



Understanding participation in sport: What determines sports participation among 15-19 year old women?

January 2006

**Research conducted by:
Louise Cox, Lester Coleman and Debi Roker
Trust for the Study of Adolescence (TSA)
www.tsa.uk.com**



CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
1.0 INTRODUCTION AND AIMS	
1.1 Background and rationale	13
1.2 Aim and objectives of the research	15
2.0 RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODS AND REPORTING	
2.1 Research design and methods	16
2.2 Sampling and recruitment of young women	18
2.3 Data analysis	20
2.4 Ethical considerations	20
2.5 Presentation of results	21
3.0 RESULTS (1): YOUNG WOMEN WHO ‘ALWAYS’ PARTICIPATE	
3.1 Sample characteristics of those who ‘always’ participate	22
3.2 Spare time	23
3.3 History of sport and physical activity	23
3.4 Current lifestyle	26
3.5 Initial explanations	26
3.6 Determinants (1): environment	28
3.7 Determinants (2): transitions	31
3.8 Determinants (3): psychosocial issues	32
3.9 Main determinants: summary	39
4.0 RESULTS (2): YOUNG WOMEN WHO ‘SOMETIMES’ PARTICIPATE	
4.1 Sample characteristics of those who ‘sometimes’ participate	43
4.2 Spare time	44
4.3 History of sport and physical activity	44
4.4 Current lifestyle	46
4.5 Initial explanations	47
4.6 Determinants (1): environment	49
4.7 Determinants (2): transitions	51
4.8 Determinants (3): psychosocial issues	52
4.9 Main determinants: summary	58

5.0 RESULTS (3): YOUNG WOMEN WHO ‘NEVER’ PARTICIPATE

5.1	Sample characteristics of those who ‘never’ participate	62
5.2	Spare time	63
5.3	History of sport and physical activity	63
5.4	Current lifestyle	67
5.5	Initial explanations	68
5.6	Determinants (1): environment	71
5.7	Determinants (2): transitions	74
5.8	Determinants (3): psychosocial issues	75
5.9	Main determinants: summary	83

6.0 RESULTS (4): YOUNG WOMEN’S VIEWS ABOUT HOW TO ‘DRIVE UP’ PARTICIPATION

6.1	Encouraging and discouraging factors in sports participation	88
6.2	Factors that could increase sports participation	89

7.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1	Summary of main findings	92
7.2	The role of determinants – environment, transitions, and psychosocial issues	97
7.3	Implications for theory and practice	98
7.4	Topics for future research	101

REFERENCES

104

APPENDICES

1	Focus group discussion schedule	105
2	In-depth interview schedule	109
3	Diary / ‘personal record’	119
4	Screening questionnaire	120
5	TSA ethics guidelines	125

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND AND AIMS

The research described in this report was undertaken by the Trust for the Study of Adolescence (TSA), and was commissioned by Sport England. TSA was contracted to undertake qualitative research amongst 15-19 year-old young women, to identify the factors that both encourage and discourage participation in sport and physical activity. This information was required in order to inform Sport England's policy and practice, and followed research conducted over the last year which was commissioned by the organisation. This previous research, conducted by The University of Oxford British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group (2005), resulted in the development of the 'Oxford model', a theoretical framework for understanding sports participation. One recommendation from this work was to conduct in-depth research into young women's experiences of sport and physical activity.

The aims of the study were to explore:

- The influence of *key transitions* in young women's lives upon levels of sports and physical activity, such as leaving school for a college, leaving college to attend university, leaving school for employment, etc.
- The influence of the *environment* upon levels of sports and physical activity – both in terms of the neighbourhood variables in the Oxford model and the notion of 'positive' and 'negative' environments (e.g. in terms of access to sports facilities).
- The influence of *social and psychological factors* upon levels of sports and physical activity (as outlined in the Oxford model), such as attitudes, and perceived benefits and drawbacks of participation.

METHODS AND DATA COLLECTED

The research was undertaken in two parts of England, the SouthEast and the West Midlands. A screening questionnaire was devised to identify 15-19 year-old young women who 'always', 'sometimes', or 'never' participated in sport and physical activity.

Following this, 75 young women were individually interviewed. The interviews explored participants' history of involvement in sports and physical activity, and their current level of involvement. The interviews focussed in particular on environmental, life-stage, and psycho-social factors, and their role in influencing attitudes and behaviours. All the interviews were transcribed, and analysed thematically to draw out the main themes. Each participant was also asked to complete an 'activity diary' over the course of one week.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The results are summarised below. First, the main findings for those who 'always', 'sometimes' and 'never' participate are detailed, followed by the young women's views about how to encourage greater physical activity amongst young people their age.

(i) *Young women who 'always' participate:*

History

- These young women had early positive experiences of sport, and reported regular participation from an early age. They did not report any negative experiences of mixing with the opposite sex in sport.
- This group felt they had participated in more sport as they have got older. This was as a result of 'growing up' and taking responsibility for their health, encouragement from family and teachers, and being in social groups that participate in sport.

Initial explanations

- Three main factors were identified initially as their main motivations for regular sports participation – health benefits, encouragement from school and family, and social advantages. Sport was seen as a way of having fun, and relieving stress.
- This group described sport as fun and exciting, a good social opportunity, and a way of participating in competition and performances.

Environment

- These young women were generally positive about the area in which they lived, reporting good public transport, and a wide range of facilities and opportunities for them to get involved in sport. However, many of this group did not view environment as particularly crucial, with many being involved in sports outside of their local area.

Transitions

- These young women described transitions within education, or from education to employment, as having a negative impact upon participation in sport. However, many added that 'growing up' had a positive impact and meant that people needed self-motivation to get involved in sport. Many acknowledged the hassles that could be involved in sports participation, but felt that they made a lot of effort to get involved.

Psychosocial issues

- These young women generally viewed the psychosocial issues as more important than the influences of the environment or transitions.
- These young women said they were aware of the opportunities

available to them to get involved, and there were reports of positive advertising such as posters and leaflets about local facilities.

- This group held a positive image of sport, and described many sporting role models. The vast majority of these women also had a positive perception of themselves in sport, and linked this perception to their level of sport participation.
- This group were aware of the link between exercise and their weight and appearance, but few cited this as a motivation for doing sport. These women rarely felt self-conscious when participating in sport.
- This group were part of social groups who also regularly participated in sport. This was considered to influence their ongoing high level of sports involvement.
- The majority of this group lived in 'active' households, where family members were sporting role models, and sport was often undertaken together. Family members encouraged each other to participate.

(ii) Young women who 'sometimes' participate:

History

- This group reported early positive experiences of sport, although some gave negative reports of mixing with the opposite sex and feeling self-conscious. This group had mixed views about whether these early experiences impacted on how they currently felt about sport.
- These young women described a reduction in their levels of sports participation, as a result of lack of facilities and opportunities, and recent changes in their lifestyle. Factors that hindered their participation included lack of time, energy, and opportunity.

Initial explanations

- This group considered there were a range of influences on their sports participation. Positive influences were the need to feel healthy and compensate for poor eating habits, and having something worthwhile to do in their spare time. Negative impacts were a lack of spare time and energy, not knowing what to do or who to do it with, and lack of opportunity.
- This group liked many elements of sport participation, including feeling good about themselves, socialising and having fun, health benefits, the development of new skills, and meeting new people.

Environment

- There were mixed views from this group regarding their environment. They were generally positive about public transport locally, but also reported limited facilities and opportunities to get involved in sport. Some added that they felt intimidated when trying to use local facilities.

Transitions

- This group felt that transitions, within education or from education to

employment, had a negative impact upon their level of sport participation. Other life circumstances had a detrimental impact upon sport, including moving house and personal / relationship problems.

Psychosocial issues

- These young women generally viewed the psychosocial issues as more important than the influences of the environment or transitions.
- This group had limited awareness of the opportunities for them to get involved in sport, and several believed that advertising and information was largely limited to leisure centres and gyms.
- This group felt that personal choice is very important in explaining their current level of sport participation. They felt that they did not make enough personal effort to get involved in sport, and described the 'hassles' associated with sports - filling in forms, having to prove your age, and having enough money to pay fees.
- This group held a positive image of sport, but very few had sporting role models. These young women also had generally positive perceptions of themselves in sport; self-perceptions were not seen to have a particularly negative impact on their level of participation.
- The issue of appearance and weight was important to this group, with several suggesting that they participate in sport in order to lose weight or gain a desirable figure.
- Being influenced by others was an important issue for this group of young women. These women reported a mixture of both active and inactive friends, and perceived the role of friends to be an important one in influencing their decision to participate in sport.
- The majority of young women who 'sometimes' participate in sport lived with at least some active family members, and there were reports of whole family involvement in sport. Although the role of the family was recognised as important in determining their participation, it was not deemed as influential as their peers.

(iii) Young women who 'never' participate:

History

- This group generally had positive early memories of sport and physical activity. The move to secondary school was associated with sport becoming less fun and more competitive. There were very few reports of any negative experiences of mixing with the opposite sex.
- All young women in this group reported doing less sport as they got older. The main explanations were because sport was no longer compulsory, they had less time because of their education/employment commitments, they felt self-conscious, and they were part of social groups who did not participate in sport.

Initial explanations

- The main things this group disliked about sport and physical activity were feeling intimidated and self-conscious, and the competition

associated with doing sport.

- This group recognised a wide variety of advantages of sport, including health benefits and the development of personal and social skills.
- However, a genuine viewpoint that several of these 'never' group mentioned was that they just disliked sport in general. It appeared that nothing could alter this deep-rooted belief.

Environment

- This group were generally positive about the area in which they lived. The vast majority felt safe to go out and were positive about public transport.
- This group were less positive of the facilities and opportunities to get involved in sport, and said that facilities can be unwelcoming. However, the young women believed that even where sporting facilities were available, they were more influenced by other factors such as lack of time or having friends who do not participate in sport.

Transitions

- This group felt that transitions in their lives, within education or from education to employment, had a negative impact upon their level of sport. This was due to having less time, less energy, and social groups changing. Some also described feeling more self-conscious.

Psychosocial issues

- These young women generally viewed the psychosocial issues as more important than the influences of the environment or transitions.
- This group were generally unaware of the opportunities available for them to get involved in sport. This was due to a lack of self-motivation to seek this information, as well as lack of advertising that was targeted at young women.
- This group recognised that they made little personal effort to get involved in sport. They often found sport too much hassle, due to prioritising other commitments and lengthy joining procedures.
- This group had a positive image of sport and were aware of the benefits. However several young women highlighted the divide between the image of sport and the image of other hobbies, such as listening to alternative music. Very few of the young women in this group highlighted sporting role models.
- The vast majority of these young women had a negative perception of their sporting ability, and said this made them less likely to get involved.
- Many in this group were anxious about their appearance, and said this was a major reason for them not participating in sport.
- The majority of this group said that their social life hindered involvement in physical activity. Their friends and social groups were inactive, and this made them less likely to get involved. Many added that if their friends participated in sport, this might have a positive impact upon their own level of sport participation.
- These women often lived in an inactive household, and few described family members as sporting role models. Family influences on sports

participation were seen as less important than friends.

Driving-up participation

The young women identified the following factors as likely to increase participation in sport and physical activity:

- Freeing up more of their spare time to do sport
- Getting support from friends and family
- Having sports clubs and classes for beginners or existing friendship groups, to reduce feelings of embarrassment and intimidation
- The provision of a wider choice of facilities, and better advertising of the existing facilities
- Making sport more fun, with less emphasis upon competition
- Making facilities cheaper
- Making facilities easier to access
- Motivating families to participate in sport
- Changing the image of sport
- Providing women only facilities
- Improving information and knowledge about physical activity and health.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key determinants in young women's participation – environment, transitions, and psychosocial issues

This research investigated the role of three main determinants upon participation in sport – the environment, lifestyle transitions, and psychosocial issues. Overall it was found that:

- Young women did not consider *environmental* issues, including the provision of facilities, as very important when explaining their current level of sports participation.
- *Transitions*, including lifestyle changes for example from school to college or from education to employment, had a negative impact upon sport participation, due to a decrease in levels of spare time, money, and energy. This finding was consistent regardless of current level of participation.
- *Psychosocial issues* were very important when explaining levels of sport participation. In particular, family and friends were considered to be the most important factors influencing participation in sport, regardless of participation level. Furthermore, complex psychosocial issues such as self-confidence, and perception of personal ability, were also found to play a significant role in the decision to participate in sport.

A number of recommendations for future practice and research are made as a result of the research.

First, practice implications include:

- a programme could be trialled that encourages sports *participation at a family level* – this might be particularly effective for the ‘never’ and ‘sometimes’ groups
- a programme could be trialled to get *families to be more supportive* towards their children’s sports participation (even if they are infrequently participating in sports or physical activity themselves)
- a programme could be initiated to encourage sports *participation among friendship groups*. Again, increasing accessibility (cost and provision) and focusing on ‘fun’ rather than competition would be important
- the provision of free *and reduced rate ‘taster’ sessions* could be trialled more extensively, to improve young women’s accessibility to sporting facilities and opportunities
- promoting sports *facilities to be more appealing* and less complicated for young women. To improve clarity over costs, ‘membership’ issues, ‘on-the-spot’ access, etc.
- further *advertising and promotional campaigns* could be undertaken, to change and improve the image of sport – this could focus on the fact that all young women can get involved and enjoy it, and that it is not just for ‘sporty’ types
- run more sessions that *focus on ‘fun’ sports and activities*, that do not have a competitive element – the research suggests that this could attract the ‘nevers’ in particular
- the results suggest that it might be valuable to provide a greater number of *women only sessions or facilities* – this would particularly help those women who feel uncomfortable doing sport in mixed sex groups
- provide *support to young women during key transitions* in their lives where levels of sports participation may be affected e.g. during the transition from primary to secondary school, or leaving school for employment.

Second, research implications include:

- How does social group membership affect young women's participation in sport? The research has demonstrated some aspects of this relationship, but further research is needed to explore it in detail.
- How do families play such a key role in determining participation levels? Do families have to participate themselves to be supportive? Or is encouragement / interest more important? How important are aspects of financial and transport support from families?
- What are young people's levels of knowledge and understanding about the health benefits of regular sports and physical activity participation? In this study many of the young women talked about fruit and vegetable consumption in relation to this question, rather than hours of physical activity per week – this is therefore an important topic for future research.
- Further investigation is clearly needed into the highly influential, although complex psychosocial issues. For example, are negative self-perceptions that young women hold of themselves in sport accurate? What are these based upon? Who are they in comparison to? Also, what about perceptions of appearance and self-consciousness in young women? What are the main concerns – their ability? Weight? Sweating and appearance as a result of sport? Clothing requirements? Showers? These are important topics for the future.
- Conducting research among young women not sufficiently represented in this research. Such as young women from Black and Minority Ethnic groups, young disabled women, and those from more deprived socio-economic areas.
- Further work into the nature of the facilities that put some young women off from taking part. What could be done to make sports facilities more young-women friendly?
- Look for success stories. An interesting and rewarding piece of research could focus on exploring the beliefs and attitudes of young women who have recently moved from 'never' to 'always' participating in sports and physical activities. Why did they change their level of participation? What made the difference? What worked for them? What can we learn from these women?
- Conducting a longitudinal study following young women at key time points in their lives. For example, during their last year at school and again at first year at college to explore, in detail, the influence of this key transition. This will enable a greater insight

into how this may be detrimental to participation levels (rather than through retrospective accounts), with a view to designing interventions to maintain participation levels.

In addition, further analysis of this rich data set is required, as follows:

- To further explore and analyse themes across all groups – for example the limited role of environmental factors, the key role of the family, etc.
- To prepare some case studies of young women who live in the same area/environment, but who have who have different levels of participation – what factors account for this?
- To look for exceptions – for example young women who are interested in alternative music, but who are involved in sports. Some young women in the study considered these two interests to be incompatible.
- Further analysis of young women at distinct lifestyle stages. For example, further analysis of all those young women at school, compared to all those at college or university or all those in employment, would allow for more specific investigation into the impact of specific lifestyle transitions.
- Further analysis of the diaries returned and completed by the young women, enabling access to information recording decisions about participation in sport as it happens.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

This chapter details the following:

- background and rationale to the study
- aims and objectives of the research.

1.1 Background and rationale

The benefits of regularly participating in sports¹ and physical activity are unequivocal. The health benefits are both physical (e.g. weight management, cardio-vascular endurance, improvements to co-ordination and flexibility) and psychological (e.g. enjoyment, socially interactive, anti-depressive, a sense of 'unwinding', and promoting self-esteem). The skills generated through sport can also be readily applied to more everyday activities, such as dedication, application, and team-building. For these reasons, it is understandable that there are increasing concerns to drive up young people's participation in sport and physical activity. Sport England's *Driving up Participation in Sport and Physical Activity Research Programme* aims to respond to such concerns.

The concern about levels of physical activity, or inactivity, among young people is noted in a recent review of adolescence (Coleman and Schofield, 2005). The authors review a number of large-scale surveys from which two key findings are reported. Firstly, among young people of secondary school age, boys are more likely to participate in sports and physical activity compared to girls. Secondly, the gap between the genders becomes more pronounced with advanced age within the teenage years. It is noted that the proportion of girls aged 14-15 that do *not* participate in any active sports, on a weekly basis, has remained stable at around 15% to 20% from 1992 to 2003 (Balding, 2004). These findings are supported by additional reviews of sports and physical activity participation (University of Oxford British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group 2005, and Biddle et al 2005).

There is thus a concern to increase, in particular, *girls' and young women's* participation in sport and physical activity. In view of this, it is clear that qualitative research that is robust and of a high standard has a crucial part to play. A qualitative approach, relative to a quantitative survey, will provide a greater understanding of the meaning of sports and physical activity in young women's lives. In order to drive up participation in sports and physical activity, we must be aware of the factors that influence *if, why, and when* young women both commence and maintain their participation. Equally, we must be aware of the factors that discourage or prevent their participation in sport. Only when a full exploration and understanding of this is complete can

¹ Sport is defined as all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competitions at all levels (Council of Europe, 2001).

recommendations for effective interventions be put in place. This understanding is essential in enabling the culture shift proposed by the Government to be achieved (Strategy Unit, 2002).

It is clear that relatively limited in-depth, qualitative research has been conducted in this area. The Oxford systematic review (University of Oxford British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group, 2005), showed that only five UK-based studies have been undertaken using a qualitative approach to explore girls' and young women's reasons for participation and non-participation in sport. These studies were typically small-scaled (e.g. six in-depth interviews by Cockburn and Clarke, 2002), and lacked a defined theoretical framework. A qualitative study inclusive of young women who do, and do not take part in sport, from distinct geographical regions within England, has yet to be undertaken. Indeed, the Oxford systematic review concludes, as a recommendation, that more qualitative research among adolescents and young people is required.

The notable exception, which had implications for the author's research, was an extensive study reported by Biddle and colleagues (2005) in Scotland. This study involved a questionnaire survey of 688 young people (including 366 girls), a questionnaire survey of 577 girls, focus groups exclusively among girls (182 participants) and diaries completed by 629 girls over the course of three weekdays and one weekend day. This study drew out a number of key findings as follows:

- Girls see sport as being too competitive
- Girls see sport as a boys' thing and therefore inappropriate for them
- Girls do not think that keeping fit and healthy or being good at sport is important
- Girls find there is a lack of suitable venues in which to take part in sport and physical activity
- Current provision does not meet girls' needs
- Girls often say lack of time is a barrier to being more active
- Girls report a decline in sport and physical activity levels across the teenage years
- Girls do not see themselves as competent
- Girls report lack of encouragement and role models from parents
- Girls from minority groups have lower levels of activity.

The critical point to note from the Biddle et al work (2005), relative to this study, is the contrasting geography and age group. Biddle et al (2005) studied girls aged 10-15 in Scotland; the authors' research is based upon young women aged 15-19, from two regions in England. As such, this older age range encapsulates some of the key life transitions which may impact upon levels of participation, such as leaving school, starting employment, and forming new relationships (a further recommendation from the Oxford review). An additional key implication of the Biddle et al (2005) research is that, together with the Oxford 'Evidence informed model of the potential determinants of sport/physical activity' (University of Oxford British Heart

Foundation Health Promotion Research Group, 2005), it has provided a sound theoretical foundation for this study. (Note that the Oxford model is reproduced in Chapter 7 of the report).

Finally, this greater understanding of the determinants of sports and physical activity is set within a policy context of ever increasing concerns over young people's levels of physical activity. The Green Paper *Every Child Matters* (Department for Education and Skills, 2003) outlines the importance of supporting children to 'Be Healthy', within which enjoying good physical health is essential. Increased sports facilities, and a commitment to raising the proportions of young people participating in sport and PE are outlined. More recently, the latest Green Paper, *Youth Matters* (Department for Education and Skills, 2005) sets out a number of national standards for local authorities. One of these standards refers to providing all young people with access to two hours per week of sporting activity in their 'free time'. It is this ambition which formed the context for the research described in this report.

1.2 Aim and objectives of the research

The main aim of the research was to improve understanding of the determinants of sports and physical activity participation, among young women aged 15-19. The aim was to provide in-depth, qualitative information about this topic.

In meeting this aim, the three key objectives of the research were to explore the following:

- The influence of *key transitions* in young women's lives upon levels of sports and physical activity, such as leaving school for college, leaving college to attend university, leaving school for employment, etc.
- The influence of the *environment* upon levels of sports and physical activity – both in terms of the neighbourhood variables in the Oxford model and the notion of 'positive' and 'negative' environments (e.g. in terms of access to sports facilities).
- The influence of *social and psychological factors* upon levels of sports and physical activity (as outlined in the Oxford model), such as attitudes and perceived pros and cons of participation.

It is also important to note that through this qualitative approach, we were able to explore important influences upon levels of participation which were not possible to anticipate in advance (and thus were not reflected in the three objectives). This inductive, exploratory approach allowed us to explore areas that were not included in the Oxford model, and thus had implications upon the revision of this model (see Chapter 7, Conclusions and Recommendations).

2.0 RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODS AND REPORTING

This chapter details the following:

- research design and methods
- sampling and recruitment of young women
- sample characteristics
- data analysis
- ethical considerations.

2.1 Research design and methods

This research consisted of a cross-sectional, qualitative study of young women aged 15-19. A mixture of complementary qualitative research methods were used in three phases, as follows:

Phase 1 – Two focus group discussions

Two discussion groups were undertaken to gain an introduction into the topic area, and ensure that important elements of sports and physical activity participation were not overlooked in the interviews (that formed the main phase of the research). Accordingly, they ensured that the interview schedule clearly reflected the aim and objectives of the research. The focus groups also enabled the research methods to adopt appropriate terms which were understood by young people. All participants in the focus groups also commented on a draft screening questionnaire (used to select interviewees – see later) and the draft interview schedule. A copy of the focus group schedule is presented in Appendix 1.

The profile of the participants in the two focus groups is as follows:

Location	Number per group	Gender	Age	Level of participation	Life-stage
South East	3	Female	All 15	2 'always' and 1 'never'	School
South East	3	Female	All 19	All 'never'	Full-time employed

The categorisation of levels of participation was an integral part of the study and required careful definition. Young women were classified as participating in three different ways, as follows:

- The *always* participates – young women who participate in high levels of participation in sports and physical activities in every aspect of their lives.
- The *never* participates – young women who never participate in sports and physical activities.
- The *sometimes* participates – young women who sometimes participate in sport and physical activity, but not on a regular or frequent basis.

Phase 2 – individual interviews

The 75 interviews with young women aged 15-19 generated the vast majority of the qualitative data. The interview schedule reflected the aim and objectives of the research, and consisted of four main sections as follows:

- Background information – confirmation of life-stage / transition, socio-demographic information, spare-time activities, and perceptions of environment.
- History of sports and physical activity participation – from child to present day.
- Determinants of participation – social and psychological issues, social and community networks, family influences, peer influences, influences of key transitions, environment, images and perceptions, and *most* significant influences.
- Exploring ways to drive up participation among young women.

A copy of the interview schedule is attached as Appendix 2.

Phase 3 – diaries

All interviewees were asked if they would like to complete a daily diary / or 'personal record' over the course of one week. In total, 46 or 61.3% were completed. This represents 25 (or 71.5%) from the South East, and 21 (or 52.5%) from the West Midlands.

These diaries intended to complement the in-depth interviews by recording data 'as it happened'. Each day of the diary consisted of five main questions:

- What did they do in their spare-time today?
- Which activity did they spent most of their time doing?
- How long did they spent doing any sport or physical activity (if applicable)?
- What was the most enjoyable aspect of their physical activity (if applicable)?

- Whether they planned to do any sport or physical activity today but never got round to it (and why?).

A copy of a diary is presented in Appendix 3.

Note that the data from the diaries is not presented in this report. Further analysis and consideration of these diaries will be reported separately.

2.2 Sampling and recruitment

The young women participating in the two introductory focus groups in the South East of England were recruited through personal contacts of the researcher. A highly varied sample of 75 young women were interviewed, based on the following main criteria:

- Geographical region – 35 in the South East and 40 in the West Midlands.
- Age – within the 15-19 age range
- Ethnicity
- Socio-economic status
- Current level of participation in sports and physical activity (ranging from 'always' to 'never' participates)
- Life-stage – in terms of being at school, college (connected and not connected to school), employed, and first year university
- Experiencing 'positive' and 'negative' environments ('positive' environment defined as having good transport and communications characteristic of urban settings, existence of a diverse range of sports and recreational facilities, and ease of access to these sport and recreational facilities in terms of transport and affordability).

The sample characteristics of the participants interviewed are displayed below:

Location	N	(%)
South East	35	(47%)
West Midlands	40	(53%)

Age (years)	South East	West Midlands	N	(%)
15	9	15	24	(32%)
16	3	7	10	(13%)
17	10	8	18	(24%)
18	7	5	12	(16%)
19	6	5	11	(15%)
<i>Total</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>(100%)</i>

Ethnicity	South East	West Midlands	N	(%)
Asian	1	8	9	(12%)

Black	0	1	1	(1%)
White	34	31	65	(87%)
<i>Total</i>	35	40	75	(100%)

Life-stage	South East	West Midlands	N	(%)
Year 10 school	9	13	22	(29%)
Year 11 school	1	8	9	(12%)
College	17	13	30	(40%)
First Year University	0	4	4	(5.5%)
Full-time employment	8	2	10	(13.5)
<i>Total</i>	35	40	75	(100%)

Level of sport participation	South East	West Midlands	N	(%)
Always	16	10	26	(35%)
Sometimes	5	16	21	(28%)
Never	14	14	28	(37%)
<i>Total</i>	35	40	75	(100%)

To ensure the diversity of the sample, young women were asked to complete a short screening questionnaire. This questionnaire served three key purposes:

1. It recorded information about the young women (in terms of age, current life-stage) to enable us to select those with the specified characteristics.
2. It invited people to volunteer for the in-depth interview. Thus, from all those that volunteered we were able to select those possessing the criteria that we required to ensure a varied sample.
3. For all those that did volunteer, the screening questionnaire was able to record their preferred contact details and location for interview.

These screening questionnaires were distributed in a range of sites including schools, colleges, universities, youth clubs, leisure centres, and employment sites. For those meeting the eligibility criteria, interviews were held either immediately after questionnaire completion or a few days later. Interviews were mainly held in the site where the questionnaires were completed.

Following the completion of the questionnaire, participants were coded (according to key criteria) as someone who 'always', 'sometimes' and 'never' participates in sport and physical activity.

A copy of the screening questionnaire is presented in Appendix 4.

2.3 Data analysis

All young women who took part in a focus group or interview agreed to the tape-recording of their discussion. All data were transcribed verbatim, and then entered and coded into QSR N6 (qualitative data analysis software).

All interview data was then thematically analysed. This involved the generation of common themes and explanations derived from the transcripts. The analysis consisted of three elements as follows:

1. The analysis generated recurring themes identifying the determinants of participation in sport and physical activities. Recurring 'push' and 'pull' factors were identified.
2. The analysis was conducted separately according to current levels of sports participation. Central to this was the presentation of the key determinants of sports and physical activity participation for each group (hence the structure of this final report).
3. The analysis also acknowledged the importance of refining the Oxford 'Evidence informed model of the potential determinants of sport/physical activity' (University of Oxford British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group, 2005), and identified areas in need of further research.

2.4 Ethical considerations

The research was undertaken in accordance to TSA's ethics guidelines. These guidelines address issues such as gaining access to participants, informed consent, care of participants, confidentiality, disclosure and feedback. These ethics guidelines are attached in Appendix 5.

All individuals who agreed to be interviewed, and who participated in focus groups, were required to provide signed consent. Immediately prior to seeking this, individuals were informed about the purpose of the research, and how their valued and confidential views will help this to be achieved. Parent / carer consent was obtained where required by the setting involved, e.g. a school or youth club. All participants were informed of the confidential nature of the research, unless they disclosed information about significant harm to themselves or others. Feedback, in the form of an accessible 'research findings' summary was offered at a later date, as was information about local sports and leisure facilities. All participants, whether for a focus group, interview, or diary received a £10 gift voucher as a 'thank-you'. Both interviewers had approved CRB Enhanced Disclosure checks.

2.5 Presentation of the results

A large amount of data was collected in this study. There are therefore four results chapters included in the report. The first three chapters are structured around the different levels of sports participation – ie ‘always’, ‘sometimes’ and ‘never’. Quotes from participants are used to illustrate each of the themes explored.

The most important part of these chapters concerns the presentation of the determinants of sports and physical activity participation. This starts with ‘initial explanations’ (unprompted question asking what young women see as the most influential determinants of their sports and physical activity participation), followed by the review of the three determinants outlined in the research objectives (transitions, environment and psychosocial issues). There is also a summary of each section at the end of the chapter.

The fourth results chapter gives the young women’s views about how to encourage greater sports participation amongst young people. The age and current lifestage (e.g. education, employment) of each young woman is given for quotations.

3.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS (1): YOUNG WOMEN WHO 'ALWAYS' PARTICIPATE IN SPORT

This section outlines the main reasons and motivations given by those young women who regularly and frequently participate in sport and physical activity (the 'always' group). The topics covered are:

- Sample characteristics
- Spare time
- History of sport and physical activity
- Current lifestyle – supports or hinders participation?
- Initial explanations – what do you think?
- Determinants 1 – environment
- Determinants 2 – transitions
- Determinants 3 – psychosocial issues
- Main determinants – summary.

3.1 Sample characteristics of those who 'always' participate

The 26 young women who 'always' participated were characterised as follows:

Age (years)	N	(%)
15	12	(46%)
16	3	(12%)
17	3	(12%)
18	4	(15%)
19	4	(15%)
<i>Total</i>	26	(100%)

Ethnicity	N	(%)
Asian	2	(8%)
Black	0	(0%)
White	24	(92%)
<i>Total</i>	26	(100%)

Life-stage	N	(%)
Year 10 school	12	(46%)
Year 11 school	2	(7.5%)
College	9	(35%)
First Year University	1	(4%)
Full-time employment	2	(7.5%)
<i>Total</i>	26	(100%)

3.2 Spare time

Young women who 'always' participate in sport and physical activity reported a wide variety of activities they were involved in during their spare time. The majority of these activities were related to sport and physical activity, most commonly dancing and horse riding, and also including tennis, team sports such as football, netball, basketball and hockey, and swimming. There were also reports of singing, playing musical instruments, jewellery making and voluntary work. As this young woman explained:

"I'm kind of, completely obsessed with dancing! (laughs) And (um) so, practically every day I do - like, Mondays I do ballet, Tuesday is tap and also on Mondays I do a dance - (um) I belong to the dance company at [school] - and that's like, every - after school and lunch-times on a Monday - and (um) I also do like, other stuff all during the week and - and sometimes swimming - but that's just kind of, for fun - at the weekends."

(15, Yr 10 School)

Most of these young women had very little spare time that was not committed to some type of sport or activity.

3.3 History of sport and physical activity participation

The young women who 'always' participate in sport and physical activity had positive early experiences of getting involved in sport, and reported regular participation in sport from an early age. For example:

"I used to do loads and I was really quite good at it as well. At - I started playing football when I was about 12, for the team - and I got really into that. And - and I used - I dunno - I used to do a lot of athletics and things, and stoolball. But (um) I stopped a little bit when I was about in Year 10, 'cos I - I had a knee injury, so that slowed me down, but I really enjoyed sport at school"

(19, College)

“Oh, yeah - I - I've always enjoyed PE - you know - like, I participated in it and never like, you know, like I didn't want to do it - it was always one of the lessons that I've always enjoyed and I looked forward to.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

This group of young women were also unanimous in their reports of not being bothered about mixing with boys to do sport, and their general level of enjoyment of sport was noticeable within several reports of positive experiences of mixing with the opposite sex. For example:

“No, I enjoyed it because I found that it - the boys were more competitive, so we were - it was harder sometimes.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

“ No, not really - 'cos they're not as - I mean, I - I generally get on with boys more than I get on with girls, so I always found that they were very accepting of the fact that, even though you were a girl, you could quite easily be just as good as them. Often when we were playing things - when we were doing things that I was good at, they - it - they stopped seeing you as a girl, and it became just another opponent or somebody working with you, and it was never an issue at all that you - you would be playing with boys. It would - because we were never - it never started - even in primary school - it - it never started to be an issue, it never became one - we were just comfortable, just to do it.”

(16, College)

These issues are explored in more detail below.

3.3.1 How early experiences impact upon sport

Young women who 'always' participate in sport and physical activity felt that their early experiences of getting involved in sport had a long-term impact upon their current level of sport participation, and were important when explaining their regular participation in sport. Reasons cited for this were related to the fact that sport has become a routine, and it is seen as a natural thing for them to participate in and enjoy. For example:

“I think they're quite important 'cos it kind of, made you wanna - 'cos when you're little, it's more fun than actually thinking that you're getting like, fit and all this sort of stuff. And then when to get like, to a higher - you actually do it because you want to do it, instead of being made to and because you've had the experience and it's kind of, built up your stamina, instead of just sitting down and doing nothing. It makes you wanna do it.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

“Very important. I think it's one of those things that you get into

the habit of allocating - of allocating that time, and if - you know - if you don't start quite early, or you're not given the opportunity to start quite early, it often doesn't come as naturally when you need it. It becomes more of a struggle, so I think it's important that in primary schools and things, you can do PE and you have those facilities to do it, 'cos it gets you into a nice - a good mindset to - to continue."

(17, College)

3.3.2 Change in level of sport participation

This group of young women generally felt that they had taken up more sport and physical activity, as they have got older. The few people who did report a drop in the amount of sport, highlighted that this was due to their current lifestyle hindering sport participation in some way, such as studying for exams. The main explanations for an increase in sport were related to three main issues, as follows:

- 'Growing up' and taking responsibility of your own health

"Probably when - when you're told - when we knew a bit more about our own health and like, eating patterns change and always relying on junk food, and then we realise that maybe we did need to do more sport, just 'cos even if it doesn't affect you instantly, it'll affect you later on in life."

(15, Yr 10 School)

- Encouragement from family and teachers

"Well, influences from my teachers - I played hockey - one - well, one of my - my PE teacher at secondary school, (um) introduced me to like, playing hockey, so I've kept up that one, but she introduced me to that - I've kept that up. And it's just teachers - like, they've encouraged sport outside of school and then I've kept them up, so it's really their influence."

(18, College)

- Social groups that participate in sport

"I think - (um) one of the reasons is like, my friends getting more involved, so I got more involved as well, 'cos obviously you wanna like, spend time with your friends and (um) so they've kind of, got me into it. I used to go to a canoeing place, which I - I didn't think I'd enjoy but when you got dragged along by your friends, it was kind of like, fun - so - you know - and then I got into it, so - yeah."

(15, Yr 10 School)

3.4 Current lifestyle

Many of the young women who 'always' participate suggested that their current lifestyle, particularly those within full-time education, supported them in participating in sport through the provision of a wide range of facilities and opportunities. However, many of these young women, both within full-time education and full-time employment, also recognised that due to lack of spare time, large amounts of coursework, and lack of energy, their current lifestyle to some extent also hindered them participating in sport. For example:

“Although, obviously there are a lot - (um) a lot of chances to do sport at college or at school, you - you once again – it's very, very hectic (um) trying to juggle family life, college life, part-time job and (laughs) friends. So, it's (um) very limited in what I can do - it does limit it - it has limited my lifestyle of what I can get involved in and the time I can spend doing it, as it is so busy with the family, which is obviously a huge (laughs) part unfortunately, but it's just - it's so hectic and so busy, it does limit the amount of time I can spend to do what I'd like to do for a change.”

(17, College)

In general, therefore, there were mixed reports about whether current lifestyle supports or hinders participation.

3.5 Initial explanations – what do you think?

The young women who 'always' participate in sport and physical activity were asked to suggest what they believed to be the *main explanations or determining factors* influencing their current level of sport participation. These young women suggested four main motivations or reasons for them regularly and frequently participating in sport which mainly reflected the benefits and advantages of getting involved in sport. These were:

- Health benefits

“Well, I s'pose 'cos you - one reason is you know that it is good for you - I mean, a lot of the time because I spend a lot of my day just sitting and working, I don't get around so, I - I do feel it is important that I should be out doing sport.”

(16, College)

“I mean, it - it gets you into a mindset of being healthy and being able to do things. Like, if you walk everywhere and if you were driven, then on the occasions that you needed to walk, you would find it more difficult.”

(16, College)

“To lose weight! It makes you a lot healthier than what you do - like, you're not huffing and puffing - d'you know? - if you just suddenly, like, need to sprint for a train or something, you're sitting there, like (sighs) - when you get on the train - d'you know?”

(19, Employed)

- Encouragement from family and school

“I don't really know - my dad's always kind of, thought to keep healthy - that sport is a good way. And as he - when he was like, my age - he never really did much sport and he always was one of the people that kind of, hung around and didn't have anything to do, so when I started doing dancing and stuff, it kind of - I think he saw it like, making me not one (laughs) of those people - kind of, got more involved and whatever.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

- Social advantages

“Like, socialising and meeting my friends, and making new friends - since playing football and hockey, I've made so many new friends.”

(18, College)

“Advantages are I get to see all my friends - like, when I go to dance, 'cos we're all really good friends, so we get to socialise.”

(19, College)

- Genuine enjoyment of sport

“I think it's to have fun - just to enjoy myself really - and to keep fit and have fun, really - just to enjoy it.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

These young women were also asked to describe what they particularly *liked* about sport or, if they had a main sport that they were involved with, what it is about this activity that they like. Responses were related to three main issues, as follows:

- Sport is fun and exciting

“It's quite exciting - you don't really know what's gonna happen when you get - in the game (rounders). If we play against the boys, they can hit further than us girls, so it makes you like, do more in the game. It's quite active - I like active games.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

- Sport acts as a social opportunity/teamwork

“I love being - 'cos it's part - it's kind of, like a - it's a friendly environment - you can go there and you can - and like, I think, 'cos I'm on my own most

of the time, I can go there and I can see and tell people like, gossip as such - or - and it gets me out of the house (laughs) - and it's just - I just love it - I express my feelings through it - d'you know? - rather than having to bottle things up - and then people seem to see when - like, how you are through your dance and stuff, so."

(19, Employed)

"You get to sort of, socialise at the same time as you do exercise and have fun."

(15, Yr 10 School)

- Competition/performing

"I just enjoy taking part - (um) - I just a like a bit of competitive - a bit of competitive - like, the matches and things on a weekend."

(18, College)

"I like performing on stage (laughs) – being the centre of attention! Yeah – I like that."

(15, Yr 10 School)

3.6 Determinants 1 – Environment

The interviews then moved on to specific influences on sports participation, first in relation to the environment.

The vast majority of young women who 'always' participate in sport reported liking living in the area in which they lived. For example:

"No - I love it because, like, everything - 'cos like, everything you want - ever want to get to, is within walking distance. You don't need a car to get around, which is nice and you have sort of, a leisure - a leisure centre and - and all the different things that you might need, which is - which is nice. And, no - there's a lot - there's a lot of people I know who live in {L}, which is great 'cos everybody's sort of, around and because everyone sort of, lives around the town centre, it doesn't take long to get in and meet up with people - and you know, you've got all the shops and things that you - that you need."

(16, College)

The majority of these young women also reported good public transport and ease of travel within and around their local area. This included use of the buses, trains and cycle routes. For example:

"Sometimes it can be easy, because I live near a train station. Or I can cycle down to Hailsham and go into the sports centre there."

(15, Yr 10 School)

“Yeah - it's all right. I've never really - I never really get the bus from round my house - I - I generally only get the bus when I'm in town and stuff like that, so I'm not really sure about what that's like, but the trains are always good.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

Young women who ‘always’ participate in sport readily identified a wide range of sports facilities and opportunities for them to get involved in sport in the area in which they live. This included facilities specifically designed for sport such as leisure centres and swimming pools, as well as opportunities to get involved in sport such as youth centres, parks, classes in local halls etc. For example:

“There's a leisure centre - about half an hour walk away. Don't know, actually. There's not that much but there is within like, a bus journey and stuff like that, there's other leisure centres. Oh - and there's a swimming pool, about a 20 minute walk away. And there's horse riding, up the top somewhere. Oh, there's - there is like, sort of - there's a youth centre, I think - I don't know if it's actually a youth centre, but it's a place where there is like, a youth club or something like that, around my area. And there's a park - there's a couple of parks, actually. Quite a few - which have like, football clubs and stuff like that.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

There were, however, several comments made by the young women in this group that the facilities and opportunities for them to get involved in sport could sometimes be unwelcoming to young people. To some extent, this confirms what the young women who ‘never’ participate in sport also felt (see later). For example:

“ I think they more concentrate on the older people because they probably pay more (laughs) or whatever. But (um) - so, I think they're probably more welcoming to the older kind of adults and stuff. But - yeah.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

“They could be more welcoming, if they - they sometimes seem a little bit hostile and a little bit kind of, intimidating and they're not always willing to give you a chance. But I think once you've - you've been accepted, you've got - you'll have an amazing time and you'll be really well-liked and it's just a lot easier, I mean in general. But I think the initial first reaction is quite hostile towards young people.”

(17, College)

In terms of the facilities being accessible, young women who ‘always’ participate generally felt that opportunities for them to participate in sport were accessible to them. However, the majority of these comments acknowledged that such facilities were accessible due to other positive elements of the environment, such as good public transport and facilities being within walking

distance, as well as family support in the form of getting lifts from their parents. For example:

“Oh, easily - yeah. I mean, you can pretty much find whatever you want and get out there, quite easily. As - as long as - I mean, some things you might need a lift for, if they're further out. But it wouldn't be too difficult to get there by walking or by bus. So, most things are pretty accessible.”

(17, College)

Young women who 'always' participate in sport and physical activity therefore appeared to consider the environment as one of relative importance when explaining their current level of sport participation. For example:

“Quite important, I think, because if I - if I couldn't get to certain places, I probably wouldn't do it as often as I did - if I had to - to maybe leave Lewes on a bus or a train to go swimming or - or whatever - I probably would choose not to do it. Whereas, because all I have to do is sort of, walk up the road - you know, it - you can just on the spur of the moment, say - oh, I'm gonna go swimming for an hour. Or I'm gonna go and play a game of tennis, or do whatever. You can just - you can just do it and you don't have to worry about, oh - I can't go now, 'cos the next train's not for half an hour, or whatever.”

(16, College)

However, the environment was only infrequently cited as a reason for getting involved in sport. Most participants added that even though the opportunities were available in their area, they would go elsewhere if they needed to, to ensure their high level of sport participation. For example:

“It - I wouldn't say so much important - they're - I mean, I play sport outside of the area, sort of, like, training things - so that wouldn't affect me if they weren't there. But it is good that they are there, so that we can practice in our own time and like, our sports teams can get together.”

(18, College)

3.7 Determinants 2 – Transitions

The role of recent transitions and current situation was also explored in the interviews.

The young women who 'always' participate in sport acknowledged that transitions within education, or from education to employment, had a negative impact upon sport participation. This was despite the fact that they still participated in sport. For example:

“Because like, just - just the work amount and how long you're here for. 'Cos if you've got an earlier class or something, then you can't always do sport, it depends like, when you finish and stuff.”

(18, College)

“I wasn't as confident when I came here (college), 'cos it was sort of, new area - and - 'cos we only have here sports on a - one - one afternoon. So, you can only take part in one sport.”

(18, College)

However, this group of young women also qualified their comments about the importance of transitions. They also spoke about the positive transition of 'growing-up', and within this becoming more aware of the need to look after their own health and motivate themselves to get involved in sport. This may go some way to explaining why, despite the negative impact of lifestyle transitions, these young women still participate in sport regularly and frequently. For example:

“I'm not sure - I just seemed to think that, as you grow up and you mature, you just realise that you can't like, have - eat what you want and not do any exercise and you're just unhealthy - otherwise, you'll end up unhealthy. So, you've got to realise, you've gotta keep a balance.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

“I think that's quite important, because you have to sort of, think more about yourself - and you haven't got your parents telling you that you've got to go to this, this week. You have to more sort of, tell yourself what you've got to do. More independent.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

This sense of 'growing up', and taking personal responsibility for their health and fitness, distinguished this group from the 'sometimes' and 'never' group (see later).

3.8 Determinants 3 – Psychosocial issues

The interviews also explored the range of psychological and social issues which might influence sports participation. These are detailed below.

3.8.1 Awareness

Young women who 'always' participate in sport and physical activity were aware of the types of facilities and opportunities for them to get involved in sport, and many described positive advertising and information about this. For example:

"I mean, there's always things in newsletters or in posters about new clubs starting up and new sports facilities opening, so you're always well aware of the things that are going on, and if you wanted to ask, you could find out very, very easily - there's always information somewhere that you can find."

(17, College)

"There are - like, when you go down this little like, shopping area - there's always like, posters up on the walls of like, clubs and stuff like that. And outside the leisure centre, there's always times and prices and all this sort of stuff. So, if you look at something and you think - oh, I really wanted to join that, it's there for you to like, sign up or whatever."

(15, Yr 10 School)

3.8.2 Personal choice, personal effort, and hassle

As already mentioned, all of the young women in this group felt that the role of personal choice was an important one when deciding their current level of sports participation. Many of them recognised that as they have got older, getting involved in sport is very much down to personal decisions and motivations to do so. For example:

"I think it is because, whereas now it's not compulsory, (um) I'm sure many people do less because they don't have to, and I think it's important that you do - and you choose to do it and that you put the effort in to continue that, even when you're not being made to. Even though it is a good start - it's a good start to be made to, 'cos it's gets you into the mindset that you have to - to continue it, when it's not compulsory."

(16, College)

Furthermore, the majority of young women who 'always' participate in sport, said that they make a lot of personal effort to do this, even when they sometimes did not feel in the mood to do sport. For example:

"It is - I think it is important for me to go out and - and like, do sport - I mean, it is like, a kind of a conscious thing that I do - so I haven't - there are occasions when I say, oh - I haven't been out or done anything this week - I must go and do something. So, it - it - it is kind of, a conscious effort to - to go and do it on occasions, but other times, it just kind of, rolls round and it happens."

(17, College)

"Quite a lot, really! Sometimes - if I've gotta get out of bed, then it's a big effort - but most of the time, I look forward to it."

(18, College)

The majority of these young women felt that for them personally, getting involved in sport was not a lot of hassle, and felt that obstacles such as filling in forms could easily be overcome. For example:

“Not too much hassle. It's just - knowing that you only have to fill in a form once, and then for the next year - you know - it's not that much hassle.”

(18, College)

“In terms of like, joining, it's not really - all the stuff that I do, I know, it's just like, you go along - most of it, you don't even have to fill out forms and stuff like that - it's, go along and see if you like it, and there's no pressure or anything to do what you don't wanna do, so that's all right.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

However, there were several comments suggesting that for some other people, participating in sport may be considered a lot of hassle, and this may discourage people from getting involved. In addition to practical hassles such as filling in forms etc. Some young women felt more social and commitment factors could affect people's involvement. For example:

“You're kind of like, committing yourself - if you go to a club and you really don't feel like going and you're still paying for it, then you feel you have to go and you don't enjoy it.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

“I think you get to a certain age and it becomes difficult, 'cos you've got other friends that are going out and doing other things, and you wanna do that, but obviously you've gotta stick at it. I think that's quite a lot of hassle, because it's meeting new people and if you're not very good at that sort of thing, then you don't wanna do it - and I s'pose if you've grown up with something, that's a lot easier - but if you go into something new at an older age, it's not.”

(18, College)

3.8.3 Images and perceptions of sport

The young women who 'always' participate in sport and physical activity held a very positive image of sport, and there were frequent comments regarding the impact that such images have upon level of sport participation. For example:

“There's - I think it - like, with all the stuff on TV - and all these athletes and stuff like that, you kind of - 'cos they're so successful, it kind of, makes you want to do that and like, you see - if you like, like gymnastics and then you see all these like, amazing people on TV - you're like, I really wanna be like that, so it'll make you work harder.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

"I think it's important to have a good image of sport, because obviously, like, when you watch, like, sports channels and stuff, it's important to have a good image because it makes more people want to go and do - like, Wimbledon on TV makes you wanna go and play tennis!"

(15, Yr 10 School)

"I think, it has a very positive image because there is so many things and I know some people that do it, which makes it seem like a very normal and - and good, positive thing to be doing, whereas I s'pose if it - if few people did it, you wouldn't be so encouraged to do it, because it wouldn't be such a big thing."

(17, College)

Two key issues that emerged in this part of the interview were role models, and perceptions of personal ability in sport. These are dealt with separately below.

Role models

There were several reports of role models within the media that the young women in this group looked up to. These included tennis players, Olympic athletes, football players etc. For example:

"Yeah, I think - I quite like tennis and Wimbledon and Lindsay Davenport and people like - oh, yeah - I like Paula Radcliffe - she - she's good - I like watching her in the running - yeah, I think she's quite a good role model."

(15, Yr 10 School)

"I do have like, people and teams that I look up to - like, I've been to see like, the England netball before and everything, and that was always something that I've always liked. When you see them, you're like - wow - I wanna be like them - so, it makes you do it more. And then, dance shows and stuff. There's lots of dancers I look up to - they're kind of role models, I guess - but - yeah. So, there's people - there's no-one specific - it's just generally."

(15, Yr 10 School)

There were also several reports of these young women having sporting role models in the form of a family member, teacher or friend, and the positive impact that they have upon current level of sport participation. For example:

"I s'pose my dad and - and my friend, have a lot of impact on the sport that I do. I mean, my - my - my dad - you know - he's - he's sort of, 45 and still playing tennis sort of, four or five times a week, and that does inspire me a lot because I think he's so into it and from - he's so good,

and I want to be that good. You can see it and so you realise you can be like that.”

(17, College)

Perceptions of personal ability in sport

The vast majority of young women who ‘always’ participate in sport held a positive perception of their own ability in sport. They also frequently suggested that this positive perception was significantly related to their current level of sport participation, as well as recognising the detrimental impact that a negative perception might have. For example:

“It's very important to me because like I say, I - I like to be good at - good at things, so I - I do feel that if there's something I'm good at, I want to do more of it 'cos I want to get better and - and for that to be something that I'm good at. So - and whereas if I'm - if I'm not particularly good at something and I don't feel that I'm going to be better at it, I don't do it as much because I feel it's always like, fighting a losing battle.”

(16, College)

“Yeah - if you were - the better you are at something, I think gives you more confidence to go out and do it. Personally, I don't so much, but I know some people who are like, quite embarrassed 'cos they think, oh - I'm not good, so they won't go out and - they won't go out and join in with the stuff because they - they're not as good as everyone else, but I don't generally look at it that way, 'cos stuff I've gone to, I've got a lot better, so I know that it'll help me, if you know what I mean – so.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

3.8.4 Appearance and self-consciousness

Although not frequently cited as a reason or a motivation to get involved in sport, the issue of weight and having a desirable figure was of some importance to the young women in this group. For example:

“I do think about it - frankly (laughs) - strangely, despite the fact that I do do a lot of sport, I still kind of, worry about my weight. I think that's probably through the media and your friends - your peer pressure.”

(18, College)

“It is kind of - because I don't want - the reason is because like, my dad's quite big and he doesn't do anything. My mum's really skinny and she does quite a lot and it's kind of like, I don't wanna end up like my dad - so, yeah.”

(18, College)

However, in contrast to the young women who 'never' participate in sport (see later), the young women who always participate reported very low levels of self-consciousness, and rarely get embarrassed when participating in sport. They appeared to also have adopted an attitude of not caring what other people may think of them, when they are getting involved in sport. For example:

"I don't care what people - if I like, it's like, when you do sport, if someone - if it's really hot and you're gonna get all hot and sweaty and everything - I don't really - it doesn't bother me what people think, 'cos it's pretty obvious to them - unless they're stupid - that you've been doing sport - that's why you look like that. So, I'm not the sort of person who'll just sit on the side and don't want people to see me do it, kind of thing."

(15, Yr 10 School)

3.8.5 Social and community networks

A variety of issues arose, in relation to the importance of social and community networks in influencing participation. These are detailed below.

Influenced by others

The vast majority of young women who 'always' participate in sport reported that other people easily influenced them, when it came to getting involved. In contrast to the women who 'never' participate, these young women frequently reported the positive impact that the role of other people has. For example:

"I'd say I'm quite easily influenced. I think if my friends do things, I feel - oh, I should do them, too. And I think I'm sometimes a bit scared of doing things unless I'm doing it with someone I know. I feel a bit out of place, just doing it by myself."

(15, Yr 10 School)

"I think I'm quite influenced by like, my friends and stuff, because if they said they'd enjoyed it, that would make me wanna go - and then I'd probably go to the same one as them, 'cos then you're still with someone you know and stuff."

(15, Yr 10 School)

Social life – does it support or hinder?

Nearly all of the young women who 'always' participate in sport felt that their social life supported their current level of sport participation. This was mainly due to being part of a social group in which sport is seen as a worthwhile thing to participate in. For example:

"It supports it, because a lot of my friends do sport as well. It - it becomes a social activity, more than a sporting activity. You might 'phone up and say, what d'you want to do today? And oh, we'll go - we'll go for a swim. It's - it's part of that social activity."

(17, College)

"Definitely supports, 'cos like, my friends are completely like, into sport as well as me and (um) I think 'cos sometimes it's just nice to be away from like, all sport and just laze about, but when you really wanna get up and go and do something active, if I didn't have my friends to like, come with me, then I probably wouldn't do it."

(15, Year 10 School)

Role of friends

All of the young women in this group reported having at least some active friends, with the majority of them stating that all friends within their social group were active. There were also frequent reports of high levels of support and encouragement from friends. For example:

"They do a lot of dancing - I do a lot of dancing in the school with them - and I know they do it outside of school - they all belong to different gyms and stuff like that, so they're all active with me and everything - and I'll go along with them and so, they're quite into it as well."

(15, Yr 10 School)

"Well, they're always like, encouraging to like, join clubs and stuff like that - I mean - they - they join new and stuff and they're like, well - d'you wanna come along? And sometimes I do, sometimes I don't. So - but they'll always offer and always be like, d'you wanna come along, kind of thing."

(17, College)

This group of young women viewed the role of friends, as a determinant or explanation for high levels of sport participation, as very important. This role was seen as a positive influence due to the support and encouragement provided by friends, and having someone to participate in sport with. For example:

"I think it's very important because it - it obviously gives you - gives you someone to go with, someone to talk to - someone to empathise with if you've lost a game or you've played badly or help - help you excel at that sport and become better, so it's a great way to make more friends but also everyone else just - you just have more time with one to one or as a whole group."

(17, College)

Role of family

The vast majority of young women who 'always' participate in sport report living in an active household, in which parents and siblings also frequently participate in sport and physical activity. There were also several reports of family members acting as role models, as well as examples of participating in an activity alongside a family member. For example:

"Because we're always doing something - we'll go out as a family to do - do sport together we go and play tennis together. My mum does body combat and swimming. She also does running."

(15, Yr 10 School)

"Well, my mum has a horse so, she does a lot of like, horse riding and stuff like that. (um) We all belong to the gym, so we all go running and swimming - (laughs) stuff you do at the gym. And my brother's quite sporty and that's kind of, influenced me in a way, 'cos I've done some of the stuff that he's done. He does a lot of (um) football and cricket, which I used to do with him."

(18, College)

The young women also reported high levels of family support, including encouragement to get involved in the activities that their the parents do, getting lifts from their parents, and their parents paying for them to participate in sport. As these young women explained:

"Well, my mum'll - my mum started me off with body combat, and she took me with her 'cos she thought it'd be fun for me and good exercise for me. They motivate me, 'cos my mum and me sometimes go running together in the evenings and stuff like that."

(15, Yr 10 School)

"Yeah - definitely. (um) They always give me lifts (laughs) and everything like that. They're very encouraging - like, if I have a match or something like that, they'll come and watch - they're supportive in that sense. (um) Yeah - when I play and stuff, they come with me. It - they enjoy a lot of the stuff that I do so they'll support me in that and encourage me and stuff."

(18, College)

"They're willing to pay for like, clubs and stuff - pay for my dancing and stuff like that. And they'll take me there, and if I need to buy any special like, clothes or anything, then they are willing to buy it for me - to like, do it - they're not like, gonna stop me or anything."

(15, Yr 10 School)

Young women who 'always' participate in sport also recognised that the role of the family is in fact an important one in determining their level of sport participation. They felt that if their parents did less sport, this might have a

negative impact upon their current level of sport and physical activity. For example:

“If you don't have a supportive family, then obviously, it's a lot harder - especially in stuff like getting there and to clubs and stuff. There's some stuff that's quite - if I didn't have my parents to take me places, then I wouldn't be able - able to do a lot of stuff. (um) Some of the stuff I do, they pay for me to do, or they help me towards - so, yeah - a lot of places - a lot of people if they didn't do that, then they wouldn't be able to do it.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

“Yeah - some things - if my mum stopped horse-riding, then I probably would.”

(18, College)

“Possibly - I think if - if my dad stopped playing tennis, I would probably stop as well, because he is the main person that I play against, and so I think that would - that would hinder because I - I wouldn't have anybody to sort of, go with, as it were.”

(17, College)

Thus, for the 'always' group, friends and family were very important factors in their level of sports participation.

3.9 Main determinants – summary

This section briefly summarises the main determinants that may influence the decision to participate in sport. The young women who 'always' participate in sport and physical activity were asked to suggest the main reason or explanation for their current level of sport participation. Responses to this question were related to three main issues, as follows:

- Encouragement from school – for example:

“ I think it's school, really - like, teachers at school - because from a young age, you get given different subjects, so if you're good at doing it, they'll like, encourage you. And I didn't like it at primary school, but I related more to the teachers at my secondary school and I got involved with - with it, 'cos if they don't introduce it to you, then you're not really gonna know about it and if your parents don't want you to do it, then they're not gonna mention anything about it.”

(18, College)

- To have fun and relieve stress – for example:

“Most important influence - I'd say that the - the way of relieving stress and having fun. It's the main reason I do it. And to kind of, feel good about myself and feel good that I can do something right.”

(17, College)

- Role of friends and social groups: for example:

“My friends. Because I do things with them, and if they're doing sport, then I'll do sport.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

In addition, each young woman was also asked to suggest which of the three main categories of influences or determinants (environment, transitions or psychosocial) was the most important in explaining their current level of sport participation. The majority of young women who ‘always’ participate in sport reported that psychosocial issues, in particular the role of family and friends, were by far the most important when explaining their current level of sport and physical activity. For example:

“I think probably the social 'cos, obviously - like I said - friends is the most kind of, important - 'cos it really gets you wanting to go into sport and stuff.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

“Probably my family - as they - they're the ones that allow me to do all the things I do.”

(17, College)

Chapter summary

This section summarises the main findings for the ‘always’ group:

History

- Young women who ‘always’ participate in sport possess early positive experiences of sport and report regular participation from an early age, and did not report negative experiences of mixing with the opposite sex. Furthermore, they felt that early experiences had a positive long-term impact upon how they feel about sport and to some extent explain their current level of sport participation.
- This group felt that they had participated in more sport as they have got older. This was due to ‘growing up’ and taking responsibility of their health, encouragement from family and teachers, and being in social groups that participate in sport.

Current lifestyle

- These young women felt that although their current lifestyles support sport participation to some extent, lack of spare time, large amounts of homework/coursework and lack of energy, can also hinder getting involved in sport.

Initial explanations

- When asked to describe the main reasons and motivations for their level of participation in sport, this group initially suggested four main factors – health benefits, encouragement from school and family, social advantages, and enjoyment of sport. When asked what they liked about sport, these young women said they found sport fun and exciting, it is a good social opportunity, and they enjoyed the competition and performing sometimes associated with sport.

Environment

- Young women who ‘always’ participate in sport were generally positive about the area in which they lived, including reports of good public transport, and a wide range of facilities and opportunities for them to get involved in sport. Facilities were however sometimes described as unwelcoming, and the role of the environment was only considered to be ‘quite’ important in determining level of sport participation. There were several comments suggesting that participation in sport took part outside of the immediate area, suggesting that the role of the environment is not a crucial factor.

Transitions

- These young women acknowledged that transitions within education or from education to employment had a negative impact upon participation in sport. There were also several reports referring to the transition of ‘growing up’, and within this the need for self-motivation to get involved in sport.

Psychosocial issues

- Young women who ‘always’ participate in sport felt that they were aware of the opportunities available to them to get involved. There were several reports of positive advertising such as posters, leaflets etc regarding local facilities.
- This group of young women felt that they had a lot of self-motivation and made a lot of personal effort to get involved in sport. Getting involved in sport was not a lot of hassle, but the ‘always’ participate group did frequently suggest reasons why for some people, sport would be considered a hassle.

- Young women who participate in physical activity held a positive image of sport, and frequently reported positive sporting role models. The vast majority of these women also held a positive perception of themselves in sport, and noted the positive impact that this perception had upon their level of sport participation.
- The majority of young women who 'always' participate in sport suggested that issues concerned with weight and appearance are something that they think about, but few people cited this as an actual motivation to get involved in sport. These women rarely suggested feeling self-conscious, and recognised the positive impact that this had upon them participating in sport.
- This group of young women reported being easily influenced by other people in relation to participation in sport, and the vast majority reported their social life supporting involvement in sport.
- These young women reported having 'active' friends and social groups, and furthermore viewed the role of peers as very important when trying to explain their current level of sport.
- The vast majority of young women who 'always' participate in sport reported living in an 'active' household, in which family members act as sporting role models, and participation in sport sometimes takes place alongside a family member. They also reported high levels of family support and encouragement, and recognised the role of the family as determining their current level of sport participation.

Summing-up

- To summarise, young women who 'always' participate in sport suggested four main reasons for this – encouragement from school, encouragement from their family, to have fun and relieve stress, and the role of friends and social groups.
- When asked to report the most important set of determinants explaining their current level of sport participation, these young women felt that psychosocial issues, particularly concerned with the role of family and friends, were the most.

4.0 RESULTS (2): YOUNG WOMEN WHO ‘SOMETIMES’ PARTICIPATE IN SPORT

This section outlines the main reasons and motivations given by the 21 young women who ‘sometimes’ participate in sport and physical activity, for their current level of sport participation. This group of young women do not participate in sport on a very regular or frequent basis, but it is not accurate to suggest that they never participate in sport. The results for this group of young women may provide insight into the more specific reasons and motivations associated with ‘sometimes’ choosing to participate in sport. The topics covered, in relation to sport participation, are:

- Sample characteristics (age, ethnicity and life-stage)
- Spare time
- History of sport and physical activity
- Current lifestyle – does it support or hinder sport participation?
- Initial explanations – what do you think?
- Determinants 1 – environment
- Determinants 2 – transitions
- Determinants 3 – psychosocial issues
- Main determinants – summary.

4.1 Sample characteristics of young women who ‘sometimes’ participate

The characteristics of the 21 young women who ‘sometimes’ participate are as follows:

Age (years)	N	(%)
15	9	(43%)
16	4	(19%)
17	5	(24%)
18	2	(9.5%)
19	1	(4.5%)
<i>Total</i>	21	(100%)

Ethnicity	N	(%)
Asian	4	(19%)
Black	0	(0%)
White	17	(81%)
<i>Total</i>	21	(100%)

Life-stage	N	(%)
Year 10 school	8	(38%)
Year 11 school	3	(14%)
College	7	(33%)
First Year University	2	(10%)
Full-time employment	1	(5%)
<i>Total</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>(100%)</i>

4.2 Spare time

Young women who 'sometimes' participate in sport mainly reported socialising, when asked what they do in their spare time. There were also reports of memberships of groups such as scouts and dance, watching TV, listening to music, skateboarding and cycling. For example:

“What do I like doing? I like going out - drinking! No, I like going out and socialising with friends, mainly. We go out a lot - we tend to like, go out for meals and things.”

(18, College)

Thus, for the 'sometimes' group, sport was something that they occasionally did in their spare time, alongside a range of other activities.

4.3 History of sport and physical activity participation

This group of young women generally reported positive early experiences of getting involved in sport and physical activity. Some young woman, for example, also acknowledged regret at not pursuing her enjoyment of sport further at a younger age. For example:

“Secondary school - I did lots of clubs in secondary school - did 'em all - even did the lads' basketball - I was mad on sport - I regret not doing PE. I didn't take the PE - I really regret it now, 'cos I loved me sport - I decided to take the IT route, because everyone said - you know - oh, companies need IT - blah, blah, blah - I found it so boring. I just thought, I wish I'd took PE now. I think if I'd of done that, I'd of had a different perception and probably took something else at college, rather than doing A Levels.”

(18, Employed)

Young women who 'sometimes' participate in sport were slightly more negative in their reports of mixing with the opposite sex. Most commonly they described feelings of self-consciousness and embarrassment when mixing with males to do sport. For example:

“I just don't have confidence around boys. 'Cos I just don't feel comfortable at all and 'cos it all depends on popularity and if you're not as good as them, then they take the mick out of you and everything.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

4.3.1 How early experiences impact upon sport

This group of young women were mixed in their opinions as to whether or not early experiences had impacted upon how they currently felt about sport, and their subsequent level of sport participation. There were several reports suggesting that early participation and positive experiences of sport leads to future enjoyment. For example:

“Because doing sports when I was younger has made me wanna do sports now 'cos I felt better when I was doing sports - it was good fun and stuff. It's like, you get to socialise a lot more with people when you're doing sports.”

(17, College)

However, several of the young women suggested that early experiences had little influence upon how they felt about sport, and that other issues concerned with their current lifestyle, such as lack of time, were more important.

“Not really, no. 'Cos I gave up my swimming because of time, so I guess it's just different things become more important - all the different things you have to do. And when you were younger, you were a bit more free when you were younger - you had a lot more spare time.”

(16, College)

4.3.2 Change in level of sport participation

The vast majority of young women who ‘sometimes’ participate in sport reported that their level of sport participation had dropped with age. The explanations for this decrease in sport participation were related to two main issues, as follows:

- Lack of facilities and opportunities

“And also quite a lot of things have shut down - sort of, the tennis club and the running club have both shut down, so there's not really that much to do any more, sort of, that I have knowledge of, really.”

(17, College)

“I think clubs don't really motivate you any more. I don't feel there are a lot of clubs any more. I mean, especially for women. It's all right for

lads - they can do football. But there's no - no clubs for women, I don't think."

(18, Employed)

- Transitions / Change in lifestyle

"Probably college - definitely, like, my education has sort of, taken over a bit and just because I've gotten older, there's lots more things to do that aren't sports or to go out and things like that. But when I was little, my sort of, going out would be going to sort of, gymnastics or going to my running club."

(17, College)

"Less. Because of school and coursework and all that. Obviously, having coursework, I've had to stay in the house a lot more to do it, 'cos it takes quite a long while - almost - that takes all your night up, which means you can't go out - which means you can't do any sort of exercise at all - which mean you - you do less as you get older."

(15, Yr 10 School)

4.4 Current lifestyle

Young women who 'sometimes' participate in sport and physical activity generally felt that, to some extent, their current lifestyle hindered participation in sport. The main reason or explanation for this was related to a lack of time and energy to get involved in sport, and lack of opportunity within their current lifestyle. For example:

"I don't really do a lot because - well, most days I go to college and I like, leave the house at half seven in the morning, and then I get home about quarter past six in the evening, and I'm just really tired, and then I just have dinner and end up just chilling out."

(16, College)

"I mean, I only - I only get half an hour lunch as well - because I actually work for like, a company on an industrial estate, in their accounts department, there's nowhere to go, so you just sit in the office and you sit on your bum all day - and it's not good - try and get out in the fresh air but - no, there's no incentives through work - there's nothing. It's just basically your own incentive to try and get out."

(18, Employed)

4.5 Initial explanations – what do you think?

The young women who ‘sometimes’ participate in sport and physical activity were asked to suggest what they believed to be the *main determinants or explanations* relating to why they sometimes choose to participate in sport. These young women suggested a range of issues that might have a positive impact upon the decision to get involved in sport, the main ones including:

- Wanting to feel healthy / compensate for poor eating habits – for example:

“And just like, my occasional swimming and running, I just feel like I should just to keep fit and keep well, really - in comparison to what I used to do, I hardly do any, so I want to sort of do a bit - that's really why.”

(17, College)

“I think generally because I don't eat healthy, I'll admit - I've really - junk food all the while - but I do try and like, and I do eat a lot of pasta and potatoes, sort of thing - which isn't always healthy - but I don't eat veg - I don't - I don't eat a lot of fruit. I should do - I mean, yes - I look at what I'm eating and think, I'm gonna get big and I'm gonna get fat, if I don't do something about it.”

(18, Employed)

“Well, I know because I have like, a really unhealthy diet, it's also good for things like burn off the foods that I eat, so that's why I sometimes do it.”

(16, Yr 11 School)

- Something to do when feeling bored – for example:

“Just take it - takes up time - gives you a little bit extra to do, instead of sitting around being bored and moaning all the time - out and about doing stuff, really.”

(17, College)

This group of young women also suggested a number of issues that might have a *negative impact* upon their decision to get involved in sport, the main ones including:

- Lack of spare time and/or energy due to current lifestyle – for example:

“It's a lot - I do find it's a lot harder now, with my job. Sort of, 'cos you get home, and I do get knackered - I'm just tired and just wanna collapse out, but I have started to recently really motivate myself, and for meeting up with like [D] - my friend - or other friends - and go - and

we will go out in the fresh air, and we'll just push ourselves to get out and try and do some. So, yeah - a bit lazy at the weekends!"
(18, Employed)

- Not knowing what to do or who to do it with – for example:

"And not really knowing what to do. Like, if I was gonna do some sports, I wouldn't know like, really what to do and like, you wanna do it with somebody and you don't wanna go on your own - it's just finding time and someone to go with."
(16, College)

- Lack of opportunity – for example:

"So, I tend to not - I think now, at my age, and because I'm in a job, it's - I can't get into any clubs whatsoever, because there'd be no chance. I personally, don't - I don't feel there are any good clubs for someone my age."
(18, Employed)

Young women who 'sometimes' participate in sport were also asked to describe the things that they *liked* or *disliked* about participating in sport. Only two people of the twenty one interviewed in this group were able to describe something they disliked about participating in sport stating that sport is too competitive and not having anyone to do it with. The main things that were reported as being *liked* about sport were:

- Feeling good about themselves – for example:

"I like it like, afterwards - when I leave dance - I always feel really good and like, really fit and it makes me wanna like, do more."
(16, College)

- Socialising / Teamwork / Fun – for example:

"I suppose - I like team work a lot and getting different skills out of it and like, it's like, a lot of fun for me - 'cos I like running around and all that."
(15, Yr 10 School)

"Oh, yeah - it's more - like, I said, it's more the social side of it - catching up with friends and (um) gossiping!"
(18, Employed)

This group of young women were also able to report a wide range of *advantages* associated with participating in sport, including:

- Health benefits

"Advantages would be, I know that if you do do sport, it helps your

cardio-vascular system, so it makes me easier to breathe when I'm doing it, so if I do running, it's gonna help my asthma a lot - so, that's one advantage."

(17, College)

- Development of new skills

"The advantages of doing sport, I s'pose is it gains health and also it can gain like, team working 'cos most sports you do play in teams and you can get communication skills out of it and co-operation and you can learn more skills -like, that you'll need in the future - by doing sport, then you'll probably think so - I s'pose that helps."

(15, Yr 10 School)

- Meeting new people

"If you join in, then you sort of, meet new people and just get more enthusiastic about sport - get fit and get healthy."

(16, Yr 11 School)

4.6 Determinants 1 – Environment

There were very mixed views about the environment from young women that 'sometimes' participate in sport and physical activity. Whilst some of these young women liked the area in which they lived, there were also several negative reports of the surrounding environment.

"Well - it's boring, really - there's nothing really much to here, so there's not like, if there is anything, then it's not advertised or anything, so you - you can't really like, find places to go."

(15, Yr 10 School)

"I'm not too keen on the area - there's a few places that I - I'd rather not go - (um) the park being one because there's quite a lot of nasty people down there that don't want you to go down there and do shout abuse sometimes, so I tend to go out of the town. And the leisure centre's - or the skate-park, which is right behind the leisure centre - is normally full of those people that don't seem to get on with me. So, all together, it's not the best place round town as well, so I don't particularly like it that much."

(15, Yr 10 School)

These young women were however generally positive in their reports of public transport and ease of travel within and around the area. Despite this, there were several reports highlighting the high cost of public transport. For example:

"It's quite good round here actually - we do have - I mean, the

bus near me - the bus stop's only something like 5 - 5 minutes walk - the bus runs every 15 minutes. I think generally, the bus service around here is quite good - I mean, it's expensive - don't get me wrong - it's very expensive, I find, nowadays - but it's - yeah - it's good."

(18, Employed)

Young women who 'sometimes' participate in sport and physical activity were generally negative about facilities, and opportunities for them to get involved in sport in their local area. The vast majority of young women who did report a facility, accompanied this comment with a barrier or constraint in relation to why they could not pursue this opportunity. For example:

"Yeah - they - they is a college near me that does some classes. I recently tried to enrol on a yoga class, but they wouldn't let me on because I was under 18. And it was really embarrassing."

(16, College)

"There's a - there's like, the leisure centre in town, but that's quite hard to get to because it's not near the train station or anything."

(16, College)

Views of the accessibility of sports facilities and opportunities were mixed. A large number of these young women suggested that the facilities and opportunities for them to participate in sport were accessible, if they decided to use them. For example:

"Well - they're accessible for me, so - 'cos I just live down the road from like, the parks and everything, but - and I think they're cheap - as far as I know."

(16, Yr 11 School)

"I think they're quite easy to get to, but I think (um) time's a big issue, 'cos it just seems to go, 'cos everyone's so wrapped up in jobs, college work - that sort of thing. Doesn't really have time!"

(17, College)

However, there were several reports highlighting the perceived barriers between young women and participation in sport, in particular feelings of intimidation and self-consciousness when taking the step to getting involved in sport. For example:

"Most of the time, it's like, - well, it's not very good because there is a gym at the leisure centre and it has swimming and all that - but the gym, you've gotta be 16 and over and it's just like, I find that silly really, 'cos like, they're trying to beat like, obesity and all that, but if it's not open to people that need it - for, like, younger people then they're not gonna use it so - I find that kind of, irritating."

(15, Yr 10 School)

“I always find they are fairly intimidating - you've always got your - your fanatics - but no, - I think as a younger person, it's really quite daunting. I think - 'cos I was with my mum, it was fine - with the induction - but I s'pose if I'd of gone in on my own, I don't know what they would have thought.”

(18, Employed)

“If I - I tell you what I find difficult, I s'pose - it's not only filling out the forms, but how to use the machines. They give you an induction, but some people's memories can be bad – I mean, at times, I've like, forgotten how to use it. And it's just really daunting, just to go up to someone and say - how d'you do this, or how d'you try this.”

(17, College)

Young women who 'sometimes' participate in sport were also asked the extent to which they felt their decision to sometimes participate, was influenced or determined by issues concerned with their environment. These young women felt that the role of their environment was of relative importance when determining their decision to participate in sport. For example:

“I think at my age - the sort of, the fact that I'm doing a job now - full-time work - it is fairly - you know - I rely on the environment to be quite good, to make me want to go out on the night - not wanna go home at night - sit and watch the telly. I wanna like, go home - ring up a few friends - see what they're doing and go out - see if they wanna play tennis - see if they wanna go for a jog - see if they wanna do something. The environment does make a difference for me.”

(18, Employed)

4.7 Determinants 2 – Transitions

Young women who 'sometimes' participate in sport and physical activity felt that transitions, within education or from education to employment, had a negative impact upon their decision to participate in sport. For example:

“Yeah - I used to be in quite a few - I used to be in teams at school, but at college, just because of transport and things - getting home - it's hard to sort of, stay after college and do things like that, so I don't - I haven't - I don't join - I haven't joined anything at college.”

(17, College)

Interestingly, this group of young women also highlighted several additional examples of transitions and lifestyle changes that young women of this age might experience, in addition to typical education or employment changes, which impact on participating in sport. These included:

- A family member dying

“I've had a lot of deaths in my family and that's sort of, I noticed that really did shift - especially with my mum and me - sort of, a lot that I did and sort of, gave up a lot of my sports - that was sort of, the start of it in the last two years. So that was one thing that really sort of, stopped all my sporting things. I dunno know - I think when it first all happened, I just sort of, gave up - I didn't really - I didn't feel that that was really important in what I do - I wanted to sort of, you know, get success in my education so I could go on and do all that and pursue that instead of just thinking about sports and things.”

(17, College)

- Moving home

“I lived in Wales, I started half-way through school in like, a secondary school in Wales, and I joined every club there - like, gymnastics, netball and swimming class and everything. And then, when I moved down here, all my confidence dropped, so - 'cos I didn't know no-one and I wasn't as close, so - yeah, I have been affected.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

- Relationship / personal problems

“You know, you go through these little phases when you get older - like, when you split up with your boyfriend and you get upset (um) - or when your parents have arguments and - there's different things - or when you fall out with your friends - when you get unhappy, you tend not to do a lot, don't you? And you just sit in and feel sorry for yourself and don't want to do sport.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

4.8 Determinants 3 – Psychosocial issues

There were a number of psychological and social issues that emerged in the analysis of the ‘sometimes’ interviews. These are described below:

4.8.1 Awareness of opportunities

This group of young women had limited awareness of the opportunities available for them to get involved in sport. Several comments highlighted the fact that these women are aware of the opportunities available in relation to a specific sport or activity that they sometimes pursue, but had little knowledge regarding a wider range of facilities or opportunities to try something new. For example:

“The things that I'm into, I sort of, know lots of places to go, but I'm not really aware of things that are offered to me - there's not much advertising or information provided.”

(17, College)

"I suppose there's things I don't know about because, again, there isn't a lot of information around to tell you about things like sports clubs or anything like that, but the leisure centre's pretty good."

(15, Yr 10 School)

There were also comments to suggest that information or advertising that is provided only focuses upon a limited range of facilities, such as leisure centres or gyms, and less on activities such as team games etc. For example:

"Quite aware, 'cos there's quite a few gyms around that I know of, but I'm not too sure on like, football clubs and that and basketball - things like that, I'm not too sure of clubs and things."

(17, College)

4.8.2 Personal choice, personal effort, and hassle

All the young women who 'sometimes' participate in sport and physical activity felt that the role of personal choice is an important one when determining their current level of sport participation. There were also several comments suggesting that compulsory sport at an earlier age was in fact a very positive thing. For example:

"I thought it was good that it was compulsory, 'cos you had a chance to do everything. With the schools, they did everything - they did athletics and tennis in the summer - you did trampolining. We did things like hockey, netball - we did it all, basically - even football - girls' football. I think now I'm older, I've got choices - I don't know. I s'pose I'd like someone to sit down and say, look - you do this today. 'Cos I bet it would get me out a bit more, if someone said, look - come on - like, if my friends said, come and do this - then, I'd think, oh - OK, I will do."

(17, College)

The majority of this group of young women felt that they did not make enough personal effort to get involved in sport. They considered that this element played a very important role when trying to explain why they sometimes choose to participate in sport, and at other times do not. For example:

"I do and I don't. Some days, I do - some days, I don't. When it comes to like, sport with like, a group - like, up here, we do rounders or something - I'll get stuck in - I will really give it my best, 'cos I - I do enjoy it. If I enjoy it, I'll put everything into it. If I don't enjoy, I just sit back and try and hide - hide from everyone. But, no - I do try - it's just - I guess it's motivating myself, as soon as I get in from work - right, come on - get your trainers on - you're going out, sort of thing. It's that thing that is a bit hard to - to grasp at the minute - trying to get there."

(18, Employed)

When asked how much hassle participating in sport is perceived to be, this group of young women felt that there was a certain amount of hassle associated with participating in some activities. This hassle was mainly perceived to be in relation to practical barriers when trying to join, such as filling out forms, having to prove age, being able to afford membership etc.

“Well, it can be, yeah - like, I wanted to do the yoga class, but I was under 18. That's quite ageist. They didn't have any ones for younger, and if they did, it was for primary school age - they didn't have any for the in-betweens. It was either over 18 or under 12.”

(16, College)

“Yeah - form filling out is quite annoying - yeah. That's the only thing I'd say. Yeah. Hassle - and you've got the money as well, to pay for all the clubs and if go to a gym and stuff, you need to pay for that, so that's probably hassle as well, to some people.”

(17, College)

4.8.3 Images and perceptions of sport

The majority of young women who ‘sometimes’ participate in sport held a positive image of sport, and several identified the importance of this positive image when explaining levels of sport participation.

“The better image people put around, the more people that'll probably do sport - 'cos they do. A lot of people do look at what other people do and then other people do it and they'll do it. So, it is mainly about media and stuff, innit?”

(17, College)

However, there were also comments to suggest that sometimes sport is simply not seen as a ‘cool’ thing to do in your spare time, despite positive images and being aware of the many benefits and advantages of sport participation.

“Yeah - so, always sat on the computer - quite a lot - that's how it goes - that's the cool thing these days - exercise isn't cool any more!”

(15, Yr 10 School)

This group of young women also felt that they did not have any sporting role models that influenced their decision to participate in sport.

“No. Not really. I haven't really got a role model in sport, to be honest. So, no - I don't think so. I think it's just pure enjoyment - if I'm enjoying, then I'll get out there and do it.”

(18, Employed)

Perceptions of personal ability in sport

Young women who 'sometimes' participate in sport held relatively positive perceptions of themselves getting involved in sport and physical activity. In contrast to the young women who 'never' participate (see Chapter 5), it was apparent within this group that self-perceptions were not having a detrimental impact upon sport participation. For example:

"I used to - I used to be really good at it - I know I did - and I probably could have gotten much better but I gave up, so now that's probably a big sort of influence for me to start again - I really do wanna start again and get more into it."

(17, College)

"I suppose my ability to do sport is better now than what it was, so I can do more now, so that's really like, encouraged me on to motivate myself to do more. So - I was - before, I didn't really like, have the health to do it, so I couldn't really do a lot."

(17, College)

4.8.4 Appearance and self-consciousness

The issue of appearance was clearly one of importance for this group of young women. It was clear that the decision to 'sometimes' participate in sport is influenced to some extent by the desire to lose weight or have a desirable figure. For example:

"I think appearance is a big thing. I'm really paranoid - I think - I don't know - there's so many - I guess you can say in the magazines and on the telly - so many slim people - so many toned people. You think - shit, do I need to be like that? I'm doing it for myself - don't get me wrong - 'cos it makes you look better - you know - I mean, I'm now starting to fit into clothes that like, I didn't do when I didn't do exercise, and my legs are starting to tone up now, and I have started to notice changes, which I'm thinking - ooh - yeah - I'm happier with myself now, and it does make me a more confident person, if I'm happy with the way I look."

(18, Employed)

"I really wanna tone up - I guess I - 'cos I'm going on holiday in September, and I'm thinking, bikini body - here I come. Image is everything - it's a lot nowadays. People judge you from your image first, before they know and I want to have like, a - quite a nice image. I've got a curvy body, so I just keep it like that - just tone it up a bit and I'll be happy."

(17, College)

These young women very rarely reported feeling self-conscious or embarrassed when getting involved in sport. Again, in contrast to the young

women who 'never' participate, feelings of self-consciousness do not appear to be having a detrimental impact upon the decision to participate in sport for this group of young women. For example:

"No - not really. I'm not embarrassed about doing sports - even with like, boys and stuff like that, 'cos I'm quite good at sport I reckon, so I'm quite high level with the boys, so - it's nothing really."

(17, College)

4.8.5 Social and community networks

In the interviews we explored how the young women's social networks influence their participation. These factors were as follows:

Influenced by others

Being influenced by other people appeared to be an important factor when explaining current level of sport participation, for those young women that 'sometimes' choose to participate.

"Quite easily because my friend does it a lot, so she's always saying come along to the gym and - you know - that's it really good - so, quite influenced by friends."

(16, College)

"Quite influenced, 'cos if all - if all my friends always like, went jogging or something, like, I'd probably go with them. But because they don't, I don't wanna go out on my own and go jogging."

(15, Yr 10 School)

Social life – does it support or hinder involvement?

There were very mixed reports from this group of young women regarding whether social life supports or hinders participation in sport. Many comments highlighted that the role of social life could potentially have a negative impact upon the decision to participate in sport, yet for these women personally, it was not considered a very important factor when explaining their current level of sport participation. For example:

"Well, I think it's kind of medium - sometimes I go swimming or running with friends. I haven't been swimming with them for ages, but I went running with my friend the other day. We go out but that does not really support sport - I'd say it's a medium - it depends what we feel like doing."

(16, College)

"I suppose it gets in the way a bit because hanging around with friends - you don't tend to do sport when you hang around with friends, do you, really? And that's just how it is. So, it gets in the way a bit, but then again, it - it doesn't, really. Because you can do sport whenever you want - it's what you choose, and it does in the way that you go with your friends - it's a bit in between."

(17, College)

Role of friends

Young women who 'sometimes' participate in sport and physical activity reported a mixture of both active and inactive friends. It is interesting to note that in the other groups of young women, there was a very obvious pattern - young women who 'always' participate mostly reporting active friends, and in contrast young women who 'never' participate mostly reporting inactive friends. This group however were more likely to report a mixture of both active and inactive friends, suggesting that the friends chosen to spend time with might impact upon the decision to 'sometimes' participate in sport. For example:

"Well, my friend's a runner - she runs for Brighton & Hove. And some of my friends do like, football and stuff, but others don't really do - get into sports."

(17, College)

When asked how important the role of friends is perceived to be in determining or influencing the decision to 'sometimes' get involved in sport, this group of young women frequently reported that the role of friends is an important factor in influencing this decision. As these young women explain:

"Yeah, 'cos it's, like - if they wanna go somewhere and then I'll go with 'em - d'you know what I mean? And then, like - if they don't wanna go anywhere, then we won't - we'll all just like, stay in the house and that."

(15, Yr 10 School)

"If your friends are, like - go out and do things with you, then you're gonna be more active. And if they do encourage you to do anything, you're gonna be more active. But if they didn't encourage you to do anything, and the ones who don't do anything, then you'd not want to be left out and not do anything either."

(16, Yr 11 School)

Role of family

The majority of young women who 'sometimes' participate in sport and physical activity reported living with at least some active family members, and

there were several reports of whole family involvement and support from parents. For example:

“We do bike-riding together, and then football is a big thing with my brothers and then my sister does a lot of netball and things like that and my mum does join in now and again, so - and my dad does basketball and hockey and all of that, so - yeah - it is a pretty active household!”

(15, Yr 10 School)

“Well, I suppose they feel the same way that I do, that like, the future - you do need to be healthy and my mum especially, 'cos she does a lot of things with like, caring - she does a lot of exercise herself for health and - and my dad's like, a fitness fanatic so - yeah. But it really isn't like, a major thing, so - say like, if a competition - they'll come along and support me on that and whenever I've got like, the odd occasion where I'm training or something, and they've got like, spare time - they come down and watch me.”

(17, College)

In general this group of young women did not rate the role of family as highly as the role of their friends in influencing level of sport participation, several of them suggesting that the decision to participate is more a result of personal choice.

“Mmm - no, not really - 'cos I haven't like, when I was younger, they did a lot of sport anyway, and I didn't really feel influenced then and I don't really feel like - oh, they do a lot of sport, so I have to - just to make myself part of the family. I don't really feel the need for compulsive sport. I don't feel influenced by them in any way, so it doesn't really bother me on how much they do.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

4.9 Main determinants – Summary

The young women who ‘sometimes’ participate were asked to suggest the main reason or explanation for their current level of sport participation. Responses to this question were related to two main issues, as follows:

- Influence of family and friends

“Family and friends. Because they're like, with you every day - and you see them every day - and if they don't do it, then you've got no-one - a lot of people don't like being on their own - I don't like being on my own - so, the - they're more important to me when I make my decisions, that's my main view on how I do sport - with them or without them.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

- Time and self-motivation

“Time. How much time I have - and self-motivation! Which can be a bit lacking sometimes. Yeah, just generally time and mood and having energy for other things. Yeah - that sort of thing.”

(16, College)

In addition, each young woman was also asked to suggest which of the three main categories of influences or determinants (environment, transitions or psychosocial) was the most important in explaining their current level of sport participation. The majority of young women who ‘sometimes’ participate in sport reported that psychosocial issues, in particular the influence of friends and the family, are the most important determinants of whether they ‘sometimes’ participate in sport.

“I suppose family and friends - with a pretty active life, so - I think that's influenced me most of all.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

Chapter summary

This section briefly summarises the main findings under each heading:

History

- Young women who ‘sometimes’ participate in sport and physical activity report positive early experiences of sport. However, there were slightly negative reports of mixing with the opposite sex, due to feelings of self-consciousness. This group were mixed in their opinions of whether or not early experiences impacted upon how they currently felt about sport.
- The vast majority of these young women reported that their levels of sport participation had dropped, due to two main reasons – lack of facilities and opportunities, and transitions / changes in lifestyle.

Current lifestyle

- This group of young women felt that to some extent their current lifestyle hindered their ability to participate in sport, most commonly due to lack of time, lack of energy, and lack of opportunity.

Initial explanations

- When asked to describe the main reasons or motivations, young women who ‘sometimes’ participate suggested a number of different factors that might encourage them or discourage them to sometimes participate. Positive influences were reported to be the need to feel

healthy and compensate for poor eating habits, and having something worthwhile to do in spare time. Negative impacts were reported to be lack of spare time and energy due to current lifestyle, not knowing what to do or who to do it with, and lack of opportunity.

- This group of young women reported liking many elements of sport participation, including feeling good about themselves, and socialising and having fun. They also reported health benefits, the development of new skills, and meeting new people as the advantages of participating in sport.

Environment

- There were mixed views from this group regarding the environment, with more negative reports emerging when compared to the other groups. They were generally positive in reports of public transport, but frequently reported limited facilities and opportunities to get involved in sport in their local area. There were also several reports suggesting the perceived barriers between young women and sport participation when considering accessibility of facilities, with several young women feeling intimidated when trying to approach the facilities. This group of young women felt that the role of the environment is of relative importance when trying to explain their current level of sport participation.

Transitions

- Young women who 'sometimes' participate in sport and physical activity felt that transitions, within education or from education to employment, had a negative impact upon their level of sport participation. They also reported several additional examples of lifestyle changes that has also had a detrimental impact upon sport, including a family member dying, moving house, and personal / relationship problems.

Psychosocial issues

- This group of young women appeared to have limited awareness of the opportunities for them to get involved in sport, and several people acknowledged that advertising and information is restricted to facilities such as leisure centres and gyms, and fails to advertise a wider range of choices.
- This group of young women felt that the role of personal choice is very important when explaining their current level of sport participation. In addition, the majority felt that they did not make enough personal effort to get involved in sport, and felt there was a certain amount of hassle associated with sport participation, including filling in forms, having to prove your age, and being able to afford membership. These issues

were considered very important when determining the decision to 'sometimes' participate.

- The majority of this group of young women held a positive image of sport, but very few reported sporting role models. These young women had positive perceptions of themselves in sport, and in contrast to the young women who 'never' participate (see next chapter), it was apparent that self-perceptions were not having a negative impact.
- The issue of appearance and weight was clearly one of importance to this group of young women, with several of them suggesting that they participate in sport in order to lose weight or gain a desirable figure. However, these women rarely reported feeling self-conscious or embarrassed when participating in sport.
- Being influenced by others was an important issue for this group of young women. These women reported a mixture of both active and inactive friends, and perceived the role of friends to be an important one in influencing their decision to participate in sport.
- The majority of young women who 'sometimes' participate in sport lived with at least some active family members, and there were reports of whole family involvement in sport. Although the role of the family was recognised as important in determining their participation, it was not deemed as influential as their peers.

Summing-up

- To summarise, young women who 'sometimes' participate in sport suggested two main issues that are important in influencing this decision – the role of friends and family, and time and self-motivation.
- When asked about the most important set of determinants explaining current levels of sport participation, this group reported that psychosocial issues, including the role of friends and family, are the most important, in comparison to the role of the environmental issues and transitions / lifestyle changes.

5.0 RESULTS (3): **YOUNG WOMEN WHO ‘NEVER’** **PARTICIPATE IN SPORT**

This section outlines the main reasons and motivations given by those 28 young women who never or very rarely participate in sport or physical activity, for their current level of sport participation. The topics covered, in relation to sport participation, are:

- Sample characteristics
- Spare time
- History of sport and physical activity
- Current lifestyle – what supports or hinders sport participation?
- Initial explanations – what do you think?
- Determinants 1 – environment
- Determinants 2 – transitions
- Determinants 3 – psychosocial issues
- Main determinants – summary.

5.1 Characteristics of young women who **‘never’ participate**

The characteristics of the 28 young women who ‘never’ participate were as follows:

Age (years)	N	(%)
15	3	(11%)
16	3	(11%)
17	10	(36%)
18	6	(21%)
19	6	(21%)
<i>Total</i>	28	(100%)

Ethnicity	N	(%)
Asian	2	(7%)
Black	1	(4%)
White	25	(89%)
<i>Total</i>	28	(100%)

Life-stage	N	(%)
Year 10 school	2	(7%)
Year 11 school	4	(14.5%)
College	14	(50%)
First Year University	1	(3.5%)
Full-time employment	7	(25%)
<i>Total</i>	28	(100%)

5.2 Spare time

Young women who ‘never’ participate in sport and physical activity reported a range of alternative activities that they do in their spare time. Of these the most common reports were related to socialising, and included going to the cinema, shopping, going to the pub, and going clubbing. There were also reports, although not as frequently, in relation to reading, watching TV, playing and listening to music, scouts, and voluntary work.

“Well, as the majority of people my age, probably just going out with friends and going to the pub - going out clubbing sometimes - even though I’m not, like, a huge clubbing fan - like going to gigs a lot - seeing live music. But apart from that, I don’t really have much spare time”.

(17, College)

Thus the majority of the ‘nevers’ were involved in a range of activities in their spare time, few of which were sporting related.

5.3 History of participation in sport

Across the sample, the majority of young women who ‘never’ participate in sport reported positive early experiences and memories of getting involved in sport and physical activity. For example:

“Oh, I used to be in every sport possible when I was at school. I used to do the - all the - when we was at primary school, all the little kind of, games and sports days - they always did something with you. But then I went into cross-country - netball, football, hockey - everything - every sport available - it was perfect - fantastic.”

(18, Employed)

“Back in my junior school, I just loved sport - I always just - PE lessons were just like, my favourite lessons - just like, I used to - I loved netball and everything, so I always used to be part of the team and everything - so, sports day - I liked the sports day especially - I just really enjoyed that.”

(17, College)

However, it was noticeable within this group that getting involved in sports and physical activity became much less desirable within secondary school, with reports suggesting that during this transition sport became less of a fun thing to do and more competitive. This highlights the importance of life-style changes and transitions that young women experience early on in their lives, as a point at which levels of sport participation may drop. For example:

“ I think when I was really, really young, I was quite into sport - I was quite active. When I got to secondary school, I think it all went downhill. It wasn't really that much fun to do PE, so probably that's why I don't do that much sport - because I think - I don't associate it with like, a fun thing to do. It was more of a task, rather than an enjoyable thing.”

(18, College)

“ Yeah, I did do a lot of sport in primary school - well, not loads - but I did actually get involved. I was in the basketball team and the football team and stuff like that - I did some netball. But like, I - I dunno - but it sort of slipped, really, in (um) - I think in - in high school and it become a bit more pushy and bit more like, competitive and I'm not very competitive, so - 'cos it's like, they were quite hot on sport and stuff, so that sort of, put - put me off a bit, really.”

(17, College)

The vast majority of young women who never participate in sport reported not being bothered about mixing with the boys for P.E at school. Any negative comments in relation to early experiences of sport and mixing with the boys highlighted issues concerned with feeling self-conscious. These feelings appear to be closely related to embarrassment as a result of what you have to wear in P.E. Interestingly, these feelings of self-consciousness and embarrassment are still very noticeable within this group at an older age, and are often reported as a reason for not getting involved in sport and physical activity at the present time (see section 5.8). For example:

“I dunno - I think there was that whole thing like, the boys were macho and - you know - I can do this - I can do that - and then the girls just huddled up in their little groups and - you know - oh, my God - I can't believe I'm, like, having to wear these tiny shorts, kind of thing.”

(18, Employed)

“I think the self-consciousness was an issue - you didn't wanna be last in a race because you were afraid of what everyone else would think, or you didn't wanna get changed for PE because you were afraid of how you looked to everyone else.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

“-'cos I remember people used to get funny comments from the boys as they were going to the lesson and the there was a really silly comment

- I've only kind of, witnessed the one - but the boys were like, ' you wanna put your legs away in those shorts, 'cos they really don't look nice on you', or something. And it was just really out of order. And my friend who that happened to, she didn't really do PE (laughs) since then! She would be ill every lesson or something."

(16, Yr 11 School)

Further details about these topics are given below:

5.3.1 Early experiences impact upon sport

Young women who 'never' participate in sport and physical activity were asked to what extent their current level of sport participation is influenced by early experiences of getting involved in sport. Despite having generally positive experiences of sport at an early age, these young women frequently reported that their current level of sport is not determined by such early experiences. This is due to other priorities becoming more important as a result of growing up and having more responsibilities, or (looking back at school) because of timetabling issues. For example:

"No, because the PE lessons were only once a week and that wasn't enough to get you into it enough. Yes, the after-school lessons - I used to do trampolining of an evening - things like that - but it wasn't enough to keep you going with it all the time - only once a week - so it didn't - wasn't an impact of anything really."

(18, Employed)

" Well, I don't know - I think it's just sort of, growing up - getting a job - I haven't really had time to sort of, do it. I mean, if - I think if I did have more time, I might take part in stuff, but (um) at school, you actually sort of, have to, don't you? You have PE lessons, so it's something you have to go out and do. Whereas now, sort of, you have the choice to do it or - or not."

(19, Employed)

5.3.2 Change in level of sport participation

This group of young women were unanimous in their reports of partaking in less sport and physical activity as they have got older. Explanations for this drop in the amount of sport were related to five main areas, as follows:

- Sport is no longer compulsory as it was at school, so because I do not have to do it, I don't.

"One is probably like, in junior schools, you have teachers telling you to do it - but, you know, influencing - bugging you to do it. Now, 'cos no-one's telling you to do it, I guess in that sense, I've no-one telling me to do it. Plus, I don't have the like, the free time to like, spend on doing sport, so I guess they're the two major reasons why."

(17, College)

- Lack of spare time as got older due to college, working etc, and other priorities for the spare time that I have got.

“Definitely just being under a lot more - a lot more stress and not really - and not having the time and not having energy to - to do some sport.”

(18, College)

“The amount of work that I've had to do for school and college, mainly. Not leaving enough time to get it done.”

(18, College)

- Lack of interest in sport

“Lack of interest. Big lack of interest. And it's just - it feels - as I said, it's not associated with doing something that's enjoyable. It - it was more of a task for me, when I was younger. So, now I don't have to do it, so I won't do it.”

(18, Employed)

“I think it is something to do with age. I mean, it partially because just my life's changed a little bit and you have to put priorities and stuff like that. It's partly because I was never very active in the first place. And I think it is partly just because, as I got older, I just got less interested and sports did seem more of a boys' thing than a girl' thing.”

(19, College)

- Feeling more self-conscious and embarrassed to get involved in sport as got older.

“Well, I wish I could do the same now but I do think I was - I don't know why - I just always feel embarrassed doing things like that now. I think it's - 'cos you - (um) from puberty and things like that because I've become more like, self-conscious and things like that - I'd care about stupid little things like, what I look like.”

(17, College)

“Self-confidence. You're more con - you're more aware of your - your body and what you're doing around other people. So, in secondary school, you have like, different groups - don't you? You have the geeks and then you have the popular people - well, it's kind of, not nice if you have got the popular people in the group to take the mickey out of you.”

(18, College)

- Social group does not get involved in sport

“I don't enjoy sport any more. Because - I don't - I don't really know - 'cos it's just - it's not my - in my social group any more, d'you know

what I mean? If all your friends aren't doing it, it's not fun any more, is it? I s'pose if I put my mind to it, you could probably like, make it social. But just - as - seeing as my friends haven't done it for years, I haven't either."

(18, Employed)

5.4 Current lifestyle

The young women within this group were asked to what extent their current lifestyle supported or hindered them getting involved in sport and physical activity. The vast majority of young women reported that their current lifestyle, whether in full-time education or full-time employment, hindered their involvement in sport. Explanations for this focused upon three main issues:

- Lack of time and lack of money

"A lot, because I don't give myself enough time to do anything. I don't - probably don't give myself enough spare time to actually make that an option - to go out and join a gym or whatever. But also, it's about money. So, I mean, I don't - I don't have a huge income, and I don't really get money off my parents, so the fact of going out and going swimming once or twice a week - I would have to pay for that and - I dunno - as a young person, I don't really wanna spend my money on stuff like that!"

(18, College)

"Well, like I say, I'm at college full-time and work both days at the weekend and if I do have any spare time, I tend to spend it on college work or going to work. So, I don't really have time to like, do other things."

(17, College)

"It's just I don't have time and I don't care enough to do it - it's - you know - I mean, I know I sound really like, a pathetic - you know - teenage right now but I really, really don't care - I really don't - I really - I - like I've already said, I'm not going to join a team just because I wanna become really very thin - I'm not gonna join a team because I'm really into sports, because I'm not any more - I just fell out of sports. And I'm really busy - I mean - I've got my A Levels - I've got work - you know - I've gotta go and sort out my university stuff - I've gotta pay some university bills - I really don't have time to be going to the gym. I mean, the only time I'd go and join a gym or do anything like that, is if I really had - you know - if I really don't have time right now, at this point in time, I don't."

(18, College)

- Lack of encouragement within current lifestyle

“Hinders it because - I mean, it's not - it's not overly encouraged at college unless you are a sporty person. Like, unless you're doing sports as a course, you don't really do it. It's that - yeah - so, if you're at college, unless you're participating in sport and you're, like, a big sports fan, you don't really do it, and the college doesn't really (um) over-encourage it. And then, as I said (laughs), I don't really wanna do it as a social activity because - probably because my group of friends, as a group, aren't overly sporty. So, if we were - we were all like, sports freaks - then, we probably would go and do sports, but we're not, so we just go down the pub!”

(17, College)

- Other things to do in spare time that take preference over doing sport

“I think it hinders - school work that we have to do at the moment - there isn't really much time to do sport, 'cos you're either revising - concentrating on work - or you wanna be out with your friends, 'cos you don't see them. I mean, again, it depends on like, if they're sporty friends, they'll be doing sport, but I don't really have any sporty friends!”

(16, Yr 11 School)

5.5 Initial explanations – what do you think?

The young women were asked to suggest what they believe to be the *main reasons* for their current level of sport participation. The young women who 'never' participate in sport and physical activity reported the main reasons or constraints being as follows:

- Practical issues – lack of time, lack of money, other priorities

“One, because it's quite pricey. Two, because I don't have a lot of time. And three, probably because - I - I don't enjoy it!”

(18, College)

- General lack of interest and enjoyment in sport

“Because I don't - I don't find sport particularly relaxing, or enjoyable - especially doing it on your own - I just - I don't see stand - standing in the gym or swimming up and down the swimming pool - that doesn't - that's not enjoyable to me. Unless other people are doing it with me, then I'll - but I wouldn't wanna just go on my own.”

(18, College)

“Main reasons for not doing sport at the moment is just because I don't wanna do sports. I haven't done it in ages - I'm not interested in it any more. I used to be relatively interested but I'm not any more - I've kind

of, grown out of it. I'd rather - I'd rather just get on - you know - I mean, I know I'm not totally unhealthy, so I'm not too stressed - I don't feel like, if I don't go out there and have a jog, I'm gonna suddenly grow obese - I know nothing like that's gonna happen - I eat relatively healthily, so I think if I'm healthy right now, then it's OK - I don't need to stress too much over it, and I'd rather just get my A Levels finished off properly this time and go to university."

(18, College)

- Other priorities – including education/employment commitments, socialising etc

"Just - I just don't have time, really. And if I did have the time, I'd just probably prefer to - to (um) go out with my friends or something, rather than - than (um) doing any sport, sort of thing."

(19, Employed)

"The amount of work I have to do for college - it's purely that, really. 'Cos if I didn't have (um) more college work to do, I would actually make an effort to do more sport."

(17, College)

- Social reasons – friends do not participate in sport

"The main reasons - because people who - my friends don't do it, probably - it sounds really shallow (laughs) but it's probably true. And just not making enough effort to do it, because of other commitments, like college and work."

(17, College)

"I don't have a real reason, it's just - I dunno - I just - I think a lot of it is my mates as well, because they don't get themselves involved in sports and stuff, so then I don't tend to get myself involved either - I just stick with them and we just go into town or something, instead of going to the gym, going to play football or something, so - I think my mates have a big impact on it, so - yeah."

(18, Employed)

The young women were also asked to suggest if they particularly *disliked* any aspect of sport, or anything associated with getting involved in sport and physical activity. Young women who 'never' participate in sport reported the main things that they disliked about sport as being:

- Feeling intimidated/self-conscious of doing sport in front of other people, and having a negative self-perception of themselves doing sport.

"Yeah - I think (laughs) because I'm not very good at it, I don't like the fact that I'm not good at it, really. So, I know that I'm not - it's not something that I'm good at, so I don't see why I should strain myself to

try and make an effort I s'pose getting too like, worked up and stuff - if I have to do it in front of other people, I'm not very good - it - I'm not very confident about doing it in front of other people, so I tend to not do so well at it."

(18, College)

"I don't know - one - one thing that gets me is sort of, (um) I - I think some classes - like, classes that you do are always like, too formal - it's quite sort of, intimidating if you wanna go there. Sort of, the thing I don't like is going there with a room full of people you don't know, and it's all too - bit too formal, sort of thing."

(19, Employed)

- Competition/effort associated with doing sport and physical activity.

"And the fact that I have to make so much effort. I mean, I'm not very competitive and I remember in school, girls getting really, really stressed out with me if I didn't try my absolute hardest, and me not caring, because it really that wasn't that important to win a game a game of netball or something. So, I - I - that's the sort of thing I don't like - I don't like competitiveness."

(17, College)

Interestingly, despite 'never' participating in sport and physical activity, this group of young women were able to suggest a wide range of *advantages* associated with participating in sport, and found it very difficult to highlight any disadvantages. Two main areas were discussed in relation to the advantages of participating in sport:

- Health benefits – keeping fit and relieving stress

"I think the advantages are - health-wise - keeping yourself fit and kind of, keeping your body in a certain shape that makes you feel more comfortable about it. And I think - I think it's when you give the - especially, like, I think for boys - it's good for them to have kind of, an output of like, aggression and energy. I think it's really good that you can let that out. And like, when - doing psychology, and like, the idea of like, stress builds up (um) like fats in your veins, so if you exercise, you can - you can burn all the stress, so I think - I think it's really beneficial"

(18, College)

"There aren't any disadvantages to doing sport because it's obviously really good for you (um) health-wise - mental health and physical health as well - both - if you're - yeah. And (um) - no, there's not any disadvantages at all - it's important."

(19, Employed)

- Development of personal and social skills

“I think the good things what you get out of sport is, you can - it really builds intelligent people who wanna learn about doing the particular sport or sports, what they're doing. You get to learn new things - new skills - and it builds up your stamina and stuff like that, and I think it's good”.

(16, Yr 11 School)

“I think it - I think it's a really good thing to get involved in because it does help keep you fit and healthy, and it is sociable to do sport - especially team sports - you know, like netball and football and stuff.”

(15, Yr 10 School)

“You become more active and more fit as well. You could meet a load of new people that you didn't think you could meet. And it is really social and if you don't wanna go on your own, you can always take a friend with you.”

(17, College)

Of the few disadvantages that were highlighted, these were most commonly related to feelings of self-consciousness, particularly in relation to the clothing that has to be worn during participation in sport.

“So I think - I think it's really beneficial. I think, negatively - I mean, I personally, as a - as a girl, kind of, tend to like, not wear very much - like, just wear some shorts and a t-shirt - I felt, kind of, a bit exposed by that. And I think at a certain age, you are very, very kind of, vulnerable and very insecure and it's - I think, kind of, having to show off your body so much isn't particularly nice. Especially doing like, gymnastics where it's all about what your body looks like. Yeah, I think generally sport is a very positive thing, but I just think it's not - it's really hard to team this time in young people's lives with sport, because people have so much going on.”

(18, College)

5.6 Determinants 1 – Environment

In general, the young women who ‘never’ participate in sport and physical activity were positive about the area in which they lived, and there were relatively few comments regarding negative issues concerned with their environment. The vast majority of this group of young women also reported feeling safe in the area in which they lived. For example:

“It's easy access - there's transport to get into town and where I need to go. It's not overly busy, so it's not like, really disruptive, and there's not, like - it's not very noisy. It's - I don't think there's, like - I mean, there's not loads of youths hanging around outside or anything. Which is good.”

(17, College)

When asked to comment upon the provision of public transport within the area in which they lived, young women who 'never' participate in sport were also generally positive:

"It is fantastic. Buses I don't really know, 'cos I always get the train. All - you've got the main train line from Brighton to London. So, it is easy to get on the train everywhere."

(18, Employed)

"It's - it's quite easy. We've got - like, if you just walk down the road, you've got a choice of like, 5 or 6 buses that run like, every 5, 10 minutes - so it's easy to get to where you wanna get."

(17, College)

Young women who 'never' participate in sport were slightly more negative in their reports of facilities and opportunities to get involved in sport, in the area in which they lived. For example:

"In my area, there isn't very much. Like, there's a - there's a swimming pool - a sort of outdoor swimming pool - but that's quite small, and it's not heated, so it's really cold (um) There isn't really that much in my area, but because it's quite central - I mean, down the hill, there's all sorts of, kind of - I think - you know - I think for somebody my age - just turned 18 - I mean, I can - I can go to pubs and stuff - but people much younger, there isn't really anything that's provided for them to do that's kind of, a - a safe and - safe and happy place to be. No - there isn't very much."

(18, College)

"We've got Adastra Park - which is just basically a park and if you wanna make activity you can, but there's nothing provided. And there's a gym - a tiny little gym at the top of the village and that's it. Nothing else at all."

(18, Employed)

Several comments also emerged from this group of young women, referring to the issue that facilities that are available may be unwelcoming for young people, particularly in terms of lengthy and uncomfortable joining procedures such as filling in forms and having a fitness test/being weighed.

"I don't - I don't think - think particularly welcome. Because I think that just - I think that {B} as a place is kind of, a bit scared of young people, and I think that they don't kind of, encourage young people to do very much, 'cos there is quite a lot of kind of, moral panic about young people being up to no good. So, I don't think that it's particularly - I don't think they

particularly encourage young people getting involved in anything.”

(18, College)

“Well, 'cos they're (um) a bit sort of, you have to have - be weighed - and you have to do this and you have to do that. And it's sort of, why can't you just go and say what you want to achieve and that's it, really.”

(17, Employed)

“Not really - it's - it's just about motivating yourself to be able to do it. It's like, sometimes I'm - I really feel like, oh yeah - you know - I wanna go join up with the gym, but you just never get round to doing it because it takes time and you've gotta fill out loads of forms, and it's just being bothered to do it.”

(16, Yr 11 School)

When asked if the facilities and opportunities that were available were accessible to young women, responses were varied. Some believed the facilities to be accessible should they choose to use them, whilst others felt that the facilities were too expensive and difficult to reach. However, despite the comments regarding sports facilities and opportunities being unwelcoming and sometimes inaccessible, the young women who 'never' participate in sport generally believed that issues concerned with their environment do not play an important role when trying to explain why they do not participate in sport and physical activity. This factor is backed up by several comments made by the young women, suggesting that even though there may be plenty of opportunity for them to get involved in sport, other issues such as lack of time or 'being lazy' override the environment leading to positive uptake of physical activity. For example:

“No - even though there's quite a lot to do, it wouldn't make me do extra - it's just that the amount of exercise I do depends on how much time I've got on my hands and if I'm studying for college, I won't be doing exercise.”

(17, College)

“ I don't think they are because there's - there's cycle lanes and stuff like that all down the {L} Road, which is near where I live and (um) - yeah - it's totally - you're totally able to do stuff like that - there's the beach down the road for like, swimming or whatever, and there's like, Prince Regent and stuff. There's lots - there's lots of places to go but it just depends. No - I think it's just that I'm lazy (laughs) that's why I don't go!”

(18, College)

“ I don't think that for me, personally, they determine - because, obviously, the opportunities are there, but I'm just not doing it. So, I've - I don't think that that's the reason, really - for me.”

(19, Employed)

5.7 Determinants 2 – Transitions

The young women who 'never' participate in sport frequently recognised that transitions in their life, most commonly within education or from education to full-time employment, had a negative impact upon them participating in sport. An increase in workload/coursework as a result of the transition from school to college, or lack of energy as a result of moving into full-time employment were the most common explanations for the negative impact of transitions. For example:

“Just because at school, you have to do it. There's a certain (um) time allocated to do it, but now I'm working full-time, it's - it gets to the evening, it's like, oh - what am I gonna do tonight? And you don't really feel like going and doing sport - school, you're made to do sport - there's time allocated for it, but now I'm working that's like, pretty much all my day is - just at work.”

(17, Employed)

“When I used to be at college, I used to have a lot of half-days and part-time work, and so a lot of days off - I used to have a lot of spare time. Whereas now, going to full-time work, it's given me a lot less time to do anything and some nights, I wouldn't get home 'til - some nights, it's about 10 o'clock - so, it's changed completely on what I would do, definitely.”

(19, Employed)

There were also reports highlighting that during transitions within the education system, social groups change. In addition, during the transition to college there becomes a much more obvious divide between those people that do get involved in sport, and those people that do not. For example:

“I used to do loads of sport - I used to loads, especially at secondary school. I don't know why I did it - it's just that because there was so much, and it was like, kind of, expected - not expected but, just everyone did it, so it was more sociable. But I found at college, it was like, less - 'cos less people do it, it's quite cliquy - the actual social group that does do it - because you're either with them, or you're with the people that don't do sport. But at school, it's like everyone did it, so it was - it was just fun.”

(18, College)

There were also comments in relation to the more general transition of growing up and going through puberty, and this potential turning point during which levels of sport participation may drop.

“For me, personally, it was probably more to do with puberty and growing up, 'cos I was - at first, the transition between primary school

and secondary school and doing PE was more or less the same - I still just got on with doing PE - it didn't bother. Then, when puberty really started to kick in, that's when I just didn't wanna do it any more. So I didn't!

(16, Yr 11 School)

"I think it's - 'cos you - from puberty and things like that because I've become more like, self-conscious and things like that and I'd care about stupid little things like, what I look like."

(17, College)

5.8 Determinants 3 – Psychosocial issues

The main psychosocial determinants of the 'nevers' sports activity are detailed below:

5.8.1 Awareness

In general the young women who 'never' participate in sport and physical activity were not very aware of the types of facilities and opportunities for them to get involved in. However, as many of them acknowledged, this was often due to them not being interested in the facilities that were available, and not making the effort to seek this information. For example:

"No - as I said earlier, I don't - I don't really sort of, pay attention to sort of, things like that. I might sort of, read a notice as I'm walking along, but I wouldn't sort of, read into it or anything."

(19, Employed)

There were also several comments suggesting that poor awareness was due to lack of advertising that targeted young people:

"Because it's not really, in a way, advertised to me. So, it's not, like - nobody's flashing into my face and saying - hey, look - you can do this - kind of, why don't you go and give it a try. It - I don't really know what I could do - well, I know what I could do. I know the things that I could do, but it's not really, like, the facilities aren't really advertised to me, so I don't really think about it."

(18, College)

5.8.2 Personal choice, personal effort, and hassle

The vast majority of young women who 'never' participate in sport and physical activity recognised that as they have got older, what they choose to do in their spare time is very much down to personal choice. This was compared to when they were younger, when some elements of getting

involved in sport were compulsory, for example at school. They frequently recognised this as a point in which their level of sport participation dropped. For example:

"I think that is quite important, actually - 'cos when you get to decide for yourself, you can just think, oh - I can't be bothered to do it today. Or I haven't got the time to do it. But when you go to school and they make you do it, you do actually have - they do actually provide the time for you to get it done. So - when there's no-one there to tell you you've gotta do it, it's easier to say, no - I'm not gonna."

(18, Employed)

"Yeah - because like, when you're given choice it's like, unless you really, really enjoy it - like, were fanatic about sport - you wouldn't carry it on. Like me - yeah, I did enjoy it, but I wasn't crazy about it like some people are studying sport for their A Levels and stuff, so they're like, proper like, in love with sport. Whereas me, I enjoyed it but unless someone told me to do it, otherwise I wouldn't really think about doing it."

(17, College)

All of the young women who 'never' participate in sport and physical activity also acknowledged that they exert very little personal effort to try and get involved in sport. For example:

"I probably don't put any effort in whatsoever, to what I could be doing, basically. To when I used to be doing it, to what I'm doing now - I could be doing a bit more if I wanted to be."

(17, Employed)

In relation to personal effort, young women who 'never' participate in sport and physical activity were also asked if they perceived getting involved in sport to be too much hassle. The vast majority of these young women suggested that for them, getting involved in sport was indeed too much hassle. This was mainly due to two main reasons – having other commitments, and the procedures involved when trying to make the first step to getting involved in sport. As these young women explained it:

"Just getting down there - taking the time to go down there, and then you've gotta fill out forms or - and pay money and take like, fitness tests or something - and do all that. You can't just go down there and that's it - do it. It's like, making the effort to do it and then - I mean, once you've done it and you - you've joined up with it, you'll probably be - find it easier to go because you'll be like, oh - shall we just pop down there for a little while."

(17, Employed)

"I think it's, like - for me, it's quite a bit of a hassle because I don't really know where to go. So, it would take a lot of effort into try and finding a place and - you know - finding a place which is cheaper or

finding an active that I like, or - you know - experimenting with things that I could do to try and find the right thing. That would be quite a bit of an effort, so it's probably why I haven't done it yet."

(18, College)

5.8.3 Images and perceptions of sport

The majority of this group of young women had a generally positive image of sport, and easily recognised the advantages associated with participating in physical activity. However, several comments suggested that some aspects of the image of sport may be having a negative impact upon the uptake of physical activity. Negative images associated with sport for this group of young women were related to two main issues. Firstly, several comments were made regarding the perception that to get involved in sport you have to 'look the part' and be a fit and healthy person. For example:

"I'm - I'm not sure - (um) I'd say it's a bit out of reach, 'cos - for me - 'cos it's just (um) - yeah, it's sort of, all this doing sports sort of thing yeah - lots of fit people - you know - and totally the opposite of me, so - yeah, (um) - yeah, it's a bit like, 'cos I'm nowhere near anything like that, it would be difficult to get involved, 'cos you'd just look like a wally - yeah."

(16, Yr 11 School)

Additionally, there were also several comments regarding sport being associated with a 'towny' image, coupled with negative issues associated with the clothing that has to be worn when participating in sport. These negative images were particularly prevalent amongst those young women who pursued alternative past times, and it was apparent that there is a strong divide between those who choose to pursue sport and those who do not. As these young women explained:

"I - I don't know. It's, like - it's kind of, two different worlds. There's like, alternative music and then there's like, sport and things like that and - I dunno, it sounds really shallow, but I - I've never really thought about going to do sports."

(17, College)

"I guess it's probably relatively important - I mean, the adverts that are about sports, don't make me wanna do sports. Let's put it that way. I mean, you know, they're just advertisements really for Adidas - Adidas and Reebok or whatever. I don't - I don't like those companies. I dunno. I guess the whole thing just makes me giggle and think it's all a bit dorky."

(18, College)

Very few of the young women in this group reported having role models in sport, either in the media or people that they know. For example:

“No - 'cos we don't see enough of them. There's more about the pop stars and models and people like that. When it comes to sport, you only get a couple of people - ie Paula Radcliffe, on that one thing that she did - but then you get nothing after that, so it's not influencing anyone.”

(18, Employed)

Perceptions of personal ability in sport

With the exception of two people, all of the young women who 'never' participate in sport and physical activity held a negative perception of themselves when it came to getting involved in sport. Furthermore, the majority of them also recognised the detrimental effect that this negative perception has upon them getting involved in sport. For example:

“Because I'm quite - one of those persons, whereas if I'm not good at any - well, if I'm not good at something, I won't even attempt to try and be good at it, because I just think there's no point, 'cos I won't be good at it. (um) Whereas I'll probably strive more in things that I am good at.”

(18, College)

“I think I'm useless at sport - and I know I am. Because obviously, I don't do any sport - so, I'm not gonna be - I'm not very fit at all. I've never really had that much like, talent - so - but I know that that's not important, and I know that you can just do sport because it's fun, and it's doesn't matter what ability you are - you're not trying to aim for the Olympics, or anything stupid that like, but - yeah. It probably puts me off - actually, yeah - it probably does doing - going straight in to do like, a team sport with people I didn't know, because I'd feel stupid.”

(17, Employed)

5.8.4 Appearance and self-consciousness

Issues concerned with anxieties about appearance and feelings of self-consciousness were the most common of all those reported within the psychosocial determinants.

Some of the young women were keen to suggest that trying to lose weight or to gain a good figure would be one of their main reasons to participate in sport or physical activity. For example:

“Yeah - I would say that the reason that I would be doing exercise would be to lose weight.”

(19, Employed)

“I know most people go to the gym - girls-wise - that's the reason why they tend to do the sport - to look thin. And guys just to build up their

bodies, so - I think it is about appearance - why they do sport and not to do with getting fit"

(16, Yr 11 School)

Additionally, an overwhelming majority of the young women who 'never' participate in sport reported feeling self-conscious and embarrassed when it came to participating in sport. They cited this as one of the main reasons for their current level of sport participation:

"Probably when you sort of, maybe have to give an example, sort of, in front of the class or something, and everyone's watching you - like, oh my God - I can't do it. I think that would be quite an embarrassing situation!"

(15, Yr 10 School)

"But I wouldn't go on my own, 'cos I'd feel embarrassed to do it on my own. Embarrassed to walk into a gym full of people and then, they'll like, all stop and stare - it's like, oh!"

(17, Employed)

"Yeah - I'm quite self-conscious - that's why I wouldn't like, join any of these exercise classes or anything - so, I didn't have to do it in front of other people."

(18, College)

5.8.5 Social and community networks

A number of social and community influences on sports participation were identified. These were as follows:

Influenced by others

Responses relating to how easily young women were influenced by other people were varied between those who felt they were easily influenced by others such as family and friends, and those who were not.

"Yeah. There is a lot of groupings and there's, like - there's always one ring leader and everyone wants to be like them and everyone thinks they're really cool, and they don't - so, if this ring leader doesn't do sport, none of them will do sport."

(16, Yr 11 School)

"Not really influenced at all, 'cos a couple of people that I know do squash three times a week, but I don't go. They do their own thing in their own and if I don't wanna go, I don't go."

(18, Employed)

Social life – does it support or hinder sports participation?

The vast majority of young women who 'never' participate in sport and physical activity felt their social life significantly hindered their decision to get involved in sport. The role of their social life was in fact an important one when trying to explain their current level of sport participation. For example:

"It hinders it 'cos like, my social life just involves like, seeing your friends or going to the cinema or something with them. Yeah - I mean, if, like - if my social life involved going out with friends to do sports, then you'd obviously do it. But as it doesn't, it - you know - it's more like, going to the pub or - going round their house and having a chat or whatever."

(17, Employed)

"I'd possibly say hinders, because there isn't - there isn't anything that I can think of that's available to people that's like, a particularly sociable event between friends. I think at my age, like, you spend most of the time in a pub or a club, which isn't particularly beneficial upon our health or on our sporting - so, no - I'd say it probably does hinder sport. I don't think it's a very good reason, but I think - I dunno - I think if there was more emphasis on it being - of the benefits of sport - then it would be seen as more of a kind of, an acceptable thing to do with your friends. So, it would be more of an option rather than just going to the cinema or going for a meal or going out for a pint or going clubbing. If it was like, an option. I'm sure it is an option, but it's not a very overly-publicised option."

(18, College)

The role of the social group may also lead to long-term perceptions of sport, and social exclusion from getting involved in sport and physical activity may begin at an early age. As one young woman explained when asked in what ways she was different from her sporty sister:

"I think it's mainly social groups - the way - the perspective I had of it at school - I - I had quite a negative perspective of sport when I was at school. Whereas she's had quite a positive thing and it's been - I don't know - she's just got into this sort of, social atmosphere and social group, where it is actually OK to do sport and it's a very positive thing. Whereas it was not really that much of a cool thing when I was younger, so maybe that's what I've associated it with."

(17, College)

Role of friends

The majority of young women who 'never' participate in sport reported having inactive friends who generally enjoy doing the same things as themselves in their spare time, such as socialising. For example:

“All my friends do pretty much the same thing as me, you know - just sort of boyfriends and hanging out and gossiping and going to the cinema a lot and going out a lot and going to gigs a lot and that takes up a lot of your time - that's like, your spare time, if you know what I mean.”

(18, College)

When asked if their friends encouraged or supported them to get involved in sport in any way, the majority of responses suggested that sport is not something that they think or talk about as a group, so there is little opportunity for support or encouragement to take place.

“It's not really talked about, so it's not really something that we consider like, a subject to back each other up on or not.”

(17, College)

“I don't think anybody really cares - again, it's not something that comes into our life very often, so it doesn't matter.”

(19, Employed)

All of the young women were also asked the extent to which the role of friends influenced their decision to participate in sport. With the exception of three young women, all young women who 'never' participate in sport and physical activity recognised that the role of their friends has a significant impact upon their decision to participate in sport. As these young women explain it:

“Yeah - 'cos if they were all gonna go and do some sport instead of going out, then we'd all go there and we'd all do the sport, instead of going to the pub or whatever we were doing - definitely.”

(18, College)

“Maybe a bit, because if I had somebody who was a bit kind of, oh - hello, let's go to - go swimming, or let's go do some sport or join something, then maybe it would be more of a push and more of like, a social activity that you can do. Whereas now, I'd probably just think of it as - oh, well - if I do go swimming or whatever, it would be by myself.”

(18, Employed)

There were also several suggestions highlighting the view that if the amount of sport their friends participated in changed, this may have a positive impact upon their own current level of sport participation. For example:

“I think if they did a little bit more, then I would as well, but I think it is - because they don't, then I think, well - if I go off to do something, then I'm missing out on something that they're doing or talking about. And then I'm just like, well - I don't wanna miss out on that, so I just don't go anywhere, 'cos I wanna be with them all the time. So - yeah - so - but I think if they got themselves a little bit more involved, then I would - I'd probably definitely get myself involved as well.”

(17, College)

Role of family

Young women who 'never' participate in sport frequently reported living in an inactive household or a household in which only some members were active. There were very few reports of families being active as a whole, or the young women partaking in sport or physical activity alongside family members. For example:

"I don't - I don't think they do much. Like, my dad - probably fishing - and that's about it. It's not very active. (um) My sisters are still at school, so they probably have to sort of, their PE lessons and things, but I don't think they do any out of school - where they choose to do something out of school, I don't think."

(19, Employed)

However, the young women in this group generally believed that family support would be available should they decide to pursue sport as a past-time, and the majority reported that they had been encouraged to participate in sport at an early age.

"Yeah - they encouraged me every day and every - every sports club that I was with, they encouraged me to do it and carry on, or if I didn't feel very well, I had to go any way - you know - things like that - they would always encourage me."

(18, Employed)

"Probably - 'cos they don't question it. You know - they don't - I'm sure if I wanted to do sport, they would support everything and help me out if it needed - you know - needed any help with it, or getting to places, or - they would support me, but they don't question why I don't do sport."

(17, College)

There were comments suggesting that this level of encouragement became too 'pushy' once the individual had established a personal disinterest in sport, which may have led to subsequent dislike of sport. For example:

"Maybe, because they were - they could have been maybe a bit pushy - like, I might have said, oh no - I don't wanna do it. And they've said, oh well - you will do it. You know? You should do it. So, it was - it was maybe again, like, seen as more of a thing that I had to do, rather than what I wanted to do."

(17, Employed)

Young women who 'never' participate in sport and physical activity were asked to what extent the role of their family influenced their current level of sport participation. Interestingly, the young women appeared to find the role of the family as less important than the role of friends, and several comments

emerged suggesting that getting involved in sport was down to personal choice and not influenced by the family. For example:

"I don't think it's important because I think I could make my own decisions if I wanted to do things."

(17, College)

These young women did however frequently report that if their families did more sport then this might have a positive impact upon how much sport and physical activity they themselves participate in. As these young women demonstrated:

"Yeah - so, if my parents were more sporty and they thought it was more important, then it's something I'd do a lot more because they would drive me to do it - influence me to do more."

(18, College)

"Yeah. I think parents have like, a big affect on their child's sport life. Like, if my parents - you know - one of 'em did sport, then it'd probably drive me to do more. Like, say, if my mum went to the gym, I'd go with her - but she doesn't."

(17, Employed)

"I think if my dad started again, it's gonna make me wanna do it again, because it'll mean we're all doing it as a family (um) - if my mum stopped completely, there's no reason for me to go back into it at all, 'cos no-one else is doing it, so why should I, basically."

(18, Employed)

5.9 Main determinants – summary

The young women who 'never' participate in sport and physical activity were asked to suggest the main reason or explanation for their current level of sport participation. Responses to this question were related to four main issues:

- Practical issues including lack of time and lack of money

"Most important influence - (um) I think it's mostly lack of time (um) but I think it is - (um) a big number - a large number of things, but it has actually - I'm always doing something that's not - that doesn't involve it. But yeah - I'd say that was the most important, but there are - it does run into a lot of other factors."

(18, Employed)

- Feeling intimidated and self-conscious to get involved in sport and feel that younger women do not fit in

“Even when you do pay, like, if you wanna go to the gym - you go in there and you get intimidated because it's not full of people my age. It's the older generation that go to gyms.”

(17, College)

- Lack of self-motivation or personal interest in sport

“Lack of motivation - that there's nothing around me that's saying, you've got to go and do sport and get fit. You know - just don't bother.”

(19, Employed)

“I just can't be bothered, really - that's my main reason. I just can't find time and just can't be bothered.”

(18, College)

- Friends

“Friends is probably a very, very big one - definitely. 'Cos the people you spend most of your time with, they're not doing it, so you're not gonna go and do it and then not spend time with them, definitely.”

(16, Yr 11 School)

In addition, each young woman was also asked to suggest which of the three main categories of influences or determinants (environment, transitions or psychosocial) was the most important in explaining their current level of sport participation. The majority of young women who ‘never’ participate in sport reported that psychosocial issues, in particular the role of family and friends, were by far the most important when explaining their current level of sport participation. For example:

“I think it's the family and friends and that - 'cos with the environment, it's not a bad place to be. There are - there are - I'm sure there are more things to do round here - I just don't know about them, 'cos I don't get myself involved. I think - I think that your family and friends are like, the biggest influence, 'cos like, if your family aren't gonna do it, then you're not gonna do it and then, if your family's more into going out, having a good time - like, going out for meals together as a family - then, you'd wanna do that instead of going out to play tennis or whatever. So yeah, again, your friends - if your friends don't do it, then I don't - you don't do it, kind of thing. So, I think that's the biggest influence.”

(17, College)

Chapter summary

History

- The majority of young women who ‘never’ participate in sport reported positive early memories and experiences of getting involved in sport

and physical activity. Negative early experiences were highlighted alongside the move to secondary school, at which point sport was believed to become less fun and more competitive. There were very few negative reports of mixing with the opposite sex in sport.

- Young women who 'never' participate in sport were unanimous in their reports of doing less sport as they have got older. The main explanations for this were related to sport no longer being compulsory, lack of spare time due to increase workload within education/employment, lack of interest in sport, feelings of self-consciousness, and belonging to social groups who do not partake in sport.

Current lifestyle

- The vast majority of young women within this group also suggested that their current lifestyles hindered getting involved in sport, due to reasons including lack of time and money, lack of encouragement within current lifestyle, and other priorities for spare time.

Initial explanations

- When asked to suggest the main reasons for not participating in sport and physical activity, responses were focussed upon four main issues – practical issues such as lack of time and money, general lack of interest and enjoyment in sport, other priorities including employment/education commitments, socialising etc, and social issues.
- The main things that this group of young women disliked about participating in sport and physical activity were feeling intimidated and self-conscious, and the competition associated with doing sport.
- This group of young women reported a wide variety of advantages associated with doing sport, including health benefits and the development of personal and social skills.

Environment

- Young women who 'never' participate in sport were generally positive in their reports of the area in which they lived. The vast majority reported feeling safe to go out and were positive in their reports of public transport.
- This group of young women were less positive in their reports of the types of facilities and opportunities for them to get involved in sport, and suggested that facilities can be unwelcoming and inaccessible.
- However, it was generally believed that practical issues concerned with the environment did not play an important role in explaining the current level of sport participation. Indeed, several comments indicated that

even though the opportunities were available for them, the decision to take up these opportunities was undermined by other factors such as lack of time or social groups.

Transitions

- Young women frequently recognised that transitions in their lives, within education or from education to employment, had a negative impact upon their level of sport. This was due to having less time, less energy, and social groups changing. The general transition of growing up may also lead to an increase in self-consciousness, again having a detrimental impact upon participation in sport.

Psychosocial issues

- Young women who 'never' participate in sport generally felt that they were unaware of the opportunities available for them to get involved in sport. This was due to a lack of self-motivation to seek this information, as well as lack of advertising that was targeted at young women.
- The vast majority of this group acknowledged that having the personal choice not to participate in sport upon reaching a certain age was an important reason for not participating. Furthermore, the group as a whole recognised that they made little personal effort to get involved in sport. They often find sport too much hassle, due to prioritising other commitments and lengthy joining procedures.
- This group had a generally positive image of sport and were aware of the benefits gained from participating. However, in relation to image, several comments highlighted the divide between the image of sport and the image of other hobbies, such as listening to 'alternative music'. Very few of the young women in this group highlighted sporting role models.
- The vast majority of these young women had a negative perception of themselves getting involved in sport, and frequently recognised the detrimental impact that this perception had upon them participating in sport.
- Anxieties about appearance, and feelings of self-consciousness and embarrassment when participating in sport were very common amongst this group of young women. Some young women cited feeling too self-conscious might be the only reason for them not participating in sport.
- The vast majority of women who 'never' participate in sport felt that their social life hindered involvement in physical activity. Most reported friends and social groups that were inactive, and furthermore recognised that the role of their friends had a negative impact upon them doing sport. They did suggest that if their friends participated in

sport, this might have a positive impact upon their own level of sport participation.

- These women frequently reported living in an inactive household and there was little suggestion of family members acting as sporting role models or whole family involvement in sport. However, the role and influence of the family in determining level of sport participation was generally believed to be less important than the role of friends.

Summing-up

- To summarise, young women who 'never' participate in sport suggested four main reasons for this – practical issues (lack of time and money), feelings of self-consciousness and intimidation, lack of self-motivation, and role of friends.
- When asked to report the most important set of determinants explaining current level of sport participation, these young women felt that psychosocial issues, particularly concerned with the role of friends, were the most important when trying to explain why they do not participate in sport.

6.0 RESULTS (4): YOUNG WOMEN'S VIEWS ABOUT HOW TO 'DRIVE UP' PARTICIPATION

This section describes some of the practical suggestions made by the young women, as to how to 'drive up' participation in sports and physical activity. This chapter is divided into two sections: encouraging and discouraging factors, and factors that could increase participation. These views expressed by the young women were incorporated into the more extensive practical recommendations outlined in Chapter 7.

6.1 Encouraging and discouraging factors in sports participation

First, it is useful to review the factors that encourage and discourage each of the three groups in the research, from engaging in sports and physical activity.

For young women who 'never' participate in sport and physical activity, the main things that discouraged sport participation were:

- Issues relating to lifestyle changes and transitions, and the subsequent lack of time as a result of such changes.
- Negative experiences of doing sport and physical education throughout secondary school.
- Social issues, including moving into friendship groups who do not participate in sport.
- Issues relating to feeling self-conscious
- Genuine dislike of sports and physical activity.

For young women who 'always' participate in sport and physical activity, the main things that encouraged sport participation were:

- Encouragement from family, friends and school.
- Personal goals and self-motivation to keep fit and healthy.
- Positive advertising and media images of sport (e.g. Olympics).

For young women who 'sometimes' participated in sport and physical activity, there were both encouraging and discouraging factors. The encouraging factors included:

- Encouragement from family, friends and school.
- Issues concerned with health (wanting to keep fit) and appearance (wanting to have a desirable figure).

The discouraging factors were:

- Feeling intimidated by other people when participating in sport.
- Transitions and lifestyle changes, leading to increased workload, less spare time, and lack of energy.

Based on these findings, the following section identifies factors that the young women believed could increase participation.

6.2 Factors that could increase sports participation

All the participants were asked to suggest things that would encourage them to participate in sport in the future, and to suggest ways in which other young women like themselves could be encouraged to participate in sport. The topic resulted in a wide range of suggestions, the ones most frequently reported were:

- Having more spare time in the future
- Support from encouraging friends and family
- Sports clubs and classes for beginners or existing friendship groups, to reduce feelings of embarrassment and intimidation
- Provision of a wider choice of facilities, and better advertising of the existing facilities
- Make sport more fun and less emphasis upon competition.

In addition, the following factors were considered particularly important:

➤ Make facilities cheaper

Many of the young women from the sample felt that this was an important issue, and felt that cheaper activities or opportunities to get involved in sport would have a positive impact upon sport participation. There were also several suggestions of free or reduced rate 'taster' sessions. For example:

“Not all of them need to be made cheaper, but I think if they do something like taster sessions and then they're free, and then you could get - and then it would like, get a lot of people involved and then they'd come back for more.”

➤ Make facilities easier to access

A large majority of young women felt that making facilities and opportunities to get involved in sport easier to access is very important. Several young women also acknowledged that this is particularly important if there is inadequate public transport or if you are unable to rely on parents for lifts. For example:

“Yeah - you've gotta think about people that can't drive - people that can't have their parents take them around - they've got to be easy to get to. There's pretty much gotta be somewhere in each area for that sort of thing.”

➤ **Motivate families**

The suggestion that families as a whole are motivated to participate in sport was also met with considerable enthusiasm by the young women, and the vast majority felt that this was an important way of trying to get young people to increase in levels of sport participation. For example:

“I think if one person in the family is motivated, then it, sort of - either it will bring everybody else up with them, or bring that person down - so, it is very important that the whole family needs to be quite motivated.”

➤ **Change the image of sport**

There were several interesting comments when the young women were asked if they felt that the image of sport needs to change. Most felt that it should – for example:

“Yeah - 'cos some people like, see sporty girls as like, more like - I dunno - more like, boyish and not as like, pretty, feminine girls - whereas it's not all sporty girls - like, they're not like that. So, I think there's a stereotype.”

“I think they - it should be made less - to look so hard - oh, gosh - you can't do that. But like, to be made so that you can do this, kind of thing.”

“Yeah - I think - I think that's important. The image of - I think some people think that sport's just there for fitness freaks and I think some people don't realise that it's there actually to have some fun - to actually enjoy yourself - and it's not all about - you know competition - it's about enjoying yourself.”

➤ **Provide women only facilities**

A large majority of the sample felt that the concept of women only facilities for sport participation was a very good idea, and that provision of such facilities would encourage more women as a whole to get involved in sport. For example:

“That'd be good because it makes it - 'cos men - not being sexist - well, I am - but they've got a bit of an ego-boost about being better

than women and at all sport and everything but it's not true. I mean, we've got great women athletes - Kelly Holmes and Ellen McArthur - we've just - we've got such great women athletes and I think it's really important that there is extra more facilities for women to compete, whether it be on their own or against men. I think to kind of make there some more equality as opposed to less equalities."

Thus providing women only facilities was something that many participants in the study considered could drive up sports participation.

➤ **Improve information and knowledge about physical activity and health**

Young women were asked if they were aware of how much sport they should be doing to keep themselves fit and healthy, and if they were aware of any guidelines regarding the recommended amount of sport. It was noticeable across the entire sample that young women aged between 15 and 19 years old have very limited awareness regarding recommended levels of sport and physical activity. It was often commented upon that, despite being unaware of guidelines relating to sport and physical activity, they were aware of other guidelines such as five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. For example:

"No - I really haven't got a clue. Don't they say something - at least 30 minutes a day or something? Or is that a bit extreme, or - it's like, I really haven't got the foggiest idea. I think enough just to keep you fit and healthy. It's all about the fruit and veg at the minute, ain't it? Eat this five times a day!"

Several of the young women did attempt to guess at what these guidelines might be, and it was clear from these estimates that there is a fair amount of confusion surrounding this area. For example:

"Yeah - I think there is, actually - yeah, there is guideline - I think they said - can't actually remember - I don't know if it's three hours a week or three hours a day - something - something like that."

It is possible that increasing young people's knowledge of the health benefits of increased physical activity could therefore be beneficial.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section covers:

- Summary of the main findings
- The role of key determinants – environment, transitions and psychosocial issues
- Implications for theory and practice
- Topics for future research.

7.1 Summary of main findings

The results are summarised below, in the form of the main findings for those who ‘always’, ‘sometimes’ and ‘never’ participate.

7.1.1 Young women who ‘always’ participate

History

- These young women had early positive experiences of sport, and reported regular participation from an early age. They did not report any negative experiences of mixing with the opposite sex in sport.
- This group felt they had participated in more sport as they have got older. This was as a result of ‘growing up’ and taking responsibility for their health, encouragement from family and teachers, and being in social groups that participate in sport.

Initial explanations

- Three main factors were identified initially as their main motivations for regular sports participation – health benefits, encouragement from school and family, and social advantages. Sport was seen as a way of having fun, and relieving stress.
- This group described sport as fun and exciting, a good social opportunity, and a way of participating in competition and performances.

Environment

- These young women were generally positive about the area in which they lived, reporting good public transport, and a wide range of facilities and opportunities for them to get involved in sport. However, many of

this group did not view environment as particularly crucial, with many being involved in sports outside of their local area.

Transitions

- These young women described transitions within education, or from education to employment, as having a negative impact upon participation in sport. However, many added that 'growing up' had a positive impact and meant that people needed self-motivation to get involved in sport. Many acknowledged the hassles that could be involved in sports participation, but felt that they made a lot of effort to get involved.

Psychosocial issues

- These young women generally viewed the psychosocial issues as more important than the influences of the environment or transitions.
- These young women said they were aware of the opportunities available to them to get involved, and there were reports of positive advertising such as posters and leaflets about local facilities.
- This group held a positive image of sport, and described many sporting role models. The vast majority of these women also had a positive perception of themselves in sport, and linked this perception to their level of sport participation.
- This group were aware of the link between exercise and their weight and appearance, but few cited this as a motivation for doing sport. These women rarely felt self-conscious when participating in sport.
- This group were part of social groups who also regularly participated in sport. This was considered to influence their ongoing high level of sports involvement.
- The majority of this group lived in 'active' households, where family members were sporting role models, and sport was often undertaken together. Family members encouraged each other to participate.

7.1.2 Young women who 'sometimes' participate

History

- This group reported early experiences of sport, although some gave negative reports of mixing with the opposite sex and feeling self-conscious. This group had mixed views about whether these early experiences impacted on how they currently felt about sport.

- These young women described a reduction in their levels of sports participation, as a result of lack of facilities and opportunities, and recent changes in their lifestyle. Factors that hindered their participation included lack of time, energy, and opportunity.

Initial explanations

- This group considered there were a range of influences on their sports participation. Positive influences were the need to feel healthy and compensate for poor eating habits, and having something worthwhile to do in their spare time. Negative impacts were a lack of spare time and energy, not knowing what to do or who to do it with, and lack of opportunity.
- This group liked many elements of sport participation, including feeling good about themselves, socialising and having fun, health benefits, the development of new skills, and meeting new people.

Environment

- There were mixed views from this group regarding their environment. They were generally positive about public transport locally, but also reported limited facilities and opportunities to get involved in sport. Some added that they felt intimidated when trying to use local facilities.

Transitions

- This group felt that transitions, within education or from education to employment, had a negative impact upon their level of sport participation. Other life circumstances had a detrimental impact upon sport, including moving house and personal / relationship problems.

Psychosocial issues

- These young women generally viewed the psychosocial issues as more important than the influences of the environment or transitions.
- This group had limited awareness of the opportunities for them to get involved in sport, and several believed that advertising and information was largely limited to leisure centres and gyms.
- This group felt that personal choice is very important in explaining their current level of sport participation. They felt that they did not make enough personal effort to get involved in sport, and described the 'hassles' associated with sports - filling in forms, having to prove your age, and having enough money to pay fees.

- This group held a positive image of sport, but very few had sporting role models. These young women also had generally positive perceptions of themselves in sport; self-perceptions were not seen to have a particularly negative impact on their level of participation.
- The issue of appearance and weight was important to this group, with several suggesting that they participate in sport in order to lose weight or gain a desirable figure.
- Being influenced by others was an important issue for this group of young women. These women reported a mixture of both active and inactive friends, and perceived the role of friends to be an important one in influencing their decision to participate in sport.
- The majority of young women who 'sometimes' participate in sport lived with at least some active family members, and there were reports of whole family involvement in sport. Although the role of the family was recognised as important in determining their participation, it was not deemed as influential as their peers.

7.1.3 Young women who 'never' participate

History

- This group generally had positive early memories of sport and physical activity. The move to secondary school was associated with sport becoming less fun and more competitive. There were very few reports of any negative experiences of mixing with the opposite sex.
- All this group did less sport as they got older. The main explanations were because sport was no longer compulsory, they had less time because of their education/employment commitments, they felt self-conscious, and they were part of social groups who did not participate in sport.

Initial explanations

- The main things this group disliked about sport and physical activity were feeling intimidated and self-conscious, and the competition associated with doing sport.
- This group recognised a wide variety of advantages of sport, including health benefits and the development of personal and social skills.

- However, a genuine viewpoint that several of these 'never' group mentioned was that they just disliked sport in general. It appeared that nothing could alter this deep-rooted belief.

Environment

- This group were generally positive about the area in which they lived. The vast majority felt safe to go out and were positive about public transport.
- This group were less positive of the facilities and opportunities to get involved in sport, and said that facilities can be unwelcoming. However, the young women believed that even where sporting facilities were available, they were more influenced by other factors such as lack of time or having friends who do not participate in sport.

Transitions

- This group felt that transitions in their lives, within education or from education to employment, had a negative impact upon their level of sport. This was due to having less time, less energy, and social groups changing. Some also described feeling more self-conscious.

Psychosocial issues

- These young women generally viewed the psychosocial issues as more important than the influences of the environment or transitions.
- This group were generally unaware of the opportunities available for them to get involved in sport. This was due to a lack of self-motivation to seek this information, as well as lack of advertising that was targeted at young women.
- This group recognised that they made little personal effort to get involved in sport. They often found sport too much hassle, due to prioritising other commitments and lengthy joining procedures.
- This group had a positive image of sport and were aware of the benefits. However several young women highlighted the divide between the image of sport and the image of other hobbies, such as listening to alternative music. Very few of the young women in this group highlighted sporting role models.
- The vast majority of these young women had a negative perception of their sporting ability, and said this made them less likely to get involved.
- Many in this group were anxious about their appearance, and said this was a major reason for them not participating in sport.

- The majority of this group said that their social life hindered involvement in physical activity. Their friends and social groups were inactive, and this made them less likely to get involved. Many added that if their friends participated in sport, this might have a positive impact upon their own level of sport participation.
- These women often lived in an inactive household, and few described family members as sporting role models. Family influences on sports participation were seen as less important than friends.

7.2 The role of determinants – environment, transitions, and psychosocial issues

The current research has been concerned with exploring the role of three main determinants upon participation in sport – the environment, lifestyle transitions, and psychosocial issues. This section briefly summarises the role of each of these factors.

First, the role of the *environment*, including the provision of facilities, is not considered to be a very important one when determining young women's level of sport participation. This was demonstrated in both (i) young women who always participate, yet acknowledge that much of this participation goes on outside of their immediate environment, and by (ii) young women who never participate, despite provision of adequate sporting facilities in their surrounding environment.

The role of *transitions* was considered by all young women in the current research to be one of significant importance when explaining levels of sport participation. In general, all of the young women across the entire sample acknowledged that lifestyle changes, for example from school to college, college to university, or education to employment, have had a detrimental impact upon participating in sport. This was due to a decrease in spare time, money, and energy, and an increase in workload. However, young women who still participate in sport, despite recognising the negative impact of transitions, also acknowledged the transition of growing up and taking responsibility for personal health and fitness.

Psychosocial issues within the current research have been found to be the most important set of determinants when explaining level of sport participation. By far the most important influence across the entire sample has been found to be the role of friends and family. Young women who always participate frequently report active friends and family, and in contrast young women who never participate report inactive friends and family. All of the young women also acknowledged the role of social influences as being an important one when explaining their current level of sport.

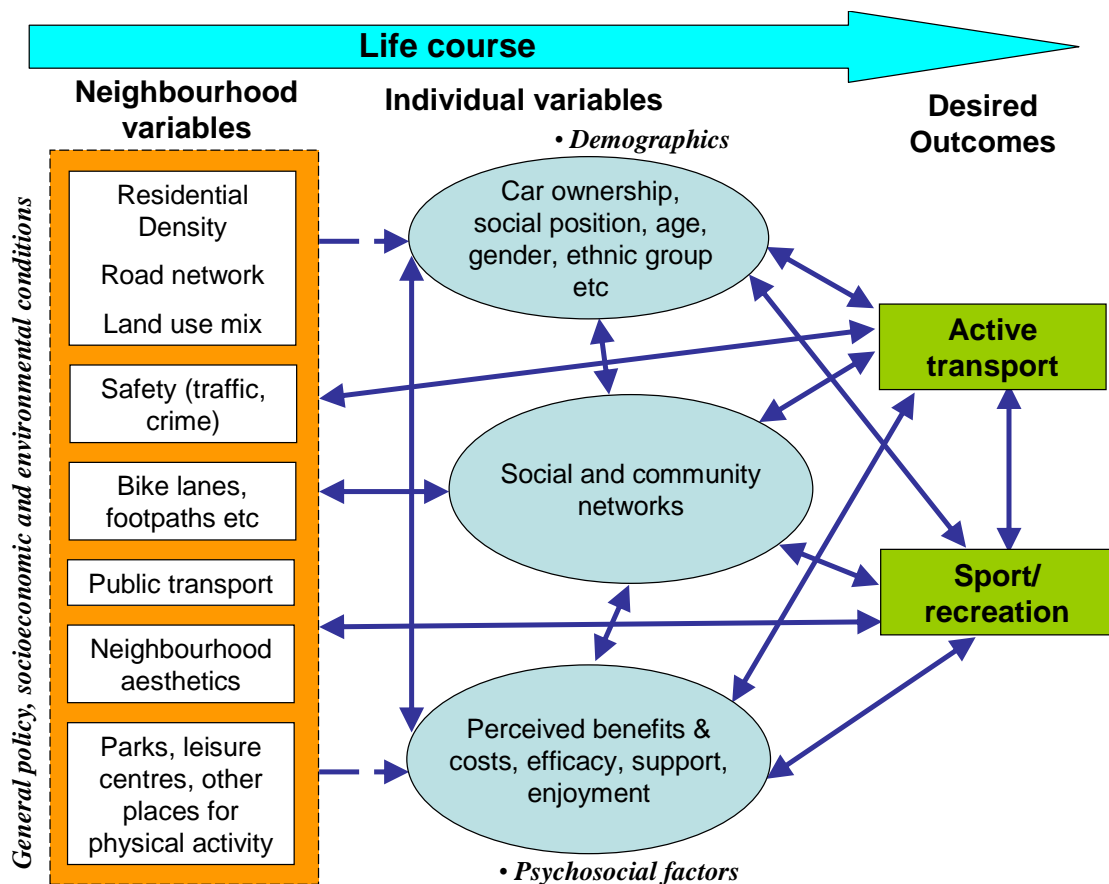
The current research has also identified more complex psychosocial issues that are very important when trying to explain participation in sport. Again in

direct contrast, young women who always participate report not feeling self-conscious when participating, and hold very positive self-perceptions of themselves in sport. However, young women who never participate were almost unanimous in their association of feeling self-conscious and embarrassed with sport, and holding negative perceptions of themselves in sport. Psychosocial issues identified in this research clearly warrant further attention, to more fully understand the complex processes involved when making the decision to participate in sport.

7.3 Implications for theory and practice

The research described in this report was undertaken in order to provide qualitative information, about young people’s involvement in sport and physical activity. It followed research undertaken for Sport England (specifically the development of the ‘Oxford model’ – Figure 1), and research undertaken by Biddle et al (2005) in Scotland. The Oxford model is as follows:

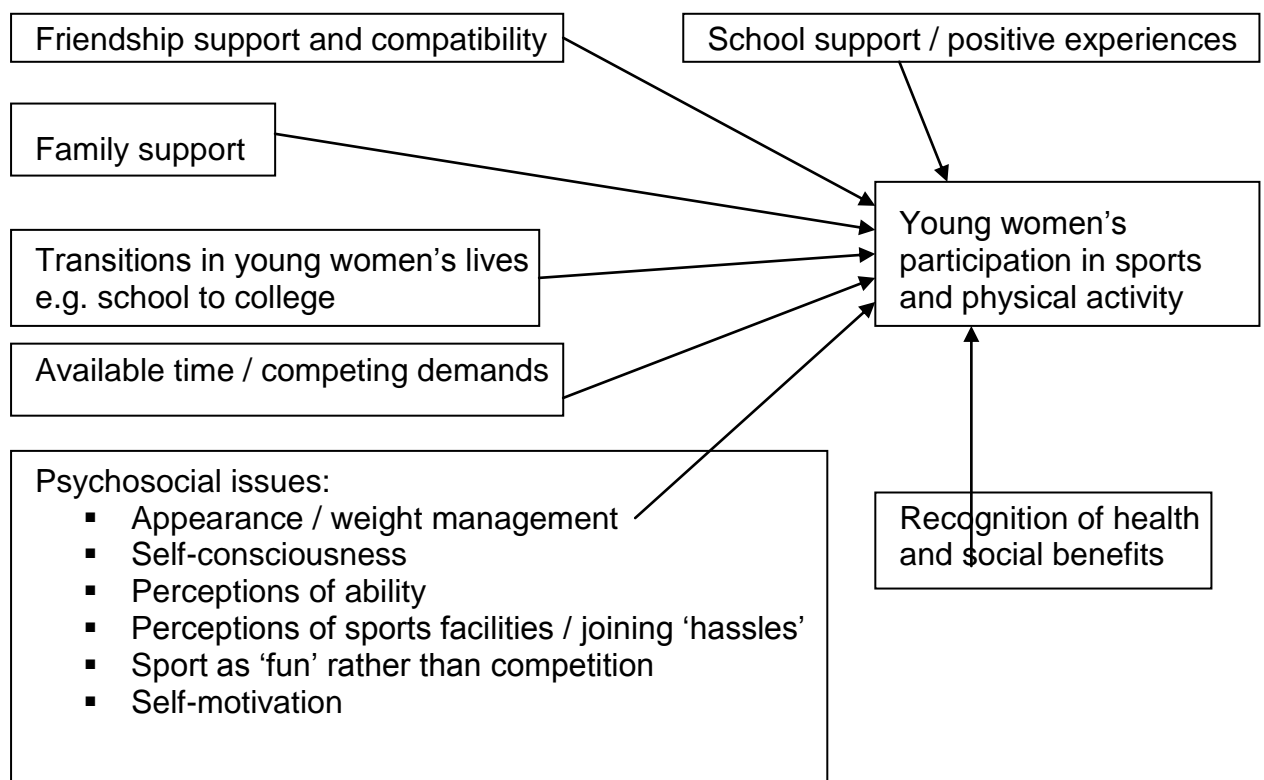
Figure 1 – Theoretical model of sporting behaviour



Reprinted with permission from Dr M. Hillsdon

The Oxford model of sport participation links together the factors that are likely to influence an individual's participation in sport and physical activity. The research described here has added new and valuable information about young women's participation in sports and physical activity, and therefore contributes towards further refinement of the model. It has demonstrated the distinct characteristics of young women who 'always', 'never', and 'sometimes' participate, and the link between these different levels of participation and the influence of family/friends, the local environment and facilities, self-perceptions, and broader lifestyle. In particular, the current research has identified the crucial role of lifestyle transitions that young women aged between 15 and 19 experience, for example within education or from education to employment, and the impact that lifestyle changes have upon sport participation. It has also identified a very significant role of complex psychosocial issues, including the role of self-confidence and personal perceptions of ability in sport, and the direct impact that these issues have upon participation in sport. Furthermore, the current research has found that above and beyond the role of environmental issues, such as provision of facilities, the role of family and friends is thought to be the most significant when influencing an individual's decision to participate in sport.

In consideration of these research findings, it is clear that the Oxford model contains factors which are of relevance to young women's sports and physical activity participation. Treating young women as a whole (as opposed to looking at groups of differing levels of participation), it is clear that some of these factors outlined in the Oxford model, and others, are particularly important. To summarise, we consider that the following illustration encapsulates the key determinants of sports and physical activity among young women aged 15-19. In view of extending the Oxford model to young women, these factors must be included:



The current research also reflects many of the findings of the Biddle et al (2005) study among girls aged 10-15 in Scotland – see Chapter 2 for a summary of their findings. For example, the ‘nevers’ (and to some extent the ‘sometimes’) in our TSA study reported many of the same views as those reported by Biddle and colleagues. For example, that sport is seen as too competitive, that there are not enough facilities available, and that girls do not see themselves as competent at sports. As such, TSA’s study has confirmed many of the findings of the previous research, but has also added new and valuable information. The most notable addition offered by this research, reflected perhaps by the older age group of our sample, is the importance of appearance and self-consciousness issues. Similarly, as an older age group, the importance of transitions in young women’s lives, and the greater role of friends and the social group, are important additions.

In view of these findings, linked both to previous theoretical and empirical research, there are a number of proposals for policy and practice initiatives that arise from this study. These include the following:

- a programme could be trialled that encourages sports *participation at a family level* – this might be particularly effective for the ‘never’ and ‘sometimes’ groups
- a programme could be trialled to get *families to be more supportive* towards their children’s sports participation (even if they are infrequently participating in sports or physical activity themselves)
- a programme could be initiated to encourage sports *participation among friendship groups*. Again, increasing accessibility (cost and provision) and focusing on ‘fun’ rather than competition would be important
- the provision of free *and reduced rate ‘taster’ sessions* could be trialled more extensively, to improve young women’s accessibility to sporting facilities and opportunities
- promoting sports *facilities to be more appealing* and less complicated for young women. To improve clarity over costs, ‘membership’ issues, ‘on-the-spot’ access, etc.
- further *advertising and promotional campaigns* could be undertaken, to change and improve the image of sport – this could focus on the fact that all young women can get involved and enjoy it, and that it is not just for ‘sporty’ types
- run more sessions that *focus on ‘fun’ sports and activities*, that do not have a competitive element – the research suggests that this could attract the ‘nevers’ in particular

- the results suggest that it might be valuable to provide a greater number of *women only sessions or facilities* – this would particularly help those women who feel uncomfortable doing sport in mixed sex groups
- provide *support to young women during key transitions* in their lives where levels of sports participation may be affected e.g. during the transition from primary to secondary school, or leaving school for employment.

In addition, it is essential that any new initiative that is provided (such as those described above) is fully evaluated.

7.4 Topics for future research

This research has covered a range of issues, and provided some valuable information about young women's sports participation. However, as with any piece of research, it has also generated further issues. There are a number of further questions raised by this research that should be explored in the future. These include:

- How does social group membership affect young women's participation in sport? The research has demonstrated some aspects of this relationship, but further research is needed to explore it in detail.
- How do families play such a key role in determining participation levels. Do families have to participate themselves to be supportive? Or is encouragement / interest more important? How important are aspects of financial and transport support from families? Which family members are most influential?
- What are young people's levels of knowledge and understanding about the health benefits of regular sports and physical activity participation? In this study many of the young women talked about fruit and vegetable consumption in relation to this question, rather than hours of physical activity per week – this is therefore an important topic for future research.
- Further investigation is clearly needed into the highly influential, although complex psychosocial issues. For example, are negative self-perceptions that young women hold of themselves in sport accurate? What are these based upon? Who are they in comparison to? Also, what about perceptions of appearance and self-consciousness in young women? What are the main concerns – their ability? Weight? Sweating and appearance as a

result of sport? Clothing requirements? Showers? These are important topics for the future.

- Conducting research among young women not sufficiently represented in this research. Such as young women from Black and Minority Ethnic groups, young disabled women, and those from more deprived socio-economic areas.
- Further work into the nature of the facilities that put some young women off from taking part. What could be done to make sports facilities more young-women friendly?
- Look for success stories. An interesting and rewarding piece of research could focus on exploring the beliefs and attitudes of young women who have recently moved from 'never' to 'always' participating in sports and physical activities (potentially accessible from a screening tool as used in this research). Why did they change their level of participation? What made the difference? What worked for them? What can we learn from these women?
- Conducting a longitudinal study following young women at key time points in their lives. For example, during their last year at school and again at first year at college to explore, in detail, the influence of this key transition. This will enable a greater insight into how this may be detrimental to participation levels (rather than through retrospective accounts), with a view to designing interventions to maintain participation levels.

In addition, further analysis of this rich data set is required. There are a number of issues still to be explored, including:

- To further explore and analyse themes across all groups – for example the limited role of environmental factors, the key role of the family, etc.
- To prepare some case studies of young women who live in the same area/environment, but who have who have different levels of participation – what factors account for this?
- To look for exceptions – for example young women who are interested in alternative music, but who are involved in sports. Some young women in the study considered these two interests to be incompatible.
- Further analysis of young women at distinct lifestyle stages. For example, further analysis of all those young women at school, compared to all those at college or university or all those in employment, would allow for more specific investigation into the impact of specific lifestyle transitions.

- Further analysis of the diaries returned and completed by the young women, enabling access to information recording decisions about participation in sport as it happens.

REFERENCES

Balding, J. (2004). *Young people in 2003*. Exeter: Schools Health Education Unit.

Biddle, S., Coalter, F., O'Donovan, T., MacBeth, J., Nevill, M. and Whitehead, S. (2005). *Increasing Demand for Sport and Physical Activity by Girls*. Edinburgh: Sport Scotland.

Cockburn, C., and Clarke, G. (2002). "Everybody's looking at you!": Girls negotiating the "feminicity deficit" they incur in physical education. *Women Studies International Forum*, 25, 651-655.

Coleman, J. and Schofield, J. (2005). *Key Data on Adolescence 2005*. Brighton: Trust for the Study of Adolescence.

Council of Europe (2001). *European Sports Charter*. Brussels: Council of Europe.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2003). *Every Child Matters*. London: The Stationery Office.

Strategy Unit / DCMS (2002). *Game Plan: a strategy for delivering Government's sport and physical activity objectives*.

University of Oxford British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group (2005). *Understanding participation in sport: A systematic review*. Sport England.

Youth Matters Green Paper (2005) Department for Education and Skills.