In both respects my sincerest thanks go to Dr Andrew Taggart, whose friendship, gentle persuasion and patient guidance in both my studies and professional life has made both an enjoyable journey. Andrew is an inspiration in the physical education field a tireless and dedicated educator and researcher who has patiently guided my study to a final conclusion even when I have appeared to wane.

Thanks and gratitude also go to the ten wonderful girls who put up with me as a netball coach for five years and who I have greatly enjoyed knowing and watching grow and develop into the young women they are today. Thanks for giving up your valuable “social time” to talk netball and I wish you many enjoyable physical activity experiences in the future, be they netball or not.

A special word of appreciation to Jan Luckman, a dear friend and inspiring colleague who gave up her valuable time to help me collect data. Jan’s outstanding communication skills and ability to talk to young people helped enormously in the conducting of the focus group interviews. She is always an inspiration, a person of boundless energy, humour, intelligence and insight whose contribution to young women’s sport and recreation opportunities has been outstanding.

Finally to my wonderful family, Pete, Angie, Tim and Sophie. Thanks for putting up with the many hours I sat grumbling in front of the computer over the past four years. Thanks also for giving my life focus, meaning and inspiration as nothing much would matter without you. I love you all dearly.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This study examines the value a group of adolescent girls ascribe to continuance in the sport of netball when they make the transition from year 7 to year 8 (primary to secondary school) and between sub junior and junior sporting structures. The research will investigate the personal, social and structural changes that occur when the participants make this transition and the influence of these changes on continued participation in netball.

Background and Significance

A recent study by Taggart and Sharp (1997) which surveyed over 2,200 Perth, metropolitan students in years 7, 8, 10 and 12, discovered that at year 7 participation rates in all forms of sport are very high for both boys and girls (boys 80%, girls 81%). A significant finding from this study was that of the students who had decided to discontinue a community sport during the 12 months prior to the survey (35% of the sample) 42% left a sport between the years 7 and 8 (the primary to secondary school transition). Furthermore the level of decline in participation from year 7 to 8 was found to be greater for girls (16%) than for boys (7%).

Research in South Australia also found that participation rates peaked at age 13, with 69% of boys and 58% of girls participating regularly in organised sport (Sale, 1994). A population survey by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (1994-95), reporting participation rates for children in specific school and community sports, confirmed that high school drop out rates are greater for girls. This was also seen in the WA study where specific data for netball
showed a marked decline in participation during the year 7 to 8 transition (Taggart & Sharp, 1997). Zubrick, Silburn, Gurrin, Carlton and Lawrence (1997) surveyed adolescents aged 12 - 16 and found that while 69% had played one or more organised sports during the past year, their level of participation declined from 77% for 12 year olds to 57% for 16 year olds. The trend appears to be world wide with Brettschneider (1989) reporting a decline of 40%, among 14-19 year old European adolescents between 1980 and 1990.

The WA Child Health Survey (Zubrick et al. 1997) emphasized the effect of social change on children and adolescents and the need to target services, including the provision of physical activity, to promote optimal outcomes for young people. The important place of physical activity in promoting health and well being of individuals is reinforced in the survey and substantiates the potential contribution that sport can make to community well-being. The survey findings show that for adolescents, the benefits of regular physical activity include not only physiological benefits, but also improved mental health, self-esteem and self-efficacy. The survey also pointed to the value of participation in organised sport at school and in the community in encouraging students to develop more active lifestyles (p. 48).

Declining levels of participation, peripheral involvement and fluctuating commitment characterise adolescent engagement with sport (Taggart & Sharp, 1997). This seems to be true for girls more so than boys. Of those year 8 girls who had dropped out of sport in the past 12 months, 71% cited clashes with other activities as the reason. Evidence points to the transition years as being a significant point for drop out from physical activity and suggests that age/year is an important factor in determining children's motives for participation in extra curricular physical activity (Daley & O'Gara, 1998). Daley
and O'Gara also recommended further research to examine the relationship between gender and age.

The Centre for Health Promotion and Research at Curtin University (1996) report that while available research evidence highlights the low number of young females participating in sport and provides a list of determinants associated with non-participation, little information is available on the perceptions of girls towards physical activity participation, inside and outside of the school. It seems that few studies have investigated the barriers or the enabling factors involved in young girls' participation by asking them directly at the time of the process of deciding whether to continue or not in physical activity or sport. The longitudinal nature of this study (interviewing participants over the two years following the transition to high school) may address this problem.

**Statement of the problem**

The purpose of this study is to target the primary to secondary transition period as the crucial time when adolescent girls make decisions about how much they value continued participation in a particular community sport. The research clearly indicates that this is a time of risk for young girls dropping out of physical activity in general.

The transition to secondary school is seen as a crucial factor in influencing decision making about continued participation in a particular community sport. In some cases the students do not go on to the same high school and contact with former team members is lost. Friendship groups are likely to change as a new school social setting is developed and explored. Changes to time available because of increased study commitments, part-time
jobs and increasing social opportunities all compete with young girls' time for and motivation to continue in physical activity. What values, attitudes and conditions influence young girls to continue with physical activity and sport particularly when they are going through a time of change is the focus of this study.

The transition from primary to secondary school coincides with a structural transition within the specific community sport of netball itself, that is, the move from a sub-junior to a junior sporting structure. In Western Australia sub-junior competition in netball is predominately comprised of primary school-based teams. The teams are generally organised through the school, a strong parental involvement is necessary and encouraged, children are selected for teams by friendship groups rather than skill and a very strong philosophy of inclusion, fairness and maximum participation for all is fostered.

Competition rules are in place to reinforce this philosophy. These include a participation only competition for primary school years 3-5 and a points ladder but no finals for years 6 and 7. Furthermore in the modified Netta game (years 3-5) teams are required to change the positions of players during every game. No player may play more than half a game in one position or play less than half a game unless due to injury or illness (Wanneroo Districts Netball Association, 2000).

The junior sport structure is comprised mostly of community club and high school teams. These teams generally have selection trials based on skill ability and coaches with a more serious attitude to competition particularly in the higher grades. The modifications of sub junior competitions are no longer in place and playing positions and time are at the discretion of individual
coaches. Coaches at sub-junior level are generally parents, whereas at junior level, coaches are often appointed by the club or school to coach certain teams, based on their coaching experience and expertise.

The structural changes at this time of transition involve the participants joining teams or clubs that are community based instead of school based. Other changes (particularly for club based participation) include a graded system of selection rather than friendship based participation, the necessity to seek out opportunities to join a community club and a more competitive philosophy of participation. These changes will be explored in terms of the participants' perceptions of the value of continued physical activity particularly, participation in netball. To what extent these transition factors effect the decisions of these girls regarding ongoing participation in netball is a key focus of the study.

**Research questions**

The study research agenda addresses specific and general activity trends of young adolescent girls and seeks to identify how their decision making about continued physical activity is influenced by the changes in the structure of their social worlds caused by these transition periods. In order to structure this investigation four guiding research questions were formulated. These are driven by the desire to understand why girls continue or do not continue in a chosen sport and how the structural changes in their physical and social worlds caused by the transition period influence their decisions. These questions are:

1. **What are the personal, social and structural changes that occur when participants make the transition from primary to secondary school?**

2. **What transitional factors occur when moving between school-based to club based participation in community sport and between**
sub-junior and junior sport?

3. What are the participants' perceptions of the value of continued physical activity, with particular reference to netball?

4. How do these personal, social and structural factors influence the decisions these young girls make about continued participation in netball?

I have chosen to adopt a research approach that is interpretive in nature. This approach should yield useful knowledge appropriate for both policy makers and sport providers. The research data will be mostly presented in words although some survey data has been included in table form to illustrate responses. The reporting of interview data should give rich and comprehensive descriptions and valuable insights into the thinking, motives and perceptions of young adolescent girls and help interpret the survey data.

Feedback from participants in this study will give sport providers a better understanding of what young girls want from physical activity and sport, and of the influences on their decisions about sporting continuance, particularly in netball. The perspectives gained may help direct the efforts of sport providers in establishing sporting experiences and intervention programs that retain young people, particularly girls, in sport through adolescence and on to adulthood.
Terms repeatedly employed and referred to will be defined so the reader understands them as intended in this study.

**Transition**: The process of changing from one state to another. In the context of this study transition refers to the process of change when the participants move from primary school to secondary school which, in Western Australia, occurs at age 12 (year 7) to 13 (year 8). The process of transition in this study also applies to the move from the sub-junior to junior, community sporting structures and occurs at similar ages.

**Sub-Junior sport**: The structure of the netball competition at the Wanneroo Districts Netball Association where the participants played netball while at primary school (years 3 to 7). Rules and playing court (goal post height) are modified and a code of ethics relating to coaching sub junior players is encouraged. Rule changes include:

- no defending the shot at goal.
- defenders to be four rather than three feet from the opponent with the ball.
- players have six rather than three seconds to pass the ball.
- players must play no more than half a game in the one position.
- minor shuffling of the feet is allowed.
- scores are kept for the game but no finals are played.
- the competition is organised by age groups so all participants are playing against children of the same age.
Lower goal posts are used (8 rather than 10 feet). Coaches are encouraged to give equitable playing time to all players, respond to the players in a sporting and positive manner and encourage sportsmanship and fun.

**Junior sport:** The structure of the netball competition at the Wanneroo Districts Netball Association where the participants played netball while at secondary school (years 8 and 9). Adult rules apply but equitable playing opportunities are encouraged and all participants must be sixteen or under to participate in this competition. The junior sporting structure ensures all players are playing against opponents of a similar age (up to 16 years).

*The Stayers:* This refers to the group of four girls in this study who have continued playing netball throughout primary school into year 8 and year 9. They are also sometimes referred to as group one. The pseudonyms used to identify this group are Andrea, Karen, Jane and Sarah.

*The Transients:* This refers to the group of three girls who dropped out of netball after primary school in year 8 but reentered the sport in year 9. They are sometimes referred to as group two and the pseudonyms used to identify them are Mandy, Ruth and Carol.

*The Dropouts:* This refers to the group of three girls who dropped out of netball after primary school and have not reentered the sport. They are sometimes referred to as group three and the pseudonyms used to identify them are Bree, Nadia and Linda.
The purpose of the review of literature is to provide an overview of research in the area and to ascertain the significance of this research. Recent research has highlighted the health benefits of participation in physical activity and sport and the need to improve strategies to gain and maintain adolescent involvement in sport and physical activity (Blair & Connelly, 1996; Brown & Brown, 1996; Naughton & Carlson, 1996; Rowland, 1990; Australian Sports Commission, 1996). Barriers to participation in sport have also been recently investigated, particularly in relation to girls (James, 1999; Malaxos & Wedgewood, 1997; Taggart & Sharp, 1997; MSR, 1996). Motivations to stay in sport in relation to developmental stages and participation phases have also been studied. Data on the influence of parents, siblings, teachers and coaches adding to our understanding of adolescent involvement and continued participation in physical activity (Kirk, D., Burke, P., Carlson, T., Davis, K., & Glover, S. 1996). Reviewing a broad perspective of current research in the area of adolescents and sport should help widen my thinking in this area and provide a sounding board for ideas on the key influences on girls’ decisions about their specific sporting participation during this transition phase.

The Importance of Sporting Continuance

Understanding the broad area of the sporting continuance of adolescent girls is important, as research suggests that long term participation in sport or physical activity has significant physiological, well being and public health benefits. There is increasing evidence to suggest that those who develop a lifestyle which incorporates regular physical activity during childhood will
accrue health benefits in adult life if regular activity is continued (Blair & Connelly, 1996; Brown & Brown, 1996; Naughton & Carlson, 1996; Rowland, 1990). Naughton and Carlson (1996) found that physiological advantages did exist within a sporting group of children when a comparison of the non-sporting and sporting groups were made and Rowland (1990) warned that there is an implicit health danger in the adoption of a sedentary lifestyle during adolescent years.

There is a worldwide acceptance that physical activity has much to offer individuals, particularly young people. The US Department of Health and Human Services (1997, p.24) states that “School and community programs that promote regular physical activity among young people could be among the most effective strategies for reducing the public health burden of chronic diseases associated with sedentary lifestyles. Here in Australia the Federal and State governments have agreed in principle with the Active Australia goals to “increase and enhance lifelong participation in sport and recreation” (Australian Sports Commission, 1996).

Determinants of Sporting Continuance

The specific focus on the primary to secondary school transition as a time when girls decide on future sporting participation is important. Research points to social, personal and structural factors impacting decisions on participation around this time in young adolescent girls lives, (Brettschneider, 1989; Ibbotson, 1996; Petlichkoff, 1995 & Weiss, 1994). Oakley and White (1992) in their study, showed how sport participation decisions among working class adolescents were mediated by a combination of meanings attached to past experiences, current recourse, self-definitions and cultural forces. Kirk et al (1996) reported family and income structure as key factors in determining the
likelihood of a child's involvement in junior sport, with time and financial demands substantial barriers to their participation in junior sport. While some may be direct socio-structural changes associated with the transition itself, others may include personal reasons and the changing societal and cultural contexts of their lives.

Social Influences

In the move from primary to secondary school many of the main influences on sporting participation in the former may change. Brettschneider (1989) notes that the family, school, sport clubs and peer groups are both the social environments in which sport activities are carried out and the social influences that shift during the course of the adolescent’s life. Ibbotson (1996) points to friends as the primary influence on adolescent behavior, thoughts and actions. The changing influence of parents and peers on these young girls decisions about their sporting participation as they move from year 7 to 8, will be important questions in this study. Kirk et al (1996) suggest that children who have supportive parents, peers, siblings, teachers and coaches are more likely to initiate and continue their participation in sport than individuals for whom this support is much lower. The question of how significant others, particularly parents and peers, influence continuing involvement in sport was the subject of a report by Brown, Frankel and Fennel (1989) who advised that future studies should look at the nature of the socialization process and ask how it is that individuals attend to particular influences in one context, yet not in another.

According to Harter (1991) cited in Moore (1994), the foremost influence on children's perceptions of competence are significant socialisers, particularly parents. It is important to consider the influence of significant others. Biddle and Goudas (1996) revealed the importance of parent and teacher
encouragement in physical activity. For females under the age of thirteen, the parent was the primary influence on sport participation. However, for students in lower secondary school the coach or teacher was a more important influence than parents.

The influence of parents on motivations to participate has been consistently reported by research findings (Wright et al., 1999; Brustad, 1996; Kirk et al., 1996). Eccles and Harold (1991) proposed that parents provide differential amounts of encouragement and opportunities to children to participate in varied activities in accordance with their personal beliefs about their children's natural dispositions and capabilities. Eccles and Harold (1991) describe and expectancy-value model of motivation in which parent expectations that their children will attain success and views about the value of that success result in socialisation practices that determine support for their child's involvement in free-choice activities.

Daley and O'Gara (1998) suggest that determining which motivational factors influence children of different ages may shed some light on the matter of why children's participation in physical exercise decreases with age. Blair, Kohl, Gordon and Paffenberger (1994) report that long-term participation is marked by an apparent low level of negative reinforcement and greater positive feedback, or at least sustained feedback as participation continues through the life cycle.

The main reasons for non-continuance and the value these students ascribe to continued sport participation, particularly those in the 12 to 13 age bracket, are still not clear. The problem of dropout from a particular sport during the transition from primary (year 7) to secondary school (year 8) as well
as the transition between different sporting structures (sub junior to junior sport) is one that has not yet been specifically addressed.

**Personal Influences**

Weiss (1994) described several major categories such as competence, affiliation, team aspects, competition and fun as reasons that children and adolescents give for participating in sport. These are supported by key findings from WA Ministry of Sport and Recreation’s, *Sport X Generation or Degeneration* (WA Ministry of Sport and Recreation, 1996) report that indicated that young people do not value the “win at all costs attitude”, wanted to be exposed to a greater variety of sports at primary school and would like to learn and play in a supportive and encouraging environment.

An important issue in relation to youth sport participation, particularly in community programs is the social aspect of sport. Clough et al., (1993) found that 80% of adolescents supported the statement ‘you make new friends’ as a reason for playing sport. Much of the literature alludes to the importance of playing with and being with friends as a socialising influence into sport (Clough et al., 1993; Taggart & Sharp, 1997). Wankel and Kreisel (1985) investigating motives for participation in organised sport in children aged 7-14 identified intrinsic (personal skill development), extrinsic (winning prizes and gaining approval from parents and coaches) and social factors (such as being with friends and being part of a team). Fruin (1994) in her research on 14 and 15 year olds found that the barriers to exercise included homework and school, feeling sick or tired, social events, the possibility of injuries and being bored with the sport. Boredom was also highlighted as a barrier to sport participation in the study by Taggart & Sharp (1997).
Motivations to stay in sport tend to differ in relation to developmental stages and participation phases. Petlichkoff (1995) found that primary school aged children cited an over-emphasis on winning (40% because they did not play and 60% because they were not successful) whereas the majority of high school aged drop outs withdrew because of conflicts of interest. Taggart and Sharp (1997) reported the major reasons for drop out in year 8 girls being sport clashing with other activities, boredom with the sport and other activities being more fun than the sport they had played. Stratton (1999) agreed but also identified one reason that was specifically age related, the development of non-sport interests. As they got older they were more likely to drop out because they became interested in activities outside of sport.

For young adolescent females, how they perceive themselves and their interaction with others has consistently been shown to influence exercise behaviour, (Centre for Health Promotion Research, Curtin University of Technology, 1996). Body weight, and body image perception is an important factor in determining levels of participation in physical activity. Tappe, Duda and Mengas-Ehrnwald (1990) found a high level of physical activity amongst adolescents was primarily related to high perceptions of physical competence. Perceived athletic competence is a significant predictor of exercise adherence for females and intrinsic interest was found to be a strong predictor of student intentions to keep involved with activities. Theodorakis (1994) suggests that personal attitude toward physical activity is much stronger than subjective norms as a predictor of intention for exercise participation. Individuals who feel more confident about their attitudes and intention for exercise and who perceive their behaviour as controllable are more likely to adopt an active lifestyle.
**Gender and participation**

No study of adolescent girls and physical activity would be complete without looking at specific gender issues as they relate to differences in achievement and participation in various sports. According to Eccles and Harold (1991) girls not only prefer different sports but they also participated in substantially fewer numbers than boys even in their most preferred sport. Australian Bureau of Statistics (1999) statistics show that during 1995-96 participation rates in sport or physical activities which had been organised by schools, clubs or associations, for Australian children aged from 5-14 years, were 65% for boys and 57% for girls.

To understand why girls make decisions to do some activities over others from the broad array of choices available, Eccles and Harold (1991) looked at the motivational factors that underlie individuals decisions regarding various activity and achievement-related choices. The model developed by Eccles and Parsons, 1982 (cited in Brustad, 1996) links choice to performance expectations and to the importance, or value, individuals attach to the available options. In particular the role of parents in socializing them into physical activity is important. This expectancy-value model of motivation that parent belief systems are related to children’s competence perceptions, success expectancies and participation. Furthermore girls’ expectations for success are guided by such core personal values as achievement needs, competency needs, personal goals, motivational orientation and gender-role schemata, Brustad (1996).

James (1999) commented on the extrinsic versus the intrinsic motivations of girls to participate. She concluded that many girls avoided mixed games because of the extrinsic factors of boys’ domination of spaces, rough play and derogatory remarks and because of the intrinsic factors of
concern about physical appearance and athletic competence. James also observes that girls in late adolescence reported fewer negative attitudes towards their body image than in early adolescence. Girls in this study are in the early stage of adolescence.

Much literature alludes to gender role socialisation. Some focus on 'role conflict' suggesting being feminine and athletic are often seen to be mutually exclusive and the ways in which women have been socialised for competition (Brustad, 1996; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Hopwood & Carrington, 1994). Others report findings on the influence of supportive parents, coaches and teachers in this socialization process (Kirk et al, 1996). Brustad (1996) found that higher levels of perceived parental enjoyment and parental encouragement was associated with a greater attraction to physical activity for girls. Specifically parental socialization was associated with a greater attraction to physical activity because of favorable peer outcomes, a greater liking of games and sports and higher perceived competence.

While the influence of gender stereotyping on the participation of young females in physical activity is real, it should be kept in perspective with all the factors which influence their decisions on participation and continuance in physical activity.

**Structural Influences**

While the schools usually provide the first introduction to organised physical activity programs an important context in Australian youth sport participation is the community. Many policy and research documents point out the inadequacies of community programs in relation to meeting the needs of young people, their contribution to drop out and failure to attract many
young participants (Rotella, Hanson & Coop, 1991, Brown et al, 1989). The literature supports the notion that children’s motivation to participate is focussed on having fun and being involved. The criticism of organised sport is that often, winning is emphasised over fun and that youth sport programs are too stressful, physiologically as well as physically creating the potential for dropping out (Clough et al, 1993; Luckman, 1991; MSR, 1996; Taggart & Sharp, 1997; Wankel & Sefton, 1989; Weiss, 1994).

The participants in this study had been involved in sub-junior sport (netball) for five years and in 1999 were involved in the more adult junior sport version if they choose to continue after leaving primary school. At this level, competition often overrides participation, ability grading is introduced and the separation from friends is likely. Gentle, Caves, Armstrong, Balding and Kirby (1994) found that out of school sports clubs were a source of encouragement to continue physical activity for very few girls. They suggested this was disappointing given participation in clubs has a significant contribution to exercise in later life. Critics of youth sport programs argue that these are physiologically and psychologically stressful and create the potential for dropping out of sport altogether. Programs that emphasise competition and outcome over fun, learning skills and individual improvement are the ones that usually create negative experiences. While it appears that some of these issues have been addressed at the sub-junior levels, little seems to have changed with the structure and composition of sport for adolescents (Taggart & Sharp, 1997).

**Conclusion**

The place and meaning of sport and physical activity in the participants lives from their point of view and how they make decisions about their
engagement in sport and physical activity across these transitional periods is unique to this study. Taggart and Sharp (1997) highlighted the year 7-8 transition as being critical in continuing sporting involvement. There appears to be a gap in understanding the specific nature of the determinants of participation for adolescents in their transition years between primary and secondary school. The different influences and situations that arise and how the participants interact with these when they make the transition both between primary and secondary school and differing sporting structures, is the focus of this study.
CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

This chapter is structured into four sections. In the first section the methodological assumptions underpinning the research questions are discussed. The second section explains the theories that helped inform the conceptual framework for the study. The third section discusses the research design or method of investigation, the implications for the choice of the sample of participants and the methods of data collection (interviews and focus groups). A review of the data collection process including how the data is to be analysed and presented is also explained. Finally a discussion of my own personal history as it pertains to this study is necessary as my personal values, beliefs and commitment to participation in junior sport has formed the basis of key assumptions that underlie the study.

Research assumptions underpinning the research questions

This study will address the specific question of adolescent girls' continuance in the sport of netball during a transitional phase, the transition being from primary to secondary school and from sub-junior to junior sporting structure. In particular the study will investigate the meaning and value young adolescent girls ascribe to this sporting participation. Does this change and if so why? Most of the literature, based primarily on quantitative data, gives little insight into the meanings attached to the influences on adolescent girls' sporting participation. While we may have found out that young girls (12-15yrs) do drop in and out of sport and physical activity (Taggart & Sharp, 1997), there is not the depth of data to explain why this happens. This qualitative study will investigate how these young girls make choices to continue to participate or not in community netball, after leaving primary school. How
these choices are interwoven with personal motivations and the social and structural changes that occur during this transitional phase will provide the focus for the meaning making.

**Theories informing the conceptual framework**

As with most sociological views of sport participation this study is interested in understanding the meanings and interaction dynamics associated sporting participation. Understanding the participant’s behaviour in terms of how they define their participation based on their relationships with others, is the implicit theory on which this study is based. Therefore the study is grounded in a symbolic interactionist approach and does not assume that the participants are necessarily socialised into sport in response to external influences. The assumptions are rather, that these young girls make decisions about their sporting continuance through a series of shifting, back and forth decisions within the personal, structural and cultural context of their social worlds.

Socialisation from the standpoint of symbolic interactionists represents a fluid, shifting relationship between people attempting to fit their lines of action together in some workable, interactive relationship. Symbolic interactionists see ‘meaning’ and ‘interaction’ as social creations. Coakley (1998, p 50) states that “symbolic interactionist theories are based on the assumptions that human behaviour involves choices and that choices are based on meanings or ‘definitions of the situation’ that people create as they interact with others”. They see behaviour in terms of an emerging process, not in terms of cause-effect relationships. For example in the case of the girls’ participation in netball, how they make their choices about continued participation is based on how they have come to define themselves as netball participants. This happens through interactions with significant others (peers, opposition, coaches and
family) and within the confines of their past and present experiences in netball.

Developmental theorists would argue that decisions made in adolescence are a result of a measurable stage of development. Learning theorists such as Bandura (1977) would suggest that self-efficacy or belief about personal competence in physical activity is a source of motivation and depends upon learned responses that have been positively or negatively reinforced. That decisions are influenced by the meanings and values of some group such as family, peers or teachers and coaches with which they identify is the implied by psychoanalytic theorists. These theories all have merit and along with symbolic interactionist theory have assisted in the development of a theoretical framework suitable for my study. Figure 1 is a representation of this framework.
**Conceptual framework**

- **Socialisation theories** (Learning theory)
- **Motivation theories** (Self efficacy/intrinsic/extrinsic motivation)
- **Structural change** (transition primary secondary school)

**Social Factors**
- Significant others (peers/family)

**Personal Factors**
- Developmental issues

**Situational Factors**
- Structural changes (transition sub-junior - junior sport)

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**Factors Involved in the Year 7 to 8 Transition**

**Symbolic Interactionism**
Focuses on how people develop meanings and identities associated with participation and how these meanings or definitions of situations influence their behaviour and choices.

**Decisions about continued participation in netball during the transition phase**
Method of Investigation

The methodology of symbolic interactionism is designed to gather information on how people see their social worlds and their connections to those worlds. This approach to understanding meaning allows us to look at the role of meaning in the decisions girls make about continuing sporting participation. At a methodological level symbolic interactionist theory guides research by identifying individual perceptions as the subject matter under interrogation. A study based on the interpretive paradigm seems best suited to gathering such data. There are many methodologies within the interpretive paradigm including those adopted in this study, individual semi-structured interviews and focus-group interviews of selected case study groups. These methods were determined by the nature of the research questions and the study’s conceptual framework. This section outlines data collection methods consistent with symbolic interactionism and the interpretive research paradigm.

Sample

The participants are a group of ten girls who, during the last three to five years of their primary schooling, played together in a primary school netball team. The girls all came from similar socio-economic areas and had similar family and cultural backgrounds. In all cases there was strong parental support for their participation in netball. Their involvement in the primary school team was based on an inclusive philosophy of participation and friendship and not on graded skill level. I had coached the team for the last five years of their primary schooling. In 1999 these girls made the transition to secondary school and the primary school netball team structure and my coaching were
no longer in place.

At the same time they made the transition between the sub junior and junior sport structure which meant those girls who wished to continue their participation in this sport had to seek out a community club or another team structure in order to continue to play. This is a common occurrence in netball in WA.

Data Collection

The main research method was an in-depth semi-structured interview with the individual participants. The interviews focussed on seeking information to understand the participant’s perceptions, thoughts and feelings about themselves and their involvement in netball. How these changed over two years as they made the transition from their primary school / sub junior involvement to secondary school / junior level involvement was an important focus for the second round focus-group interview questions.

The initial interviews were conducted in May / June 1999 as it was then clear which of the participants had decided to continue their netball participation and who had not. Interviews were semi-structured with a guide of questions, but allowances were made for participants to discuss issues of importance as they arose. (Appendix 2 outlines the guide of questions used in the semi structured interviews). The interviews were audio taped and transcribed for analysis. In the spirit of interpretive research there was a strong effort to analyse data as an ongoing process and to allow the data to guide the next stage of investigation.

After the initial individual interviews, follow up semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted in phase 2, to ensure the explanations and
descriptions were accurate to obtain validation from participants on emerging themes and to gather extra data. An extra year had passed between the first interviews and the focus group discussions, so this was a chance to gather some longitudinal data on the girls' participation patterns. Data from the first set of interviews was used to divide the group into three focus groups. The first group (the stayers) had continued participation in netball from primary school to secondary school and into the next year. The second group (the transients) had dropped out of netball in the transition to the first year of secondary school but had returned to the sport in the following year. The third group (the dropouts) had discontinued netball after primary school.

A colleague, who was independent of the study and had no personal relationship with the girls, conducted phase 2 focus group interviews (Appendix 3). The first round of interviews had highlighted the difficulty of getting the girls to disclose personal information when I was so close to them, their friends and families. Having an independent interviewer was an attempt to overcome this problem.

The participants were also asked to fill in a brief two-page questionnaire (Appendix 4) following the focus group interviews to add to the data generated. Results of the questionnaire helped give a snapshot of the three groups and the results of these are displayed in tables in chapter five.

Analysis

Data generated through the interviews were analysed using an inductive process. Interviews were audio taped, transcribed then analysed based on the identification of emerging themes. These themes were categorised by the level of continued sporting participation in netball for each individual.
The continuance or non-continuance in netball and as it emerged a third group who dropped out and then back in to the sport the following year.

After the initial analysis of the data, focus group semi-structured interviews took place. These focus group interviews served to check that the emerging themes were a good representation of the participants' views, validate the perceptions of the participants as to the reasons for continuance or non-continuance and to flesh out any other emerging issues or situations regarding their sporting participation, (Appendix 3). At the conclusion of the focus group interviews the participants were asked to complete a survey sheet to consolidate the data collection, (Appendix 4).

**Trustworthiness**

A triangulation between my own observations during the interviews, the perceptions of participants and of significant others (parents and colleagues) provides for a number of viewpoints with which to understand participants' perceptions of the meaning and value of continued participation in sport.

My personal relationship with the participants (their coach for five years) allows for a discussion of my own observations and perceptions in the analysis. This should also lead to the participants feeling at ease with me in interview. I remained continually alert to any personal bias due to the close relationship with the participants and to any personal subjectivity in the interpretations. I have shared the interpretive process with colleagues (within the Physical and Health Education Department at Edith Cowan University) and the research respondents to verify that the analysis reflects each participants perspective. The outcomes of this research will be reported to the participants in the study. The validity of the findings ultimately rests on whether the participants or significant others will see a recognisable reality in the reported outcomes.
Ethics Procedures

I provided all participants with full details of the study including a plain English statement outlining the purpose, method and anticipated application of the results of the study. The disclosure form (Appendix 1) required the under-age participants to have signed parental approval. Information on the disclosure form included:

Permission of participants

Permission was gained from the participants and their parents for the interviews. Participants were aware that their participation in the project as voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time.

Informed consent

Explanations of how and why the participant had been selected for the study and a full briefing on the purpose and degree of involvement required were given.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality, where possible, was assured and only my supervisor and myself had access to data. There was no identifying evidence on disks, cassettes and transcripts and pseudonyms are used at all times in the writing of the research. All information is kept in a cupboard in my locked office.

Accuracy of transcripts

Participants had the opportunity to check the accuracy of the reported findings both during the course of the data collection and by previewing the completed document. They were given the opportunity to delete or change any information they felt was inaccurate or caused discomfort by disclosure, but no changes were forthcoming.
Limitations

One of the major limitations of the study is the closeness of myself to the participants. I acknowledge that my personal relationship with the participants as coach of the team for five years may lead to some participants withholding information or being uncomfortable disclosing information. Although I did not have a position of power (coach) when the interviews took place, I knew each of the participants personally and my hope is that this meant participant ease, openness and frankness rather than withholding of information. To safeguard against my relationship with the participants limiting disclosure, the focus group interviews were conducted by a colleague who had extensive interviewing experience and who had no personal relationship with the participants.

I remained continually alert to any personal biases throughout the study due to my close relationship with the participants and to subjectivity in interpretations. To this end I shared the interpretive process with colleagues and the participants to help verify that I am reflecting the participants’ perspective.

Author’s Biography

I came into this study with a strong personal commitment to junior sport and the philosophy of encouraging and maintaining participation of girls in physical activity. As a trained Physical Education teacher and former elite player, I came to the coaching position with a greater knowledge and skills base than the normal parent coach. I was the netball coach of the participants in this study for five of their primary school years. A close relationship with the participants had been built and I am very familiar with them all, both from
a sporting and personal perspective. In the years when the interviews took place I was no longer coaching any of the participants but the personal relationship remained. I acknowledge that it is neither possible nor desirable to separate my values and involvement with the participants from the research. My own views, knowledge, attitudes and beliefs have informed many of the assumptions that underlie the study and my personal knowledge of the girls cannot be disregarded. The complexities of this relationship with the participants needs to be recognised.

**Intended study timeline**

There were three main phases of this study: the design: data collection and analysis and finally the selection of case study groups with cross case analysis between these. In phase one the conceptual framework and research questions were developed, and the protocol and method for data collection designed. Phase two involved the collection of the data from individual interviews and the analysis of this data to determine how the focus group interviews would be conducted. The third and final phase involved the selection of case study groups for focus group interviews. These formed the basis for the cross case analysis and in writing the conclusions and recommendations. Table one outlines the intended timeline for the completion of this study.
Table 1

**Study timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study focus</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Phase I)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>June ’99</td>
<td>Identify/select participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview questions developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview questions piloted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>July ‘99</td>
<td>Interviews conducted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview tapes transcribed - ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>August/Dec ’99</td>
<td>Data analysis - ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Phase II)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study groups</td>
<td>August 2000</td>
<td>Data analysis - complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Case study groups identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>September 2000</td>
<td>Identify sub-groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Second round focus groups completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross case analysis</td>
<td>October 2000</td>
<td>Data analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER FOUR

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

The initial in-depth semi-structured interviews were a substantial and important part of the study. These were conducted in May/June 1999 to ascertain clearly which of the participants had decided to continue their netball participation or not during the transition from primary to secondary school. In the spirit of interpretive research, the data generated in these interviews helped guide the next stage of investigation. The main objective of these first round interviews were to gain an understanding of each of the girls' participation patterns particularly as it pertained to the sport of netball. Collected data also helped me to understand other physical activity patterns of the participants, how these had bearings on their future decisions and their perceptions of their experiences in netball.

Participant Profiles

A profile of each participant gives an overview of their participation and their perspectives on physical activity, in particular netball. Participants are coded as belonging to two groups. Group 1 (the netballers) participants continued playing netball in year 8 and group 2 participants stopped netball in year 8. The girls have been given pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity.

**Group 1: The Netballers**

Group one participants were the girls who continued to play netball in year 8. In this case all four girls joined the same community club, three were graded into the same team (Jane, Sarah and Karen) and the fourth was graded into a higher team (Andrea).
Jane was an enthusiastic participant in netball since year three. She mastered the skills of the game quickly and was considered one of the more skilled players in the team. Jane was a high achiever in many areas of her school life and had a positive belief in her netball abilities. Her self-perception of her abilities was revised when in year 7 she tried and failed to make the final cut for her first age group representative team.

Physical Activity in 1998 (Year 7)
Netball: (School team) 1 x training p/w and 1 x game.
(winter season April - September)
Tae kwon do: 2 x p/w plus gradings and competitions.
All year Ballet: 5 x classes p/w. All year.

Physical Activity in 1999 (Year 8)
Netball: (Community club team) 1 x training p/w and 1 x game.
(winter season April - September
Tae kwon do: 2 x p/w. All year.

Other Activities
Walking: to school each day (40 mins each way), weekends to beach and to visit friends.
Music: violin (High School Orchestra)

Jane continued her participation in both netball and tae kwon do into year 8. She discontinued ballet because of the time, effort and effect on her social life. She indicated being pushed really hard by her ballet teacher was a motivation to stop. As ballet was not going to be pursued professionally and
her main motivation to do it was fun, the commitment required forced the decision to quit.

"because my teacher was being a cow. It was really hard. I kind of liked it but I guess I did it because you get used to it. She was really pushing me hard and stuff and it started getting serious like, are you going to continue doing ballet as a profession, so I just decided I didn't really want to do it. I was just doing it for fun". (Interview 4)

Janes' continued involvement in netball related to fun, friends and loving the game.

"Netball I did, all my friends were doing it and that made it fun and I liked netball, it was good. It was a fun game, it was fun playing it. I liked it when we actually played the games, you got all excited and everything". (Interview 4)

Tae kwon do was continued because of parental pressure. Despite liking it at first Jane indicated that as a sport it was becoming boring and she would quit if allowed.

"Well I started when Dad started because I just wanted to try it out and then Dad said that I can't quit until I get my black belt, so I kind of have to do it. It was fun at first but now I don't really like it. It's kind of boring and stuff, just doing the same stuff again every time".

Asked about the differences in netball from primary to secondary school and indications were that Jane was enjoying club netball more as she was graded in a team of similar ability. Interestingly she was graded to play in the same team as two of her primary school teammates. Jane also indicated she might not have played if none of her friends had gone on with netball.
“No, I might have maybe, but I don’t think I would have done if nobody else was doing it, like being the only one.” Parental support while acknowledged was not a big influence on decision. “Mum likes me playing netball but I don’t think she really minds”.

Transition changes that had an impact on Jane’s decisions to continue to play netball, but not ballet, were increased independence, free time available by giving up ballet, socialising and study commitments. She continued netball as an enthusiastic participant with a community club, graded and playing in a relatively high grade. She indicated she was happy in her new team as it was both challenging and fun. Asked if she enjoyed her netball as much as the previous year she replied, “About the same I think, It’s pretty hard, it’s not as fun sometimes because like you haven’t got all your friends with you, but it’s kind of like you’re making new friends”. (Interview 4)

Sarah’s Profile

Sarah played netball since year 4 and is a competitive player who likes the challenge of pitting her skills against others. Sarah was also one of the more highly skilled players in the team, mastering the skills early and showing a desire to achieve in the sport. She continued to play netball in year 8 and along with Jane was graded to play in a highly graded team in year 8.

Physical Activity in 1998 (Year 7)

Netball: (School team) 1 x training p/w and 1 x game.
(winter season April – September)

Tae kwon do: 2 x p/w plus gradings and competitions. All year
Physical Activity in 1999 (Year 8)

Netball: (Community club team) 1 x training p/w and 1 x game.
(winter season April – September)
Tae kwon do: 2 x p/w. All year.

Other Activities
Music: Piano and Oboe

Sarah continued both netball and tae kwon do in year 8. Reasons for continuing in netball are fun, friends and competition.

"I like playing netball. I thought if I could get in with my friend or any of my other friends it would be even better because you can meet new friends and other people and it would be a harder level of competition". (Interview 3)

Similarly competition was a motivation to continue with tae kwon do.
"I find it interesting and I like the tournaments and trying to do things to pass grading. I just think it's fun". (Interview 3).

While going with friends made the transition to club netball easier, indications are that Sarah would have continued regardless of her friends continuing. She also indicated that the graded system suited her, allowing her to play with players of similar ability and a more serious attitude to competition.

"Probably like it a bit more because it's a harder competition and if you get moved up, you've got to try a bit harder and I like it being more strict because it's hard getting a game going when nobody is serious about it I reckon". (Interview 3).
Sarah discounted the transition factors such as attending a new school, making new friends, worries about the amount and difficulty of study and homework as an influence to her physical activity levels. Sarah remained in the same friendship group with the others from group 1 who continued netball and identified no other concerns with the transition to high school that would have affected her decisions.

Karen's Profile

Karen started playing netball in year 4 with her friends and made steady progress with her skills in primary school. Karen was a peer leader at primary school and her main motivations for playing was to be with her friends. She was also a very high achiever in all aspects of her schooling. A break in the peer friendship group when the girls went to high school almost meant Karen did not continue with netball. Her friendship group included those who discontinued in year 8. However as the season approached she changed her mind and friendship group and joined the same club with her friends from primary school.

Physical Activity in 1998 (Year 7)
Netball: (School team) 1 x training p/w and 1 x game.
(winter season April – September)

Physical Activity in 1999 (Year 8)
Netball: (Community club team) 1 x training p/w and 1 x game.
(winter season April - September)

Other Activities
Music: Piano and violin
Karen continued with netball in '99 as it was her only physical activity. Friends and maintaining fitness through some physical activity were the main influences for Karen starting and continuing netball.

"Well my friends, most of them were doing it. I didn't think I would do it at first then I realised that I had to do something. I couldn't just sit around all day doing nothing with my time, so I did that because I already knew how to play and stuff". (Interview 2)

As with Jane and Sarah, the increased seriousness of competition was a positive factor. "Yes it feels like you are a lot more important when you're playing this year. It's more serious". (Interview 2)

The friendship dynamics were a factor for Karen. Her main friends from primary school all joined a new friendship group in year 8. None continued netball. She acknowledges that if she had not changed her friendship group back to those who continued to play she also, may not have continued.

"Probably did because I changed friend groups and the group that I was with before, none of them continued to play netball and the new friends that I made they continued to play netball. I probably wouldn't have gone back if none of my other friends did it". (Interview 2)

Andrea’s Profile

Andrea is a very keen and talented netballer who has ambitions to participate at an elite level. She is motivated by her own abilities in netball and the influence of her mother who was an elite netballer. Andrea began netball in year 3 and was one of the strongest players in the primary school
team. She has been selected in representative teams for the Association and the Waneroo Netball Region and is graded and playing in a team in the highest grade for her age group.

Physical Activity in 1998 (Year 7)
Netball: (School team) 1 x training p/w and 1 x game.
(winter season April – September)
Netball: (Association and regional representative teams) 6 x weeks pre carnival training.

Physical Activity in 1999 (Year 8)
Netball: (Community club team) 1 x training p/w and 1 x game.
(winter season April - September)
Netball: (Regional representative team) 6 x weeks pre carnival training (July and August)

Other Activities
Music: French Horn

Andrea remained in the same friendship group as those who continued to play. Unlike the others, a major influence on her decision to continue to play netball was that of her ambition to succeed and the influence of her mother, a former elite player. She had gained selection in regional and association representative teams and this success was a major motivation, along with enjoyment of the game itself.

“Well grading is harder, I’m in a higher team. It gets harder. We train harder and play harder games and stuff. It’s good. You get to play better games and
it teaches you to play better because you’re playing against better teams”.

(Interview 8)

Asked if not playing with her friends was an issue she replied

“Yes at the beginning but I got to know people. I would have played anyway”. (Interview 8)

Andrea identified different friends, more homework, more study and different subjects as transitional changes associated with moving to high school but these had no impact on her decisions regarding physical activity.

Group 2: The Drop Outs

The other six girls from the primary school team dropped out of netball in year 8. For some, netball was dropped in preference to other physical activities and for others concerns over time, extra study and new friendship groups had an impact on their decisions. The girls who dropped out in year 8 were Mandy, Nadia, Ruth, Bree, Linda and Carol.

Mandy’s Profile

Mandy had played netball since year 4 and while she was an enthusiastic player in primary school, she had other sporting commitments particularly rhythmic gymnastics, a sport in which she was a high achiever. Mandy was involved in tae kwon do and surf club while at primary school and continued rhythmic gymnastics (after a short break in year 8) and dancing in secondary school. Mandy is an active girl, with a busy social life and was one of the participants whose concern over the unknown time and study commitments involved in the transition to high school was a factor in her
decision in discontinuing netball.

Physical Activity in 1998 (Year 7)
Netball: (School team) 1 x training p/w and 1 x game. (winter season April - September).
Rhythmic Gymnastics: 3 x p/w. All year
Surf Club: 1 x p/w summer season (October – December)

Physical Activity in 1999 (Year 8)
Rhythmic Gymnastics: 3 x p/w all year (discontinued in second half of the year)
Dancing (at school) 3 x p/w
Walking 1/2 hour per day

Mandy discontinued two community sports, netball, and surf club in year 8 and later in the year gradually cut down and stopped gym. The main reasons for discontinuing in these sports were the unknowns associated with the transition to high school.

"Well, it was my first year of high school, but then I was doing gym and I didn’t want loads of things on because I didn’t know how much homework I was going to get and everything. Yes, just how much I needed to study and everything".

While discontinuing some sports, she indicated the importance of physical activity and for this and social reasons took up dance and maintained a commitment to walking.

Mandy also changed friendship groups in year 8, with none of her
high school friends participating in netball. Another factor mentioned in interview was the increased independence and social activities.

"I do a lot more with my friends now that I haven’t got to go to gym every night, I'm allowed to go more places now that I’m older”.

Friends, exercise and parental encouragement motivated Mandy’s initial participation in netball, gym and surf club.

Nadia’s Profile

Nadia started netball in year 4, but had to stop in year 7, due to clashes with her dance commitments. While she enjoyed netball, her main motivation to play was to be with friends and she indicated that she did not feel she had the same skill level as those that had consistently participated throughout primary school.

Physical Activity in 1998 (Year 7)
Netball: (School team) 1 x training p/w and 1 x game.
Spring season. (October-December)
Dance: 4x p/w all year

Physical Activity in 1999 (Year 8)
None

Other Activities
Modeling: 1 x p/w
Drama: 1x p/w
Nadia discontinued netball in year 8, due mainly to entering a new friendship group and not having the confidence in her ability. Nadia joined a new friendship group in year 8, separate from her primary school friends. Comments regarding starting with a community netball club, without the security of being with friends, included:

"I wasn’t really good at netball but I still did it but I didn’t really want to make a fool out of myself. It’s a bit different when there’s people that I don’t know and I’d probably get stuck in a team with nobody that I knew and feel a bit uncomfortable about it. So that’s why I didn’t."

and

"Yes I think if I had a couple of friends then I would" (Interview 6)

Dance had been Nadia’s major physical activity during the primary school years and had involved a huge time and financial commitment from both herself and her mother (Two hour lesson 4 x per week). She discontinued dance in year 8 due to financial problems, but took up drama and modeling as new activities.

Nadia indicated that she was missing physical activity particularly the fitness and social aspects of sporting involvement. "It keeps me fit. That’s the main reason. It’s just a great kind of social get together kind of thing". (Interview 6)

She had some motivation to start a sport again and indicated this would be netball because it is a sport she was familiar with. However this would depend on having friends to do it with.

"You have to have a friend basically to do it and most of us are like that". (Interview 6)
Ruth's Profile

Ruth started netball in year 5 and was primarily motivated by her friends being involved in the sport. Ruth was affected by transition factors such as making new friends, being unsure of how much time would need to be devoted to homework or study and the demands of a new social group.

Physical Activity in 1998 (Year 7)
Netball: (School team) 1 x training p/w and 1 x game.
Winter and Spring season.
Dance: 1 x p/w half the year

Physical Activity in 1999 (Year 8)
Modelling: 1 x p/w

Ruth discontinued netball and dance in year 8 and her decisions were affected predominately by friendship groups and transition factors.

"I think I was just going to have a break and I'm going to start back up next year. You have to kind of join a club and stuff and you have to get accepted in clubs and stuff like that. So I thought I just might have a break and try some different things and just start back up next year". (Interview 5)

and

"When you get home you always have to have more homework and then you get really tired from doing that, so there's usually no time to go and do your sports and stuff". (Interview 5)

Asked why she would consider taking up netball again instead of another sport she replied, "Well. I really like netball and it's kind of like, it's more
fun than any other sport that I've done and it's more like you play lots and lots of different people and you're against different people every time and it's just exciting and fun”.

(Interview 5)

**Bree’s Profile**

Bree was one of the least skilled players in the team and required a fairly high degree of encouragement and coercion to give her best at training and games. Her lack of ability and effort at times affected the team morale as others would become frustrated, particularly if it appeared she was not trying. In the main the girls were very supportive of her attempts on the court. Bree’s mother was very supportive of her playing netball, as Bree was not as very physically adept as some of the others, slightly overweight and needed to be encouraged in physical activity. She made several comments to me as coach indicating how grateful she was that I had managed to encourage Bree to continue with netball each year.

Bree herself in interview indicated that she had enjoyed the primary school netball experience. The degree of support and encouragement she received from the coach, players and her parents I feel sure contributed to her positive feelings.

**Physical Activity in 1998 (Year 7)**

Netball: (School team) 1 x training p/w and 1 x game.

Winter season (April-September)

Tennis 1 x p/w Summer season

Swimming 2 x p/w Summer season
Physical Activity in 1999 (Year 8)
None

Other Activities
Drama: (school productions)
Music: Clarinet

Bree was the only one of the group that went to a different high school in year 8. She mentions transition factors as the reason for stopping netball.

"It was just that it took up a lot of my time. I didn't know the people in a new school. It's a lot harder to find a good team to play with. I've met a whole lot of different people. I've been doing a lot of drama and things, lots of homework. It's just been really busy for me". (Interview 7)

and

"I could have found a team to play with but it didn't interest me this year. I've got too many things to do at the moment". (Interview 7)

Despite having good experiences at primary school, "It was great, being with your friends. A team game. A great coach. Everything just worked out great and we always had a really good time" (Interview 7), once the supportive team and coach were no longer in place, she had little motivation to stay with the game of netball. I don't think she would have had the confidence to try out for a club team as putting her skills on show would be a daunting experience.

Carol's Profile

Carol was a high achiever at primary school both academically and in several sporting areas (particularly swimming and athletics). While not one of
the most able of the netballers, her natural athletic ability meant she held her own on the court. Carol remained friends with the group that dropped out of netball in year 8, but cited changes in the family recreation patterns and the need for a break as the main reasons for discontinuing netball in year 8. She indicated that she intended to take up swimming training to compensate for the loss of exercise but that had not eventuated. Having missed the activity of sporting involvement, Carol returned to netball in year 9, joining the same club as her original primary school friends.

Physical Activity in 1998 (Year 7)
Netball: (School team) 1 x training p/w and 1 x game.
(winter season April - September).

Physical Activity in 1999 (Year 8)
None

Other Activities
Music: Violin

Carol’s friendship group at high school was the group that did not continue with netball. Transition and family factors were given as reasons for stopping. “I just wanted to settle into high school and have a break a from netball. We bought a boat, and were go away a lot on weekends”. (Interview 9)

She admitted missing physical activity and had planned to take up club swimming but had not got around to it. She planned to take up netball again in year 9.
Linda's Profile

Linda played netball throughout primary school. Although friendly with all the other girls in the team, she joined a completely new social group at high school. Sadly, her father passed away at the beginning of year 8, and coping with this trauma and the fact that her mother did not drive, would have been a factor in her decision not to continue with netball in year 8. Linda’s new group of friends were involved in other physical activities and she joined basketball, surf club and volleyball with her new friends.

Physical Activity in 1998 (Year 7)
Netball: (School team) 1 x training p/w and 1 x game.
(winter season April - September).

Physical Activity in 1999 (Year 8)
Basketball (school team)
Volleyball (school organised competition)
Surf club 1 x week summer season

Linda’s new friendship group at high school influenced her activity choices. “I started playing basketball, surf club and volleyball because I wanted a change and because I made new friends”. (Interview 10)

Another reason given was that her family had difficulties with transport in that year. The family concerns, lack of involvement with her primary school friends at high school and the influences of her new friends were the major factors in her physical activity decisions.
Participation in netball

Less than half of the girls in the team continued their netball participation in season '99. However three girls, Mandy, Ruth and Carol did indicate an intention of recommencing netball in 2000. While a variety of reasons have been given for non-participation the friendship dynamics of the group seemed to have a large bearing on the decisions. Of the ten girls in the study one went to a different high school. She discontinued her netball. Of the other nine in the original friendship group all went to the same high school. Three stayed friends, four joined another friendship group together and two joined independent friendship groups at the same high school. Three of the first group and one of the second group continued playing netball. Three of the other four who joined new friendship groups discontinued netball in year 8, but indicated a desire to recommence playing in year 9. The other two who joined new friendship groups independently discontinued their netball participation.

Friends

Of those that continued their participation the main reasons given were that their friends continued to play. Asked if she would have played if her friends had not, Jane responded

"No, I might have maybe, but I don't think I would have done if nobody else was doing it, like being the only one".

Karen, who in year 8 was part of the friendship group that discontinued with netball, but then changed back to the group who continued, made the observation that familiarity with the game was important in her decision to continue.
"I actually didn’t think I was going to do it at first, but then I realised that I had to do something. I couldn’t just sit around all day doing nothing with my time, so I did that because I already knew how to play". (Interview 2 – Karen)

It should be noted that Karen joined the same club as her year 8 friends and played in the same team with her friends from year 8.

It’s fun

Literature suggests that children aged between 8-11 years are more highly motivated by external factors such as social status, encouragement from parents and friends, liking the coach and that older children report significantly higher, skill acquisition, achievement, team affiliation, fitness, fun and friendship as motivations to participate in sport. For those participants who continued to play in year 8, the interviews appear to support these findings. The overwhelming response to why they continued was “It’s fun”. Attempts to draw out what they meant by “fun” met with the following responses.

“All my friends were doing it and that made it fun and I liked netball, it was good”. (Interview 5 – Ruth)

“It’s a fun game. It was fun playing it. I liked with when we actually played the games, you got all excited and everything”. (Interview 4 – Jane)

“Winning was good, yes and playing with friends and stuff”. (Interview 8 – Andrea)

“You’re with your friends all the time. If you like the sport then you can play a game and also have a good time playing with your friends”. (Interview 5 – Ruth)
"I reckon it’s fun because you can hang around with all your friends and you play like a fun sport and it's just fun to play”. (Interview 9 - Carol)

“It's a team sport and it doesn't just rely on you. It was good fun. Keeping up with your friends, like them being there as well because it was all my friends were in the team”. (Interview 2 - Karen)

Overwhelmingly the responses indicate that the nature of the game itself and playing with friends made the game “fun” and were the main motivation to participate.

**Competence**

Three participants were pleased that they were now graded in ability groups. They suggested that playing with the primary school team had been frustrating at times as there were differences in ability and motivation to play. In the graded club team the pressure to perform was greater, but this made it more challenging and fun. For instance

“I like playing with people that are all the same or just a little bit above, but you can come to the same sort of level as they are. If you make a mistake, you all make little mistakes not just clumsiness or anything”. (Interview 3 - Sarah)

Another agreed that the primary school friendship team was at times frustrating, “Yes, it was frustrating sometimes when someone like dropped the ball or didn’t try hard or something” (Interview 4 - Jane). Andrea felt her game was improving because she was graded much higher stating: “You get to play better games and it teaches you to play better because you’re playing against harder teams”. (Interview 8 - Andrea)
While those that continued to play cited friends as important to their decision, the girls who discontinued in netball were also influenced by their perceived competence compared to their friends. One participant felt that her ability level would have resulted in her being graded more lowly than her other friends and team-mates from primary school.

"It's a bit different when there are people that I don't know and I'd probably get stuck in a team with nobody that I knew and feel a bit uncomfortable about it. So that's why I didn't". (Interview 6 – Nadia).

Perceptions about their ability/competence levels seemed to have had a major influence in the decisions the participants made. The literature suggests that the foremost influence on children's perceptions of competence are significant socialisers, particularly parents (Harter, 1981 in Kimiecik & Horn 1998). This is one area of the study that evolved through the interview process and adjusted my thinking about my research questions.

Perceived athletic competence is a significant predictor of exercise adherence for females and intrinsic interest was found to be a strong predictor of student intentions to keep involved with activities (Theodorakis, 1994). Theodorakis suggests personal attitude toward physical activity is much stronger than subjective norms as a predictor of intention for participation in physical activity and those participants who feel more confident about their abilities are more likely to adopt and maintain an active lifestyle. I decided to investigate this theory in more depth with the focus group interviews and surveys. How the girls perceive themselves in relation to the others, their perceptions of how their parents perceive their ability and how they perceive each other became interesting questions for focus.
New contexts

The transition to high school introduced "unknowns" which a participant suggested influenced her decision not to play netball.

"Well, it was my first year of high school but then I was still doing gym and I didn't want loads of things on because I didn't know how much homework I was going to get and everything". (Interview 1 - Mandy)

However, at the time of the interview (mid way through the year) she expressed regret that she hadn't continued netball and suggested she would play the following year. Subsequent data suggests that she did recommence playing netball in year 9.

Ruth, who dropped out of netball in year 8, also mentioned that transition changes in high school affected her decision.

"The most change, is probably so many different people because in primary school we only had a small school and you knew everybody, but in high school there’s all older people and different, weird people and stuff like that". (Interview 5 - Ruth)

She suggested that high school life meant more homework and stated: "when you get home you always have to have more homework and then you get really tired from doing that so there’s usually no time to go and do your sports and stuff." (Interview 5 - Ruth)

Being uncomfortable with new situations was a factor expressed by Ruth. When she was asked if it was difficult to get involved in netball after leaving primary school, her answer was
"...yes, because you have to kind of join a club and stuff and you have to get accepted in clubs and stuff like that. So I thought I just might have a break and try some different things and just start back up next year". (Interview 5 - Ruth)

Subsequent interview data suggests she also recommenced playing netball in year 9. Interestingly both Mandy and Ruth together, formed their own team with new friends and continued to play in year 9.

Bree, who went to a new high school in year 8, responded to the question regarding her decision not to play netball with: "It was just that it took up a lot of my time. I didn't know the people in a new team and it's a lot harder to find a good team to play with". (Interview 7 - Bree)

She also mentioned the changes associated with the transition year such as meeting a whole new set of friends, new activities such as drama and having lots of homework.

Conclusion: Interview insights

The initial individual interviews served several functions in the research process, providing some valuable insights and enabling readjustment and rethinking of several aspects of the study. Firstly, it confirmed the playing status of the participants and helped divide them into two groups, those that had continued in netball and those who had not. More importantly, data generated suggested that some of those who had discontinued in year 8 were planning to recommence playing in year 9. This gave the impetus for the second round of focus group interviews conducted in the following year and led to a third group, the transients, being identified (those who had dropped out in year 8 and then moved back into the sport in year 9).
The initial interviews made me aware of the difficulties of asking questions of a personal nature, in terms of motivations, influences of friendship groups and significant others such as parents to the girls when I had such a close personal relationship with them their friends and their parents. It was decided to use an independent interviewer for the second round of interviews to eliminate the problems of the close relationship between the researcher and the participants. A colleague who had no personal relationship with the participants and who could provide completely unbiased insights into the data conducted these interviews.

The data from the first set of interviews along with a brief survey of participant’s physical activity patterns in August 2000, was used to divide the group into three focus groups for the Phase 2 interviews conducted in October 2000. Three distinct groups were identified. They included those participants who had continued in netball in the two years following primary school (the stayers), those who dropped out of netball in the transition to the first year of secondary school but had returned to the sport in the following year (the transients) and a third group who had discontinued netball after primary school (the dropouts).

The analysis of data from the initial interviews greatly informed aspects of the research and helped refine and refocus the study’s research questions. As a result a survey sheet of questions (Appendix 4) was developed to be used in conjunction with the focus group questions for the October interviews. When analysing the first round of interviews interesting questions regarding, self-perceptions and the perceptions of others, competence, influences of the transition years arose and contributed to the reforming and adding of questions for the focus groups. It was decided to ask the participants to fill in a brief two-
page questionnaire to add to the data generated by the interviews. They were
to complete this questionnaire at the end of the focus group interviews as it
was hoped that the focus group discussion would help them clarify their
opinions and views. The results of the focus group interviews and the surveys
are discussed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE
FINDINGS PHASE II
(Surveys and focus group interviews)

Introduction and overview of interview/survey process

As discussed in chapter four, the initial interviews gave me an awareness of the difficulties arising from my close personal relationship with the participants, their friends and parents. It was decided to have the focus group interviews conducted by a colleague, independent from the study and the participants. The focus groups were divided into three groups and interviewed separately. Different questions were asked of each group. I was interested to discover the perceptions each group had of the motivations for physical activity involvement of participants in other groups. The groups were divided as follows:

Group 1, the stayers: those who continued netball into year 8 and to year 9.

Group 2, the transients: those who dropped out of netball in year 8, but recommenced in year 9.

Group 3, the dropouts: those who had dropped out of netball after year 7 and did not return.

The participants were asked to fill in a 20 item questionnaire (see Appendix 4) following the interviews to add to the data generated. My particular interest was their overall physical activity pattern, perceptions of competence, parental influences on their decisions and the influences of other significant people and factors with regard to netball. Results of the questionnaire helped give a snapshot of the three groups and the results of these are displayed in the following tables (Tables 2-18). The real truth behind these tables, lie in
the comments made by participants in the focus group interviews. These comments help make sense of the data and are explained and described preceding the tables.

GROUP 1 – The Stayers

Table 2 is an overview of group one’s (the stayer’s) physical activity patterns from year 7 to year 8. For this group netball is their dominant physical activity and no one took up a new sport or activity in year 8.

Table 2

Snapshot of “the Stayers” Physical Activity Patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did you continue playing netball in year 8?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you continue with another community sport or activity in year 8?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you take up a new sport or activity in year 8?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you give up a former sport or activity in year 8?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it important to be good at sport?</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Netball appears to be the main physical activity for this group with only one of the four continuing another community sport and two participants giving up an activity (other than netball) in year 8. None of the stayers took up a new activity in year 8. Table 2 indicates that in two of the four cases they are doing less activity in year 9 than in year 8. It was not considered important to be good at sport to enjoy it, but enjoyment was touted as the crucial factor for participation.
It was clear the participants in this group were the most skilled of the year 7 team members, with one attaining elite status for her age and two others trying for representative teams. Perceptions of their own abilities in relation to their year 7 teammates and perceptions of their parent’s beliefs in their competence levels supports this. (Table 3)

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Stayers Perceptions of Competence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which best describes your ability in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relation to your primary school team?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do your parents rank your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>netball ability?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>One of the best</th>
<th>Same ability</th>
<th>Less skilled than others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very good /good</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Friends were ranked as the most important people to influence their decisions to continue to play netball. Only Andrea ranked elite players as an influence, probably due to her involvement both through her mother and her exposure to other elite players in the development and representative teams she has been selected in. All have had knowledgeable and supportive coaches throughout both their primary and high school involvement. All have had supportive parents, taking an active interest in their netball development, beyond transport and financial support.

Friends were ranked first as the main influence of others on their own continued participation in netball. (Table 4). When asked why they thought others had dropped out of netball in year 8 their perceptions were, that it related
to the others being in a different friendship group (friends not involved in netball) and the influence of other commitments.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influences of Other People on</th>
<th>&quot;The Stayers&quot; Decisions to Continue to Play Netball</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average of rankings 1 (most important)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite players</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Love of the game, friends and fun emerged as the key attractions and influences on sport participation for this group. Other research (Taggart & Sharp, 1998; Penney et al, 1999) discusses the social appeal of involvement in sport with friends featuring as the main factor influencing involvement. Staying fit and healthy was also identified as an important reason for participation. Although achievement, improving skill and enjoyment of competition were factors, they were of less importance than having fun with their friends in a game they enjoy playing.

It may be important to note here that in both their primary and high school netball competitions these girls had a reasonable degree of team success. The primary school team did quite well and was ranked highly in their grade (A4). In high school all were graded highly (in year 8, A5 Junior grade and A1 Year 8 grade, and in year 9, A1 Junior and A5 Junior grades respectively) for
their ages and in teams that did well in their respective competitions. Indeed the girls in A5 Junior (in year 9) won their competition and subsequent parent comment on the excitement of the girls at this achievement was noted.

Year 8 interview responses indicate that the nature of the game itself (particularly playing with and against people of the same ability) and playing with friends made the game “fun” and were the main motivation to participate. In the year 9 focus group interviews, the participants were able to identify other motivations such as team affiliation, improved skill acquisition, competition and achievement. Playing with friends and meeting new people however were still most important. Some of the responses from the focus group and individual interviews regarding the changes involved, particularly in the competition structure of netball in the community club included:

“I just like the game, also the fact that you always win” (Focus group 1 – Andrea)

“Keeping up my fitness, meeting new people. I like competing against people”. (Focus group 1 – Sarah)

“I’m in a team that plays harder games and we’re all of the same ability. Its better”. (Interview 8 – Andrea)

“I find it interesting and I like the tournaments and trying to do things and trying to pass gradings”. (Interview 3 – Sarah)

“You have to be good enough to get into a team. It’s a good thing in one way because I like being with players of similar ability”. (Interview 3 – Sarah)

“I think because we’ve been graded into our ability and stuff and I’ve got friends in my group too, but the other people I don’t now very much and its harder because you don’t really know what their going to do. It’s pretty hard but I still like it”. (Interview 4 – Jane)
Table 5

Influences of Other Factors on "The Stayers" Decisions to Continue to Play Netball

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average of rankings</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 (most important – 7 least important)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of game</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being with friends</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise/fitness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make new friends</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The influence of parents on adolescents' motivations to participate is well documented in the literature and the survey data suggests that parental approval and encouragement is important and has some influence over decisions to continue netball. Andrea named her mother as an important role model, a former elite player, whose achievements Andrea has ambitions to emulate. In all cases the parents (mothers generally had more input than fathers) has been a positive influence in regard to their children's participation in netball and this was recognised by and important to this group (Table 6).
Table 6

Parental Influence – "The Stayers"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Not important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How important do you think your participation in netball is to your parents?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important to you is your parent’s encouragement to play?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much influence did your parents have over your decision to play?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GROUP 2 – The Transients

As with the stayers, the transients were also active girls who valued physical activity and fitness (See participant profiles Chapter 4). One participant in particular was involved in several sports in year 7 but dropped both netball and another two sports in year 8. For the transients the dominant reason for discontinuing netball was the uncertainty about the level of commitment associated with being at high school, particularly school and homework expectations.

Kirk et al (1996) identified social and time commitments as consequences of sporting participation. Participants interviewed were concerned about keeping a balance between sport and study and the consequences of sport on their social life, particularly in terms of keeping up
with friends outside their sport. The transient group from this study also expressed these concerns. They cited the need for a break from the sport, having a social-life, the influence of new friends and other sporting commitments as concerns during the transition year. For Mandy who continued her other sport (rhythmic gymnastics) it was the bond with friends in this sport that maintained her participation.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you continue playing netball in year 8?</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you start netball again in year 9?</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you continue with another community sport or activity in year 8?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you take up a new sport or activity in year 8?</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you give up a former sport or activity (other than netball) in year 8?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it important to be good at sport?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All participants in this group ranked their abilities as equal to other players in the year 7 team and considered their parents had positive perceptions of their netball abilities (Table 8).
"The Transients" – Perceptions of Competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>One of the best</th>
<th>Same ability</th>
<th>Less skilled than others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which best describes your</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ability in relation to your</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>primary school team?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very good/good</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do your parents rank your</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>netball ability?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a range of perceptions, unlike the stayers, regarding the importance of parental influence and encouragement. Regardless of their perceptions of their parent’s support and encouragement of their participation in netball, this group did not feel that the parents had any direct influence on their decisions to play, or not.

Mandy recognized the big commitment (in terms of transport and the restrictions on their time) her parents made in facilitating her participation, but was still adamant that decisions regarding physical activity were hers alone. When asked who was the most important person influencing her physical activity decisions her answer was, “myself, I know what I want to do, where I want to do it”. (Focus interview 2 – Mandy)
Table 9

"The Transients" – Parental Influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important do you think your participation in netball is to your parents?</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Not important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| How important to you is your parent's encouragement to play? | 1 | 2 |
|---|---|
| A lot | Some | Very little |

| How much influence did your parents have over your decision to play? | 3 |
|---|

Given the choice of three influential people over decisions to drop out of netball in year 8, friends were ranked first. While interview questions raised many other issues as discussed above, the importance of the influence of friends for this age group cannot be ignored.

Table 10

Influences of Other People in "the Transients" Decision to Stop Playing Netball in Year 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>.</th>
<th>Average of rankings 1 (most important) – 3 (least important)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There seems little doubt, at least for the participants in this group, that the transition between primary and high school introduced significant concerns or "unknowns" regarding secondary school. All participants in this group mentioned getting used to high school or wanting to settle into high school as a major factor in their discontinuation of netball. This was the case even though netball was a 'winter' sport. Extra time commitments related to perceived expectations of secondary school, making new friends and having an increased social life were identified as important factors involved in the transition.

"I just wanted to settle into high school and have a break from netball".

(Focus group 2 – Carol)

"I wanted to get used to high school, getting to know new people and wanting to have time to socialise. I had different friends".

(Focus group 2 – Ruth)

"I wanted to focus on my other sport (rhythmic gym) and with homework and gym I didn’t have time. I wanted to have a social life".

(Focus group 2 – Mandy).

Table 11

Other Factors in "the Transients" Decision to stop Playing Netball in Year 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Average of rankings</th>
<th>Rankings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changing schools</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make new friends</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough time</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing priorities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New activities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not good enough</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Friends feature as an influence on the transient's decisions to return to netball in year 9 (Table 12). Mandy and Ruth formed their own social team with a new group of friends in year 9. In interview their reasons given for coming back to the sport were:

"we already knew how to play, we met new friends and it was a sport we could all play together" (Focus group 2 – Mandy) and

"we made up a team, a friends mum coached and other mums scored". (Focus group 2 – Ruth)

Carol joined a community club in year 9 and this decision was influenced mostly by her primary school friends. When asked why she started again in year 9 she replied:

"I wasn't involved in a sport and I needed to get back into organised sport. I had already done netball before and I knew I had enjoyed it before. I missed it when I wasn't playing and the other girls said they really enjoyed it. I really liked it so I started it again and I will probably continue". (Focus group 2 – Carol)

The other girls were her former team-mates from group one (the stayers) and Carol joined the same community club these four girls had joined in year 8. At the club, she was graded in a different team, but this did not detract from her enjoyment as she felt it was good to be with new people and she enjoyed the club atmosphere.
Table 12

Influences of Other People in "the Transients" Decisions to Restart Netball in Year 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average of rankings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>1 (most important)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>3 (least important)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All participants in this group indicated that they enjoyed the game itself. Having fun was the dominant reason for this group returning to the sport, and in both cases they returned to relatively social grades where enjoyment and fun were greater motivations to play than winning. Concern for fitness is, for this group, also a major factor in their motivation to play sport. Carol indicated that part of the reason for getting back into netball was:

"At high school you don’t get as much physical activity and sport as at primary school where you do lots of fitness. At high school you don’t get as much information about sport as at primary school, you have to seek it yourself. At primary school it’s easier to get into a sport". (Focus group 2 – Carol)

The specific reasons Ruth, Mandy and Carol gave for their return to the sport in year 9 were:

"Because it was with my friends and I wanted to get fit". (Focus group 2 – Ruth)

"I liked the sport" (Focus group 2 – Mandy)

"I really enjoy it, not under pressure and in games we do well and have fun". (Focus group 2 – Carol)
The two girls who returned to netball with their own friendship team expressed concern about some problems with this team, which made the experience less fun than anticipated. When questioned about differences from the primary school team experience to the team in year 9, Mandy and Ruth's responses regarding the year 9 team were as follows.

"the coach was our teammate's mum so some people were always worried about favoritism. It made it less enjoyable because people get in fights over silly things" (Focus group 2 - Mandy) and

"It was different because the girls were older and acted more mature and had more guts to stand up to the coach, but it was less enjoyable because everyone got in fights. The coach showed favoritism and the girls were jealous and got upset if they were taken off". (Focus group 2 - Ruth)

They also stated that the girls in their year 9 team had very different skill levels and this caused problems. "Some hadn't played before and some were very good, it was frustrating" (Focus group 2 – Mandy).

Responses indicated they had not enjoyed the experience because of the fights and upsets during the season and in response to the question, "was netball important enough to them that they would try to fix some of the problems?" they replied: "It comes down to how much time I have". (Focus group 2- Mandy) and "When it comes to joining a club that's pretty scary, we would be put in a lower team" (Focus group 2 – Ruth).

It seems unlikely that these girls will join a club in the future. While they have displayed a reasonably positive perception about their competency levels, they understand that the stayers who went straight to a club in year 8
have progressed further in their skill level. This perception has reduced their confidence in seeking to join a community club. It seems more likely that if they were to continue to play they would seek to form another friendship team with a different coaching situation. Asked what would be the ideal way to be involved in netball the responses were: "Well we respected our coach more in year 7 than year 9, we knew more than our year 9 coach" (Focus group 2 – Mandy) and "Have a better group of people" (Focus group 2 – Ruth).

Table 13

Other Factors in “the Transient’s” Decisions to Restart Netball in Year 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Average of rankings 1 (most important) – 7 (least important)</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being with friends</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise/fitness</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of game</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make new friends</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GROUP 3 – Netball Dropouts

As with the stayers and transients, the dropouts, despite giving up netball in year 8, at least two of this group were committed to being physically active (Table 14). Nadia has a heavy involvement in dance, Linda is involved in social volleyball, basketball and surf club and Bree is involved in drama. (see participant profiles Chapter four). All indicate that being fit is important
to them, however being good at sport is not seen as important. For example: "because the most important thing is to have fun and do the best for your team" (Focus group 3 – Nadia) and "because it doesn’t matter how good you are if you enjoy it then that’s all that matters" (Focus group 3 – Linda).

Table 14

Snapshot of “the dropout’s” Physical Activity Patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you continue playing netball in year 8?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you continue with another community sport or activity in year 8?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you take up a new sport or activity in year 8?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you give up a former sport or activity (other than netball) in year 8?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it important to be good at sport?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perceived competence for this group is lower than of the other two groups. While this study does not purport to gain an understanding of how these girls perceive their physical appearance and self-worth my involvement with them for five years as a coach gave me some understanding of the way they perceive themselves, their bodies and their exercise behaviour.

Of all the girls in the study these three would be at a higher risk of lower self-esteem. Interestingly, when members of the other groups were asked why they thought some girls had dropped out of netball one perception was that the lack of self-esteem of a participant in this group could have been a factor in her decision to drop-out. Asked why they thought others in their
primary school team had not continued with netball one of the stayers answered, "doesn't have very good self esteem, she never tried very hard" (Focus group 1 – Sarah)

For Nadia competence in netball was given as a reason for dropout. In the survey she ranked herself as less skilled in netball than her teammates from year 7 (Table 15). Nadia suggested a reason for not continuing was that she was not very talented at netball. In her original interview, the reason given for not playing provides some insight regarding her perception of competence in netball and the effect it had on future decisions.

"I wasn't very good at netball but I still did it. I didn't really want to make a fool out of myself. I could make a fool out of myself playing netball with the school team who I knew since back in year one, but it's a bit different when there's people I don't know and I'd probably get stuck in a team with nobody that I knew and feel a bit uncomfortable about it. So that's why I didn't". (Interview 6)

Asked why she thought others in the team had continued with netball Nadia replied they were obviously talented at it, indicating that for her, perceptions of competence do affect decisions about physical activity. Nadia was a skilled dancer, having studied and participated in dance from an early age. Dance was an activity in which her mother gave a lot of encouragement and support. Given her competence in this activity, it is not surprising her other two main reasons for giving up netball in year 8 were dance commitments and family influences. Given the literature on the effect of perceived competence on motivation to participate in physical activity the decisions made in this case are not difficult to understand.
Bree also ranked herself as lower skilled than her teammates (Table 15). Having coached this player for five years and along with her mother, expended a great deal of energy encouraging, cajoling and pushing her to perform and continue her participation, her decision not to continue in netball after primary school was not unexpected. The reasons for dropping out given in her interview were:

"It was just that it took up a lot of my time. I didn't know the people in at my new school. It's a lot harder to find a good team to play with. It didn't interest me this year, I've got too many things to do at the moment I've met a whole lot of different people and I've been doing a lot of drama and things, lots of homework. It's just been really busy for me" (Interview 7 – Bree).

Linda cited time commitments, starting other activities and wanting a change as her reasons for giving up netball. She joined a completely new friendship group at secondary school and participated in new activities with this group of friends.

Table 15

"The Dropout's" – Perceptions of Competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>One of the best</th>
<th>Same ability</th>
<th>Less skilled than others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which best describes your ability in relation to your primary school team?</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td></td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do your parents rank your netball ability?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 16 indicates that for this group, perceptions of parental interest and encouragement to play netball was less than for the other two groups. It is interesting to note that parents of this group are in fact, perceived to have had some influence over their decisions not to continue with netball. Exactly what this means is unclear. In the case of Nadia her involvement in dance and time commitments may have made netball participation too difficult, so dance was the choice both parent and child agreed upon. In the other two cases it is unclear whether the parents encouraged their children to try other sports and activities or whether they simply supported their child’s decision not to continue in this sport.

Table 16

"The Dropout’s" - Parental Influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Not important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How important do you think your participation in netball is to your parents?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important is your parent’s encouragement to play?</td>
<td>A lot</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Very little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much influence did your parents have over your decision not to play?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of the influences of other people, friends and parents were indicated as being the most important influences.
Table 17

Influences of Other People in “the Dropout’s” Decisions
Not to Continue to Play Netball

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average of rankings 1 (most important) – 3 (least important)</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

New activities, changing priorities, time considerations and new friends are indicated as the main reasons for dropping out of netball (Table 18). Statements made by this group indicate that for all three, the primary school experience in netball was a positive one. For example when asked why they thought others in the team had continued in netball, a sample of the comments were:

"because when we played we always had fun" (Focus interview 3 – Linda)

"because of the fun we had together". (Focus interview 3 – Nadia)

"it was great, just being with your friends. A team game. A great coach. Everything just worked out great and we always had a really good time”. (Interview 7 – Bree)

However positive the experiences in primary school they were not enough to maintain participation once the primary school team structure changed. Motivation and enjoyment of the game seem to be tied in with the security of playing with long time friends and having a supportive coach. Confidence and motivation to seek out a new team and put their abilities on display may have been a telling factor when the friendship team, coach and familiar structure were no longer in place.
Other Factors in “the Dropout’s” Decisions Not to Continue to Play Netball

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Average of rankings 1 (most important)</th>
<th>7 (least important)</th>
<th>Rankings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New activities</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing priorities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough time</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make new friends</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not good enough</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing schools</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

The dominant influence on all three of the groups’ decisions regarding continuation or non continuation in netball related to friends. For the “stayers” it was important that they had the security of joining a community club with their friends. Their enjoyment of the game related to being with and playing with friends.

For the “transients” new and different social groups were formed, social life increased and other ‘unknown’ time constraints relating to move to secondary school were deciding factors in their decisions to stop netball after primary school. Friends were also a deciding factor in their return to the game in year 9. The “dropout” group, indicated that the key factor was a change in peer groups, with a resultant change in activities as they participated in other activities with new friends.
Perceived competence seemed to also affect the decision making process. The "stayers" had very positive perceived competence in the game as did the "transients" while the "drop outs" has a less positive perception of their netball competence. This was mentioned by the "dropouts" as a factor in the selection other activities over netball. These influences on decision making along with other influences and factors raised in chapter 5 will be discussed further in the following chapter.
CHAPTER SIX
DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Discussion and recommendations are addressed by focussing on the study's main research question. This final chapter is divided in two sections. In the first section, I will look reflectively at the findings and highlight the main ideas that have been generated by the individual and focus group interviews. My interpretations of a cross case analysis between the three groups of participants based on patterns of behaviour and explanations of the participants thoughts and actions will help address and explain the research question.

This study is based on the symbolic interactionist theory that human behaviour involves choices and that choices are based on meanings or 'definitions of the situation' that people create as they interact with others, (Coakley, 1998). In the case of the girls' participation in netball, how they have made their choices about continued participation is interwoven with how they have come to define themselves as netball participants. This happens through interactions with significant others (peers, coaches and parents) and within the confines of their past and present experiences in netball and other activities. In particular the study has investigated the meaning and value young adolescent girls ascribe to sporting participation, particularly netball. Understanding and reporting the participant's behaviour in terms of how they define their participation based on their relationships with others, provides the framework for the discussion.

In the second section, recommendations are presented. These recommendations relate the conclusions of the study to some recent literature
and focus on the question:

*What effect does the personal, social and structural changes that occur when participants make the transition from primary to secondary school have on continued participation in netball?*

The major research findings over the last twenty years have consistently reported that sense of self, perceptions of physical competence, motivation and perceived options are the major barriers associated with participation or non-participation in physical activity, (Daley & O'Gara, 1998; Petlichkoff, 1995; Weiss, 1994; Eccles & Harold 1991; Wankel & Kreisal, 1985; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Harter, 1980). The importance of the peer group and friends for adolescents deciding to play sport has been highlighted in this study and supports many other studies on adolescent sporting behaviour (Penny et al., 1999; Taylor et al., 1999; Taggart & Sharp, 1997; Brustad, 1996; MSR, 1996; Ibbotson, 1996; Brettschneider, 1989).

The theoretical framework for the study is based on the assumption that all these factors interplay and change over time impacting on adolescent decisions regarding sporting participation, particularly at times of major transition. The impact of these factors over the transitional time between primary school to year 9 and changing community sporting structures was the focus of the study.

**Social**

**Friends**

The most influential and significant change during the transition between primary and high school is that of friendship groups. Friends have been identified in many studies (Penny et al., 1999; Taggart & Sharp, 1997; Brustad, 1996; MSR, 1996; Ibbotson, 1996) as the primary influence on adolescent
behaviour, thoughts and actions and significant socialisers into sport.

In this study, peer group changes correlated highly with decisions regarding sport participation. For all participants friendship dynamics changed in the transition to high school but particularly so for the three participants who dropped out of netball altogether (Bree, Linda and Nadia). Bree went to a different school and for her a whole new peer group was formed. New friends, new activities and the time commitments of a new school, homework etc were the reasons given for her non-continuance in netball. Nadia and Linda both joined new, separate, friendship groups at high school and none of their new friends played netball. Linda became involved in other sports with new friends and Nadia decided to continue her dance activities in preference to netball.

The three participants in the transient group also joined a new peer group, separate from their primary school netball friends. They cited meeting new people and concerns regarding the unknown commitments of high school as the reasons for netball discontinuance. Mandy maintained her involvement in another sport (rhythmic gymnastics) in which she was competing at a high level. She reported the bond with her friends in this sport as one influence on her decision to continue her participation. The return to netball in year 9 of the transients can also be linked to friends, Mandy and Ruth forming their own social team with new friends and the Carol joining the club of her primary school team friends.

The four participants who continued their netball participation remained friends in year 8 at high school and joined the same community club. Karen, Jane and Sarah were graded into the same team and Andrea was graded in a higher team. Andrea, while initially nervous about not being with
her friends, had elite aspirations, which motivated her participation. This supports Eccles model of achievement and activity choice based on the theory that choices are guided by one's expectations for success, achievement needs, competency needs and motivational orientation (Eccles & Harold, 1991).

In addition to the influence of new and changing peer groups the transition time between primary and high school coincides with an increased awareness and changes in social activity. Several participants, particularly those who had discontinued their netball participation cited having a social life as a reason. This was linked to the contextual issues of the move to high school, the unknown commitment of homework and study and meeting new people.

Kennett (1998) raised the issue of the need for adolescents to keep weekends free of regular commitments because it is time for more spontaneous and flexible forms of social interaction. He suggested the nature of competition is such that it can easily escalate to the point where it is in conflict with this important adolescent issue. Making sure they had time for new commitments and a social life was an important consideration. Stratton (1998), reported that a specifically age related drop out factor was the development of non-sport interests. In this study the transition to secondary school was also linked to the gaining of more freedom for social lives. Mandy made the point that: "I do a lot more with my friends now and I'm allowed to go more places now that I'm older" (Interview 1 - Mandy).

Parents

The influence of parents on motivations to participate has been consistently reported by research findings (Wright et al, 1999; Brustad, 1996;
Kirk et al., 1996; Eccles & Harold, 1991). The survey data suggests that parental approval and encouragement is important and has some influence over decisions to continue netball. Taggart and Sharp (1998) indicated that parents were a strong influence on participation but that this declines with age. Interesting differences between groups regarding their perceptions of parental support and encouragement and in the influence of parents on their decisions were discovered.

Eccles and Harold (1991) proposed that parents provide differential amounts of encouragement and opportunities to children to participate in varied activities in accordance with their personal beliefs about their children's natural dispositions and capabilities. My results indicated that the stayer's parents had a greater influence on their girls continued participation in netball, with participants reporting their parents' support and encouragement was both appreciated and important (see Tables 4 & 6).

Andrea named her mother as an important role model, a former elite player whose achievements she had ambitions to emulate. Similarly, Nadia indicated because of time clashes she discontinued netball in favour of dance. This decision was influenced by both her own and her mother's belief in her superior dance competencies over competency in netball. Mandy, chose rhythmic gym over netball, having attained elite status in this sport as opposed to a social involvement with netball. These examples support Eccles' model of activity choice, in Brustad (1996). This expectancy-value model of motivation theorises that parent expectations about the likelihood that their children will attain success and their views about the value of success in that domain result in socialisation practices that provide greater or lesser support for their child's involvement in free-choice activities.
The stayers and the transients reported a belief that their parents had relatively high perceptions of the girl's netball competence. The dropouts believed their parents' perceptions of their children's competence in netball was lower. Parental encouragement to play was perceived as less important for the two groups who had dropped out of netball and both these groups reported that their parents had little to do with their decisions regarding physical activity.

The Coach

Data from the interviews and surveys would indicate that the primary school coach in this study had very little influence on decisions regarding continued participation. Many earlier studies have reported the influence of coaches in terms of being fair and supportive, is a factor in adolescents continuing participation in sport (Daley & O'Gara, 1998; Kirk et al., 1996; MSR, 1996; Wankel & Kreisal, 1985). In this study the influence of friends, parents, enjoyment of the game, other activities, concerns about the transition to high school all featured before any mention of the coach. My personal perception is that there is an important finding, that while not obvious from the data, must be discussed.

Taggart and Sharp (1998), reported large numbers of dropouts in their study indicated that the sport was 'boring'. Interview data from Taggart and Sharp's study suggested this was systematic of low skill level, lack of opportunity to get equitable share of the game time and uneven competition. Participants in this study identified fun with their friends, excitement and challenge and having a positive belief in their competence as enjoyable factors of their primary school experience. Examples of comments include;

"All my friends were doing it and that made it fun and I liked netball, it was
good". (Interview 5 – Ruth)

“It’s a fun game. It was fun playing it. I liked with when we actually played
the games, you got all excited and everything”. (Interview 4 – Jane)

“winning was good, yes, and playing with friends and stuff”. (Interview 3 –
Sarah)

“You’re with your friends all the time. If you like the sport then you can play
a game and also have a good time playing with your friends”. (Interview 9 – Carol)

“It was great, being with your friends. A team game. A great coach.
Everything just worked out great and we always had a really good time”. (Interview
7 – Bree)

“It’s a team sport and it doesn’t just rely on you. It was good fun”. Keeping
up with your friends, like them being there as well because it was all my friends were in
the team”. (Interview 2 – Karen)

“At primary school I thought I was really good an’! it made me feel good about
myself”. (Interview 4 – Jane)

While the emphasis in these comments relates to fun and playing with
friends, it is what is not mentioned in comments that could be significant. No
negative comments regarding the playing of, or coaching of, the game were
forthcoming, even though they were asked specifically if there was anything
they didn’t like about their netball participation in primary school. The only
negative comments made were in relation to the differences in skill level, which
was at times frustrating for some (made by the girls with the better skills) and
early morning games which is a factor of the way this community sport is
organised.

It is possible that they were inhibited from making negative comments
as I was both coach and interviewer. However, it could also be possible that
they simply had a good playing experience in primary school. My background
as a trained physical education teacher, junior coach and educator with a strong philosophy of inclusion and fair and equitable play meant these girls were given the benefit of well planned training sessions, good skill instruction, maximum participation opportunities and a strong emphasis on fairness and equality in time and positions. Much of the literature alludes to these factors being important to young people in enjoying and maintaining participation in sport (Penny et al., 1999; Taggart & Sharp, 1998; Malaxos & Wedgewood, 1997 and Clough et al., 1993). While they may not have been able to identify these factors as motivations for enjoyment, they were certainly not mentioned as barriers or deterrents to participation. The fact that all the girls remained playing netball over their primary school years with no attrition attests to it being a positive experience. In contrast two of the girls who organised their own social team in year 9 had a different viewpoint of this secondary netball experience.

"the coach was our teammate’s mum so some people were always worried about favoritism. It made it less enjoyable because people get in fights over silly things”. (Focus group 2 – Mandy)

and

"It was different because the girls were older and acted more mature and had more guts to stand up to the coach, but it was less enjoyable because everyone got in fights. The coach showed favoritism and the girls were jealous and got upset if they were taken off”. (Focus group 2 – Ruth)

For those girls who went on to take a more serious pathway to playing netball by joining a large and competitive community, their experiences were also different from the primary school experience. As supported by Penny et al., (1999) comments made by these girls highlighted that at this stage of development, motivations to play were improving skills, competition and challenge.
"I'm in a team that plays harder games and we're all of the same ability. It's better". (Interview 8 – Andrea)

"I find it interesting and I like the tournaments and trying to do things and trying to pass gradings. I just think it's fun". (Interview 3 – Sarah)

"It feels like you are a lot more important when you're playing this year. It's more serious". (Interview 2 – Karen)

"It's a harder competition and you've got to try a bit harder and I like it being more strict because it's hard getting a game done when nobody is serious about it". (Interview 3 – Sarah)

"You have to be good enough to get into a team. It's a good thing in one way because I like being with players of similar ability". (Interview 4 – Jane)

"Grading is harder, I'm in a higher team. It gets harder. We train harder and play harder games and stuff". (Interview 8 – Andrea)

"I think because we've been graded into our ability and stuff and I've got friends in my group too, but the other people I don't now very much and it's harder because you don't really know what their going to do. It's pretty hard but I still like it". (Interview 4 – Jane)

As the comments indicate all four girls enjoy the challenge of being graded into teams of similar ability. More challenging from a physical and training perspective, playing with and against teams and players that are more skilled and having players and coaches who take the game more seriously are positive aspects of this junior competition as compared to their primary school team.

The primary school experience included players with a range of skills and motivations and the coaching style had to reflect this. The positive comments regarding the primary school experience reflect that developing skills
in a fun, supportive way left all the players with positive memories of their primary school netball experience and hence a greater chance of a continuation in or return to the sport.

**Personal**

**Perceptions of Competence**

The data generated by the three groups in the individual and focus groups interviews and surveys highlight the importance of several personal aspects on decisions of continued participation in this sport. Participants’ perceptions of competence in the sport of netball correlated with their continued participation in the sport during the transition year. This supports much of the literature on the influence of self-concept of ability on achievement related behaviours and activity choices (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Weiss, 1994) and was highlighted in the survey data. The stayers had high levels of perceived competence. However, as the girls progressed to year 9 this factor may have become less important. An interesting comment was made in this regard by Jane (group one – stayers) in response to a question about the influence of ability on maintaining participation:

"at primary school I thought we were really good. One of the reasons was, I thought I was good and it made me feel good about myself. But now it doesn’t matter. Going to a club made you realize that you’re not as good as the others" (Focus group 1 – Jane).

This indicates that feeling good about skill level is important to the enjoyment of the game, particularly at sub junior level, but other factors may become more important as they get older. Similarly the transients, had medium to high perceptions of competence. The dropouts had lower perceptions of competence (Table 14). Highlighting how perceptions of competence may have
been important in decisions regarding continued participation were their responses to the interview question, “why did they think the others had continued in the sport after year 7?”:

“They were really good at netball, had good skills” (Focus group 3 – Linda) and

“We had a lot of fun as a group and had good team spirit. There were a lot of talented players”. (Focus group 3 – Nadia)

Penny et al., (1999) identified that improving skills and being good at a sport, over time, became an appeal of participation. For the participants in this study who continued their netball participation this was also the case. They cited improvement in their skills, competition and improved competence as positive aspects of their continued participation.

Knowledge and Experience

Although motivations to continue participation are influenced by perceptions of competence, familiarity, knowledge and initial involvement in the game are other important factors. The transient group who returned to netball in year 9 all stated their return to netball, as opposed to taking up a different sport, was based on their prior knowledge, experience and enjoyment of the game. An example of responses to why they started netball again in year 9

“I wasn’t involved in a sport and I needed to get back into an organised sport. I had done netball before and I knew I enjoyed it before” (Focus group 2 – Carol)

“I liked the sport”” (Focus group 2 – Ruth)

“We already knew how to play, we met new friends and it was a sport we could all play together”. (Focus group 2 – Mandy)
The study indicates that those who had dropped out of the sport were more likely to return to the same sport if they felt competent and knowledgeable enough, had good perceptions of competence and previous experiences were positive. Eccles and Harold (1991) suggest that the affective memories associated with various activities are an important influence on the value they attach to these activities. In this case all the girls reported positive memories of primary school netball experiences. Memories are influenced by many of the same processes that influence self-perceptions and expectations, the prior success or failures and the goals and motivational orientation that were held at the time the person engaged in the activities.

**Enjoyment / Love of the Game**

Enjoyment of the game is identified consistently throughout the study as an important factor both in retention during the transition phase and as a motivation to re-enter the sport. Understanding the concepts of enjoyment and fun were difficult but comments from all groups indicated that the primary school experience was fun and enjoyable, with the overwhelmingly important factor being playing with friends. Excitement of playing, liking the sport itself and the team affiliation were other aspects of the primary school experience that were enjoyable. The “fun” factors changed slightly for group one participants who continued playing into high school. Playing with friends still rated highly, but concepts of fitness, competition and achievement were also mentioned. Curtin Centre for Health Promotion Research (1996) and Taylor et al., (1999) identified “fitness & health”, “fun & enjoyment”, “appearance and body image” and “friendship / socialising /team” as the four most important reasons girls participate in physical activity. In their studies these factors decreased to year ten, with body image, psychological benefits and meeting
people becoming increasingly more important. This study concurs.

If personal aspects of junior sporting experiences such as high perceptions of competence, enjoyable and 'fun' experiences and a good knowledge of the skills and rules of the game are achieved in the initial introduction to the game, the chances of continued participation in the sport are increased. This study has shown that there is a high correlation between perceptions of competence, familiarity with the game and memorable and enjoyable experiences and continued participation or reentry to the sport.

**Structural Changes**

**Primary to Secondary School**

For all participants the move from primary to secondary school had some influence on decisions to continue participation in netball. The six participants who dropped out of netball in year 8 consistently cited the move to secondary school as a major factor. Reasons for non-continuation associated with this transition included meeting new friends, starting new activities, unknown workloads relating to homework/study and time commitments. Many other studies have cited the influence of homework and work commitments, other activities being more fun than sport, increasing importance of social lives and more freedom given by parents as factors influencing decisions on sporting participation (Taggart & Sharp; 1998, Penny et al., 1997; Cough et al., 1993; Kirk et al., 1996 and Taylor et al., 1999).

**Sub Junior to Junior Sporting Structure**

For the four participants who continued with netball the transition to a community-based club was a different, but positive step. In each case the girls indicated they were enjoying the more competitive aspects of playing for
the club along with increased training expectations and harder games due to an equitable grading system.

They had to make a commitment to attend the community club’s grading nights. Having to perform for graders and in front of a very large contingent of peers is for some a difficult prospect. To do this without the support of friends would have been quite daunting. All the girls who went straight to the club system had good perceptions of competence and confidence in their ability to play. To add to their comfort, three were graded into the same team. The fourth was happily graded into a higher team.

Club participation meant harder and more serious attitude to training, less fun and more skills orientated. Winning was important to the community club coaches, who in most cases are coaching to enhance their own coaching experience. This was the case for these four participants. However the girls expressed the view that they enjoyed the challenge of competing against better or similar skilled players, improving their own skills and having a serious attitude to winning.

"I’m in a team that plays harder games and we’re all of the same ability. It's better". (Interview 8 – Andrea)

Enjoying it a bit more because it’s a harder competition and if you get moved up, you’ve got to try a bit harder and I like it being more strict because it’s hard getting a game done when nobody is serious about it, I reckon.". (Interview 3– Sarah)

“Well, grading is harder, I’m in a higher team. It gets harder. We train harder and play harder games and stuff. It’s good. You get to play better games and it teaches you to play better because you’re playing against better teams”. (Interview 8 – Andrea)

“You have to be good enough to get into a team. It’s a good thing in one way
because I like being with players of similar ability”. (Interview 2 – Karen)

“I think because we’ve been graded into our ability and stuff and I’ve got friends in my group too, but the other people I don’t know very much and it’s harder because you don’t really know what their going to do. It’s pretty hard but I still like it”. (Interview 4 – Jane)

On the other hand the players who dropped out of the sport in year 8 saw the grading system as a barrier to participation. For these girls the most important thing was having fun with friends and several made comments about not wanting to join a club because they would be unlikely to be playing with their friends.

“I wasn’t really good at netball but I still did it but I didn’t really want to make a fool out of myself. It’s a bit different when there’s people that I don’t know and I’d probably get stuck in a team with nobody that I knew and feel a bit uncomfortable about it. So that’s why I didn’t.” (Interview 6 – Nadia)

“It’s a lot harder to find a good team to play with”. (Interview 7 – Bree)

“Yes, because you have to kind of join a club and stuff and you have to get accepted in clubs and stuff like that. So I thought I just might have a break and try some different things and just start back up next year”. (Interview 9 – Carol)

“When it comes to joining a club that’s pretty scary, we would be put in a lower team”. (Interview 5 – Ruth)

The comments also indicate less confidence in their abilities compared to the group that continued in year 8.

**Importance of Other Activities**

Taggart and Sharp (1997) and Taylor et al., (1999) identified the year 7/8 transition as a time of high level drop out. The most common reason
given was that sport times clashed with other activities and that it was boring. None of the participants in this study indicated they were bored with the sport, however, group two and three participants were most affected by transition factors. Several commented on the need to take a break from the sport and the influence of other activities and new friends taking up their time:

"I wanted to focus on my other sport (rhythmic gymn) and with homework and gym I didn’t have time. I wanted to have a social life". (Interview 1- Mandy)

"I just wanted to settle into high school and have a break from netball". (Interview 9 - Carol)

"I wanted to get used to high school, getting to know new people and wanting to have time to socialise. I had different friends". (Interview 5 - Ruth)

None of the participants in the stayers group mentioned the influence of these other factors. The impact of the social factors, new friends, time and study concerns and the uncertainty about joining a new netball club structure were greater for the girls that did not continue with netball. It is significant that the transients and the dropouts also had lower perceptions of competence regarding their netball abilities. The girls who continued on with netball stayed within the same friendship group and netball became both their physical activity and an extension of their social lives. A shift in their attitude to the game itself was noted, with achievement, skill acquisition, challenge and competition becoming as important as the social factors.

**Conclusion**

Individual and focus group interview and survey data, indicate that for this group of young adolescent girls a variety of influences and factors impacted on their decisions to continue or not in the sport of netball. While evidence in this study supports the literature findings that competence, friends, team aspects, competition and fun are all strong motivations for continued
participation, it has also highlighted the sensitive nature of these factors to external or structural changes in the girls lives.

In particular, the transition to high school intensified the influence of many of the above mentioned factors. For participants who did not have a high level of perceived competence or the security of friends with which to seek new avenues for playing, continued participation in this particular sport was less likely. Allocating discretionary time to the sport of netball for those who continued in the sport, related to the sport meeting their needs, of which, challenge, skill development, achievement and most importantly social dimensions were paramount. If we want less drop-out in sport by young adolescent girls during these transition periods the challenge to schools, junior coaches, community sport providers and parents will be to develop strategies to minimise the effects of transition factors. Some of these strategies are suggested in the following recommendations.

Recommendations

A series of recommendations have evolved from an analysis of the data and the interpretation of the findings. The relevance of these recommendations is applicable to the sport of netball and to a range of stakeholders from parents, teachers, coaches and school and community sporting personnel.

**Recommendation One:** Provide enjoyable, inclusive and positive sporting opportunities that focus on playing with friends at sub junior or primary school level.

One of the most important factors in the ongoing participation in the sport of netball and the re-entry into the sport for participants in this study, is the positive primary school experience. Fun, enjoyment of the game and playing
with friends kept all the girls in this study playing throughout primary school and featured as a factor in the choice of netball as a sport, for those that re-entered in year 9.

All the girls who continued in netball felt competent in the sport and had very positive perceptions about netball as a game. Sub junior sporting experiences and primary school sport need to promote “fun” in sporting activities, providing opportunities and activities which make children “feel good”. Developing skills and competencies is also important as perceptions of competence are linked to ongoing participation. To facilitate long term participation a combination of fun and competence are paramount.

**Recommendation Two:** Recognise the importance of parent support and their role in influencing the formation of adolescent values and attitudes to participation in sport.

Parents were not mentioned specifically as influential in the majority of participants’ decisions regarding continued participation in netball. However, it is important to note that participants who continued in the sport identified their parents as having strong perceptions of their ability in the sport. They believed their parents thought they were skilled at netball. This had, I suggest, a strong influence on the girls own perceptions of competence which was a motivation for continued participation.

Parental support for all the participants in the study was strong. Throughout their involvement in sub junior netball, all the participant’s parents, (mothers and fathers) were supportive financially, provided transport, gave positive messages and watched and supported games. Positive parental support is often unnoticed and unappreciated, perceived as the norm by many young
people. Perhaps it is only those who don’t have it, that notice it as a factor. In
this study it was a much more important factor than the data suggests.

**Recommendation Three:** Target friendship as a significant socialiser into sport and
recognise its importance in retaining and attracting participants into a sport.

Friendships were a significant factor in all decisions regarding participation. Having the confidence to join a new club related to joining with friends, changing peer groups were influences on non-continuation in the sport, taking up new activities related to new friendship groups and friends were significant socialisers for re-entry into the sport. Friends were the main reason the primary school team retained all players.

Schools and clubs need to recognise the importance of friendships and socialisation to adolescents. Sensitivity to the grading of friends in teams together (where abilities allow) may assist in the retention of players. Graded teams who have players unknown to each other could work on building team friendships, and encouraging social activities to make the sporting experience more meaningful and social.

Bring a friend to training at the end of season to encourage familiarity and socialisation may help recruit new season players. Clubs who establish links with primary school teams and commit to keeping friendship teams together could encourage many more players to maintain involvement.

**Recommendation Four:** Recognise the year 7-8 transition as a time of fluctuating commitment to sporting activity. Dropping out may be only temporary.
This study highlighted the fact that the transition to high school can be for some a time of great uncertainty. Participants indicated uncertainty regarding time commitments, with expectations of increased study and work loads, the impact of new social groups and increasing freedom for more active social lives. However, after the first year of high school and knowing what to expect, some participants were ready to come back to physical activity. It is likely, that if they return, it will be to a sport in which they are familiar. This is the time many adolescents need to be encouraged back into sport. Schools, clubs, coaches and parents need to recognise and facilitate this reentry. Strategies for doing this are discussed in recommendation five.

**Recommendation Five: Target year 9 girls for re-entry into community sport.**

It is more likely that girls will re-enter a sport that they are familiar with and feel competent at. The longer adolescents remain out of sport the less likely they will re-enter. Perceptions of competence will reduce the longer they are out of the sport.

Clubs and schools could try recruitment drives aimed at year 9 girls. Combined with a message of join with a friend and the sport being familiar, this encouragement could result in re-entry to the sport. High schools could facilitate reentry of girls into sport with a strategy of organising friendship groups into teams to compete in local community sport. Teachers, community clubs and coaches need to work together to provide students with information, equipment and organisational assistance, to facilitate the re-introduction of adolescents to community sport.

**Recommendation Six: Community clubs need to develop stronger links with primary school netball physical education and coaching programs.**
Primary schools provide the majority of teams in the WA metropolitan sub-junior community netball competitions. These teams are predominately coached and organised by interested parents or teachers. While there are some larger clubs who support and develop teams in sub-junior competitions the majority of community clubs recruit their junior players on grading nights once girls leave primary school. Gradings are based on ability and the entry into a club is often a daunting experience for many who have to put their skills on display and are often separated from friends.

If clubs were to develop links with primary schools so that existing teams are encouraged to come to the club with some assurance that playing with friends (where possible) will be facilitated, a much greater number of young players may be encouraged to make the transition to junior netball. Once within the club structure social events and training and playing alongside other club teams will facilitate development of friendships within the club. A gradual and less intimidating transition to graded playing may be achieved with a greater retention of players.

**Recommendation Seven:** Community clubs need to develop stronger links with secondary school netball physical education and coaching programs.

Private secondary schools frequently organise netball teams for community club competitions but few government secondary schools do so. Stronger school-community links between the school Physical Education programs and the community clubs would facilitate the reentry of adolescent girls into netball.

For girls who stop playing after primary school it is difficult a year or so later to have the confidence to join a community club without support or
friends. Teachers of netball Physical Education programs could organise interested players or friendship groups and link these with club contacts and coaches. Clubs could provide schools with information on grading nights, competitions and contacts. Schools and clubs could share facilities and resources. If schools and clubs increased communication, sharing of resources and sensitivity to the needs of these girls, more could be encouraged to reenter the sport.

**Recommendations for further research**

The research findings from this thesis opens the door to further comparative investigations of the worlds of young sports participants and year 7-8 transition factors including:

1. A comparative study with a team coached by a person without professional training as a teacher.
3. Further investigation into the timing of dropping out and dropping back in to sport, of young sports participants. Ie the transient nature of young peoples sports participation and underlying motivations.

**Conclusion**

The importance of sustaining adolescent girls' interest and involvement in physical activity and sport, particularly during times of change and transition, has been highlighted by other studies. It is hoped that this study will add to the understanding of the interplay of the many factors impacting girls' decisions on continued activity. No one model of participation can ensure positive and sustained outcomes for all adolescents.

Andrea was a stayer, Mandy was a transient and Bree dropped out. They, along with the others have told me that for sustained netball involvement
it is important to feel competent, enjoy the sport, have friends and team affiliation and a supportive structure, parents and coach. How these factors are developed has been discussed with respect to other relevant studies and most importantly the perceptions of these participants.

As a coach and a committed teacher of the sport of netball with a long involvement in junior sport, I have a passion for the game and a commitment to helping enhance and sustain the involvement of young girls in physical activity, particularly netball. Research, which asks adolescents to reflect on their sporting experiences, can help all stakeholders gain a better understanding of their clients. This will assist in the provision of experiences and programs that help sustain and reinforce the value of sporting participation to adolescents and enhance the possibilities of life long activity.
References


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Dear

I am currently undertaking my masters research which proposes to look at the reasons why (or why not) you and other members of the 1998 North Beach Netball team have decided to (or not to) continue community sporting participation in netball after leaving primary school. The topic of my thesis is 'Girls Playing Netball: Factors influencing participation in community sport during a transitional phase'.

Your involvement in the study would involve two twenty minute interviews with me and a ten minute interview with your parents at a convenient time to you. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time.

Should you decide to participate any comments or disclosures made would be confidential. There will be no identification of you personally on any of the tapes, disks or transcripts and pseudonyms will be used in the writing up of the research. You will also have the opportunity to preview the report and may delete or change any information that you feel is inaccurate.

If you would be happy to participate in the research could you and your parents please sign the form enclosed. Thanks for your time and I look forward to talking to you. I will give you a call in the near future to arrange a time to talk.

Regards

Sue
PARTICIPANT

I __________________________ have read the information regarding Sue Sharp’s research study and I am happy to be a participant.

Signed __________________________ Date

PARENT/GUARDIAN

I __________________________ having read the information regarding Sue Sharp’s research study, give permission for my daughter __________________________ to be a participant.

Signed __________________________ Date ________________

I am happy to have a 10 minute interview with Sue regarding the research.

Signed __________________________ Date ________________

If you have any questions, require clarification or would like to read the full proposal please don’t hesitate to call me on [redacted].

Regards

Sue
Tell me about your sporting involvement last year.
Prompts
What did you do?
What did you enjoy most about each activity? Why? Explain?
What did you enjoy least? Why? Explain?

Tell me about your participation in Netball in primary school
Prompts
Why did you play Netball? What made it fun?
Who/What influenced your feelings most about participation in Netball?
What did you enjoy most? Least?
Did any of these things have a bearing on your decision to play /not netball this year?

What sports/activities are you involved in this year?
Prompts
Why did you continue? Explain?
How do you feel about these activities
Why did you not continue? Explain? Why?

Tell me about your Netball participation this year?
Prompts
What are the main differences between this year and last year?
The good/bad/differences/changes in the way you see the sport?
Does this change your feelings toward the game?
   Your participation?
   Your enjoyment?
   Your decision to continue playing next year?

What were the main influences on your continued participation in Netball
Prompt
Access/Who helped?
How easy to find a club?

What were the main influences on your discontinuing participation in Netball?
What are the most important factors in your enjoyment non-enjoyment of Netball this year?

Tell me about the changes that are occurring in your life now? since moving from primary to secondary school

Prompts your feelings
- Changes in your life / new school / friends / interests.
- Change in social life
- Parental influences how do these impact your sporting involvement?
APPENDIX THREE

GIRLS PLAYING NETBALL

Focus Groups - Prompts

GROUP 1

Prompts

Flesh out the reasons for continued participation in netball.
How so they perceive their ability levels, they may have comments about each other if not about themselves?
Do they have ambitions in the sport?
What is the key reasons for continuation?
Social factors / friends in sport/peer groups / changing peer groups etc
Personal factors / Exercise/ fitness/ time/ other competing factors
Structural changes / Sub junior to junior structure/What are they? Better / worse
Primary /secondary school / big changes? What? Did it effect choices about Physical activity?
Who was the biggest influence/ did parents have much to do with decision, other friends, need to do something with their time, exercise/fitness etc?

Why do they think the others did not continue with netball?
Did they feel they had a different attitude to the game in year 7?
Do ability levels have anything to do with it?
Changing friendship groups, how much influence did this have?

Discuss general activity levels. Were they doing other sports/activities?
Did they continue with these why/why not
Did they take up any new sports in year 8? What? Why? Why not?

Did they give up any former sports from year 8?

Important people in decision-making

Important factors in decision making

GROUP 2

Prompts

Flesh out the reasons for non-continuance in netball.
How so they perceive their ability levels, they may have comments about each other if not about themselves?
What is the key reasons for discontinuation?
Social factors / friends in sport/peer groups / changing peer groups etc
Personal factors / Exercise/ fitness/ time/ other competing factors/
unknowns (high school)
Structural changes / Sub junior to junior structure/ Primary to secondary
school
Who was the biggest influence/ did parents have much to do with decision,
other friends, need to do something else with their time, working etc.?

Why do they think the others did continue with netball?
Did they feel they had a different attitude to the game in year 7?
Do ability levels have anything to do with it?
Changing friendship groups, how much influence did this have?

Discuss general activity levels. Were they doing other sports/activities?
Did they continue with these why/why not
Did they take up any new sports in year 8? What? Why? Why not?

What made them come back to netball in year 9?
What changes occurred to get them back into netball?
What were the main reasons?
How is netball in year 9 different from primary school?
Is the structure different, does it make it more or less enjoyable?

Did they give up any former sports from year 8?

Important people in decision-making

Important factors in decision making

GROUP 3

Prompts

Flesh out the reasons for non-continuance in netball.
How so they perceive their ability levels, they may have comments about
each other if not about themselves.
What is the key reasons for discontinuation?
Social factors / friends in sport/peer groups / changing peer groups etc
Personal factors / Exercise/ fitness/ time/ other competing factors/
unknowns (high school)
Structural changes / Sub junior to junior structure/ Primary /secondary
school
Who was the biggest influence/ did parents have much to do with decision,
other friends, need to do something else with their time, working etc.

Why do they think the others did continue with netball?
Did they feel they had a different attitude to the game in year 7?
Do ability levels have anything to do with it?
Changing friendship groups, how much influence did this have?
Influence of parents and their perceptions of perceived competence
Discuss general activity levels. Were they doing other sports/activities?
Did they continue with these why/why not
Did they take up any new sports in year 8? What? Why? Why not?
Did they give up any former sports from year 8?
Important people in decision-making
Important factors in decision making
APPENDIX FOUR

GIRLS PLAYING NETBALL

Survey Questions / Focus Groups

Name ______________________________

GROUP 1

Please tick the following boxes where applicable

1. Did you continue to play netball in year 8?  Yes No

2. What were the 3 most important reasons for continuing with netball
   1. ______________________________
   2. ______________________________
   3. ______________________________

3. Some of the team did not continue with netball after year 7. What do you think are the
   reasons they dropped out?
   1. ______________________________
   2. ______________________________

4. Did you continue with another community sport or activity, from year 7 to year 8? Yes No

5. If yes, what other sports or activities did you continue and why?

   If no what activity or sport would you like to play and why?
   (leave question blank if there is no other activity in which you are interested)

6. Did you take up a new sport or activity in year 8 Yes No

7. If yes what other sports or activities did you start and why?

8. Did you give up a former sport or activity in year 8
   Yes No
   If yes what other sports or activities did you give up and why?
9. Think about your playing ability (netball) and tick one box that best describes your ability in relation to your primary school team:

- I was one of the better players in my primary school team
- I was about the same ability as most of the players
- I was less skilled than most of the players

10. How do your parents rank your ability in netball:

- Very good
- Good
- Average
- Poor

11. How important do you think your participation in netball is to your parents?

- Very important
- Important
- Not important

12. How important to you is your parents' encouragement to play?

- A lot
- Some
- Very little

13. How much influence did your parents have over your decision to keep playing?

- Very little
- Some
- A lot

14. Thinking about your primary school netball team, answer the following:

- Yes
- No

15. It is important to be good at sport

Why

16. Can you identify/ name any differences in the attitude of the coaches, other players, club etc from playing in your primary school team to community team.
17. Does this make it more or less enjoyable? Why?

18. Can you rank the following people in order of importance in influencing your decision to continue with netball (1 most important, 4 least important):

   Parents □ Friends □ Coach □ Elite players/development people □

19. Can you rank the following factors in order of importance in influencing your decision to continue with netball (1 most important, 6 least important):

   Love of game □ Being with friends □ Competition □
   Make new friends □ Achievement □ Fun □
   Exercise/fitness □ I’m good at it □
GROUP 2

Please tick the following boxes where applicable

<table>
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<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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- Did you continue to play netball in year 8?
- What were the 3 most important reasons for not continuing with netball
  1. ____________
  2. ____________
  3. ____________
- Some of the team did continue with netball after year 7. What do you think are the reasons these girls continued?
  1. __________________________
  2. __________________________
- Did you continue with another community sport or activity, from year 7 to year 8?
  If yes, what other sports or activities did you continue and why?
  If no what activity or sport would you like to play and why?
  (leave question blank if there is no other activity in which you are interested)

- Did you take up a new sport or activity in year 8
- Did you give up a former sport (other than netball) or activity in year 8?
  If yes what other sports or activities did you give up and why?

- Think about your playing ability in netball and tick one box that best describes your ability in relation to your former primary school team;
I was one of the better players in my primary school team

I was about the same ability as most of the players

I was less skilled than most of the players

- How do your parents rank your ability in netball

- How important is your continued participation in netball to your parents

- How important to you is your parents encouragement to play

- How much influence did your parents have on your decision to continue netball or not

Thinking about your primary school netball team Answer the following:

- It is important to be good at sport

Why

- Can you rank the following people in order of importance in influencing your decision not to continue with netball (1 most important, 3 least important)

Parents  Friends  Coach

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Can you rank the following factors in order of importance in influencing your decision not to continue with netball in year 8? (1 most important, 6 least important)

Changing schools ☐  Changing priorities ☐  Competition ☐
Make new friends ☐  New activities ☐  Not good enough ☐
Not enough time ☐

List other reasons if applicable
Name ________________________________

GROUP 3

Please tick the following boxes where applicable

Yes  No

1. Did you continue to play netball in year 8?  

2. What were the 3 most important reasons for not continuing with netball

1. ____________________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________________

3. ____________________________________________________

3. Some of the team did continue with netball after year 7. What do you think are the reasons these girls continued?

1. ____________________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________________

4. Did you continue with another community sport or activity, from year 7 to year 8?

If yes, what other sports or activities did you continue and why?  

If no what activity or sport would you like to play and why?

(leave question blank if there is no other activity in which you are interested)

5. Did you take up a new sport or activity in year 8

If yes what other sports or activities did you start and why?

6. Did you give up a former sport (other than netball) or activity in year 8?

If yes what other sports or activities did you give up and why

7. Think about your playing ability in netball and tick one box that best describes your ability in relation to your former primary school team;

   I was one of the better players in my primary school team  
   I was about the same ability as most of the players
   I was less skilled than most of the players
8. How do your parents rank your ability in netball

9. How important is your participation in netball to your parents

10. How important to you is your parents' encouragement to play

11. How much influence did your parents have on your decision to play or not?

12. Thinking about your primary school netball team Answer the following:

13. It is important to be good at sport

14. Can you rank the following people in order of importance in influencing your decision not to continue with netball in year 7 (1 most important, 3 least important):

15. Can you identify/name any differences in the attitude of the coaches, other players, club from playing in your primary school team to community team.

16. Does this make it more or less enjoyable? Why?
17. Can you rank the following factors in order of importance in influencing your decision not to continue with netball in year 8? (1 most important, 6 least important)

- Changing schools
- Make new friends
- Not enough time
- Changing priorities
- New activities
- Competition
- Not good enough

Last Other reasons if applicable

18. Did you start netball again in Year 9?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes Why?

19. Can you rank the following people in order of importance in influencing your decision to restart netball in year 9 (1 most important, 4 least important)

- Parents
- Friends
- Coach
- Others (Who)

20. Can you rank the following factors in order of importance in influencing your decision to continue with netball in year 9 (1 most important, 6 least important)

- Love of game
- Being with friends
- Competition
- Make new friends
- Achievement
- Fun
- Exercise/fitness
- Other (what)