

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY  
(Kuring-gai Campus)**

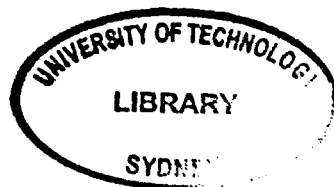
**'IT WASN'T ME IT WAS MY SOCCER  
BOOTS!'**

**Women, Sport and Identity: An Exploration of  
Identity through Amateur Women's Soccer**

**by**

**Jacinta Ledlin**

**Submitted in fulfillment of  
Master of Arts (Sports Studies)  
2007**



***Students are required to make a declaration when they submit the thesis for examination. Here is a recommended form of words.***

### **CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

**Signature of Candidate**

Production Note:  
Signature removed prior to publication.

---

## **Acknowledgements**

I am very grateful to all the people who have assisted me in this study. This includes sincere thanks to my university supervisors with whom I was blessed, Dr Carmel Foley and Professor Kristine Toohey; their guidance and support helped me to stay inspired and keep thinking and moving forward even when it appeared that I had ground to a halt. I am also indebted to my friends and family for their ongoing support. I would particularly like to thank my mother Colleen and aunts Maureen and Patricia who as educated women elders in my family generously gave their time, intellect and life experience to invaluable discussion about this study. To James Harrison, my fellow researcher, thanks for wonderful discussions, good tips and sometimes a tough word or two. Thank you also to the football club, administrators and coaches. Naturally, this study would not have been possible without the generous contributions of the women who participated in the study. I am eternally grateful to them for sharing their feelings and lived experiences with me. I have savoured their stories and will always hold the essence of this experience in my heart – thank you.

# CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>(ii)</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>(vi)</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background to the study	1
1.2 The research question	4
1.3 The research topic	7
1.3.1 Justification of the research topic	7
1.3.2 Significance of sports participation	7
1.3.3 Women's amateur football as a case study	9
1.4 Terminology	9
1.5 Summary	10
<b>2. LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 Introduction	11
2.2 Interpreting Identity	12
2.3 Women and Identity	14
2.4 Sports and Identity	14
2.5 Women, Sport and Identity	15
2.6 From a Dribble to a Mighty Roar <i>The history to women playing football in Australia</i>	17
2.6.1 Introduction	17
2.6.2 Soccer History of the World	17
2.6.3 Women in Sports	19
2.6.4 The Future of Football is Feminine	21
2.6.4.1 China	22
2.6.4.2 Austria	23
2.6.4.3 Britain	24
2.6.4.4 U.S.A	25
2.6.4.5 Germany	26
2.6.5 International Competition	27
2.7 Football History in Australia – A Social History	28
2.7.1 Australia and Sport	28
2.7.2 Australian Sport after British Settlement	28
2.7.3 Men's Football in Australia	29
2.8 Australian Women in Sport	32
2.9 Australian Women as Football Players	35
2.10 Summary	39
<b>3. METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>39</b>
3.1 Introduction	39
3.2 Research Principles and Paradigms	39
3.3 Using Qualitative Methodology	41

3.3.1	Sample Selection	41
3.3.2	The Role of the Researcher	42
3.3.3	Individual In-depth Interviews	43
3.3.4	Participant Observation	44
3.3.5	Reflexivity	44
3.4	Analysis of the Data	45
3.5	Limits of the Study	45
3.6	Summary	46

## **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION** **47**

---

4.1	Introduction	47
4.1.1	The Informants: Their Background	47
4.2	Setting the Scene	48
4.2.1	Popular Lore about Women's Football	48
4.2.1.1	Football is a Guy's Sport	49
4.2.1.2	Women who play Football are all Lesbian	50
4.2.1.3	Playing Football Makes you Fit	51
4.2.1.4	You Must be 'Sporty' to Play Football	51
4.2.1.5	Women's Football is not Taken Seriously	52
4.3	More than a Game – the Football Experience	53
4.3.1	The 'F' Word	53
4.3.1.1	Strength of Friendships	54
4.3.1.2	Attachment	54
4.3.1.3	Motivation	54
4.3.1.4	The Need to be Heard	55
4.3.1.5	Connections	56
4.3.2	The Search for 'me' in Team	57
4.3.2.1	More Connections	57
4.3.2.2	Commitment	58
4.3.2.3	Motivation	58
4.3.2.4	Diversity	58
4.3.3	My Body can Take it	60
4.3.3.1	Weight Control	60
4.3.3.2	Improved Body Shape	60
4.3.3.3	Increase Awareness and Respect for the Body	61
4.3.3.4	I Feel Stronger	61
4.3.3.5	Confidence	62
4.3.3.6	Badges of Honour	62
4.3.4	I Love a Bit of Aggression	64
4.3.4.1	Cathartic Experiences	65
4.3.5	Muscling Up – Alternative Femininities	66
4.3.6	Through the Looking Glass – It's Just about Me - Self	67
4.3.6.1	Time for Me	67
4.3.6.2	Occupying Self	68
4.3.6.3	Increased Awareness of Self	68
4.3.6.4	A Reflection of Our Lives	69
4.3.7	Agency	69

4.3.7.1	Choosing Role Models	70
4.3.7.2	Capability	70
4.3.7.3	The Need to be Heard	70
4.3.8	A Good Link – Gender relations	71
4.3.8.1	Men in the Family	71
4.3.8.2	Social Situations	72
4.3.8.3	Workplace	73
4.4	Coach	75
4.4.1	A Coach of Many Hats	75
4.4.1.1	Coach as Teacher	75
4.4.1.2	Coach as Life Coach	76
4.4.1.3	Coach as Setter of Team Tone	77
4.4.1.4	Coach as Influencing the Experience	78
4.4.1.5	Coach as Friend - Attachment	78
4.4.1.6	Coach as Listener	79
4.5	I Actually Enjoyed it – Football is Fun!	80
4.6	Conclusion	81

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS** **84**

---

5.1	Introduction	84
5.2	The Five Basic Research Questions	85
5.2.1	What is identity from a sociocultural perspective and how can it be measured?	85
5.2.2	Are there any links between women's participation in sport and identity?	86
5.2.3	How are the experiences of football participation seen and evaluated by the women who participate?	87
5.2.4	How do participants perceive playing football has affected their leisure, family and work identities?	87
5.3	Popular Lore	88
5.4	Friendship	89
5.5	Team	89
5.6	Body	90
5.7	Badges of Honour	91
5.8	Aggression	91
5.9	Self	92
5.10	Connections	92
5.11	Coach	93
5.12	Fun and Enjoyment	93
5.13	Conclusion	94
5.14	Implications for Theory	95
5.15	Implications for Practice	97
5.16	Suggestions for Further Research	97

## **REFERENCES** **99**

---

## **APPENDICES** **110**

---

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1: The Research Process	6
Figure 2: Relationship between existing literature and research area	11
Figure 3: Identity Wheel	82

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the experiences of women who have chosen to participate in amateur football (known in Australia as soccer). It investigates and interprets effects of individual experiences and perceptions of sport for women amateur football players on their identities.

The present research proposes that women's exposure to sporting experience as players has an influence on their identities both within and outside the sporting arena. The arguments for this position are explored using local narrative which details the nature of women's experiences of sports and their ever-changing identities. To understand these experiences it is important to locate them within a foundation of historical context which traces the history of football, the involvement of women in sports, the development of women's football in significant countries and the journey of the game of women's football in Australia. With this information about the historical journey of women's sport and football it is simpler to examine the current effect of the sport on identity.

Theories of identity, gender and sports are analysed. The theoretical perspective taken in this thesis builds on feminist ideologies and an interactionist approach to understanding women and their experiences. Analysis is undertaken using sport as a site of self-discovery and identity building best understood through investigation of women's individual experiences.

This thesis uses qualitative research with in-depth interviews, participant observation and reflexivity to investigate the research proposition. Interviews with thirteen amateur women football players were undertaken to investigate their thoughts, feelings and perceptions, and consequently information was collected about sporting experiences, perceptions and effects on identity. This was combined with participant observation to assist in giving context and clarity to the exploration. Finally, reflexivity was engaged to provide an added measure of triangulation to the study.

The thesis analyses the data as it relates to the experiences of identity change and



transference between the identity domains of leisure, work and family. The findings demonstrate that the experience of sports participation as a player provides women with access to testing their established identities, practising additional identity traits in a challenging and often new environment and, once having done so, transferring aspects of their new-found identities to other areas of their lives. It found that sports participation clearly influences the development, shaping and sustaining of identity for women in a range of identity domains.

The findings demonstrated that the act of playing football brings with it a broad range of impacts upon each woman's identity. Often the women expressed their appreciation of the opportunity to practise and apply the self-awareness, connections, sense of team, confidence, capability, aggression, sense of agency and fun they had adopted in the sporting arena to other areas of their lives.

The study revealed that the women valued highly the friendships and connections they established and felt constrained by the organisation of the sport which most often gave priority to skill level and winning above the maintenance of these connections. The women attempted to address this inadequacy through voicing their needs and resisting the sports organisation. Methods of resistance included verbally expressing their discomfort to sports administrators and coaches, refusing to be parted from their established team and, when placed in a 'new' team, being reluctant to bond with new team members. The women used resistance and the example of the competitive success of a team which sustained its connections to influence the team organisers to re-evaluate team construction. Once this was achieved, organisers gave credence to the importance of established connections when allocating players to teams in subsequent years.

The study reveals that the experience of playing soccer is shared with others. However, each team member has her own unique experience. The exploration of these experiences unearthed a range of realities, emotions and perceptions that influenced each player's identity and confirmed the value of sport for women and the need for an alternative approach when considering women's sport.

This thesis makes a contribution to knowledge in the field of sports studies with its exploration of women's experiences and the recommendations of approaches to sports for

women. This approach is informed by consultation with its sporting participants. This understanding can be used to assess and inform future sports policy development and practice. Principally this thesis seeks to acknowledge and legitimise the sports experiences of women and the effect these experiences have on their identities in the domains of leisure, work and family. In doing so it provides a better understanding of the relationship between identity, gender and sport.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background to the Study

In this introductory chapter, background material regarding the exploration into women, sport and identity and the outline of some of the theory relevant to the exploration will be presented. The chapter will also detail the research problem, along with the associated research question this thesis aims to address. The justifications for conducting this research and an examination of the contribution of this thesis to the field of sport and leisure studies will follow.

To begin to place the research in context, an example of an incident which occurred on Anzac Day in 2004 illustrates a reality of contemporary sport for women in Australia. When a football referee tried to bar a 20-year old woman football player from playing with her team for refusing to remove a headscarf called a hijab, worn in accordance with her Muslim religion, he warned her that if she refused this directive the result would not only mean that she could not play on the day, but may be banned for life. Afifa Saad, a talented player and a serious Muslim, had played in her hijab for years. She refused to remove her hijab, and both her own team-mates and the opposing team walked off the field in support of her decision (Cubby 2004 ). By doing so they initiated a political activity, demonstrating the power of resistance that has been a feature of many women's sporting involvement (Hargreaves 2000).

This incident highlights the importance granted to individuals within a women's sporting team. It also highlights the shared culture of caring and ethical lifestyle that appears to be a feature of amateur women's sport (Hargreaves 2000). Afifa Saad's refusal to remove her hijab illustrates the player's sense of assertiveness. The other players' choice to defy the referee and support their fellow player demonstrated solidarity between players as they exercised their agency and chose not to play at all, rather than play without their team-mate. This expression of self-direction and self-control is based on the notion of identity, emerging from relationships with other people (Coakley 1998). In this circumstance the space for the expression of identity was conducted within the sporting domain of football.

Sport has been an integral part of most cultures since the beginning of recorded time. However, for many women, involvement in sport presents challenges. The story of Afifa Saad and her team-mates provides one specific example. More generally, participation in sport requires a time commitment, which, while it may not demand money or membership of a particular class, does involve a choice, which has often been interpreted as selfish (Stell 1991). Whether a woman is an amateur soccer player or a professional athlete, a conscious decision must be made to set aside time for sport (Stell 1991). This choice is contrary to the role in life which has often been pre-assigned to women as carers and nurturers (Boutilier and SanGiovanni 1983; Lenskyj 1986; Stell 1991). This role has been used to argue against the legitimacy of many women's desire to participate in sport during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and into the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed, the acceptance of and support for women playing sport, in many countries, increased. The emergence of women's access to sport was a significant part of social reform that also widened women's social and political options (Bialeschki 1990:45). The reduced resistance towards women playing sports, particularly those that were traditionally dominated by men, mirrored the gains that were made as women's political rights received increasing recognition in these Western nations (Pfister et al 2002). Countries where women's access to participation in organised sports developed as a part of the women's movement included the UK, America, Germany, Austria, Spain and Australia (Pfister et al 2002).

Despite these gains, for more than 200 years Australian women have struggled against opposition to their participation in sport (Stell 1991). They have been dismissed as unimportant, forbidden, ostracised, disregarded, abandoned, humiliated, unrecognised and obstructed. Yet the driving urge to play sport has remained powerful for many women (Stell 1991). Significantly, an increasing number of Australian women are choosing to engage in traditionally male sports such as football, cricket, rugby and golf (Cashman 1995). Together the growing involvement in a range of sports and community attitudes towards women's participation are slowly undergoing change (Cashman 1995).

However, to reach this point there has been a long history of criticism of women who

take up male-dominated activities (Cashman 1995). Such criticism has questioned the medical appropriateness, physical attractiveness, sexuality and the encouragement of aggression for women (Cashman 1995). Through the decades these criticisms have gradually subsided, as sport has become recognised as medically beneficial and the media encouraged women to participate in physical exercise (Stell 1991).

In the last two decades Australia experienced a rapid expansion in the number of women participating in male-dominated organised sport (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003). One of the many sports which has rapidly increased in popularity amongst women is soccer (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003).

My personal involvement in the experiences of women playing amateur sport in Australia began in 2002 when I joined an amateur women's football team. Although I had previously been involved in amateur sports, primarily horse riding, I had never really considered the effect that involvement in a team sport might have on my identity. Ten years after giving up serious participation in horse riding I was convinced by a work colleague to take up football. In the beginning she persuaded me to come along to training sessions 'only' for some much-needed exercise. Before I knew it I was decked out in shin pads, boots and a synthetic jersey, sweating it out on the field at weekend games. I was passionately reviewing our games and comparing bruises over beers at the pub, e-mailing team-mates and meeting them for outings both related and unrelated to the games of soccer. I began to see the significant influence participation in this pastime was having on my identity beyond the sporting experience itself. I started to ask myself what was the experience of participation in amateur football for other women and how did it influence their identity? Was my experience a typical experience; if not, what was a typical experience for women playing amateur football? How did women approach the sport and attach themselves to the sport and each other? If they attempted to adapt the sport to suit themselves, how did this take place?

## 1.2 The Research Question

Since 1788 and the beginnings of white settlement, amateur sport in Australia has played an important role in the shaping the nation (Cashman 1995). The British-based ideology of amateurism supported the belief that sports served a moral purpose, creating character in its participants and promoting team cooperation (Cashman 1995). From this base it is widely accepted that a sports environment provides order, authority, collaboration, self-assurance, self-esteem and relaxation more readily than any other environment (Stell 1991). Thus, sport has been accepted in Australian society as an important pastime building character and enhancing important social skills. As such sport is in a perfect position to significantly influence the individual on a number of levels and facets, one of which is identity.

Sport, as a dimension of space, influences identity as the participants interact to create new aspects of life (Kayser Nielson 1999). Many writers have put forward the belief that exposure to participation in sports and the qualities it encourages can be instrumental in the development of identity (Coakley 1998; Coakley and Donnelly 1999; Hargreaves 2000; Roche 2000). Yet, women have been, and to a certain extent continue to be, marginalised and excluded from traditionally male-dominated sports. This exclusion has limited women's access to experiences that may prepare participants for adult roles in the public sector (particularly the workplace and political life) (Boutlier and SanGiovanni 1983). Therefore, this study explores the question of whether playing sport can provide an opportunity to expand women's experiences, giving them an avenue to encourage and extend identity formation. This thesis will discuss and draw conclusions about women's participation in sports and the influence that the experience has on the development, shaping and sustaining of the identity of women.

In order to adequately answer the central research question, five basic research questions will provided a framework for locating and structuring the empirical data collection:

1. What is identity from a sociocultural perspective and how can it be measured?
2. Are there any links between women's participation in sport and identity?
3. How are the experiences of football participation seen and evaluated by the women who participate?

4. How do participants perceive playing football has affected their leisure, family and work identities?
5. How can sport participation opportunities, sports discourses and organisations become more responsive to the needs of women?

These questions required the selection of research approaches that would allow an in-depth exploration of the experiences of a group of Australian women who play amateur sport and an investigation into the place of sports discourses in the lives of individual women. Data was gathered using qualitative research methods. The questions were addressed using a dual sampling approach: in-depth interviews with individual football players, allowing for deep insights and detailed qualitative data; and participant observation of events related to football to give an alternative data set and therefore broaden the scope of the collected data, allowing for verification of results through triangulation. The researcher kept a journal throughout the process as a reference for events and tool for interpretation. The in-depth interviews were analysed with the assistance of Nvivo – qualitative data software.

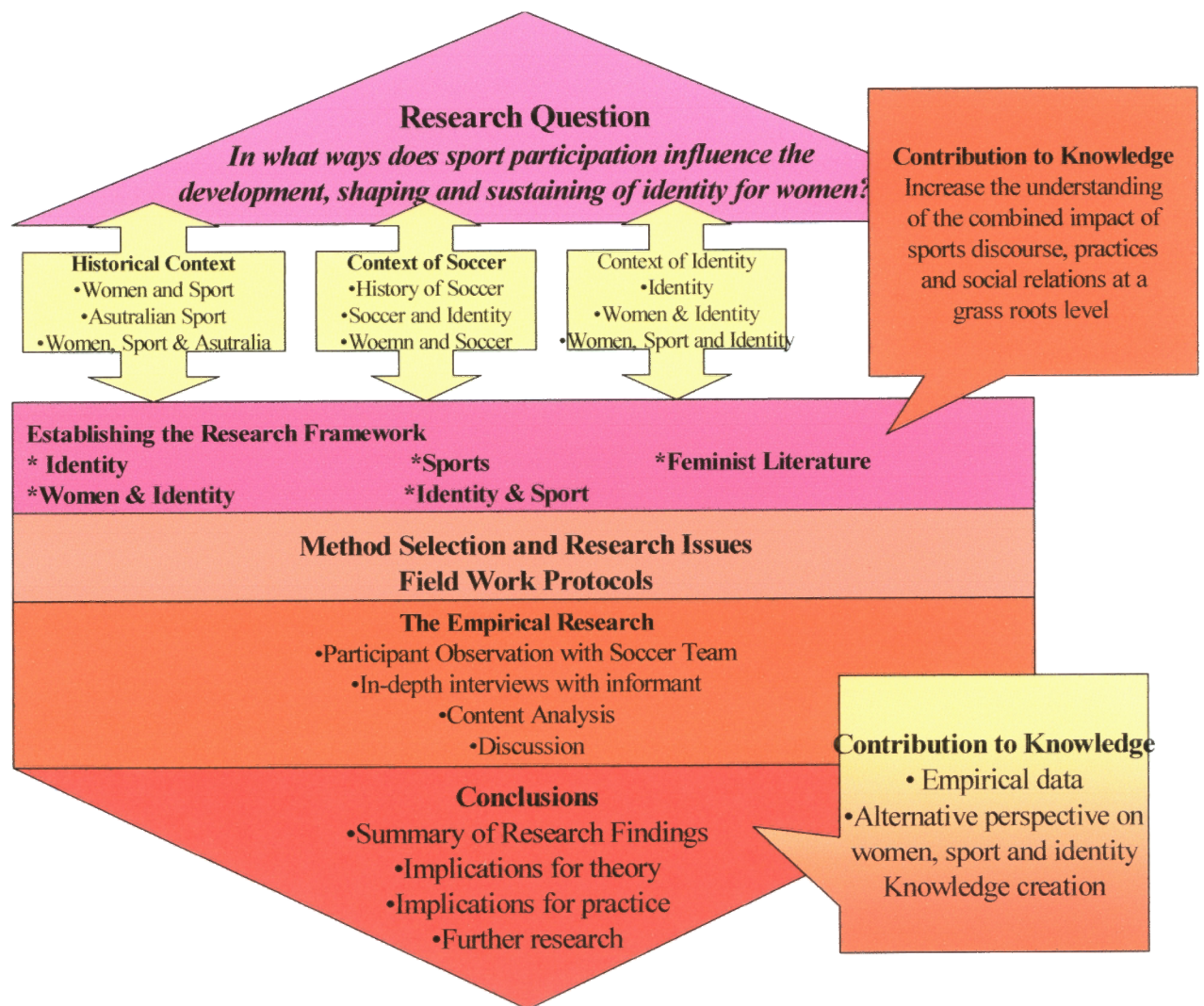


Figure 1: The research process



## **1.3 The Research Topic**

### **1.3.1 Justification of the Research Topic**

There is some existing research and literature about women, soccer and identity. However, the majority of this research focuses on women who play professional soccer (Cox and Thompson 2001; Caudwell 2002). Very little research exists about the developing, shaping and sustaining of identity through women's involvement in amateur soccer. Through exploring the connection for women between sport and identity this study is well placed to make a unique contribution to the existing body of knowledge. It does so by listening and giving validity to the voices of women participating in amateur sport and drawing from their experiences.

As research specifically related to identity in the context of women and sport, this exploration aims to increase understanding of the impact of sports discourses, practices and social relations (Taylor 2000) on participants. By finding out more about the relationship between women's identity, participation, perceptions and sport, this research may influence sport-related decisions about policy, politics and the community.

### **1.3.2 Significance of Sports Participation**

The ability to engage successfully in sport holds positive value in most Western cultures. Social acclaim and the perception of economic benefits often accompany success at the highest levels (Wearing 1998). The educational system rewards sporting achievement alongside academic achievement, particularly for boys. In adolescence boys are taught that it is a measure of their masculinity that they need to be tough and endure pain (Wearing 1998). Conversely, it has been found that many adolescent girls have negative memories of sport, reporting that they were bored, felt stupid and incompetent, and were given negative feedback from peers. They experienced discomfort and embarrassment and had bad memories associated with the rules and clothing requirements (Coakley and White 1999). Sporting achievement, academic achievement, social acclaim and economic benefits are not as encouraged for women

and girls as they are for men and boys, often resulting in reduced access to and success in each of these areas (Cashman 1995, Wearing 1998).

In relation to the body, participation in sport has important consequences. The body and mind significantly influence each other to engage in physical activity and to determine the degree to which one performs (Tangen 2004). Often reasons for participation in sport rest on feelings such as 'It is fun' and 'It feels good', which indicate that sometimes the real reason for participating in sport is connected to embodied knowledge and is rather unclear even to the person themselves (Tangen 2004:19). In stories gathered from women they have talked about the kinaesthetic or sensual pleasure they experience while participating in physical activity and their feeling of connectedness: 'I liked the way it made my body feel. I like what it did to my muscles... I liked feeling strong...' (Clarke and Humberstone 1997). Being physically strong and in control, identifying with the body and being proud of its achievement can be a source of confidence and security, and as such have the power to influence personal identity. In past research women have spoken about setting sporting challenges and goals for themselves and the pride and meaning in their lives connected to the achievement of these goals, which have contributed to their sense of identity (Clarke and Humberstone 1997).

The increase in women's sports participation directly corresponds to the level of acceptance of women's equity (Pfister et al 2002). As women make headway into achieving social equity their penetration of traditionally male domains is increasingly recognisable. One of these domains is that of aggressive male team sports, sports where power, aggression and sometimes brute strength are important. These sports include rugby league, boxing and football. Such sports have been customarily regarded as 'out of bounds' for women (Hargreaves 1994:273). While there are still some sports in Australia from which women are actively excluded (eg boxing), the repertoire of sports that accommodate women has experienced great expansion, indicating increased community support of equal rights for women (Pfister et al 2002).

This thesis seeks to explore some of the experiences for women who have chosen to participate in football (known in Australia as soccer), a traditionally male sport, through the investigation and interpretation of their individual experiences and perceptions of the

sport and its effects on their identity.

### **1.3.3 Women's Amateur Football as a Case Study**

The sport of women's amateur football will be used as a case study to provide the context for the research question because of its increasing popularity amongst women sports participants. Amateur football provides a rich environment for the exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions. Traditionally football has occupied a mainstream position as a male sport, but it is becoming increasingly popular amongst women, played across all of Australia's states and territories. In 2003 the team game of football was identified as the fastest growing women's sport across Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003). Since its introduction to the country's women in the 1920s, the sport has engendered much social criticism because of its traditional basis and has generally been considered to be a primarily 'male' sport (Cashman 1995). This thesis will chart an historical narrative on the evolution of soccer worldwide and in Australia, and the history of the involvement of women as soccer players. It will provide the framework for analysing women's involvement in the sport and the broader social construction of women's place and identity in Australian society.

## **1.4 Terminology**

### **IDENTITY**

Identity is the way a person sees themselves. Identity is constructed through a person's experiences as they interpret how they are viewed by other people and measure themselves against qualities they value (Erikson 1968).

### **FOOTBALL**

Commonly known in Australia as soccer, Association football is a team sport which requires two teams of 11 players each. It is a ball game which is played on a rectangular grass field with a goal at each end. Each team scores by manipulating the ball into the goal protected by the other team. All players, except the goalkeeper, must

avoid using their hands and in general play manoeuvring the ball with their feet, torso or head. At the end of the game the team with the most goals wins.

## **1.5 Summary**

This chapter has provided the foundations for the remainder of this thesis. While theoretical frameworks and a conceptual understanding of theoretical issues relating to women and sports form the groundwork of this thesis, my central focus is on analysing participants' individual experiences of amateur football and its influence on the development, shaping and sustaining of their identity. Within this is an underlying theme, the relationship between sport, femininity and traditional gender stereotypes. It is recognised that there are multiple subjectivities of women's experiences and realities and multiple femininities and that this research will not be able to capture all the possible variations. However, the use of sports to influence an individual or group identity will be explored. The methodology is based on the interview narratives of women who participate in amateur football. I will argue that playing football for these women expands their experiences, providing an avenue to encourage and extend identity formation. Through interrogating existing literature, building on this literature and through further research providing an exploration of women's participation in sport, this thesis aims to extend a relatively neglected area of knowledge, relating to women, amateur sport and identity. From this the thesis will discuss and draw conclusions about women's participation in sports and the influence that the experience has on the development, shaping and sustaining of identity of women.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter the literature review will build on the concepts outlined in chapter 1 by examining different theoretical perspectives on identity, identity and sports, women and identity and women and sports. The purpose of these discussions is to contextualise the research questions and to develop a conceptual framework as the basis for the empirical investigations undertaken in this study. The theoretical approaches will be presented further in the methodology chapter.

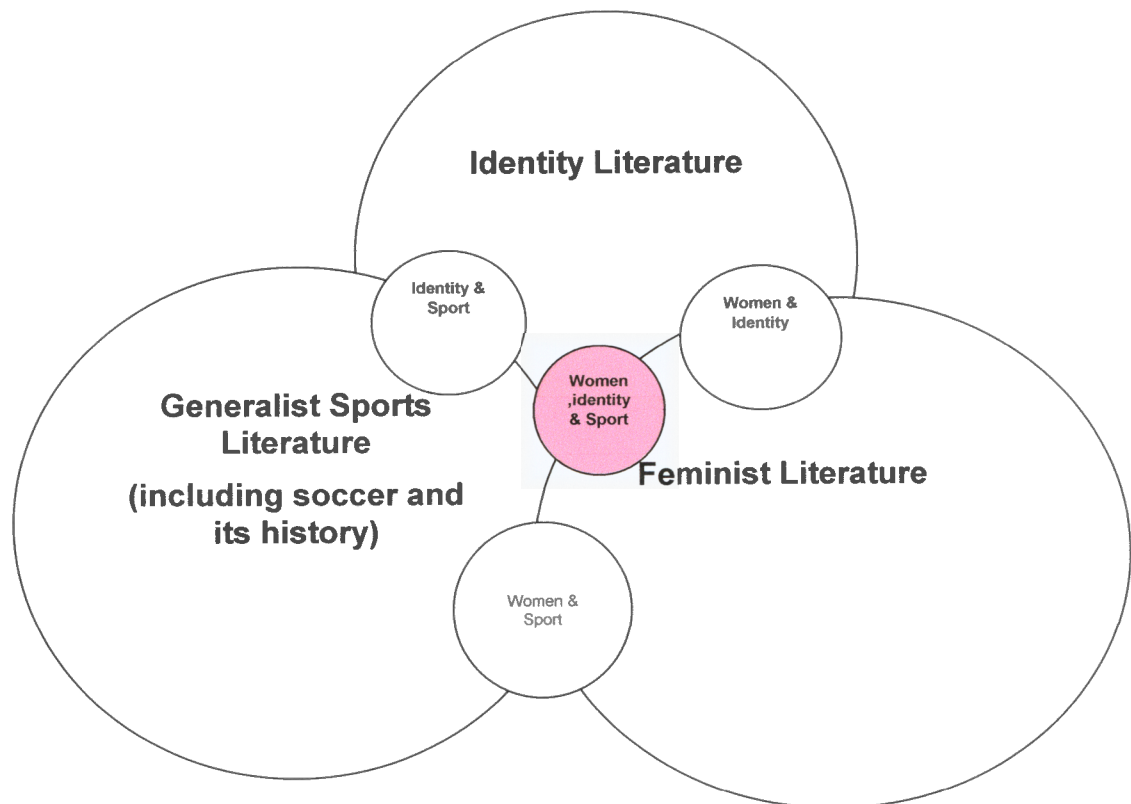


Figure 2.1 Relationship between existing literature and research area



Figure 2.1 is a diagrammatic representation of published research and literature relevant to the topic of study. As indicated by the relative size of the circles there is a substantive body of identity, sports and feminist writings. However, the research undertaken on identity and sport, women and identity, and women and sport is considerably less substantive. Literature that examines the amalgamation of all three,

identity, sports and women, is very limited.

To gain a greater understanding of the context within which the informants, women playing football, are placed, it is important to look at the history preceding the current activity. The following chapter will trace the history of international football, women's involvement in sport, the evolution of women's soccer, sport in Australia, Australian women and sport and Australian women's football. All research is easier to understand when considered within its historical context (Taylor 2000). This chapter will also provide a literature review of the historical context for the research. The central focus of the review will be women and sport in Australia.

## **2.2 Interpreting Identity**

The interpretation of the term 'identity' varies widely in the assorted literature reviewed for this thesis. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the more popular definitions of identity which were taken into consideration before settling on the interpretation applied in this thesis. The term 'identity' as used in this thesis has been defined in chapter 1.

What is identity?

The word 'identity' is so frequently used in our society that at first inspection the term appears to be self-explanatory. On closer inspection a definition of the term 'identity' is hard to pin down. One of the most central questions facing people throughout their lives is that of identity (Augustinious and Walker 1995). Who are we? The answer to that question is complex, providing an almost infinite array of possibilities.

Much of the research about identity is built upon Erik Erikson's classic work during the 1960s. Erikson acknowledges the complexity of the concept of identity by declining to give a direct definition. He does, however, give an explanation of identity formation' proposing that individuals judge themselves in light of how they perceive others judge them measured against qualities they see as important. He maintains that the process of identity formation is constantly 'changing and developing' (Erikson 1968:22-23). From an interactionist perspective' identity is the sense of who we are and our understanding of how we are connected to the rest of the world (Coakley 1998). Through role taking we see ourselves as others see us (Bessant and Watts 1999).

Augustinous and Walker (1995) present the notion of 'personal' identity as myth because construction of self requires social context. Depending on the particular social context, a person selects a few identifications as their social identity to fit that context. To evaluate the self it is necessary to compare ourselves with others.

The theme of constant change and development is commonly embraced in literature with researchers describing identity as being fluid, emerging out of our relationships with other people and new situations (Bessant and Watts 1999; Coakley 1998; Hargreaves 2000). Therefore, they suggest that the complexities of our relationships significantly influence the identity we develop. As we encounter other people and situations, we determine and attach our social identities to the groups to which we are connected to (Augustinous and Walker 1995). Our identity is dependent upon our experiences with others and how similar or different we see ourselves when compared to others.

Much literature suggests that identity is about both similarity and difference. The recognition of other individuals, groups and spaces are the tools we use to determine whether or not we belong. The way in which we describe ourselves, our identity, relies on how we see ourselves in relation to other individuals, groups and spaces (Bessant and Watts 1999; Hetherington 1998). As we are always encountering new people and new situations, our description of ourselves is often reconsidered. We rename ourselves depending on the circumstance we have encountered and experienced.

The use of names, or markers, is often how we describe our identity. These markers carry different messages about how we view and where we see ourselves sitting in a social structure. Names such as 'sporty', 'girl', 'football player' and 'wife' indicate our identity. (Bessant and Watts 1999) They describe us in particular situations. For different situations we often have different identity markers.

Every person has their own collection of identities to be used when and where they deem appropriate (Kershner 1998). We are not limited to only one identity but have numerous identities for numerous situations. We may be a 'mother', 'sportswoman', 'team-mate' or 'friend' depending on separate situations: with our children, participating in sport, having a drink at the pub or spending time with a loved one. We use these identity markers to construct our sense of self and to shape the way we think, feel and act in given situations (Bessant and Watts 1999). Our social networks and relationships

determine our identity markers. We use these markers to describe others and ourselves. In doing so we 'create society and are at the same time created by it' (Bilton et al 1995:15).

## **2.3 Women and Identity**

A seemingly obvious but significant point is made by Boutilier and SanGiovanni (1983) who state that 'women are not men' and that in spite of affirming and exhibiting their ability to achieve in an environment which is constructed primarily for men, women are still people different from men. Various identity markers such as 'co-operative, nurturant, intuitive, aesthetic, process-oriented, emotional, yielding, compassionate' (Boutilier and SanGiovanni 1983:19) are used to describe women. If we have these qualities they should be affirmed as good and employed to inform and transform us rather than to limit and restrict us. They should be used to transform the activities we are involved in (Boutilier and SanGiovanni 1983).

Chodrow (1978) and Gilligan (1982) observed that women's identities are predominantly relational and explored the fostering of nurturance and responsibility in girls. Wearing (1998) applies this to leisure research by Pfeiffer and Davis (1971), which shows that women spend more time socialising than men. In Western society the most highly valued qualities are those of achievement, self-promotion and competitive individualism. A key feature in the Western concept of women is that femininity is equated with care for others rather than self. In order to identify and be identified with their culture, Western women must forego the qualities that the culture values to maintain their feminine worth as self-sacrificing and responsive (Lenskyj 1986).

## **2.4 Sports and Identity**

Identity is expressed and symbolised in popular cultural practices, including participation in particular sports and games (Brownell 1988). It provides yet another experience of the individual, groups and spaces for the participants to evaluate themselves. The development and determination of different dimensions of identity are significantly influenced by experiences of sporting culture (Roche 2000). Coakley and Donnelly (1999) refer to the process of change that accompanies any new role a person takes on, including a sporting role. They describe a deliberate process in which the identity of



a sporting participant is constantly undergoing revision and change because of the processes they are exposed to, both from inside and outside the sporting structure they have attached themselves to (Coakley and Donnelly 1999). Our sporting experiences shape our identity.

Involvement in sporting pursuits introduces and reinforces social values and practices, shaping our identities (Lenskyj 1998). It is through the learning of sporting rules, role playing and interaction with other sports participants that we learn what is acceptable and unacceptable, are rewarded and ostracised and perceive ourselves through the eyes of others (Coakley and Donnelly 1999; Lenskyj 1998).

Decisions to participate in sport are usually determined by a person's belief about who they are and what is important to them. The ties between gender and identity significantly influence choices made about a person's sports participation. Many women do not view themselves as being athletic even though they are very physically active (Coakley and Donnelly 1999).

## **2.5 Women, Sport and Identity**

When discussing women, sport and identity it is important to highlight the concept that sporting women are not a homogenous group. While the dominant sports culture is 'white, western, middle class, heterosexual and able bodied' (Hargreaves 2000:7), there is much more diversity present within a group of sporting women. Involvement in sport proves a social environment for women to experience each other's identities.

Through participation in sport women can access settings where they can develop identities that reach beyond their socially determined gender roles. This can result in personal empowerment (Henderson et al 1989). Women challenging the mainstream definitions of gender by participating in all kinds of sports are forging new cultural and sporting identities throughout Western culture (Hargreaves 1994; Vertinsky 1990). 'They are boxers, soccer and rugby players, body builders and weight lifters, and they take part in the macho and risky worlds of free climbing, iron-man events and extreme sports ... and so on (Hargreaves 1994). These women are often seen as intruders and are challenged by having their motivation and sexuality questioned (Fasting 1989; Lenskyj 1986) Although constrained by the past, the sportswomen of today are claiming

an identity that used to be exclusively male, and they are producing new sporting identities.

As new sporting identities for women emerge and opportunities increase, it is clear that women athletes have become increasingly concerned with winning. Motivation for women who competed in the 1970s differs from the motivation of those who competed in the 1980s. In a 1987 study, the sportswomen of the 1980s were more likely to list competition and skill as reasons for involvement in sport, while women who competed in the 1970s gave social reasons (Croxtton et al 1987). Because of the contribution of the women who have come before them, each new generation of sporting women has a different experience. The identity of many sporting women has transformed and evolved as they have accessed different experiences.

The heroine of elite sports faces the same fate as the hero: products of a system which encourages and expects them to adopt the qualities valued in a hegemonic male culture damaging their bodies. These qualities include those of achievement, self-promotion, commodification and competitive individualism (Hargreaves 2000). The values inherent in the dominant model of competitive, aggressive sport, in particular violence, do not fit with the qualities which are given most value for women in Western society, as carers for others (Hargreaves 2000). However, women are often still committed to an 'ethic of care' and view sport as an 'indulgence' (Henderson et al 1989:124). The adoption of alternative identities, through sport, which reach beyond the identity of gender allow for agency of the individual (Henderson 1996).

Females and males approach sport and recreation from very different perspectives. Currently many female sporting perspectives are judged by the male sporting standard and by this measure are found lacking. This compounds myths about women's inferiority. Research shows that many women do not value as highly as men the emphasis on competition provided by the male sporting standard. They value more highly the qualities of 'co-operation and connection, friendship and enjoyment' (Lenskyj 1994:8) as well as 'self expression and the aesthetic component' (13). Valuing and applying these qualities allow women to maintain their feminine identity.

An alternative sporting model has been developed by women academics which encourages political sporting activities that integrate power, knowledge and emotional

life, sporting activities that promote women's health by encouraging a positive, healthy and holistic approach to exercise and highlight women's experiences of their bodies. These experiences promote the knowledge and experience of the sensual pleasure and control of women's own bodies becoming central to identity and promote a social culture of a caring and ethical lifestyle (Lenskyj 1992, 1994).

To gain a greater understanding of the journey women have travelled in their goal to play sport and particularly soccer it is helpful to consider the historical context from which we have emerged.

## **2.6 From a Dribble to a Mighty Roar**

*The history leading up to women playing football in current day Australia*

### **2.6.1 Introduction**

As has been previously discussed, it is important to position the research within a socio-historical domain. The sports participation of women and their experiences cannot be viewed in isolation from broader constructions of gender relations. This section highlights the sporting and football experiences that have shaped women's sporting patterns and community responses to their involvement. It also traces historical occurrences in sports and the place of women within sports and discourses. Women's identities are influenced by the dominant cultural hegemonic practices across all spheres of lived experiences, and a better understanding of the interrelationships between sport participation and identity should provide a more informed appreciation of the contemporary location of women in Australian sports.

### **2.6.2 Football History in the World**

Football and its antecedents have a long history. An accessible game, requiring only a leather ball and the willingness of two or more people to kick it around, it is represented on relics from ancient Egypt, in religious paintings, on Grecian vases and mentioned in the Bible. Respected authors including Chaucer and Shakespeare have referred to it (Murray 1994). Kicking a ball was present in Australia (Cashman 1995), the Americas, China and Japan before Europeans visited those countries, and it was played as a game in most European countries before it was known as an official sport (Murray

1994).

Football participation involved a level of mayhem until 1863, when in Britain the establishment of the Football Association (FA) brought an end to the sport's unruly association and introduced codified rules for the 'round ball code' (Murray 1994:1) making it an official sport. The FA also established administrative control and became the recognised authority on most aspects of the game (Murray 1994).

The introduction of a code for football meant the 'fun' now took on a more serious side. Spectators began to attend games in large numbers and were prepared to pay to watch it. Grounds were enclosed so that admission fees could be charged. Some administrators, players and workers began to be paid. The professional status of football soon followed and this model spread to other countries (Murray 1994).

In 1904 a world body (known as The International Federation of Association Football (FIFA)) was founded in France. It made football the first 'ball-kicking' code to take on an international dimension. At this time football was played in many English-speaking countries around the world, but only in Britain was it the dominant sport. However, even prior to 1914, football flourished in non-English-speaking countries such as Austria, Hungary and Bohemia. The German and French enjoyed an expanding competition scene in the 1920s. And in 1930, with a membership of 31 countries, FIFA introduced the first World Cup (Crouch 2002). The game's popularity continued to expand. Italy became a football power during the 1930s and Spain likewise during the 1950s. By the mid 1950s FIFA had expanded to 80 members, 18 of which were Asian and five African, indicating a mass global expansion. By the 1990s this membership had increased yet again to a total of 141 members, and in 2002 that had become 203 members.

The above related to the game's male history. As far as the history of women's participation is concerned, the story is not so straightforward. Women's sport and football history emerged later than men's and at a slower pace.

### 2.6.3 Women in Sports

*'We shall never have great doings from women unless they have great souls – we cannot well expect great souls in little cramped bodies.'* (cited in Fletcher 1987:536)

As acknowledged in the previous chapter, sport has primarily existed as a male domain. It has been designed and run with male participation as its foundation. It is a patriarchal institution encouraging and supporting 'competition, discipline, rationality, control, product and victory' (Boutilier and SanGiovanni 1983: 17). Historically, sports institutions have excluded women on the basis of biological inferiority. This has been based on the view of the gendered body. Women's perceived inability to display and maintain the aggression, strength, speed and endurance required for many sports, without significantly damaging their reproductive possibilities, feminine look and nature, or general health and wellbeing has been put forward as a reason for their unsuitability to participate in vigorous physical activity. Such arguments are purpose-built for sustaining the sport's gender status quo, further encouraging women to continue to occupy their subordinate role in a patriarchal society. (Boutilier and SanGioanni 1983; Cashman 1995; Lenskyj 1986; Booth and Tatz 2000)

However Fletcher (1987) suggests that in reality sport history has not told the entire story and that the numbers of working-class women who participated in sport in the early 1900s is underestimated, because the topic is under-researched. This, however, is a result of the low importance attached to women's sport. The recording of their involvement in sport has traditionally been a low priority. Men's sports have been widely recognised and recorded in the media, by betting bodies, history books, and story telling, and in the everyday experiences of spectators. Women's sports have fewer avenues of record.

Other research has also found that in the late 1800s and early 1900s organised sport was developed for both men and women (Dworkin and Messner 2002). At the turn of the century one of the images of the emancipated women in Britain was of them cycling, swimming, playing cricket, hockey, golf, tennis and football. These images were recorded in the journals of the time (Fletcher 1987). Although few women appear to have played football during this time, many of them were spectators and fans of the

men's game (Williams and Woodhouse 1991, Williamson 1991) Later, during the war years women emerged from the domestic sphere and demonstrated their competence in areas of factory work, business, politics, academia and sports such as football. The First and Second World Wars brought about opportunities for women to join the workforce in positions previously filled by men. As the work possibilities expanded, so did access to non-traditional sports for women, including football (Hargreaves 1994).

Beginning in the 1920s unions lobbied for both men and women to have improved facilities and opportunities for sports. Big international workers competitions were established, and in 1925 the Workers' Olympics were held. The Workers Wimbledon Championships in which women competed followed these in 1930. During the 1930s there was a range of sporting activities women engaged in, particularly in urban areas. These activities included gymnastics, swimming, netball, tennis and football (Hargreaves 1994).

Many working women recognised the benefits of sport to their health and wellbeing as well as the restriction of their clothes on their ability to enjoy outdoor activity and exercise. Women in Britain, Germany, other parts of Europe and North and South America valued sport as a requisite for the wellbeing of their labouring bodies:

We want to bathe our bodies in light, air, and sun to do our sports while as lightly clothed as possible ...and... take to the swimming pools and the sports grounds to refresh our bodies and make them elastic enough to return on the morrow, with renewed strength, to the struggle for existence.(Borg 1929, cited in Guttman, 1991, cited in Pfister 1980 from Hargreaves 1994)

Since the 1970s ideas about which sports are suitable for women have expanded. Women continue to gain better access to training, coaching and facilities (Thing 2001). One of the reasons for this was greater advocacy by women's lobby groups. The first special action group to be set up for women in sport was the Women's Sports Foundation in the USA, 1974. The Canadian Association for women followed in 1981 and the British Women's Sports Foundation in 1984 (Hargreaves 1994). Yet, despite growing numbers of participants there still remained a lack of encouragement for women to play many forms of sports (Cashman 1995). Women's participation in sport is still not considered equal to men's. They have also continued to have a lesser status as

associate members, with reduced prize money, less access to facilities, often minimal status and low media coverage (Lenskyj 1990). The sport of football provides an example of this.

#### **2.6.4 The Future of Football is Feminine**

*The future of football is feminine.*

Sepp Blatter, FIFA President

(cited in Cubby 2004 )

Since women's first endeavours to play club football in the late 1880s, women's football has experienced periods of swift growth, often followed by setbacks. There was no smooth progress for the sport of women's football as there had been with men's football; rather it has been a disjointed and jerky development. Currently in Australia and overseas, football is in one of its growth periods, rapidly expanding in popularity as a sport played by women. (Pettus 1998)

Although football dates back to Ancient Greece, it is only since the First World War that the sport has been officially available for women to play. Introduced as an exhibition sport in Britain during WWI, when professional male players were away at war, the popularity of women's football faltered after the war when troops came home. During the 1950s the sport was introduced in the USA as an exercise in teamwork and unity in some women's colleges (Pettus 1998) However, the games were given reduced competitive value as the teams were assembled from a mix of players from each college. In 1964, a breakthrough came after the American Youth Soccer Organisation was founded, and by the late 1960s girls' teams as well as boys' teams were fairly common. By 1991 a Women's World Championship was introduced for professional international teams (Pettus 1998). The introduction of 'Soccer Coach Barbie' marked the growing acceptability of football as a girls' sport with commercialised possibilities when the toy entered the market in 1997 (Pettus 1998). This position of international acceptability was further cemented in 2000, when women's football made its debut as an Olympic sport.

However, it was not just war that accelerated women's sport participation. Pfister et al (2002) link the growth in the development of women's rights and women's ability to

access sport. In Norway, Great Britain and Germany, women gained civil rights and won the right to vote during the late 1800s and early 1900s. This was around the same time that women in these countries were beginning to play football at a competitive level. However, in Spain women won the right to vote in 1931, but during the fascist dictatorship of Franco women did not play football at a competitive level. Once the Second Republic was introduced Spanish women began to play football at a competitive level. Pfister et al argue that this indicates that there is a link between the political situation and women's sporting roles.

The emergence and expansion of women's football as an international sport have been dependent on its development and popularity in a range of countries. Women's football has different histories in different countries. In China women's football was first recorded during the Donghan Dynasty around AD 25 – 220. In Austria women's football experienced a false start in the early 1900s. In Britain and America women's football first boomed during the war years. In Germany it started out in the 1930s and its popularity gained momentum in the 1950s. The following section examines the growth of women's football in these countries.

#### **2.6.4.1 China**

The earliest record of women playing a form of football exists in China where surviving frescoes from the Donghan Dynasty AD 25 – 220 depict women kicking a ball (Leighton 2002). This activity would have been impossible for upper-class women to sustain when the tradition of foot binding was introduced late in the T'ang Dynasty, which reigned from 618 – 906 (Wikipedia 2007). Then, during the 1600s the Qing Empire outlawed both foot binding and women playing football (Leighton 2000). Apart from a short term during the Qing Empire, foot binding remained an increasingly important tradition, spreading throughout the classes, until it was finally outlawed in the revolution of Sun Yat-Sen in 1911 (Wikipedia 2007).

The tradition of foot binding required young girls to have their feet bound from an age between four and seven years, aiming to maintain their foot size at about three or four inches in length. The pain from bound feet reduced a woman's capacity to be physically active and increased their dependence on others (Wikipedia 2007). It quickly became a prerequisite for marriage and was therefore widespread throughout the upper classes



of the Chinese community and was also common in the working classes.

During the 1920s, after foot binding had been banned, football began to creep into the curriculum in Chinese girls' schools (Leighton 2002). In the 1960s, under Mao's rule, it was played in many regions and its popularity gained momentum, with China becoming the champions of Asia in 1986, a position it still maintains (Hong and Mangen 2002)

The first Women's World Cup was held in China in 1991 (Leighton 2002), and in 1996 China won the silver medal in women's football at the Atlanta Olympics, cementing its position as an international women's football power. In 1999 there were eight professional women's football teams in the country and a strong National Youth League which was focussed on the development of future international players (Hong and Mangen 2002).

#### **2.6.4.2 Austria**

In 1918 women's football was first played in Vienna. Results of a trial game of women's football were reported in an Austrian newspaper, accompanied by the argument that women were not suited to certain sports, including football, and should concentrate instead on motherhood. In 1923 there is more evidence of the presence of women's football when the newspaper *Der Montag* reported an initiative for the introduction of women's football with venues and coaching provided (Marschick 1998).

Responding to the invitation, women turned up for the training sessions in their street clothes. Sixty women attending the second training session participated in various exercises. Five months later fewer than half of the required players turned up for their first official game. Volunteers from the crowd were called upon to participate. The papers reported the game as being a disappointing and boring event (Marschick 1998).

Women's football did not receive mention in the press again until 1936, when the Ladies Football Union was founded. There were a few games recorded during 1937. As with Britain and Germany, the Austrian women did not receive support from the national governing body and had great difficulty in finding fields to train and play their games on, leading to the 'cry for help' to find a field on which to train which received no adequate response, and the cessation of the women's game (Marschick 1998).

It was not until 1967 that a new women's football club was formed. Patronage built gradually and in 1982-83 an official women's league was established. In 1990 a national team was formed and began to participate in international competitions. As with many other countries, new support from the men's national governing body encouraged the growth of women's football, and in the 1990s the Austrian Football Federation, a women's football commission was founded. A boom in women's football began in 1992 with players' numbers increasing from 2500 to about 6000 in 1998 (Marschick 1998).

#### **2.6.4.3 Britain**

In the late 1890s, British women's football first entered the public sports domain, with the establishment of the British Ladies' Football Club. Few records are available reporting their activities; however, there is a record of a public match taking place in 1895, between a team from the north and another from the south of England. Another record indicates that there was a women's match in Newcastle during 1895 attended by about 3,000 spectators. (Pfister et al 2002) There are few other records of women's football until the establishment of sponsored women's teams during the First World War.

Before World War I there was a tradition of male factory workers participating in inter-factory football competitions. Women who worked in factories during the war years were encouraged to carry on this tradition and competitions with women players were organised. The public, starved of their usual sporting entertainment, quickly developed a taste for watching these women's teams. (Fletcher 1993; Hargreaves 1994; Parrat 1994)

One of the most popular clubs during these years was 'Dick Kerr's Ladies', which was formed in 1917. The players comprised of munitions workers from Kerr's engineering works at Preston. They often played in front of large crowds. For example, on Boxing Day 1920 they played in front of a crowd of 53,000. They became known as the unofficial English team and in 1920 played matches against teams from France, Scotland and the USA (Hargreaves 1994). Sports entrepreneurs readily saw the benefits of their popularity and arranged for them to have access to the large football grounds controlled by the men's Football League. This enabled the games to draw large

crowds, with the proceeds going to charities, rather than the players (Hargreaves 1994). The popularity of the games encouraged other women to play football themselves, so by 1921 there were approximately 150 women's football clubs throughout England.

However, a change in social conditions with the end of the war and the return of men from the battlefields marked the abrupt downfall of women's football in Britain. Thus, soon after it was formed, support for the English Ladies Football Association was withdrawn. The FA used the rationale that it had received complaints about the allocation of charity money from the women's matches (Hargreaves 1994). It also issued a statement that claimed that football was not a suitable game for women and should therefore not be encouraged (Hargreaves 1994). From this point the FA banned women's teams from playing on any of its fields, directly affecting their ability to draw the crowds they had become accustomed to (Cox and Thompson 2001).

It took a long time for women's football in England to recover from this setback. It was not until 1962 that the Women's FA (a separate body to the FA) was formed giving women an opportunity to play football at a highly competitive level again. By 1970 the FA lifted its ban on women's football and finally in 1993 merged with the Women's FA, taking over stewardship of the women's game (Leighton 2002). In the last two decades, the number of FA-registered women players has increased at a rapid rate with 9000 players and 314 clubs in 1990 to 14,000 women players, 15,000 girl players and 1700 clubs in 1998 (Crinnion 1998) and in 2001 55,000 females were registered (Chaudhary 2001).

#### **2.6.4.4 USA**

As with Britain, the USA's first women's football teams were formed in response to the professional sportsmen of the country being away at war. By 1925, similarly, the first wave of women's football had ended, due to concern that they were stealing viewers and dollars away from the men's game which had been re-established after the war. It took a long time for women's football to emerge again.

During the 1950s there were occasional meets between women's colleges; however these games were played with a non-competitive team composed of a mixture of players from various colleges. In 1964 the American Youth Soccer Organisation was

founded and by the late 60s it was common to find girls' teams as well as boys' teams. Brown University, along with a handful of other universities, formed a women's football team in 1976 and 1977. The first Ivy League Championship took place in 1981 (Pettus 1998).

The women players on the American national team were the first female football players to be paid as full-time professionals. Corporate endorsement of the first woman football player came about in the USA in 1991. In this year 5.7 million females were playing football throughout the country, primarily at the youth level. In 1994 this number had grown to almost 7 million. More recently there are an estimated 7.2 million female players, with girls making up 40 per cent of the youth football around the country (Pettus 1998 ).

#### **2.6.4.5 Germany**

In Germany, like England, the national governing body has not always supported women's football. The first women's football club was established in West Germany in 1930 with 35 members. The club's formation was perceived as a scandalous event within the community and due to public outcry the club was non-operational by the close of 1931 (Pfister 2001).

In 1957 the wives of footballers who belonged to the German Football Association (DFB) approached the organisation and demanded their right to be recognised and be allowed to play football (Pfister 2001). The DFB was not swayed by their arguments and withheld their support of women's clubs through the 1950s and 1960s, though they did support women playing recreational football rather than competitive football.

It was in 1970 at its annual conference that the DFB first officially recognised women's football (Pfister 2001). With this support women's football in Germany expanded rapidly. In 1971 knockout competitions were established, the next year regional championship matches were organised, and, in 1974, the first women's national championship was held. Throughout the 1970s women's football in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) also grew rapidly. In 1979 moves were made to develop women's football at local and state levels.

In the 1980s an upper league was introduced in West Germany, and in 1990 the DFB officially recognised women's football as a top-level competitive sport. In the late 1990s a twelve-team national league with a single division was formed, significantly raising playing standards. During the 1980s and 1990s the German women's football team dominated the international scene, winning the European Championships in 1989, 1991, 1995 and 1997 (Pfister 2001).

## **2.6.5 International Competition**

During the 1920s there was an international women's football competition involving countries throughout Europe. This was short lived and ceased when women's football was banned or seriously restricted in many of the participating countries towards the late 1920s. The European Championships were revived in 1984 and first won by Sweden. In 1985 the Olympic Committee and US Football Federation hosted the first Olympic Festival for women's football in Louisiana, USA. The first women's World Cup Title was held in 1991 in China. Women's football was introduced as an Olympic sport in the year 1996 (Pettus 2000).

A consistently increasing spectator base supports the growing popularity of elite women's football. The Women's World Cup final in 1999 saw over 92,000 spectators for the match between the USA and China, with TV audience in excess of 40 million viewers (Cox and Thompson 2001). With the interest of participants, spectators, national and international governing bodies, women's football, at this point in its development, looks as though it has firmly established itself as a major international sport.

We can increase our understanding of women's emergence as footballers in Australia by examining the historical context of football particular to Australia. It highlights the sporting and football experiences that have shaped Australian women's sporting patterns and community responses to women's involvement in sport. It also traces historical occurrences in Australian sports and the place of women within sports organisations and discourses.

## **2.7 Football History in Australia – A Social History**

### **2.7.1 Australia and Sport**

Sport in Australia predates the settlement of the British and Europeans. The indigenous Aboriginal people of Australia had a tradition of sport both as a part of their everyday activity and as contest between tribes. These activities included ‘wrestling, spear-throwing contests, sham fights, primitive forms of football involving possum skin balls, spinning disks and stick games’ (Cashman 1995:16), as well as sports to practise skills for tracking, hunting and gathering (Cashman 1995, Howell and Howell 1987). While sport existed as a pastime within Aboriginal communities, it does not appear to have had the same structures as those imposed upon Western sports that have dominated professional sports.

### **2.7.2 Australian Sport after British Settlement**

The culture of Western sport as a leisure pastime and organised activity was introduced to Australia with British settlement from 1788. It is hard to gauge the frequency and type of sporting activity amongst the early convicts, soldiers and free settlers, as few records exist reporting their pastimes, other than those of the wealthy settlers. It is likely that soldiers and the lower classes took part in bare-knuckle fighting, boxing and wrestling as pastimes, ways of solving arguments and sporting spectacles as well as a means to increase wealth (Vamplew 1992). Usually their sport was held on feast days and holidays, organised by publicans and the people. It was enjoyed in the main by men (Cashman 1995).

Despite the hardships of early settlement, it didn’t take long for space to be officially established for sporting purposes. A race ground was established in 1806 in Richmond for the purpose of horseracing. Sports such as cricket took place in public spaces soon after the landing of the First Fleet in 1788 (Cashman 1995), In 1810 Hyde Park in Sydney was designated for a range of sports including horseracing, cricket, quoits, hurling and football, and became Sydney’s centre for sporting activities (Booth and Tatz 2000; Cashman 1995). Other sports followed including the sport of kangaroo hunting, adapted from fox hunting, introduced in 1852 when an Irishman brought with him to Australian some hounds from his father’s kennels. In 1868 the first cricket team toured

abroad. The entire team was Aboriginal (Howell and Howell 1987). From its early days, the colony embraced sport as a leisure activity, and new sports were introduced as more people emigrated and brought their pastimes with them.

Organised sport increased in popularity with the advent of the gold rushes in the 1850s. These brought with them a large increase in migrants, increased wealth to a great segment of the society and a more diverse population. As Australia's variety of immigrants increased, so too did its range of sporting activities. Soon they extended to wrestling, snow sports, gymnastics and football. The introduction of a half-day Saturday in the 1860s provided ordinary Australians with more time to spend at sport, either as participants or spectators, and many had more money to spend on sport. By the 1860s many sports in Australia had become well organised, including horseracing, boxing, cricket, sculling and athletics.

The introduction of the Chinese, Cornish, Germans and Scandinavians attracted to the country by the gold rushes resulted in an added richness to the country's sporting profile (Cashman 1995).

### **2.7.3 Men's Football in Australia**

Organised football within Australia was introduced soon after it began in Britain. The first recorded game of football in Australia took place between the students at the King's School and the Wanderers team on Parramatta common in 1880. Australia's first football association, the English Football Association, was formed in 1882, and in 1883 a match was played between Victoria and New South Wales under British Association rules (Cashman 1995). The formation of state football associations followed closely behind. The first football bodies reflected the British influence on the new colony, with names such as the Southern British Football Association, the Anglo-Australian Football Association and the British Football Association (Vamplew 1992). Whether British or European, each new influx of immigration to Australia brought increasing numbers of football devotees, strengthening the popularity of the sport in Australia.

The ethnic-related boom of football clubs became formalised in 1920s and 1930s with the formation of football teams organised around nationalities. Maltese, Jewish, Italian and Greek settlers in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide as well as the more isolated

locations of Mackay and Broken Hill formed their own clubs. After 1945, the number of European immigrants to Australia exploded and many more football clubs quickly formed in response to increased interest. Sporting teams were often formed in the immigrant camps in the New South Wales and Victorian rural areas such as Greta, Uranquinty and Bonegilla, where immigrants were housed in camps (Mosely et al 1997). Football was a familiar sport for these immigrants. It was a cheap source of entertainment and did not require fluency in English, therefore allowing players to demonstrate their skills, make and maintain links with their new community, and providing opportunities to gain prominence and valuable networking connections (Vamplew 1992). Another outcome was that football transformed from the fast-moving, hard-running, body contact-style practices by the English migrants to the application of finely tuned skills and a slower paced game, a demonstration of skill by the Europeans (Booth and Tatz 2000). Football began to be strongly identified as an ethnic sport and other Australians began to refer to the game in a derogatory manner as 'wogball' (Vamplew 1992).

The game's popularity was also increasing in other countries around the world. International competitions were becoming popular during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, with Australian football teams touring overseas and hosting competitions in Australia against countries such as China, Canada, Czechoslovakia and Palestine, as well as with closer neighbours of the South Pacific. Australia was beginning to establish itself as a keen, if not always successful, football competitor in the world forum (Warren 2002).

Meanwhile, the newly established migrant clubs met with opposition from the national governing body of football, the Australian Soccer Football Association Ltd, who barred the new migrant clubs from the first division competition in New South Wales. Regardless of their skill level, migrant clubs were only allowed to play up to second division. The Australian Soccer Football Association Ltd continually resisted requests from the ethnic clubs to reconsider their position so that in 1957 a number of migrant clubs banded together and formed a breakaway group, the NSW Soccer Federation (NSWSF). The Australian Soccer Football Association Ltd retaliated, lodging a complaint to FIFA, which resulted in the NSWSF being banned by the international governing body. The official reason given for the ban was that certain Sydney clubs had illegally poached overseas players (Cashman 1995; Warren 2002).



The ban had both positive and negative outcomes. It meant that the teams belonging to the NSWFSF couldn't play matches against international teams, and NSWFSF players couldn't play for the national team. This effectively dismissed Australia's chances to participate in the World Cup. It also meant that players could be imported from overseas without large transfer fees being imposed. This last decision enabled clubs in the NSWFSF to gain more than 30 top-level players from overseas who had not been officially released from their clubs or associations. This lifted the standard of competition, created media and public interest about the sport and was therefore highly beneficial to the local game in Sydney (Warren 2002).

As their members began to flourish financially in their adopted country, the domestic clubs that had provided their social and sporting base also increased in wealth. As a result of this they were able to pay their players substantially more money than many of the other, non-ethnically based football clubs, attracting the best players of the Australian football scene. Some clubs, such as Prague, brought over numbers of players, including full internationals, from other countries. (Warren 2002)

By 1974 the Australian football team had made its debut in the World Cup finals, held in Germany, and although they lost 2 – 0 to the East Germans, the German crowd of 15,000, recognised the significance of their presence and the valiant game they had played, giving them a standing ovation,. (Cashman 1995; Warren 2002). Australia has since participated in every World Cup competition although the team has not made the finals again. In response, the support for football has continued to grow, at least at the grassroots level. The support for professional football has a chequered history and has not yet enjoyed the financial support enjoyed by other codes such as the Australian Rugby League (ARL) and the Australian Football League (AFL). Appreciation and support for the sport of football at an amateur level are reflected in Australia's growing amateur participation (FFA 2005).

The popularity of football has continued its ascent as a sport played by youth and adult amateurs in Australia. The 2000 report on 'Outdoor Soccer' by the Australian Sports Commission noted that almost 129,000 adults played football nationally, ranking it the sixth most popular sport in the nation (Australian Sports Commission, 2000). In 2002 the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that football had become the number one team sport for children, with a participation rate of 13% or 355,900, with both boys and

girls as participants (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002). The 2003 Participation in Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey reported that 669,300 people over the age of fifteen participated in outdoor football. Football has become a mainstream sport in Australia. Not only is it a mainstream sport for Australian men, it has also become a mainstream sport for Australian women.

## **2.8 Australian Women in Sport**

The story of Australian women in sport is quite different from their male counterparts'. Women began their first foray into organised sport in the school setting during the 1880s and 1890s and much later in the 1900s began to compete in a range of sports outside of the education system. Until recent years women's sport did not appear in the professional sports scape. An exception to this was to entertain the sports spectators during the First and Second World Wars.

During the early days of the colonies most sporting experiences were limited to men. Many popular sporting events, such as cockfighting, dog-baiting, boxing and wrestling were considered to be too rough for the women to participate in, even as spectators. White women were welcome as spectators to more civilised and organised sports, including cricket and horse racing. As participants women were restricted to a range of 'ladylike' sports that were not too physically taxing. Thus most of their sporting activities were social rather than competitive and included foot races, swimming, tennis, walking, drill and callisthenics (Cashman 1995, Stell 1991). One of the sporting activities that was legitimately competitive was the 'Ladies' Purse' offered at the Sydney Hunt Hurdle Races of 1837, and many of the wealthier women often rode their horses to the hunt accompanying the men (Stell 1991). During the second half of the century women's sporting pursuits expanded to skiing and tobogganing for those who lived or spent time in the areas of the country sufficiently cold to snow (Stell 1991). As the sporting landscape expanded for women during the days of the colonies, the prospect of sporting possibility and choice presented themselves for the next generation of women.

During the 1880s and 1890s Australian schoolgirls were encouraged to enjoy a wider range of physical activities than previously when many school principals supported the medical view that physical activities would make them more robust mothers and argued the advantages of these activities to stimulate mental activity and discipline (Cashman

1995, Stell 1991). It was around this time that clothing became less restrictive, corsets were less rigid and the 'divided' skirt was introduced for women, which enabled them to ride both bikes and horses astride. While this created moral outrage at the time, it made sport participation much safer and more comfortable than doing either with a heavy skirt (Cashman 1995).

Less restrictive clothing and greater encouragement to participate in physical activities not only resulted in increased sporting activity for women but a competitive element which had not previously been acceptable began to emerge. The first women's lawn bowls match was played, women appeared in the Melbourne Cricket Club tennis championships and swimming carnivals were held. In 1888 the first bicycle race for women was held in Ashfield, Sydney. Australian women began to take advantage of the new opportunity to be involved in sport (Cashman 1995).

Despite these advances, during the early twentieth century Australian women had to deal with two contradictory messages regarding their involvement in organised sport. These messages, supported by the media, alternated between asserting that sport was an unfeminine pastime which made women less attractive, and the opposite view that sport was essential for women if they wanted to be attractive to the opposite sex. Neither of these messages was based on the same reasons for women's participation in sport as those for men's participation, or acknowledged that women enjoyed the competitive elements of sport. For example in 1924 the *Australian Women's Mirror* encouraged women to exercise in moderation to keep '*fit and young*', but not too much, lest they become too '*muscular and ungainly*' (Cashman 1995).

However, despite these mixed messages and continued restrictions, sport for Australian women continued to increase in popularity. They formed hockey clubs, were awarded certificates from the Royal Life Saving Society and in 1912 competed for the first time in the Olympic Games. Swimmers Fanny Durack and Mina Wylie represented Australia at the Stockholm Olympic Games, bringing home gold and silver medals in the 100 metres freestyle event. The success of these two women resulted in greater public support for female swimmers and paved the way for other Australian women to represent their country at the future Olympic Games. As the century continued so too did the evolving opportunities for women, within certain limits. In the 1930s women's basketball championships were introduced, women's cycling clubs were formed, women were

included in the National Athletics Championships and four women represented Australia at the Los Angeles Olympics (in swimming and track and field). A trend of increased sporting range, competition and success continued through the next 30 years. This trend was always accompanied by the community's encouragement of women to participate in sport at moderate levels. There were still many barriers to equality with their male counterparts (Cashman 1995).

The 'moderate sports' dictum received a challenge in 1970s from feminists and the medical profession. Feminists encouraged women to celebrate their bodies, making their own decisions about their use. The medical profession advised women to exercise vigorously to keep themselves free of coronary and circulatory diseases. Australian women's magazines started to promote rigorous physical activity in their articles which contributed to the greater public acceptance of the right of women to compete, sweat, reach physical exhaustion and put their 'bodies on the line' (Booth and Tatz 2000:206).

Australian women now began to participate in sports that had previously belonged purely to a male domain. Sports which had been deemed to be too violent or physically demanding such as cricket, rugby league, boxing and football were now beginning to open to women. Although women were later banned from boxing in NSW, the doors to most other notoriously chauvinistic sports arenas were slowly opening (Booth and Tatz 2000).

The medical profession again supported a shift in the attitude towards Australian women and sport in the 1990s when they recommended strength and endurance training for good health. The media contributed to changing attitudes with its images of well-toned, sculpted women in advertisements. Lisa Curry-Kenny symbolised the attractive female power of muscular strength in her swimming success, books, videos and advertisements (Booth and Tatz 2000). These changing attitudes and women's subsequent increase in sports participation is reflected in sports participation studies. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002) reports 32.1% of females participating in organised sports and physical activities, which include aerobics, golf, tennis, swimming, martial arts and cricket. In 2003 this rate had increased to 42.8% reported in the Participation in Exercise, Recreation and Sport, Annual Report 2003. The same report has found that women's participation in sport and exercise generally is much the same as men's, at a rate of 82.4% for women and

82.6% for men (Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport 2003). The increase in women's participation in sport on a local level was mirrored in Australian women's involvement on the international sports scene.

In the international arena, Australian women's participation rates have increased since the 1912 Olympic Games. Up until 1992 women made up about 20% of the members on the Olympic teams. With increasing numbers of female athletes for the past few Olympics (including the 2000 Sydney Olympics), the average participation rate for Australian women at the Olympics has risen to 30% (Phillips 2001). These figures represent a significant difference between the numbers of Australian men and the numbers of Australian women supported to participate in international sports competition.

One of the sports finally introduced for women at the Olympic Games in 1996 was women's football. As the host nation for the 2000 Olympics, the Australian women's football team automatically qualified to compete. The team finished seventh out of eight teams (Watson 1994). The history of women's football in Australia offers an interesting insight into the position it occupies for amateur players today.

## **2.9 Australian Women as Football Players**

The participation of women in football emerged, contracted and re-emerged throughout Europe. It appears that in Australia, women were introduced to the sport later. The very first game of women's football appearing on public record was held in Brisbane in 1925 between the 'Reds' and the 'Blues' before a crowd of 10,000 (Watson 1994). The game then received little mention on public record for nearly fifty years when an article in Brisbane's *Sunday Mail*, on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1924, referred to women playing football and fighting like men during the Great Depression. In the same year regular women's football competitions were established in most states, and the Australian Women's Soccer Association (AWSA) was formed. In 1978 Australia made its debut as an international team and finished eighth out of thirteen teams. Australian women's participation in football was beginning to gain momentum.

Throughout the 1980s developments occurred which would contribute to the establishment of a firm foundation for women's football in Australia. The Australian

Soccer Weekly began to publish a regular column on women's football in 1981. The inclusion of this column indicated an increased acceptance by the traditional men's football scene. In 1982 the Oceania Women's Football Confederation (OWFC) was formed and the following year Australia finished second behind New Zealand in the first Oceania Cup organised by the OWFC. The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) provided a grant for the appointment of a National Executive Director and in 1986 the national headquarters for the AWSA moved to Canberra to accommodate ease of facilitation with the ASC.

A defining moment for the profile of Australian women's football came in 1988 when Prime Minister Bob Hawke publicly recognised Australia's defeat over Brazil in the opening game of the Pilot World Cup in China. As the 1980s drew to a close *The Far Post*, national newsletter of women's football was established and Australia was invited by Japan's Football Association to compete in the combined Test and Provincial Tour of Japan (Watson 1994). This was a fitting conclusion to a significant decade in the history of women's football in Australia. These firm foundations served the sport well during the continued expansion of women's football in Australia

The 1990s were a busy period for women's football in Australia. In 1990 the first World Cup for women was announced and was scheduled to take place in China in 1991. Australia entered a team in the qualifiers but unfortunately failed to gain entry to the finals. Although they didn't make the finals, the Australian team had reached an international standard. Confirmation that Australia was developing women players of international standard came when Australia exported two players to Denmark during the same year. 'Girls in Soccer Week' was initiated by the AWSA in 1992 in an effort to further encourage girls to participate in football and provide a larger pool from which to select talented players for higher level competitions in future. The second FIFA World Cup was held in 1995. This time Australia did qualify and finished the competition 12th out of 12 teams. (Halim 2004, Watson 1994) The next challenge would be the Olympic Games.

In 1996 women's football made its debut at the Olympic Games at Atlanta. While Australia did not qualify they already had their sights firmly set on the Olympics Games at Sydney where as the host country they would automatically qualify. In 1998 a residential scholarship was provided by the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) in

Canberra for the entire national squad. Australia was starting to get serious about providing opportunities for international success to the women's football national squad. In the same year the first Women's Soccer League in Australia began. By 1999 the Australian team had again qualified for the FIFA World Cup and finished 11<sup>th</sup> of 16 competing nations (Watson 1994). Australian women's football had built on the foundation established by the AWSA to develop a successful national team and they were firmly focused on the future.

This focus was rewarded when in the year 2000 at the Sydney Olympic Games the national team, despite their seemingly undeserved automatic qualification into the women's football competition, proved their right to be included by finishing a respectable seventh of eight competing nations. In 2002 the Australians U19 entered for the first FIFA U19 World Championships held in Canada but failed to make the finals. Also during that year was the amalgamation of the national body for women's football in Australia with the Australian Soccer Association (ASA) (Halim 2004; Watson 1994). This move is significant as it indicates the size to which the organisation had grown and the acceptance of women's football as a sport to be taken seriously by the national governing body which had previously only represented male football.

In 2003 Australia again qualified for the finals of the Women's World Cup which was this time held in the USA. They finished 13<sup>th</sup> of 16 competing nations. The following year there was a new qualification process for entry into the Olympic Games. Australia qualified for the women's football at the Athens Olympic Games and made the quarter finals (Halim 2004; Watson 1994). The sport of professional women's football had established and maintained itself at an international level for more than a decade. Women's football has not only increased in popularity at the professional level, it is supported by a thriving grassroots population.

Presently in Australia at a grassroots level, amateur women's football is swiftly gaining momentum. In 1984 Women's Soccer Australia was formed, with 4,711 registered players. Ten years on, in 1994, its numbers had increased to 9,147 and in 1999 had accelerated to in excess of 58,000 members. This last growth was influenced by the inclusion of women's football as an Olympic sport for the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. In 1999 one of the primary goals of the organisation was the placement of women's football amongst the top three participation sports in Australia for women (Soccer

Australia 2003). In 2003 Women's Soccer Australia came under the wing of Soccer Australia and this organisation itself committed to continue to increase interest amongst girls at a junior level (Soccer Australia 2003). According to the 2003 figures from the Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport, the participating numbers of women playing football remained stable, increasing only slightly to 59,500. Despite this slowing of growth football is one of the fastest growing women's sports in Australia (Australian Sports Commission 1999, WNFC 2005).

The evolution of women's football as a sport played by women and accepted by our sporting community has had a long and winding journey. There are times that it appeared as though the sport had died out all together. Yet, despite the setbacks, women's football has grown to the point where it is today played at the Olympic Games. The FA which once banned its very existence now recognises that women players are very likely to be the future of the game (Cubby 2004; Makudi 2007b). Women and girls can see the game played at high level at the Olympic Games and can therefore think of football as an acceptable choice for them.

Today football's international governing body, FIFA, supports the expansion of women's football and acknowledges its 'responsibility to nurture and support administrators and coaches of national associations that do have women's programmes, and to help them build on the future by providing manageable and quantifiable milestones' (Maduki 2007b:1). While it has been a long time coming, this recognition should enable women's football to continue to expand its international reach. However, at a grassroots level its development is the responsibility of the relevant national organisations.

The significant increase in interest and numbers of registered players for Australian women's football indicates that They must perceive some benefits for themselves. These may include socialising and participating with friends, experiencing the strength and responsiveness of their bodies, playing well and fairly, enjoying the process, and improving health and fitness. (Clarke and Humberstone 1997; Coakley 1998; Hargreaves 2000; Lenskyj 1994; Roberts and Brodie 1992).



## **2.10 Summary**

The relevant theories about identity, sport and identity, women and identity, and women, identity and sport have been identified and discussed. I have also reviewed the literature about the history of women and sport and the history of the soccer game. Having taken into consideration the material reviewed, an appropriate approach has been adopted to analyse women's sporting experiences. An appropriate approach to the collection and analysis of individual women's experiences utilises an interactionist position framed in feminist methodology. An analysis from the women's personal view is necessary in an attempt to fully understand the relationship between sporting experiences and identity. An interactionist approach will provide rich descriptions of the development, shaping and sustaining of identities (Coakley 1998). Feminist methodology embodies equality, empowerment and the presentation of the subjective experience. The interactionist approach using feminist methodology builds analysis around the experiences of women in an attempt to understand the way they construct personal identities (Hargreaves 2000). This perspective recognises the value of each woman's unique experience and allows an exploration of the effect that sport has on an individual's identity. The following chapter will draw upon the literature about successful research into women's sporting experiences and identity to develop a suitable methodology for this research.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter seeks to explain the methodology used for this qualitative study and the rationale for its employment. It provides a detailed account of the specific research methods employed, interview content and protocol and participant observation methodology applied.

The research problem in this study is: the experiences of women who participate in amateur sport and the influence this experience has on the development, shaping and sustaining of their identity. The primary data collection served two functions. Data was collected through in-depth interviews to provide women with the opportunity to tell their

own stories. Participant observation was undertaken to provide an alternative impression of the experiences of the participants through the eyes of another party, the researcher.

### **3.2 Research Principles and Paradigms**

The present research project was informed by two basic assumptions based on previous research. First, participation in sports plays a powerful role in the development, shaping and sustaining of women's identity (Hargreaves 2000). Second, research should endeavour to provide information about human behaviour that can be used to improve the quality of life for the researched population. The choice of methodology for this research was determined through consideration of a number of issues raised in the feminist and identity literature reviews on sports research. The literature provided background material on the social, environmental and systemic conditions that impact upon women's involvement in sports.

In selecting the appropriate methods for this study it was important to consider research methodologies that were fitting for conducting research with women as subjects. Much of the feminist literature about sports participation highlights concerns about how power is exercised in the organisation, delivery and participation of sports (Lenskyj 1990). In response to those concerns, research methods were selected to respect the voices of the participants and listen to what they were saying.

In order to effectively research the experiences of women who play amateur sport and the influence this participation has on their identity, it was crucial to employ appropriate methodology (Boutilier and SanGiovanni 1983). As qualitative research is best suited to ascertain meaning and context, it was selected as the principal data-gathering procedure. Qualitative research allows for the provision of a space for women's own interpretations, the placing of the research in a specific sporting context and the teasing out of meanings, implications and perceptions. The combination of these qualities provides rich data on specific areas of interest (Denzin et al 1988, Scraton and Flintoff 2002, Veal 1997).

### **3.3 Using Qualitative Methodology**

Qualitative research is representative of the assumption that experiences can be told in a multiplicity of ways in order to broaden understanding of women's lives (Clarke and Humberstone 1997). In this circumstance the research is focussing on a small area of interest (amateur football) according to a specific group (women from one Sydney club).

Qualitative research does have its limitations. Some researchers have reported that they have had problems getting their research group to participate in their research (Denzin et al 1988). This was not the situation with this study. Some women soccer players approached the researcher asking if they required them for the research and all players approached by the researcher agreed to be observed during participant observation, but interestingly, when approached via email the participation rate reduced with time constraints often being stated as the reason for potential participants declining to be involved in the study. Some researchers also caution that findings are usually community-specific and cannot easily be extended beyond this group (Denzin et al 1988).

#### **3.3.1 Sample Selection**

This study has utilised the contributions of thirteen women who play football in the Inner West area of Sydney. The participants were chosen on a geographical basis. Informants were gathered through a variety of methods. A convenience sampling method was used. Initial contacts were gained through word of mouth. From these initial contacts some of the sample of women came from the snowball method. Other informants were gathered through an email request asking for participants to volunteer for the research project. While those who finally participated were randomly selected they were selected from a sample that was not random. The samples were selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- 1 The informants were recruited in line with the study's definition, that being that they were women who played football.
- 2 The women all played with the same Inner Western Sydney football club.
- 3 Age or length of time playing football were not selection.

The snowball method was used as one of the ways to obtain subjects for the study. This provided an element of randomness as the researcher had no control over who was approached to be potential participants. The researcher asked a team member to let people know about the study and give people their details if they were interested in participating. Interested women then contacted the researcher. All women soccer players who approached the researcher to participate in the study were accepted.

The other method used to obtain subjects for the study was email contact. The researcher contacted via email a limited number of women soccer players at random outlining the study and asking them if they would be willing to be interview subjects. The majority of the soccer players contacted chose to participate in the in-depth interviews.

### **3.3.2 The Role of the Researcher**

The form of investigation utilised in this research project required the researcher to provide 'passionate objectivity'. This indicates that the researcher does not stand apart from the situation being researched (Hargreaves 1994:165-166). As an amateur woman football player the researcher for this project is firmly embedded in the political and social context of the work.

The provision of passion from the researcher was simple; objectivity on the other hand provided a challenge. While one of the scientific goals of research is to provide valid reliable information, there is recognition from many researchers that this is not possible. We are all informed by our previous experiences which in turn provide our beliefs, values and feelings that influence our interpretation of information. We can attempt to neutralise the effect of our influences by stating our position and influences so that readers can put the research into context using this knowledge (Boutilier and SanGiovanni 1983).

The need for objectivity was particularly obvious during the conduct of in-depth interviews where the aim was to draw value-rich material from informants about their experiences without responses being influenced by the interviewer. Therefore the researcher attempted to refrain from using body language that may indicate displeasure with the topic being spoken about and supported informants verbally as they articulated their experiences, attitudes and ideas.

### **3.3.3 Individual In-depth Interviews**

In-depth interviews were conducted as they were deemed appropriate to collect a wealth of information from a relatively small sample of women who play amateur football. The interviews were guided by a list of questions around which response and discussion took place. Participants were prompted to extend their answers to some questions to draw out richer information about their experiences (Veal 1997).

The interviews with the women were conducted at a time and venue selected by the informant. Interviews were conducted in cafes, hotels, the informant's home or the researcher's home. A total of thirteen women were interviewed. Of these, one woman was used as a pilot study and following this small adjustments were made to the interview questions. The study utilised the contributions of the thirteen women. The research tool utilised to obtain the data was a qualitative in-depth taped interview. Each interview took between 30 minutes and one and a half hours. The interviews were each then personally transcribed by the researcher to ensure quality and correctness. Transcribing took between two and five hours for each interview depending on the quality of the sound and length of the interview. Once transcribing was complete the researcher recruited the assistance of two different groups to help code the material. The groups consisted of a male fellow researcher and the researcher for this topic. The other three women with academic backgrounds. Each person read the material separately and coded the material. Discussion was then encouraged around the interviews and coding ideas, and the researcher recorded the themes that were identified by the groups as each discussion was taking place. The diversity of groups for coding assisted with maintaining the validity and reliability of the data, resulted in a larger selection of themes and explored valuable areas the researcher may not otherwise have considered.

Whilst the qualitative semi structured interview is time-consuming and labour-intensive to collect, transcribe and interpret, it is a research tool which encourages a depth of data which does not surface with other interview techniques such as a questionnaire. It is a highly effective tool for attempting to truly listening to personal experiences as perceived by the interviewee. On the other hand it is problematic to translate experience into text as the researcher cannot expect to directly capture the lived experience of

another (Denzin 1994). However, the value of the information gathered provides more complex material than would otherwise be provided. This use of the method aims to respect the power of the informant and strives to effectively report their responses, reactions and impressions. (Veal 1992)

Additionally, this method was used in order to fulfil the focus of the research, which was to explore the experiences of women who play football and the effect that they consider playing football has had on how they perceive themselves and in turn other areas of their lives. This method was then woven with information gathered through participant observation to help give greater depth of understanding and to increase the reliability of the study.

### **3.3.4 Participant Observation**

As a player with the club (but not the team) being studied and someone who had already gained admittance to the social setting, the researcher was easily able to observe other players in various settings such as at training, the pub, nights out and at games. The unobtrusive technique of participant observation took place with the knowledge of the participants.

Participant observation also provided a means of triangulation for the research. Triangulation can illuminate the clarity of the messages that are received and understood in different areas of the research (Humberstone 1997). An additional tool used in the research and useful for triangulation is the use of reflexivity.

### **3.3.5 Reflexivity**

The process of reflexivity has been applied to this research project. Each researcher brings with them to the research process experiences, impressions and attitudes which cannot be ignored. This positioning is more explicit in qualitative research than in quantitative research, as it is viewed as being more subjective and therefore requires the researcher to make visible the way in which they influence the research and are influenced by it. Because this affects the way knowledge produced by the research is constructed, it is valuable to analyse the research process (Humberstone 1997). Therefore it was determined that reflexivity would be a valuable tool to utilise for this

research project.

Reflexivity in the current research project was implemented throughout the research process. The researcher kept a journal of activities and her thinking processes during and after each of these activities.

### **3.4 Analysis of the Data**

The researcher gathered all of the data and personally transcribed all of the interviews. The process of analysis under these conditions was ongoing. As such the researcher constantly related what was heard and observed to the objectives of the study, drawing and reviewing conclusions throughout the study. This process is defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as *grounded theory*. Data from the in-depth interviews was analysed with the assistance of the software program NVIVO.

### **3.5 Limits to the Study**

This study is intended to explore the experiences of women who play amateur sport, in particular soccer. The findings are not intended to be applied to the whole population. Rather, they help provide an interpretation of the impacts of playing amateur sport on the women interviewed and provide a framework for further research in the area. While qualitative research can include large numbers of people, it usually concentrates on small numbers of people as it is so labour-intensive. The limitation of research with small numbers of participants is generally well recognised (Glesne 1999; Veal 1997). It is not possible to make reliable wide generalisations through qualitative research. The purpose of qualitative research is not to make generalisations but to learn a great amount about the issues which the study is focused upon.

Importantly, the assumption made from this study is that respondents are capable of accurately recalling past experiences and the important influences in these experiences. There is a possibility of bias originating from recall errors and under/over-estimation of events. The presence of the interviewer may cause some kind of reactivity on the part of the interviewee (Denzin 1994). Whilst this is acknowledged, the very depth of the data collected from this process is valuable despite this inherent problem.

### **3.6 Summary**

Through the use of qualitative research tools, which included in-depth interviews, participant observation and reflexivity, a rich description of the experience of playing football and the influence this event has on the participant's lives was constructed. The three research methods endeavour to provide an increased understanding of women's sporting experiences and triangulation acting as validity and reliability checks for each other.

The following chapter will report and discuss the empirical findings drawn from analysing the data gathered from interviews and participant observation.



## **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter introduces the findings and discussion of the research. It looks at who is playing women's football, the personal experience of playing football and the effect of experience on players' identities. Specifically it looks at the main themes which emerged from the interviews and the way in which these themes contribute to the exploration of identity. In particular, it investigates experiences within the identity domain of leisure and pays attention to the themes within the leisure domain (football) and the influence on the identity domains of work and family.

#### **4.1.1 The Informants: Their Background**

The informants in this study exhibited both similarities and differences in their demographic attributes. Similarities included language and residential location. Differences included age, level of football experience and previous sporting experiences. The following details were obtained from the interview questions given to each informant.

##### *a. The informants' age group*

During my time conducting participant observation with the inner west team, it was clear that the women who played came in many shapes, sizes and ages. When interviewing informants I took the opportunity to ask the women their ages. Informants' ages ranged from 19 years of age to 45 years of age. The average age of the informants was 28 years of age.

##### *b. Previous experience with sports*

Most of the women interviewed for the study had previous experience with a range of sports including hockey, netball, softball and athletics. Some of the women spoke about the lack of access to football as a sport for them. A couple of the women had been able to play football as girls but had experienced opposition when they reached twelve and it

was no longer deemed acceptable for them to participate in the sport. Girls are often allowed the opportunity to escape the constraints of femininity in childhood on the condition that they grow out of their masculine behaviour (Lenskyj 1990). For these women there came a time in their lives when young tomboys must become young women, and as football was identified as a male sport, it therefore had to be abandoned.

Some of the participants viewed themselves as sporty and others viewed themselves as not sporty. Many of those who perceived themselves to be non-sporty changed this perception of themselves while participating in playing football.

### *c. Experience playing football*

Participant observation highlighted for me the possibility that there was a diverse range of experience amongst the women players. Some women seemed to have finely tuned football skills and well-honed instincts while others had fairly rudimentary skills and strategies. Asking the women football players about their experiences confirmed that amongst them was a wide range of experience playing football. The length of time playing football ranged from one year to twenty-three years. The majority of women informants had been playing for between one year and five years, and the average length of time playing football was 8 years.

## **4.2 Setting the Scene**

This section details the informants' views and perceptions about the impacts of their participation in football which were gleaned in the in-depth interviews. To protect the informants' identities, pseudonyms were used throughout the study.

### **4.2.1 Popular Lore about Women's Football**

It became evident from the study that there is considerable popular women's football lore. The anecdotes about popular lore were given freely, without prompting, as part of the natural flow of dialogue during the interviews.

From the research it became apparent that there is a general belief that football is not

available as a sport for women who fit into the mainstream. Anecdotes ranged from the perception that 'football is a guys sport' and that 'women who play football are lesbian' to beliefs that 'playing football makes you fit' and you must be sporty to play football ,and included the idea that women's football was not taken seriously. Many of these popular lores were disproved by the women interviewed. The informants often quoted from stories they have heard from others.

#### **4.2.1.1 Football is a Guy's Sport**

The view that football has been a stereotypical men's sport emerged from the interviews:

*I played a lot of stereotypical guy sports like cricket and soccer. (Liz)*

'Klutz' referred to the emerging popularity of football as a sport for women and girls:

*I like girl's soccer because of that fact that you know, it's becoming less and less stereotyped as a guys' sport like there's heaps of girls' competitions now and guys come up and watch our game sort of thing and I just like that.*

Elizabeth acknowledged the history of football as an exclusively male sport when she said *it was only the men that used to play the sport though. It wasn't the women.* While football has for hundreds of years been a men's sport it has certainly stamped into the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a women's sport (Cubby 2004a).

Some of the women spoke about the resistance they had received from others about participating in a traditionally male sporting domain:

*My mum and grandma didn't really want me to play. My grandma was like 'Oh my little girl' and refuses to listen when I talk about my injuries. (Elizabeth)*

but also spoke about the support and encouragement provided:

*My uncles really like that I play. They are all like tough and sporty. They are all in the army and they always ask how my football is going. (Elizabeth)*

#### 4.2.1.2 Women Who Play Football are all Lesbians

During the interviews some of the women acknowledged the presence of heterosexist stereotyping attached to women's football. Liz said:

*A lot of people say that only butch women or lesbians play soccer and that's such rubbish because if you go and watch any soccer game it's a totally diverse mix of people.*

As Liz pointed out, there was a diverse mix of women; some of these women identified as lesbian and others identified as having another sexuality.

However, they did not speak of any specific instances of having been personally stereotyped as lesbian because of playing the sport. The question of sexuality did not appear to be one of concern to the women who were interviewed. When asked about this Jana simply stated:

*No I've never heard that.*

This is in contrast to experiences reported in the findings of Caudwell (2002), Hargreaves (1994) and Lenskyj (1986) who found that women who played sports which were traditionally male were often subjected to sexual stereotyping. Often resistance to women's participation in sport is reflected in the derision and displeasure inflicted upon them in the form of homophobic remarks or questions about their femininity (Hargreaves 1994). Perhaps this alternative experience of the women football players is a measure of the acceptance of women's right to play football and to claim it as their own domain.

Hargreaves (1994) asserts that women are increasingly able to dismiss attitudes which they find limiting. Jana's thought on the matter reflects Hargreaves' opinion:

*If someone ever said that to me I'd be like 'I don't see you playing so get over it'. I wouldn't have a problem with it. I mean it's no big deal to me. I don't have time for narrow-minded people. If you have that narrow-minded opinion it's your loss and I'll just move on (Jana).*

#### **4.2.1.3 Playing Football Makes You Fit**

Another lore that emerged from the interviews was the belief that playing football makes you fit:

*I thought well I have to do something and this is a fun way of keeping fit.*  
(Chantelle)

There was an idea that playing football with other women would force you to push yourself beyond your limits and was an enjoyable way of exercising.

*That's one of the benefits because it pushes you beyond your physical fitness levels because you're there and you've got to do it. So that I enjoy because it increases my fitness.* (Elizabeth)

When the researcher reflected on these comments in her journal it was clear that she had chosen to take up soccer for the purpose of fitness and weight control. However, she could neither claim to be fit or thin even after being involved in the sport for a number of years

Roberts and Brodie (1992) discuss the fact that the connection between sport and fitness has been made for a long time and identify that gains in health and fitness are seen by women as one of the advantages of involvement in sport, along with 'intrinsic enjoyment and sociability' (p51).

#### **4.2.1.4 You Must be 'Sporty' to Play Football**

Women who are sporty are not perceived to be part of the mainstream (Caldwell 2004 not in bib; Hargreaves 1994; Lenskyj 1986; Theberge 2000).

Successful participation in football challenged some women's beliefs about themselves. Participants spoke about the breaking of traditional stereotypes and their own beliefs:

*Yeah I actually really enjoyed it which I was really surprised about because I*

*always thought of myself as a non-sporting person. (Jasmine)*

Elizabeth learnt that she could be both academic and sporty:

*So in school I was kind of always not a very sporty person, not very active. I was more academic. So it's kind of with me now that I've realised you can be both. You don't have to be one or the other. You can be an active, sporty type person and still be intelligent and academic. You don't have to choose between them. (Elizabeth)*

It came as a surprise to these women that they began to identify themselves as 'sporty' and found themselves to be capably so even though they didn't fit the commonly accepted stereotype.

#### **4.2.1.5 Women's Football is not Taken Seriously**

As the sport of football is not generally viewed as a mainstream women's sport, some of the women expected that the sport would not be well organised. They were pleasantly surprised that it was taken seriously enough to be competently organised. As Jana explained:

*The pleasant surprises were things like it was taken quite seriously. You know, with things like there's websites where you can go and check your results, referees, in the good days there were linesman and that sort of thing.*

This is in contrast to the findings of Pfister et al (2002) and Hargreaves (1994) which refer to the lack of supported organisation which has historically often accompanied women's sporting teams in a male-dominated sporting arena.

The anecdotes suggest that popular lore views football as primarily a men's sport accessible in a non-serious form to fit, sporty, lesbian women. As discussed the reality is that playing football does make you fitter but amateur players do have a range of fitness levels, players come in all shapes and sizes and do not necessarily look like the 'sporty type' and women who play football identify along a range of sexualities. This research supports the notion that there is no one homogenous group of women who

play football, just as Hargreaves (2000) suggests when she speaks about the development of research about women and sport.

## 4.3 More Than a Game - The Football Experience

### 4.3.1 The 'F' Word

It may come as no surprise that during my research I noticed that a dirty word was frequently bandied around both on and off the football pitch.

When I first started to interview participants, observe interactions and events, and talk to coaches, it became obvious that there was something bothering almost everyone. This was expressed with frustration and yearning, caused ultimatums to be made and appeared to be resulting in mayhem and discontent amongst players and coaches. It was omnipresent and permeated the football atmosphere. It was so powerful that we began to refer to it as the 'f' word. More emotive than any four letter expletive was the word *friendship*.

When asked to give themselves a pseudonym, 41% of the women named themselves after a friend or in relation to a significant friendship. When asked why she chose a friend's name, Liz stated *she's my best friend and I like her*. Similarly Helen said, *I named myself self after my girlfriend because she's beautiful and it's a nice name*. This finding is in keeping with findings of Vescio, Crosswhite and Wilde (2003) who identify that when asked to nominate a sporting role model, most girls will name a family member or friend. The names we give ourselves usually provide clues about our identity. They indicate the relationships we value and our social connections. We use them to help construct our sense of self (Bessant and Watts 1999). The choice to name themselves after friends highlighted the importance of friendship to these women's identity.

Friendship was particularly important to Marjorie when she said *it is about me and about friendships and I found that I discover more about myself in this environment*.



#### **4.3.1.1 Strength of Friendships**

Marjorie expressed the strength of friendships made on the football field:

*It's mainly the friendships and fun...I mean girls (who) have moved to different countries I'm still friends with.*

As did Ruby:

*My team-mates were like my sisters. There was always someone there if you needed them. Support in every way really, mentally and physically. If you hurt yourself there was always someone there for you. If you couldn't get there someone would come and pick you up. If you couldn't get home someone would take you home. If you had a problem outside of soccer there was always someone there to comfort you. They were just like being sisters really.*

#### **4.3.1.2 Attachment**

Many of the women spoke about the difficulties that they experienced when they were graded by skill level rather than with the friends they had bonded with during previous football seasons. Jackie expressed a sense of loss and sadness:

*I found it really hard to be pushed up into another team. I was given no choice and I felt so insecure. I just wanted to play with my friends. With the women I knew. I felt self-conscious about my skills and I felt lost. At first I didn't have any connection with my new team-mates. I eventually fitted in and became friends with some of them but my heart really ached. I still feel sad about it. (Jackie)*

#### **4.3.1.3 Motivation**

Some of the women talked about the fact that their friendships with the other women in their team motivated them to rejoin each year:

*Last year was really fun. Our team got along really well and we all became quite good friends. I know the coaches and it was fun last year so I thought I might as well play again this year. (Liz)*

Marjorie echoed this sentiment saying that the friendships she had developed *outweighed everything- I realized that I would miss the girls so much (if I didn't rejoin)*. As Marjorie said this she started to cry, emphasising the personal magnitude of her relationships with her team members.

#### **4.3.1.4 The Need to be Heard**

Coakley (1998:7) identifies that many sports with women participants are 'grounded primarily in the values and experiences of men; they are controlled by men and are geared to the way the world operates'. During the first couple of seasons, the male coaches were unaware of the importance of friendship to women. They insisted that the women's teams be divided by skill level and were shocked and frustrated by the women's reactions to their decision. One of the coaches expressed this frustration when he said, *All I ever hear is, 'Can I play with my friend?' (whingey little girl voice) for God's sake no. I don't want to hear it any more. They can't play with their friends, this is football. You can't have a whole team of different skill levels. It doesn't make sense. They should just get on with it (Kristoph) (Collected during participant observation)*.

One female coach insisted that her team stay together in spite of intense pressure from the other coaches. As the seasons progressed, her team returned the most competitive results within the club. With this example and consistent lobbying from women club members, the administration relaxed rules about playing at skill level and more women's teams stayed together in following seasons. I will discuss the complexities of the experience of coach later in this chapter.

While this was indeed the circumstance with the Inner West Football Club, it was clear that the men involved in the organisation were committed to the organisation, success and growth of the women's teams. The approach to organisation evolved as the male organisers become increasingly aware of the needs and wishes of the female players and as more women became involved as organisers and administrators. In its 2003 publication *Towards Better Sport: Good Practices for Women and Girls in Sport*, the Australian Sports Commission acknowledges that women are under-represented at all levels in coaching, officiating and leadership. Women are still facing obstacles to equal involvement in sport and physical activities as players, coaches and administrators.

Slowly women are filtering into the organisation and administrative arms of the Inner West Football team.

#### 4.3.1.5 Connections

Some of the women chose to play football with the intention of making new friendships. Buffy from Canada stated, *It's the only way I've been able to socialise. It's the only thing here which has given me my own identity, outside Andrew (boyfriend). Most of the things I am here are defined by him ... definitely it has a big influence on my social circle.*

For others the development of friendships came as a surprise: *when I moved to Sydney I found that it was a good way to meet new people, it was very social, and I wasn't expecting that (Liz).*

Developing friendship away from her partner and workplace was important to Lisette: *it's just the general thing of having a really good circle of friends around that are quite separate from people that I know at work or through Rick (partner). It's nice to have other people that are specific friends for me.* Lisette is referring to her friendships within the identity domains of work and family. Having established friendship in these domains Lisette seeks to pursue her leisure identity in a space which is sufficiently independent from them (Kelly 1983). According to Wearing (1998) alternative spaces or heterotopias offer opportunities to test and construct different versions of self. These different selves could not be as readily tested in other more familiar spaces.

Marjorie reflected on the fact that she had spent very little time with women since leaving school: *I realise that I've missed spending time, that time with just girls and just chatting and having that time that's away from everything else.* Her contact with women through football had reminded Marjorie of the pleasure of female conversation and company (Rubin and Rubin 1995 ).

This research confirms that friendship holds a high-level priority amongst many women. Friendship for women thrives on companionship, vivacity and support and gives women a forum to talk honestly about their hopes and fears. The exposure to the spirit of female conversation and the testing of new identities as women grow is for many

women one of the great joys in life. It is often an essential element in their ability to survive (Rubin and Rubin 1995).

### 4.3.2 The Search for 'Me' in 'Team'

#### 4.3.2.1 More Connections

According to Bandy and Darden (1990) and Lenskyj (1994), belonging to a team seems to hold particular relevance to women. Their research reflects that women often express a need for connection with other women and an appreciation of the poetic beauty and effectiveness of teamwork. The following extract suggests that the experience of playing football evokes a feeling of belonging in a way which non-team sporting activities fail to do:

*...everyone worked as a team. Probably the more we got to know each other and the longer that we were together as a team, cause the team stayed together for a lot of years. I was really shocked at the closeness that a team can have and support they can give each other after being together for so long. That was a really beautiful. (Ruby)*

The social aspects accompanied by the exercise benefits of playing on a team appealed to some of the informants. Liz commented that the attraction of being a member of the football team was for her *social. I think the exercise and the socialising probably together. It's not a huge part of my life, it's not my number one focus, but it's important to me. It's not necessarily winning but it's being a member of a team and going along playing each week. That sort of thing (Liz).*

Many of the women expressed a comfort level with the team they had become accustomed to and a reluctance to move to another team:

*I feel very comfortable within the group of people. The friends that I have there at the moment. I think if that changed and new people came through you get maybe different fits of people and if I maybe got traded to another team where it was a very clicky group and I didn't feel that I wanted to have to prove myself to get into*

*this group I think that would be too much hard work. (Petria)*

#### **4.3.2.2 Commitment**

The theme of team is also concerned with the concept of commitment. Marjorie talks about her sense of commitment to the team: *it's the demand of being on a team. Being on a team is very compelling. So there's a sense of guilt and responsibility, but I also enjoy it. I really like being with them.*

Accompanying a sense of commitment many of the women were intensely aware of the possibility that they may let their team down through a performance below standard. In spite of wanting to be able to play with friends of mixed ability, Chantelle did not want to let her team down and said that she would be prompted to stop playing football *if I found I was going to be a hindrance to the team because I simply was below the standard. The team I'm in would never ever, would never say that. They are very good. They're very forgiving. But if I felt that I wasn't contributing then I would give up.* Scraton and Flintoff (2002:8) refer to a feminine morality which focuses on 'self-sacrifice and responsivity to others' needs'. Here Chantelle offers to sacrifice her own needs for the good of the team.

#### **4.3.2.3 Motivation**

Some of the participants expressed a belief that belonging to a team helped to motivate them to exercise. Elizabeth commented:

*I was wanting to play a team sport because I'm not very self-motivated. I'm a lot more self-motivated now since I've been doing it, but at the time a kind of needed almost people to rely on me to be there in order for me to actually go and turn up. So, that helped and that was right.*

#### **4.3.2.4 Diversity**

The football players interviewed expressed pleasant surprise at the diversity amongst their team members:

*I didn't expect such an eclectic bunch of girls in my team. Like we've got lawyers and psychologists and students and up to 35/37 and down to 18. I didn't expect such an eclectic mix. When I got to know the people I was playing with that was probably the thing that took me by surprise the most. (Elizabeth)*

In fact the diversity enriched the experience for Jasmine:

*I really enjoy meeting other people and getting to know other people and just the exposure to all the different personalities and conflicts and things that arise when you're in a team.*

This diversity extended to levels of competitiveness adopted by teams:

*Some teams can be really, really competitive and therefore really crazy on the field. Other teams are really laid back and they're fun to play against. (Klutz)*

It should be noted that while the players spoke about diversity amongst their teams, that diversity existed within a select group. As an observer, it appeared to me that most of the women had been born in Australia. The women born in Australia came from a range of ethnic backgrounds, including Italian, Croatian, Anglo and South American. Those women who had not been born in Australia usually came from a country where English was the first language. Most of the women had completed or were completing their Higher School Certificate, many had tertiary qualifications and most were employed. The majority of the women did not have children and appeared to have a comfortable disposable income. Those women who did have children were seen as role models for future sports participation by the women without children.

### 4.3.3 My Body Can Take It

#### 4.3.3.1 Weight Control

Hargreaves (2000), Mathes, McGivern and Schneider (1992) and Roberts and Brodie (1992) observe that weight control is often mentioned by women who participate in sports as one of the motivators for their participation. A number of the women spoke about using football as a way of controlling their weight. Helen commented:

*If I don't play soccer I am going to look like a beach balloon, beach whale or whatever (laugh). Because I notice that I'm starting to put on weight in the off season. So I think, ooh I'm going to play soccer. (Helen)*

Similarly, Buffy said:

*I used to be so skinny I never used to think about my body very much. I found soccer is a way that I have been able to not gain a lot of weight so I like it.*

#### 4.3.3.2 Improved Body Shape

The findings of Hargreaves (1994) explore the concept that 'female sports are part of the battle for control of the female body' (p 289) and that sport is perceived by women as a way of achieving and maintaining a better body.

*I like the muscles it gives me. I like having good strong legs. It keeps my body trim. I can eat whatever I want because my metabolism is fast because I'm just running around. (Jana)*

*I didn't lose weight but I actually changed body shape. With no other exercise in between besides training and the soccer match so it's surprising really how quickly that happened. I thought that losing my waist was just part of getting older so it was a nice surprise to have it back again. (Chantelle)*

#### 4.3.3.3 Increased Awareness of and Respect for the Body

Playing football increased players' awareness of their bodies. Jasmine said:

*Physically I'm much more aware of my body. I realised what different things do to my body.*

Clarke and Humberstone's (1997) and Hargreaves' (2000) research discusses the influence of physical activity on changes in personal identity as women begin to identify with their bodies and take pride in their ability to respond to the challenges presented and find the experience 'positive, pleasurable and empowering' (Hargreaves 2000:289).

*There are all shapes and sizes that play soccer. I've always had a body image that is smaller. I've never been this big in my life so I've always had this image of myself as quite small but then I see girls on the field who are like I used to be and I realise that I am quite scary to them (laugh). I realised that I was quite fast and I could be fast. I never thought of myself as fast. I think it helped me to stop smoking because it made me think of my body as if it could do something.*  
(Marjorie)

As she is involved in the sport and measures herself against other women playing her sport, Marjorie reassesses her image of herself, her identity, and finds that she is different to the image of herself that she has previously held (Bessant and Watts 1999; Coakley 1998). Marjorie is more aware of her body and where it sits in relation to other women's bodies. This change in identity emerges as an increased awareness and respect for the body.

#### 4.3.3.4 I Feel Stronger

Clarke and Humberstone (1997) refer to the women in their research who spoke about the way that physical exercise changed their muscles and made them feel stronger. The women in this study expressed similar sentiments.

*I feel a lot stronger. You feel a lot less fragile. I guess I used to be a bit more precious.* (Elizabeth)



Participation in football gives women the opportunity to test their bodies in ways which they have often been discouraged from. Thing (2001) refers to the fact that women who play symbolic-aggressive sports become accustomed to working their bodies hard, facing the challenge of a symbolic fight and trust their bodies to respond to their requests. Here is an environment where the body can be pushed to the limit, rolled and tumbled, beaten and battered. Football provides an environment where a woman can have her body pushed to breaking point and when it doesn't break discover that she is not the fragile and delicate creature she has always been encouraged to believe she is. Having found this out, she gets back up and does it again. Elizabeth comments:

*You do bounce back. You might have big bruises on you but you just get over it ... I used to be a bit more precious but now I'm more gung ho about it because I know my body can take it.*

#### **4.3.3.5 Confidence**

Clarke and Humberstone (1997) talk about the changes which occur in personal identity as women get more in touch with their bodies and find that it 'can respond to the challenges; is capable and able' (p91). This finding is supported by the findings in this study.

*I think I'm more confident about my fitness than I was before. I'm more confident about general coordination and strength. Physically it's reaffirmed something that I've always just assumed. (Elizabeth)*

Clarke and Humberstone (1997:91) discuss the empowerment for a woman which comes with the confirmation of physical strength as a 'source of confidence, personal security and the opposite to the vulnerability of femininity'.

#### **4.3.3.6 Badges of Honour**

Many of the women entertained a popular topic of conversation about the badges of honour imprinted on their bodies by the act of playing football. The most visible of these was bruising. The women spoke about the bruising they had received while playing

football with pride and enthusiasm. They displayed these badges of honour as proudly as any war veteran:

*I have gone away with a lot of bruises and it's all just part of the game and I show my bruises off very proudly! It's like I'm so tough, see how tough I am. (Jasmine)*

*As a keeper it's fun to come off with huge scratches and bruises all over you. And you can show all your friends. You're like 'Check out this bruise! How cool is this?'. (Liz)*

Sometimes they remind the women of the action on the field and their acts of bravery:

*Every week I get a new one and I never realise it on the field. It's always like 'Oh yeah I remember that tackle'. When I feel a bruise or something. Yeah, yeah I enjoy it. (Jana)*

Summing up her feelings about the bruises she gets from playing football, Buffy said:

*I love bruises and I bruise very easily.*

There is matter of fact acknowledgement of the toughness of the game present in the quotations. There is acknowledgement that the game is hard and that the acquisition of bumps and bruises is all part of the process, rather than an exception to the rule or something to be avoided. This finding is supported by Hargreaves (1994) and Lawrence (1998) who suggest that there is a sense of satisfaction some women gain from playing 'rough, physical sports requiring strength and speed' (Hargreaves 1994:273) and discuss the resulting blurring of traditional ideas of femininity in sports. The women do not talk about being limited by the toughness. The toughness is accepted as the way things are. To expect the toughness is part of their sporting identity. Badges of honour provide players with proof of their authenticity as football players. They are physical evidence that that had engaged in battle, put their bodies on the line, fought with valour and discharged their duties with courage, honour and aggression.

The women in this study generally encountered positive experiences of their bodies through participation in football. They felt fitter, stronger and more in control of their

weight. They were more aware of their bodies and were able to be proud of what their bodies were able to endure. They have started to view themselves as less fragile and more capable and confident. As Bandy and Darden (1990) discuss, a woman's view of her body is informed by her experiences. Through the football experience players developed an increased sense of their own bodies and were able to measure their bodies against the bodies of the other women playing football rather than against their male counterparts. Unlike the findings of Boutlier and SanGiovanni (1983), Lenskyj (1986, 1988), Coakley (1998) and Scraton and Flintoff (2002), there is no measuring women's bodies against men's bodies and finding them inferior (Bryson, 1991). Each footballer measures herself against her peers, other amateur sports women, and finds that she does not belong to a homogenous group but to a diverse group which includes many *shapes and sizes* (Marjorie).

#### **4.3.4 I Love a Bit of Aggression**

It is often assumed that women will not enjoy the physicality that often accompanies traditional male sports. It is assumed that women source enjoyment from physicality that does not have the competitive rough and tumble of many male-dominated sports and only some sports which are considered to be appropriate (Clarke and Humberstone 1997). However, many of the women expressed enjoyment of the physicality involved in a game of football:

*...I kind of enjoy that physical contact. The sport is a little bit aggressive by nature, it's a competition. You know that's what it is. You know I used to play netball and I hated the fact that it wasn't a little bit contact. A little bit aggressive. Because you're fighting for the ball it (aggression) becomes part and parcel with it. You give it as much as you take it. So I don't see any problems with it at all. I enjoy it. (Elizabeth)*

Aggression and physicality do not fit with the perception of traditional female gender roles. Thing (2001:275) speaks about the assumption that women would not enjoy the 'aggressive symbolic play in sport', going on to say that aggression in women was often seen as inappropriate and therefore not expected. Women are expected to be caring and emotionally contained. Jasmine cast aside her containment on the football field:

*I love a little bit of aggression. The rest of your life you need to be polite and nice and this is a time when you don't have to do that. I really love that (Jasmine).*

Thing (2001) argues that women seek out play-aggressive sports as a means of enabling themselves to have an intense experience of body and emotions. Elizabeth nominates football as a conduit for these emotions:

*Some people go up to bars and pick fights and you can go kickboxing and you can go to soccer and get real physical. I mean you can get quite aggressive sometimes.*

#### **4.3.4.1 Cathartic Experiences**

The cathartic benefits of sport as an appropriate way of releasing tension and frustration have been widely recognised (Coakley 1998). However, it is largely unexpected that women would find aggression a cathartic experience. Lenskyj (1994) talks about the aversion to aggression for many women who play sport because it can disrupt the connections which women value very highly (Lenskyj 1994). In contrast to this and more in keeping with the findings of this research is the research by Thing (2001) which proposes that aggression is a 'game-in-a-game' for many women directly connected to emotions of joy and excitement.

*It's almost very cathartic in a way. You've had a big week and you're all pent up because your partner has been annoying you all week or something, you go out on the field and you get a bit physical. You have a few knocks. You fall over and when you get back up and you go 'right. I'm over that now'. So it's the cathartic nature of it. (Elizabeth)*

Football provided an appropriate space to show the aggression that they had pent up from other areas of their lives:

*It's better to do it on the soccer field that it is to do it in the workplace (laugh). (Elizabeth)*

Sometimes just a run around the field was enough:

*I guess it's my outlet. It sort of gives me something that is a bit of a chance to take a deep breath and sort of release as well. Thursday night is football training. If it's been a hard week it's a good chance to run around and let some steam off. I think you need to do something like that. It really takes my mind off other things.*  
(Petria)

The act of playing football and engaging in aggression allows for the abandonment of the 'ethic of care and nurturance' and the establishment of alternative femininities and the right to entitlement (Wearing 1998).

#### **4.3.5 Muscle up - Alternative Femininities**

In Western society, women are taught to develop and are rewarded for qualities of 'passivity, dependence and nurturance' (Lenskyj 1986:13). As Cashman (1995) asserts, women have only recently been encouraged to be involved in sports and they have 'constrained female physical expression' (p81). The aforementioned feminine qualities are challenged through the experience of playing football. Through role taking in a traditionally masculine environment such as the football field, players have an opportunity to try out new behaviours and experience changes in identity (Bessant and Watts 1999) and to enjoy them. As Jana says:

*It's nice just not to be a princess. It's nice to get in there and muscle up and get on with it. I think it's a good strength.*

The release from traditional gender roles in a leisure environment can be empowering for the players (Clarke and Humberstone 1997; Henderson et al 1989).

*The game I had last week got quite rough and there was this girl that was really, really saying abusive comments to me and another player, she was calling us all sorts. I was about to go 'Oh this is all too much' and I just had to literally slap myself and say 'Right, muscle up and get on with it, win the ball off her and that will shut her up'. Usually I'm pretty tough. (Jana)*

The players expressed an appreciation of the opportunities to break out of their usual gender roles. Liz enthused:

*It's an excuse to be rough. I like being able to roll around in the dirt. How often do you get to do that?*

while Klutz talked about her newly discovered sense of entitlement which emerged as a competitive edge:

*Well it has made me feel a bit more competitive. It's given me increased feeling like I know what's it's like to go up against someone and the need to win. Not need to win but want to win.*

As women continued to test the gender boundaries, they discovered qualities in themselves that may not have previously recognised. Many of the women embarked on a journey of self-discovery.

#### **4.3.6 Through the Looking Glass - It's Just about Me - Self**

##### **4.3.6.1 Time for Me**

Women are often automatically expected to put the needs, socially and emotionally, of other family members, their partner and children above their own needs (Deem 1986, Green et al 1990). This, Coakley (1998) and Lenskyj (1994) conclude, results in women having limited time on their hands with which they can freely participate in sport. Even though it is often not a top priority, women have come to see leisure time as an entitlement. A big factor in their leisure choices is 'time for myself' (Lenskyj 1994).

Chantelle confirms this:

*It's something I can do for myself. I think I spend so much time working and doing other things around the home. It is actually two times a week I can actually go outside of that and do my own thing.*

Marjorie talks about the transition from viewing football as being attached others to viewing football as now solely about herself:

*It gives me something that's just for me. It's not a part of anyone else. My job is part of my identity and so is my marriage and friendships and even though soccer started out attached to Ian, my husband, it's not any more. It's just about me.*

#### **4.3.6.2 Occupying Self**

In an alternative to the above findings, Jana spoke about football providing a way of occupying herself:

*...literally have something to do so that when I'm thinking about what I'm going to do on the weekend well Sunday morning's taken up. Well that's cool 'cause I've got my game and then if I've nothing on in the afternoon and the girls go for a drink or something I can join them and have somewhere to go.*

During my observation it was clear that while some of the women football players had children, many others did not. Jana did not have children. Perhaps women without children do not have the same demands on their time as those women with children have. Perhaps they are not held as responsible for the emotional and social wellbeing of family members. This may leave them to seek out an alternative, personally satisfying occupation which participation in sport can provide.

#### **4.3.6.3 Increased Awareness of Self**

Marjorie found that through exploring a new environment she became more self-aware and learnt more about herself:

*It's just made me more self-aware ... I discover more about myself in this environment because it's so different from any other kind of environment for me ... (I learn) about how I operate in a group and how I am competitive and how I respond to having no power. Because I think in my job I have more power and in my life I have more power than I do as part of a team. So, the challenge and getting along with people I don't like because they are on the team. How I have to pull my head in and just do things that I tell. Because I'm a psychologist I tell*

*people everyday how to live and how to get along with people, and this is a challenge for me. 'Cause I don't choose who I'm with and in this particular squad there are really strong personalities that I don't like so it's interesting for me. I'm analysing myself more I think.*

#### **4.3.6.4 A Reflection of our Lives**

Through working as a team and playing on the football field, players were able to examine their approach to life:

*I was going to myself, 'The way you deal with this is the way you deal with your life.' The way you choose to deal with this says something about the way you choose to deal with your life. (Marjorie)*

This increased agency was a theme which permeated through the football experience.

#### **4.3.7 Agency**

Bessant and Watts (1999) and Giddens (1979) discuss agency as a person's ability to be 'self aware, to know what we are doing, to choose what to do, and to give good accounts of why we did what we have done' (Bessant and Watts 1999:129).

During this research it has become clear that as the women footballers became more experienced and knowledgeable about football, their sense of agency increased. Earlier we have read about the women's increasing self-awareness and have been able to follow the players' journeys as they came to know what they were doing, were able to choose what to do and talk about the reasons they did so.

The women were able to give good accounts about the effect that playing football has had on them.



#### **4.3.7.1 Choosing Role Models**

Buffy gave an account of her choice of name:

*I just chose the name Buffy because I'm a big fan of the show. I found that she was probably one of the most positive female role models of my generation on television. Because the whole premise behind the show is that the creator took the stereotypical female that's always helpless in that sort of situation and made her into a person that's a hero.*

By undertaking a sport which is not stereotypically female, Buffy the football player has modelled herself on the television character and become her own personal hero.

#### **4.3.7.2 Capability**

Jana saw herself as being more courageous:

*It's given me a lot of courage I think*

while Jasmine had shown herself that she was capable of things she hadn't imagined. This gave her the belief that she was capable of so much more:

*I feel that I can accomplish more now. This was something I thought I'd never be able to do. I never thought I would do it. So I feel just by accomplishing these things that maybe there's other things that I don't know about that are just as good and maybe I should explore a little more and open my eyes a little more.*

#### **4.3.7.3 The Need to be Heard**

Knowing what we would like to do and going about doing it are two different things. The constraints of other people can stand in the way of us doing what we want (Bessant and Watts 1999). In this research as the players knew more about what they were doing, they wanted to have more choice in the way things were done, and some became frustrated by the lack of access to being heard and therefore being able to act on what they wanted:

*I think it's interesting that it's a women's sport and a women's thing but why is it run by men and controlled by men? I'm really starting to resent that 'cause I think that men and women play sport for different reasons and I don't think the men that run this club know that. I just find that very dismissive.*

As a result of increased agency many of the women identified that football provided a good link to the men in their lives.

#### **4.3.8 A Good Link - Gender Relations**

In their book *Crossing Boundaries*, Bandy and Darden (1990) discuss sport as a forum within which women can explore their relationships with the men in their lives. The players in this study spoke about the improved connections they were able to build with the men in their lives because of football. These connections were strengthened because of access to similar experiences, to the language and culture of football.

Many of the women had male family members who had played football but had not previously been involved in the sport: *the men in my life have always been involved in soccer. But not me* (Marjorie).

Now because they have an experience of the sport, have access to its language and some knowledge about its rules, the women became more interested in engaging in conversations about football:

*I am interested in hearing about it. Before when I didn't play soccer, when Ian was talking about soccer, I wouldn't even listen. Now I kind of start to listen. I also talk about it to people who don't play soccer and probably bore them.*

##### **4.3.8.1 Men in the family**

Jasmine spoke about playing football giving her an opportunity to connect with her dad in a way which had previously not been possible:

*It gives my dad and me something to talk about cause I never used to talk about*

*sport and he's a blokey bloke, talks about sport and I have an understanding of that now. So at least I can carry on a conversation. It's improved that with my dad.*

Marjorie realised that her husband's perception of her had changed:

*He comes to watch sometimes when I force him, and he talks me through. So it has had an impact, I think, on how he sees me too. 'Cause he told me I run like a bloke, which is a good thing apparently (laugh) not like a girl.*

The football experience was also a good link for Jana and the men in her family:

*I was brought up with four brothers and they all play sport and my dad is really into sport. So it is something that we can always talk about. It's a good link for me and my family just to chat about the game and things.*

And for Liz and her brother:

*My brother is my coach and we actually talk about soccer a lot. He's obsessed. It's actually scary how much we talk about soccer.*

When asked what football meant to her, Klutz summed it up succinctly. For her football was about connecting with the men in her family - her dad and brothers:

*It means a lot because I've got quite a few people in my family who play soccer and I've always enjoyed watching my dad play and my brothers play. So it does mean a lot.*

#### **4.3.8.2 Social Situations**

Through the experience of playing football the women felt as if they gained credibility and were able to take a different perspective when talking to men who played or watched football:

*I have a different perspective in talking to Ian's mates who play soccer. You get a*

*different response from men when they find out you're not just someone that sits on the sidelines, that you actually play it ... It's just a conversation starter I think and it's kind of fun. (Marjorie)*

*I think with the boys it's a bit more 'she understands, she's on our level'. Like when it comes to sport and we can invite her to the rugby and we can just do things like that. (Elizabeth)*

Having gained increased information about football, the women shared interests with which they could engage with men in social situations. Knowledge about football also provided opportunities to develop workplace relations.

#### **4.3.8.3 Workplace**

Participation in football appeared to have a significant influence on the relationships with men in the workplace. Players spoke about an improved level of credibility, perception of capability and general work relations with men because of their football experience.

#### ***Acceptance and Respect***

The act of playing football meant that Elizabeth was more accepted by the men in her workplace:

*...with the men it was almost a bit more accepted because I could take a bit of a knock and I could play a bit of sport.*

Liz felt that the men in her workplace respected her more because of her participation:

*I think I actually gained a lot of respect from the guys because I played a lot of stereotypically guys' sports like cricket and soccer and I watched football. I'd go to the pub after work and have a beer with them. I think that gave them more respect for me.*

## **Capability**

Men in the workplace automatically perceived that they were more capable:

*I think people know that I'm not too much of a fairy. I can just muck in and get on with it... even if it's a specific work thing they know that I can just muck in and get on with it because they perceive that because I play football I'm probably tougher than the average girl at work. (Jana)*

Elizabeth spoke about her experience with the women in her workplace:

*I was almost masculinised a little bit. Like a light bulb needs to be changed and oh Elizabeth can do it... I'd be getting up on tables and changing light bulbs because there was hardly any guys I worked with.*

## **General Work Relations**

Football provides common ground with men in the workplace and therefore more opportunities exist for making connections and improving work relations:

*Two guys at work play soccer so we talk a lot. We had a meeting and I had scored five goals one weekend and they wrote it on the board. So everyone was talking about it. So that's cool. (Helen)*

Of women's involvement in a traditionally male sport Klutz concludes:

*I think that it's really good that girls are getting out there and not leaving it to the guys all the time, sitting on the sidelines and watching.*

Another significant relationship which dominated the interviews and observation was the relationship which women embarked upon with their coach.

## 4.4 Coach

### 4.4.1 A Coach of Many Hats

According to this study the coach plays a very significant role in the experiences of the women players. They view the coach as a teacher, mentor, role model and chief or leader who has the power to positively or negatively affect the experience of football for each and every player on the team.

Generally, the women spoke about their coaches as being 'good':

*When I first turned up I thought it would be really, really difficult. I thought I'd be pretty hopeless and I thought there'd be a coach that would yell at me and tell me I was hopeless and tell me what to do. .. I was surprised at how good the coaches were. I probably got yelled at a few times but I probably yelled back a few times too. All the coaches were really patient and I was surprised at how well and how much I learnt in the past year, my first year. (Jasmine)*

#### 4.4.1.1 Coach as Teacher

According to many of the players the coach plays a significant role in the learning experience. The women who spoke about learning expressed the enjoyment that they experienced from learning. They indicated that they learnt more readily and less painfully from positive feedback. There appeared to be a lot of satisfaction associated with the process of learning through their coaches' input.

*...it's always positive feedback. So it's good. Afterwards I think that's ok. I take it in and learn from it. He says, 'When you're shooting look down, not up,' so next time I'll look down. So I learn something. (Helen)*

*...last year was Paul and I learnt heaps last year and really enjoyed it because I picked up so much. I really felt like I was learning and developing skills and things. (Petria)*

The women spoke about the value of constructive criticism from their coach.

*The coach I had then was just...I just found it so gentle, the whole thing. 'You're doing it this way but maybe we could try it this way'. It wasn't yelling or anything I had expected it to be. (Jasmine)*

Constructive criticism was seen by informants as being highly worthwhile. The women could see the difference between criticism which helped them to play a better game and criticism which corroded their confidence and inhibited their ability to play.

*...he was generally pretty good at giving constructive criticism as opposed to criticism for criticism and he obviously understands the game very well. (Buffy)*

#### **4.4.1.2 Coach as Life Coach**

Some of the players translated things that they had learnt from their coach to other areas of their lives such as the workplace or in their relationships with friends.

*I really admired my coach for the way he held training sessions and motivated us, the motivated speeches he gave before the game. You know I really looked up to him for that. I probably got a lot out of that in terms of my friends or even at work. Prior to a training session he would tell us what we are going to do or recap on the game, how well we played, what we are going to do in tonight's session and why we're doing it and what we're going to do in Sunday's game. Just having that agenda and carrying it all out. He would go around and speak to everyone individually and make sure everyone is ok. I've looked at him quite a lot and thought that's a really good thing to do. He makes everyone feel welcome and I guess I've used that in work if I go and visit customers and various things. I explain myself a bit more based on what I've seen he does and what I like about it. (Jana)*

The observation from Jana highlights the influence that a coach has as a role model and the power they have to affect other areas of a player's life. In addition, the transfer of skills to other domains in a player's life reflects a change in identity through relationships and interactions with others. These women were taking skills learnt within the identity domain of sport and were applying the skills to other areas, or identity domains, of their lives (Kelly 1983).

#### **4.4.1.3 Coach as Tone Setter for Team**

Some of the players acknowledged and expected that the coach as a leader and role model had an important influence on the tone of the team.

*If you've been playing together for four or five months and training I have an expectation that part of the coach's job is not just to teach you how to play the game but also to make you play together well and to set the tone. (Petria)*

Just as they influenced the tone of the team, coaches had a strong influence on the players' personal football experience.

#### **4.4.1.4 Coach as Influencing the Experience**

Players perceived that the coach had a powerful impact on the value of their football experience. According to players, a coach can often single-handedly induce positive or negative experiences. Jasmine spoke about the positive experience prompted by her coach:

*I thought it would be really, really difficult. I thought I'd be pretty hopeless. I thought the coach would yell at me and tell me I was hopeless. I enjoyed it. My coach was wonderful. All the coaches were really patient. I was surprised at how much I enjoyed it and how much I learnt.*

A painful story was told of one team's experience.

*I almost cried...I think what he intended to do was bollock us and then to try and bring us back up. But that didn't happen so we went back on the pitch being told we were pieces of shit. We played even worse the second half and afterward we were thinking privately, 'That's what you do to men's teams in between' you know they really don't give a shit. Not to a demotivated team that hasn't won a game all season who're getting a bit tired of it...You know you don't do that to get a better performance.*



Fortunately the story ends on a much happier note:

*The next day*

*Angel coach turned up and said, 'Aah you're all lovely for turning up. Thanks for playing the long weekend. Go out there and have fun. Lets all have a go. It doesn't matter what the result is'. We had such a better game. (Marjorie)*

#### **4.4.1.5 Coach as Friend - Attachment**

Many of the team members talked about their attachment to their coach. Players spoke about being in contact via email, spending training and game time together and socialising as a team after games. According to research conducted by Eagly et al (1992), women and girls value a coach's ability to socialise as an important leader characteristic. A leader who socialised well had a greater influence on sporting involvement. As teams spent more quality time with their coaches they became more attached to them. Marjorie expressed this attachment well when she said:

*They become yours. This is my team, this is my soccer, this is my coach. You're protective of them (Marjorie)*

Marjorie also told a very amusing analogy about a previous coach and his defection to coach an apparently better team:

*So your coach is like your boyfriend. I've noticed that attachment with other teams as well. And you feel kind of jealous. But our coach who's the typical man in the relationship is too scared to do anything, shit scared, so he tries to make everyone happy and he's going out with both of us (training both teams) (peels of laughter). But he's appointed a lucky, McCoach, to come and watch our games. He's like the supervising ref. And then we've got the coach's beautiful assistant who comes along and just stands there and complements us. (laugh) He's a very nice guy, he's really sweet. I don't know why he's there. I don't know what he's doing. I think he's just there to provide moral support to our coach while he cheats on us. (laugh) He plays us (the teams) off against each other. He will come to me and the team captain and he says you know, 'I enjoy coaching you*

*guys more'. (laugh) Our team is like 'I'm your wife and you've left me for this bit of fluff! This team that might be in a higher division.' He's attracted to the glamour. He's not taking care of the home fires and they're going out. McCoach is a poor substitute. He doesn't spend time with us. It is, that is the best analogy I can make and it's so funny.*

#### **4.4.1.6 Coach as Listener**

As the women became more knowledgeable about playing football they began to expect that their coach would listen to them and involve them in the decision making for the team:

*We know how to run it, me and Megan. We're saying, 'This is what you want to do. Keep the team. Keep the core team from last season at the fours. Don't let us lose our strikers to the top team. If you want this team to have a go, keep us together and you coach us'. (Marjorie)*

Dubois (1992) found that women team members valued emotional support as the most important quality of a coach. Emotional support can be given through positive support, listening to women and responding to their needs. In this study the women spoke about responding positively to these qualities in their coaches. Chelladurai and Arnott (1985) reveal that a large percentage of female athletes they interviewed preferred a coaching style which included a participatory decision-making style. Players talked about their need for participatory decision-making with their coaches. They also expressed a need to be included in decisions made for them in relation to organisational matters, including team selection. In her research, about the history of women's football in Germany, Pfister (2001) refers to the dependence of women's football on coaches who are 'favourably disposed to women' (p51). Certainly a coach's sensitivity to the needs of women appears to have a bearing on the women's experience as football players and team members, and experience that above everything else could be great fun.

Finally, a theme which saturated the interviews and observation was that of enjoyment. The general consensus given was that 'football is fun'.

## 4.5 I Actually Enjoyed it –Football is Fun!

The value of enjoyment is a common theme expressed by women who participate in sport. For many women there is far less focus on winning or losing and greater concern with the fun and enjoyment which can be generated through the process of sports involvement. (Lenskyj 1994; Roberts and Brodie 1992; Wright and Dewar 1997).

Some of the women had not expected that they would experience such enjoyment through playing football:

*I was a little bit surprised at how much I enjoyed it. I really liked it a lot. (Lucy)*

*It's much more fun than I anticipated (Chantelle).*

For others, the fun had gone out of playing football and they were pleased to rediscover it:

*It's a nice change to play with people who want to have fun. Some of the most fun, the best fun I've had in games is when we've been wopped so if we didn't know how to have fun with losing there'd be no fun (laugh). (Buffy)*

Marjorie explored the complexities of this enjoyment:

*There's something that's really quite enjoyable. I think that's the other aspect that really enjoyed that's so difficult 'cause nothing else, not going to the gym or jogging do you have to first of all extend yourself to the extent 'cause you're so tired by the end of the game but there is pressure on you from the rest of the team to try your hardest. So that's something I don't do in any other aspect of my physical exercise life. And 'cause I'm a defender I have to stick my feel in front of things and risk my ankles and my knees. But I don't think about that when I'm playing a game. I get scared after the game or sometimes when I do hurt myself. But I really do enjoy the physicality and I'm not scared to, I used to be scared but not anymore, to bang into people. Which is something you don't get taught to do as a girl. You don't get taught to be physical like boys do so and in all my other sports like netball and hockey and touch football are all non-contact*

*so this is much more physical. (Marjorie)*

In spite of the fact that some of the players were fiercely competitive and others highly skilled, the overwhelming influence was the need for the experience to be fun and enjoyable. Tangen (2004) discusses the idea that fun and enjoyment are major motivating factors for playing sport and that often we are unclear as to the real reasons why we are physically active except that at some level it makes us feel good. He describes this as embodied knowledge.

## **4.6 Conclusion**

The wide range of meanings expressed in the themes discussed in this chapter indicates that football is more than 'just a game' to these participants. Major themes of friendship, team, body, aggression, alternative femininities, self, coach, gender relations, agency and fun emerge from the experience of playing football (fig 5.1). With each thematic experience players automatically re-evaluate their identity, and as Kelly (1983), asserts re-evaluation in one identity domain, for example leisure, can influence a person's identity in other domains such as the domains of family and work.

# Identity wheel

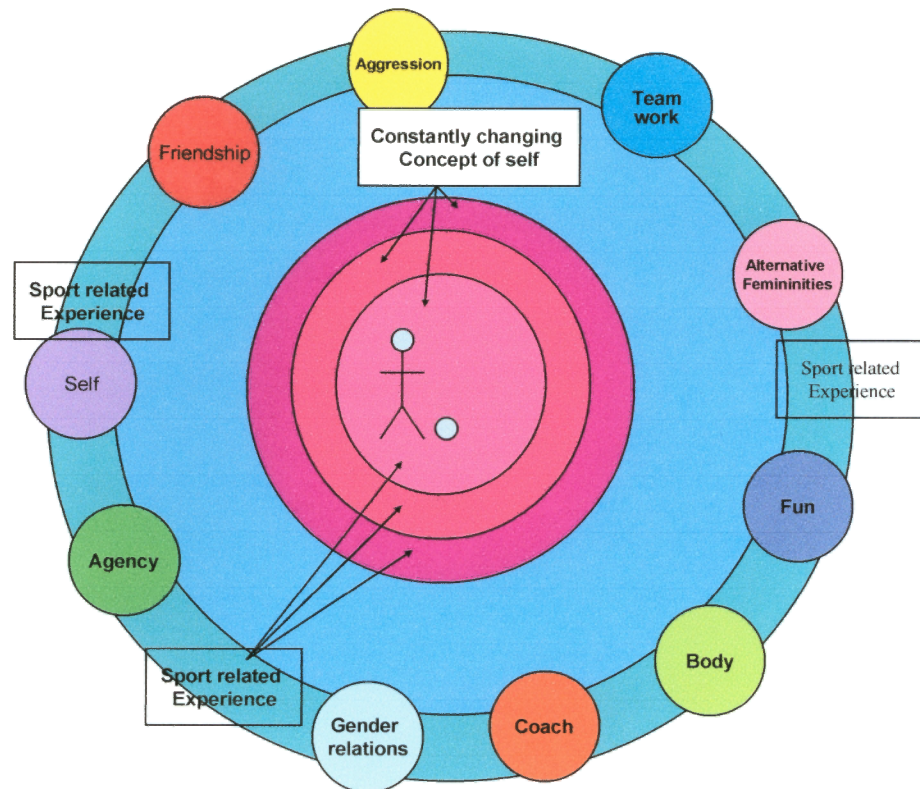


fig 5.1 Identity Wheel

Within these themes are recurring themes. With increased game knowledge, experience and language the women players search for and establish connections with their team-mates, coaches and men in their lives and become increasingly attached to their team-mates and coaches. They commit to the people in their football lives and utilise this commitment to improve their motivation to continue to play, setting aside the time as *time for me*. As they grow in confidence and knowledge about the sport, many of the players begin to see reflections of their lives within the experience, can account for their actions and want their ideas and needs to be heard and responded to. They and others see themselves as stronger, more confident and more capable. Football provides an avenue for weight control, improved body shape and a new awareness and respect for the body; the women perceive that they are more respected by the men in their lives in the domains of leisure, family and work. They can exercise in a fun and enjoyable atmosphere, releasing the tensions of their daily lives and getting satisfaction from their activity. Wearing (1998) discusses the value of repeated performative acts. According to Wearing (1998), Butler proposes that gender is a process we adopt

through repeated performative acts which are constructed by the culture we function within. The more times we perform an action the more comfortable we become with this action, eventually identifying the act as a part of our identity. This theory is seen in action as the women gained more experience playing football, wearing their uniforms and being seen in their uniforms, the more comfortable they became with being in a public space and being identified as football-playing women. Overall the research shows that playing football has positive effects on the lives of the women who play the sport. These diverse outcomes serve to support the belief that women who play sport are not a homogeneous group and that no matter how large the sporting group, each experience is an individual one (Hargreaves 2000).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

*It's the women you are working for. It's not a big chore to go to training and play the games. (Lisette)*

### 5.1 Introduction

This study has endeavoured to expand the research on women and identity. Identity and sport is a realm of women's lives which has been increasingly explored over the past 20 years. This thesis has explored the experiences of twelve amateur women footballers from the perspective of the literature on women and sport and the associated concept of identity. Through the five basic research questions it has sought to understand the elements of the experiences of the women football players that contribute to the identities of women who play football with the Inner West Football Club:

1. What is identity from a sociocultural perspective and how can it be measured?
2. Are there any links between women's participation in sport and identity?
3. How are the experiences of football participation seen and evaluated by the women who participate?
4. How do participants perceive playing football has affected their leisure, family and work identities?
5. How can sport participation opportunities, sports discourses and organisations become more responsive to the needs of women?

It is possible to apply this study when compared and contrasted with relevant literature discussed in earlier chapters to other women's experiences of a range of sports. In addition, this chapter will examine the implications of this research for a theoretical framework applied to women and sports participation and identity, an area which will benefit from continued research. Further, this chapter will discuss implications for the practices applied to women's sports participation. In concluding the chapter, this thesis offers suggestions about the direction for further research. Essentially the chapter will provide a conclusion to the central research question, 'How does sport participation influence the development, shaping and sustaining of identity for women?'

Through exploring the connection for women between sport and identity, this study is well placed to make a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge. It does so by listening and giving validity to the voices of women participating in amateur sport and drawing from their experiences. According to Pfister (2001), women's football and its continued development rely heavily 'on the work of committed coaches who are favourably disposed towards women' (p.51).

Of prime importance to the women who play football for this inner-west football club is the possibility to make, strengthen and maintain connections. The experience of playing football provides women with the opportunity to build upon connections with a vast cross-section of people in their lives.

As connections evolved the women become more attached to their team-mates, coaches and administrators, to their workmates and often to other men in their lives. It is the connection to team which largely motivates the women players to continue attending training, playing and attending team functions. In turn as their connections strengthened so did their commitment to their team and the game of football itself. Together the women experienced the highs and lows of training and playing. They learnt about each other, football and most importantly about themselves. The ultimate message which is conveyed through the act of women playing football is that 'being a soccer player can help us to grow up to become better women' (Pettus 1998:266). We apply what we learn about others, football and ourselves to the other facets of our lives, to our other identity domains of work and family.

## **5.2 The Five Basic Research Questions**

### **5.2.1 What is identity from a sociocultural perspective and how can it be measured?**

As discussed in the literature review, identity is a surprisingly slippery concept. For the purpose of this study, identity is defined as:

The way an individual judges himself or herself and perceives others who are



significant to them to judge them. Our identity is 'always changing and developing'.

(Erikson 1968:22-23)

As we build relationships with other people and encounter new situations our identity is constantly developing, changing and growing.

(Coakley 1998)

Depending on the social circumstance we find ourselves in we do not just have one identity. We each have numerous identities.

(Bessant and Watts 1999)

The measurement of identity also posed a challenge. How do you quantify something as intangible as identity? Study of the informants' transcripts and notes from participant observation clarified the idea that each person's experience is different. The women themselves spoke about changes in the way they perceived what was happening around them and what they were doing. As the players encountered new and different experiences their identities changed. When they speak about 'How I saw myself then' and 'How I see myself now' and 'How I act in different social environments', recognising and reporting it, as has been done in the previous chapter, is to qualitatively measure identity.

### **5.2.2 Are there any links between women's participation in sport and identity?**

This study has found that there are significant links between women's participation in sport and identity. As the players encountered new and different experiences, they reported that often their identities changed. The sporting experience of playing football and socialising as a football team gave many of the women access to new experiences. Through facing new situations, being challenged by these situations, responding to the challenges and reflecting upon them, the identities of the players evolved. Some of the women began to identify as sportswomen with increased strength and confidence, an ability to 'muscle up' in tough situations and relish not only the aggression of the game but also the beautiful connections with team-mates and coach. Other players began to identify as competitive, motivated and capable, and enjoyed a chance to see

themselves as individuals rather than purely a mum or partner. Through football they were given the space to access, test and refine aspects of their identities they may never have considered previously and repeat them until they felt natural (Wearing 1998). Then many of the women reported transferring these identity markers to other domains of their lives such as work and family.

### **5.2.3 How are the experiences of football participation seen and evaluated by the women who participate?**

The women football players who were interviewed for this study overwhelmingly reported that they found football a richly rewarding experience. For many it contained an additional bonus of being fun. Players enjoyed the connections of friendship, team work and companionship, exposure to women from other walks of life and the benefits for their bodies, confidence and their minds. The players recognised that participating in football gave them an opportunity to expose themselves to challenges and to gain insight into themselves. They reported an increased personal awareness and the opportunity to reflect on their lives. This in turn affected the other domains of the women's lives – leisure, family and work.

### **5.2.4 How do participants perceive playing football has affected their leisure, family and work identities?**

Participants reported that they often transferred the skills they had learned through the football experience and aspects of identity they tested on field to other areas of their lives. In the participants' views their identity domains of leisure, family and work mostly benefited from their sporting experience.

Some of the women spoke about their increased ability to believe in their capability, make connections and take leadership roles in the workplace, while others spoke about the benefits of being able to share their sporting knowledge and interest with their partners. Younger women used older players who were mums as role models for how they could combine sport and family effectively. In addition, other women spoke about their ability to positively apply their football experience to other leisure experiences such as socialising.

### **5.2.5 How can sport participation opportunities, sports discourses and organisations become more responsive to the needs of women?**

The needs of women are very diverse. While women do have many shared and similar experiences, they also have many different experiences which inform their particular needs and wants in relation to sport. Therefore it is reasonable to assert that responding to the needs of women may require a range of approaches.

To discover what the needs of a particular group of women are, this study indicates that first and foremost the women participants need to be heard. They like to be listened to and their thoughts to be considered when discussions about them and decisions which affect them are being made. By consulting the women being targeted for sports participation, in sports discourses and by organisations, it will be easier to effectively respond to their particular needs.

The following sections discuss the themes which ran through the experiences discussed by amateur women football players in this study.

## **5.3 Popular Lore**

The women in this study challenged popular lore about women's football. Sometimes beliefs had been held by participants themselves and they were surprised and often delighted by the discovery that socially limiting lore was not true. Their interviews reflected that football is still considered to be a stereotypical men's sport but is emerging as a socially acceptable sport for women and girls. As the numbers of women enjoying the act of playing football increase, the attitudes of coaches, administrators, other footballers, family, fellow workers and the general community are changing, and more women are encouraged to join the game. Furthermore, lore emerged about the game of football being dominated by lesbian players. This lore appeared to be becoming less powerful as women players discovered that players ranged in sexuality from heterosexual to lesbian and that comments about sexuality were rarely encountered and if encountered were given little power. Identifying as lesbian was not a prerequisite for playing and enjoying the game of football. Many of the women believed that playing

football would increase their fitness which was by all accounts a true experience for all players. The act of playing football pushed the women to test their fitness limits and enjoy exercising, increasing their fitness levels. Some women had always considered that a football player had to fit into the traditional stereotype of the sporty persona. Many women in this study discovered a new identity for themselves. Having never previously considered themselves to be sporty, some of them were able to adopt an integrated identity which applied their previous identity with their new sporting identity: for example, they could be both academic and sporty. Some of the players approached the sport with the expectation that because it was not a stereotypical women's sport it would not be taken seriously. They were pleasantly surprised to find that this was not the case. The sport was competently organised with enthusiastic administrators who constantly strove to improve the organisation of the sport.

## **5.4 Friendship**

A hugely influential factor within the football experience was that of friendship. It emerged that many of the women were not as interested in playing at their skill level as they were in playing with their friends. For many it hardly seemed to matter that they would be playing below or beyond their skill level if they played with their friends. The importance of winning appeared to be minor in comparison with the opportunity to have a kick with the women they were friends with. Attempts to organise the women's teams according to skill level and impose rules which did not accommodate the women's friendships resulted in disgruntled players and frustrated coaches and administrators. The most satisfactory results seemed to be achieved when women could play with their friends, stay with their original teams and build on the friendships they had put so much time and effort in to establishing.

## **5.5 Team**

The women in this study were particularly affected by their experience as team members. As active team members they were able to connect with other women, share social experiences, become familiar with and put their trust in their team-mates. In front of their team-mates they had the freedom to explore and practise previously unexplored identities in a supportive, caring and enjoyable environment. Under these circumstances they were able to repeat the acts which exposed alternative identities, and therefore

deconstruct and recombine their identity as women (Wearing 1998).

The relevance of team to the women was highlighted by this study. The opportunity to belong to and work as a team provided great satisfaction as well as great challenge. The women found that the social aspects of belonging to a team allowed them opportunities to expand their friendship networks, and as they increased their connections with their teams, they discovered a relatively safe environment within which to experiment with their identity (Bessant and Watts 1999). Once having established this safe space, they were reluctant to move on to a new team where they would have to prove and establish themselves all over again.

In addition, as the women became closer to their team-mates they discovered that they became more committed to the team, more motivated to exercise and were less inclined to skip training and games. They found themselves taking personal responsibility for the needs of the team and sometimes putting those needs above their personal needs (Scruton and Flintoff 2002).

Some of the football players were delighted by the opportunity to expose themselves to the diversity of women who were in the teams, finding that the ages ranged from 18 well upwards and a mix of careers, personalities, competitiveness and conflicts as well as ethnic backgrounds and education levels. This exposed the women to alternative life possibilities and provided them with role models for future life choices, for example mixing sport with family commitments.

## **5.6 Body**

Another major theme which emerged from the research was that of the body. Many of the women spoke about the advantages football provided for them in weight control, improved body shape, increased awareness and respect for the body. For some of the women this awareness meant that they looked after their bodies with more reverence, drinking and smoking less and noticing *what different things do to my body* (Jasmine). Some of the women also felt stronger because of the changes in their muscles. They relished the opportunity to test their bodies in an appropriate environment, an environment where it was acceptable to sweat, breathe so heavily that you sound like a horse after the end of a long race, grunt from the effort, smell of rank sweat and come

off the field covered in dirt and grass stains. Once having discovered what their bodies could do, the participants found that they had increased confidence in the ability of their bodies and consequently themselves.

## 5.7 Badges of Honour

As a result of the symbolic battle and the physical tests players' bodies were exposed to, the players' bodies were often covered in bruises. These bruises were often viewed as badges of honour, proof of the authenticity of the players. Bruising was evidence of the tough physical challenge they had endured and served as reminders to the women of their acts of bravery. Through these experiences of the body the women were able to see themselves as being more capable and confident.

## 5.8 Aggression

The footballers in this study sourced great enjoyment from the opportunity to engage in 'aggressive symbolic play' (Thing 2001:275). Some of the women felt conflicted about the aggression which they displayed on the field but quickly cast this aside, often throwing themselves into their alternative on-field identities to take advantage of its cathartic benefits. On the field they could release the pressures and tension of a week of work and family where they had felt the need to adhere to society's expectations of women as calm, caring nurturers (Lenskyj 1992) and take on the identity of a vocal, pushy, uncaring, ball-kicking banshee, and at the end of the game brush themselves off ready for another week of socially acceptable behaviour. On the field the players were provided with an occasion when they could *muscle up* and exercise qualities which are usually attributed to sportsmen, enacting alternative femininities and breaking away from their traditional gender roles.

## **5.9 Self**

As women break away from traditional gender roles allowed the players to see beyond the looking glass and examine themselves. They savoured 'time for myself' (Lenskyj 1994) and began to take ownership of football rather than identify the sport with someone else. Some of the women without children viewed the activity as a way to productively occupy themselves, while those with children identified the opportunity it provided to do their own thing, independent of their partners and children. In this team sport environment they were able to discover more about themselves and examine their approach to life.

Football acted as a catalyst for the women to examine themselves and their lives and to adopt or apply new strategies to their lives. They talked about becoming increasingly self-aware and their increasing ability to look at their actions and give accounts for how and why they acted as they did. During the process of becoming football players, the players' sense of agency had expanded. Further, some of the women gave accounts of knowingly choosing role models and saw themselves as more courageous and capable, and having increasing possibility to connect with the men in their lives. As their self-awareness increased, the players were more able to identify what they wanted from the sport and wanted to be able to change the organisation of the sport to better suit their needs.

## **5.10 Connections**

Improved interest in, experience in and knowledge about football provided many of the women with the chance to explore and build better connections with the men in their lives. The men they improved connections with included fathers, brothers, partners, friends and work colleagues. The women felt more accepted and respected. They believed they shared more common ground with men generally and were seen as being more capable by these men.

As football players the women also built connections with their coaches. They saw their coach as a teacher, mentor, role model and leader and recognised that their coach had the ability to positively or negatively affect their football experience. Many of the women were relieved to find that their coaches were 'good' and gained great satisfaction from a

coach's assistance in facilitating positive learning experiences. The players appreciated constructive criticism provided by their coaches; some acknowledged the benefits of criticism which supported them to be more confident footballers who could make better tactical decisions and recognised criticism which undermined their fragile self-belief and therefore limited their playing ability.

## **5.11 Coach**

Players often used their coaches as role models whose skills they could adopt and transfer to other areas of their lives. This skill adoption affected the identity of the players in domains outside that of their leisure domain as it crept into their domains of work and family (Kelly, 1983). As a role model the footballers often looked to their coach to set the tone of the team and therefore assigned them responsibility for their personal footballing experience. Many of the players became very attached to their coaches, valuing a coach's ability to socialise with the team both on and off the football field (Klonsky 1991 not in Refs). As they gained experience, the women expected to be listened to and be involved in the decisions affecting the team as a whole. Although many of the coaches started coaching the women's teams with strategies which would normally apply to male teams, over time they adapted to the needs voiced by their women players, often involving the women in decisions about playing and increasing their emotional support of the team members. The ability to connect with and be sensitive to the needs of women players is perhaps what differentiates a coach from a 'McCoach', draws the team together and encourages the women to test their new-found identities in a safe environment.

## **5.12 Fun and Enjoyment**

The final major theme identified by this study is the value that the women players placed on 'fun', a theme which has commonly been expressed by women in previous studies (Lenskyj 1994; Roberts and Brodie 1992; Wright and Dewar 1997). Many had not expected the act of playing football to be such a source of fun and enjoyment and were thrilled to discover that it could be provided for. As Tangen (2004) suggests, it is often difficult to ascertain exactly why one is motivated to play team sport except that it makes us feel good. The knowledge is embodied within the players and as such may never



have to be so closely analysed as to provide a definite formula for success. It is simply what it is.

## 5.13 Conclusion

This thesis has explored Kelly's (1983) identity domains during the period of establishment, a period when 'a person takes on central roles of family and economic production' (p.69). It has explored the experiences and themes within the identity domain of sport and examined the effect themed experiences can have on the identity of individual players. Ultimately one conclusion of this research is that players in this study, once having engaged in the football experience, instigated a butterfly effect where every experience affected their personal identities to a greater or lesser degree and flowed into their other leisure, work and family domains. It appears to have been impossible to come away from the experience of playing football unchanged.

Boutiler and SanGiovanni's (1983) perspective sums up the value of sport: 'sport and play are essential, universal and enduring aspects of being human; whatever form they take in particular societies and historical eras, they should always be a source of joy, self discovery and freedom' (p.11). Team sport has the ability to change how we see ourselves and how others see us, on the field, at work and amongst our family and friends. It can have a huge impact on our lives, capturing our minds and our imaginations, revealing more about ourselves than we ever thought possible and helping us to become better women (Pettus 1998).

As Marjorie said at the end of her interview

*It has really impacted my life a lot. It's really taken up a lot of my time and changed a lot of things in my life. It has had a huge impact. (Marjorie)*

## 5.14 Implications for Theory

Findings from this study have a number of implications for theory. In this section I will highlight the findings which support previous findings and theories as well as other findings which indicate that changes have taken place. Very often these findings flesh out theories, showing them in practice and bringing those theories to life upon application.

Previous findings which were supported by the findings in this research include the findings of Hargreaves (1994) who argues that women are able to dismiss attitudes they find limiting. The research provides strong support for the theory that women highly value friendship, finding great pleasure in female conversation and company and often view it as an essential element of their lives. (Rubin and Rubin 1995). In addition it confirms the findings of studies which conclude that belonging to a team is very important for women (Bandy and Darden 1990 , Lenskyj 1994). As an extension to this finding, it emerged that after establishing connections within their team, the women were reluctant to leave this team for another because of the friendships and emotional safety provided by the team they belonged to.

As with previous studies, the body was an important theme for women football players and they viewed playing football as a way to control their weight (Hargreaves 2000; Matheset al 1992; Roberts and Brodie 1992). This supports Hargreaves' view that for women sport is partly about attempting to control the body and therefore a tactic to transform and preserve their bodies. Also emerging from this research is further confirmation that physical activity can influence changes in personal identity (Clarke and Humberstone 1997, Hargreaves 2000) and makes the women feel stronger, not just on the football field but in many areas of their lives.

These experiences of women in the amateur football arena provide a current richness and real life context to theories of identity. By talking about the ideas, skills and attitudes which the women football players practised and adopted in the leisure domain of sport (football) and then utilised in other domains of their lives such as work and family, this research supports the research of Kelly (1983). Kelly states that the re-evaluation of identity in one identity domain can result in changes in identity in other domains. The dialogue of the women about the re-evaluation of their various identities also supports

the research of Coakley (1998) and Bessant and Watts (1999) who discuss the concept that our identities are always changing in response to the experiences one encounters as we engage in the endeavours of life.

In addition, this research reflects the changes which have occurred in the forum of women who play football and provides an up-to-date account of the experiences of players. Unlike the studies of Caudwell (2002), Hargreaves (1994), Fasting (1989) and Lenskyj (1986), this research found that these women football players did not feel as if they were subjected to sexual stereotyping. And in contrast to the findings of Pfister et al (2002) and Hargreaves (1994), neither did these women feel as if they lacked support from their organisation. Instead, the football players in this study spoke about the growing support and understanding of their club and the club's enthusiasm to increase their understanding of the women's needs and improve opportunities for them.

The women players drew on feminine morality of 'self-sacrifice and responsivity to other needs' (Scruton and Flintoff 2002:8) within their team and club. However, they abandoned these traditional feminine traits for the cathartic opportunity provided by the act of aggression and putting their bodies on the line once on the field, a finding also spoken about by Thing (2001), but alternate to the findings of Clarke and Humberstone (1997) and Lenskyj (1994). The interesting thing about this study is that the women expressed their ability to oscillate between their traditional roles as carers and nurturers and the role of warrior women, depending on the occasion. The concept of Badges of Honour draws upon the findings of Hargreaves (1994) and Lawrence (1998) who talk about the sense of satisfaction women gain from putting their bodies on the line. This study delves deeper by talking to the women about the bruising and other injuries they incur when playing football and gives voice to the naked pride some players take in the physical manifestation of their brave acts of aggression.

Although it is important to remember that not all experiences are the same, there is evidence that there has been evolution over time as women have taken on a more prominent role in the sporting arenas. This suggests that perhaps previous research no longer accurately reflects current experiences of women playing traditionally male-dominated team sports.

## **5.15 Implications for Practice**

As research specifically related to identity in the context of women and sport, this exploration aims to increase the understanding of the impact of sports discourses, practices and social relations (Taylor 2000). The exploration of these experiences unearthed a range of realities, emotions and perceptions that influenced each player's identity and confirmed the value of sport for women and the need for an alternative approach when considering women's sport. From the experience, thrill and stability of connection within women's football arose a need to be more than a pawn of the coaches and administrators. Many of the women wanted to apply their newly acquired knowledge about the game and lifelong knowledge about women to the teams, their selection, training and game plans. They longed for an opportunity to be heard. They needed to be heard. They needed to be consulted. Unfortunately, these sorts of opportunities have not always been made available to players. The leadership style of club and team administrators tended to be autocratic.

The value of a consultative approach should be considered when women's sports are being offered. The significance that women place on friendships and relationships should be recognised by administrators when discussing women's needs and organising sports participation, teams and competitions for amateur sportswomen, and an approach should be selected with sensitivity to these values.

## **5.16 Suggestions for Further Research**

Examination of the literature review has identified that there is considerable scope for further investigation of issues surrounding women, sport and the development, shaping and sustaining of identity, specifically, the impact of participation in sports on those women who participate in previously male-dominated sports.

While there is some significant research about women and their football experiences, there is considerable scope for studies which continue to explore the experiences of amateur women footballers and to follow the evolution of the sport as it continues to change and grow. As the frameworks applied to women's football adapt according to the perceived women's needs, it will be important to gauge whether these changes are relevant, and the most effective way to do this would be by responding to women's need

to be heard by asking the women themselves about their experiences.

This study has also found that there is considerable scope for the examination of the role of the coach within the women's football experience, exploring the difference between a coach and a McCoach and the qualities which are required for a coach to tap into the heart and soul of their women's teams and be highly effective. Such research could more closely investigate how coaches influence the identity of their team players and which skills, if any, players choose to apply to the other identity domains of their lives.

## REFERENCES

- Allison, L. (2001). *Amateurism in Sport*. Great Britain, Frank Cass Publishers.
- Augustinous, M and Walker, I (1995). *Social Cognition: An Integrated Introduction*. London, Sage.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2002). *Participation in Physical Activities, Australia*. Canberra, Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2003). *Participation in Sport and Physical Activities Australia*. Canberra, Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- Australian Sports Commission (2003). *Towards Better Sport: Good Practices for Women and Girls in Sport*. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Australian Sports Commission (1999). *Beyond 2000*. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Bandy, S. and A. Darden (1990). *Crossing Boundaries: An International Anthology of Women's Experiences in Sport*. Champaign IL, Human Kinetics.
- Bessant, J. and R. Watts (1999). *Sociology Australia*. Crows Nest, Allen and Unwin.
- Bialeschki, M. D. (1990). "The feminist and women's participation in physical recreation". *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance* 61(1): 44-47.
- Bilton, H. (1998). *Outdoor Play in the Early Years: Management and Innovation*. London, David Fulton Publishers.
- Bilton, T and K. Bonnett, (1995). *Introductory Sociology*. London, Macmillan.
- Birrell, S. (2000). Feminist Theories for Sport. *Handbook of Sports Studies*. Eds J. Coackley, & Dunning, Eric. London, Sage Publishers Ltd. 61-76

- Booth, D. and C. Tatz (2000). *One Eyed: A View of Australian Sport*. St Leonards, Allen and Unwin.
- Boutilier, M. and L. San Gionanni (1983). *The Sporting Woman*. Champaign, Ill, Human Kinetics.
- Brownell, K. (1988). "Exercise and Regulation of Body Weight". *Women and Exercise: Physiology and Sports Medicine*. Eds M. Shangold and G. Mirkin. Philadelphia, F.A Davis: 40-54.
- Cashman, R. (1995). *Paradise of Sport: The Rise of Organised Sport in Australia*. Victoria, Australia, Oxford University Press.
- Cashman, R. (2002). *Sport in the National Imagination: Australian Sport in the Federation Decades*. Sydney, Walla Walla Press.
- Caudwell, J. (2002). "Women's Experiences of Sexuality Within Footballing Contexts: A Particular and Located Football Epistemology". *Football Studies* 5(1): 24-45.
- Chaudhary, V. (2001). "Women Players Get Football Fever". *The Guardian*: 2001: 22.
- Chelladurai, P. and Arnott, M. (1985). "Decision Styles in Coaching: Preferences of Basketball Players". *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport (RQES)* 56(1): 15-24.
- Chodorow, N. (1978). *The Reproduction of Mothering: A Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley, CA, University of California Press.
- Clarke, G. and B. Humberstone (1997). Introduction. *Researching Women and Sport*. Eds G. Clarke and B. Humberstone. Houndmills, Basingstroke, Hampshire and London, Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Coakley, J. (1998). *Sport in Society - Issues and Controversies*. Singapore, WCB/McGraw.
- Coakley, J. and P. Donnelly (1999). *Inside Sports*. London, New York, Routledge.

Coakley, J. and A. White (1999). *Making Decisions: How Young People Become Involved and Stay Involved in Sports*. Inside Sports. Eds J. Coakley and P. Donnelly. New York, Routledge. 77-85

Cox, B. and S. Thompson (2000). "Multiple Bodies: Sportswomen, Soccer and Sexuality". *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 35(1): 5-20.

Cox, B. and S. Thompson (2001). "Facing the Bogey: Women, Football and Sexuality". *Football Studies* 4(2): 7-24.

Crinnion, J. (1998). "A Game of Two Sexes". *The Guardian*:1998 15.

Cronan, M. and D. Mayall (1998). *Sporting Nationalisms: Identity, Ethnicity, Immigration, and Assimilation*. London, Frank Cass.

Crouch, T. (2002). *The World Cup: A Complete History*. London, Aurum Press Limited.

Croxtan, J., D. Chiacchiaall names (1987). "Gender Differences in Attitudes towards Sports and Reactions to Competitive Situations." *Journal of Sports Behaviour* 10: 167-177.

Cubby, B. (2004). "Besotted Female Gender goes on a Football Bender". *Sydney Morning Herald*. Sydney 14/06/2004

[www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/06/14/1087065086136](http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/06/14/1087065086136)

Cubby, B. (2004). "Soccer Game Called Off Over Headscarf". *The Age*. Melbourne. 2004.26/04/04 [www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/04/26/1082831497725](http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/04/26/1082831497725)

Deem, R. (1982). "Women, Leisure and Inequality". *Leisure Studies* 1(1): 29-46.

Deem, R. (1986). *All Work and No Play?: A Study of Woman and Leisure*. Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

Deem, R. (1988). ""Together We Stand, Divided We Fall"; Sociology and the Sociology



of Sport and Leisure". *Sociology of Sport Journal* 5: 341-354.

Denzin, N and Y Lincoln, eds. (1998). *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*. London, Sage Publications.

Denzin, N. (1994). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, California, Sage Publications.

Dixson, M. (1984). *The Real Matilda: Women and Identity in Australia*. Victoria, Penguin Books Australia.

Donnelly, P. (2000). "Interpretive Approaches to the Sociology of Sport". *Handbook of Sports Studies*. Eds J. Coackley and E. Dunning. London, Sage Publishers. 77-91

Donnelly, P. and K. Young (1999). "Rock Climbers and Rugby Players". *Inside Sport*. Eds J. Coackley and P. Donnelly. New York, Routledge.67-76

Dubois, P. (1992). The Behaviour of Youth Football Coaches. *Studies in the Sociology of Sport*. Eds A. Dunleavey, A. Miracle, C. Rogers and C. Rees. Texas, TCU Press.349-360.

Duquin, M. E. (2000). "Sport and Emotions". *Handbook of Sports Studies*. Eds J. Coackley and E. Dunning. London, Sage Publications.477-489.

Dworkin, S. L. and M. A. Messner (2002). "Introduction: Gender Relations and Sport". *Sociological Perspectives* 45: 347-352.

Dyer, K. F. (1982). *Challenging the Men: the Social Biology of Female Sporting Achievement*. St Lucia, University of Queensland Press.

Eagly, A., M. Makhijani, B. Klonsky. (1992). "Gender and the Evaluation of Leaders". *American Psychological Bulletin* 111(11): 3 - 22.

Edgar, A. and S. Peter, eds. (1999). *Key Concepts in Cultural Theory*. London, Routledge.

- Erikson, E. (1968). *Identity, Youth and Crisis*. New York, WW Norton & Co.
- Fasting, K. (1989). "Women's Lives - Consequences for Leisure and Sport". *Nytt om Kvinneforskning* 13(4): 18-26.
- Fletcher, S. (1987). "The Making and Breaking of a Female Tradition: Women's Physical Education in the Industrial and Post-industrial Eras". *From Fair Sex To Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post-industrial Eras*. Ed M. A. Park. London, Frank Cass. 145-157
- Fletcher, S. (1993). *Women's First: The Female Tradition in English Physical Education 1880 - 1890*. London, Athlone Press.
- Giddens, A. (1979). *Central Problems in Social Theory*. London, Macmillan.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press.
- Glaser, B. S., A (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago, Aldine Publishing Company.
- Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction*. New York, Longman.
- Green, E., S. Hebron, D. Woodward. (1987). *Leisure and Gender: A Study of Sheffield Women's Leisure Experience*. London, The Sports Council, and Economic and Social Research Council.
- Green, E., S. Hebron, D. Woodward. (1990). *Women's Leisure, What Leisure?* London, McMillan.
- Gunew, S. and A. Yeatman (1993). *Feminism and the Politics of Difference*. St Leonards, NSW, Allen and Unwin.

- Hall, M. A. (2002). "The Discourse of Gender and Sport: From Femininity to Feminism". *Gender and Sport: A Reader*. Eds S. Scraton and A. Flintoff. London, Routledge: 6-14.
- Hallim, D. (2004) "Like a both-gendered sport." Women's soccer in Sydney. Honours Thesis, USyd.
- Hargreaves, J. (1994). *Sporting Females: Critical issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sports*. London, Routledge.
- Hargreaves, J. (2000). *Heroines of Sport: The Politics of Difference and Identity*. London, New York, Routledge.
- Henderson, K. A. (1996). *Both Gaps and Gains: Feminist Perspectives on Women's Leisure*. State College, Venture Publishing.
- Henderson, K. A., M. D. Bialeschki M. D. V. Freysinger; S. M. Shaw. (1989). *A Leisure of One's Own: A Feminist Perspective on Women's Leisure*. State College, PA, Venture.
- Hertz, R. (1997). *Reflexivity and Voice*. Thousand Oaks, California, Sage Publications.
- Hetherington, K. (1998). *Expressions of Identity: Space, Performance, Politics*. London, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.
- Hong, F. and J. Mangen (2002). "Will the 'Iron Roses' Bloom Forever? Women's Football in China: Changes and Challenges". *Soccer, Women, Sexual Liberation*. Eds F. Hong and J. Mangen. [www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=108516287](http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=108516287)
- Howell, R. and M. Howell (1987). *A History of Australian Sport*. Drummoyne, Shakespeare Head Press.
- Humberstone, B. (1997). "Challenging Dominant Ideologies in the Research Process". *Researching Women and Sport*. Eds G. Clarke and B. Humberstone. London, Macmillan Press. 199-211

Kayser Nielson, N. (1999). "Knowledge by Doing: Home and Identity in Bodily Perspective". *Leisure/Tourism Geographies: Practices and Geographical Knowledge*. Ed D. Crouch. London and New York, Routledge: 277-289.

Kelly, J. R. (1983). *Leisure Identities and Interactions*. London, Allen and Unwin.

Kershin, A. (1998). *A Question of Identity*. Sydney, Ashgate Publishing.

Lawrence, K. (1998). "Making our Mark: Women Playing Australian Rules Football in Melbourne". *Football Studies Group* 1(2): 115-122.

Leighton, T. (2002). A History of Women's Soccer, Club Football - Fan Channel. 2007 [www.wanguoqunxing.com/cms4/modules.php?](http://www.wanguoqunxing.com/cms4/modules.php?)

Lenskyj, H. (1986). *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality*. Toronto, Women's Press.

Lenskyj, H. (1988). "Measured Time: Women, Sport and Leisure". *Leisure Studies* 7(3): 233-240.

Lenskyj, H. (1990). "Power and Play: Gender and Sexuality Issues in Sport and Physical Activity". *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 25(3): 235-45.

Lenskyj, H. (1992). "Unsafe at Home Base: Women's Experience of Sexual Harrassment in University Sport and Physical Education". *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal* 1: 19-33.

Lenskyj, H. (1994). *Women, Sport and Physical Activity: Selected Research Themes*. Canada, Sport Information Resource Centre for Sport Canada.

Loy, J. W. and B. Douglas. (2000). "Functionalism, Sport and Society". *Handbook of Sports Studies*. Eds J. Coackley and E. Dunning. London, Sage Publishers.8-27

Makudi, W. (2007a). Committee for Women's Football Considers Adapting. 23.10.07 [www.fifa.com](http://www.fifa.com). 2007

Makudi, W. (2007b). Women's Football More Popular than Ever. 23.10.07  
www.fifa.com. 2007

Markula, P. (2003). "The Technologies of the Self: Sport, Feminism, and Foucault".  
*Sociology of Sport Journal* 20: 87-107.

Marschick, M. (1998). "Offside: The Development of Women's Football in Australia".  
*Occasional Papers in Football Studies* August 1998: 69 - 88.

Mathes, S. A., A. T. McGivern & C.M. Schneider. (1992). "The Influence of Participation  
and Gender on Employees' Motives for Involvement in a Corporate Exercise Program".  
*Journal of Sport Management* 6(1): 1-14.

Messnor, D. (2002). "Just do...what? Sport, Bodies, Gender". *Gender and Sport: A  
Reader*. Eds S. Flintoff. London, Routledge.17-29.

Mewett, P. G. (2003). "Conspiring to Run: Women, their Bodies and Athletics Training".  
*International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 38: 331 - 349.

Mosely, P. A., R. Cashman, J. O'Hara, Weatherburn (1997). *Sporting Immigrants*.  
Sydney, Walla Walla Press.

Murphy, P., K. Sheard, and I.Waddington. (2000). "Figurational Sociology and its  
Application to Sport". *Handbook of Sports Studies*. Eds J. D. Coakley and E. Dunning.  
London, Sage Publications.92-105.

Murray, W.J. (1994). *Football: A History of the World Game*. Hants, England, Scolar  
Press.

Parrat, C. (1994). "From a History of Women in Sport to a Women's Sport History: A  
Research Agenda". *Women and Sport: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Ed D. M. G.  
Costa. Champaign, Human Kinetics.1-12.

Pettus, E. (1998). "From the Suburbs to the Sports Arenas. Nike is a Goddess". *The*

*History of Women in Sports*. Ed L. Smith. New York, Grove/Atlantic Inc: 245-266.

Pfeiffer, E. and G. C. Davis (1971). "The Use of Leisure in Middle Age". *Gerontologist* 11(3): 187-195.

Pfister, G. (2001). "'Must Women Play Football?' Women's Football in Germany, Past and Present". *Football Studies* 4(2): 41-57.

Pfister, G., K. Fasting, S. Scraton. (2002). "Women and Football - a Contradiction? The Beginnings of Women's Football in Four European Countries". *Gender and Sport: A Reader*. Eds S. Scraton and A. Flintoff. London, Routledge: 67-75.

Phillips, S. (2001). *History of Women in Sport in Australia*. accessed 12th April 2004 from World Wide Web:

[http://www.ausport.gov.au/fulltext/2001/ascpub/wpmen\\_history.asp](http://www.ausport.gov.au/fulltext/2001/ascpub/wpmen_history.asp). A. S. C. Website.

Roberts, K. and D. A. Brodie (1992). *Inner City Sport: Who Plays and What are the Benefits*. The Netherlands, Giordano Bruno Culemborg.

Roche, M., Ed. (2000). *Sport, Popular Culture and Identity*. Oxford, Meyer & Meyer Sport (UK).

Roseblum, K (1986). "The Conflict between and within Genders: An Appraisal of the Contemporary American Femininity and Masculinity". *Sociological Inquiry* 56:93-100, 1986.

Rubin, H. and I. Rubin. (1995). *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. Thousand Oaks, California, Sage Publications Incorporated.

Scraton, S. and A. Flintoff (2002). "The Discourse of Gender and Sport: From Femininity to Feminism". *Gender and Sport: A Reader*. Eds S. Scraton and A. Flintoff. London, Routledge. 330-40

Soccer Australia (2003). [www.socceraustralia.com.au](http://www.socceraustralia.com.au). 28.10.03. 2003.

- Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport Research Group (2003). *Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey (ERASS)*. Belconnen ACT, Australian Sports Commission.
- Stell, M. (1991). *Half the Race: A History of Australian Women in Sport*. North Ryde, Angus and Robertson.
- Tangen, J. O. (2004). "Embedded Expectations, Embodied Knowledge and Movements that Connect: A System Theoretical Attempt to Explain the Use and Non-Use of Sport Facilities". *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 39: 7-25.
- Taylor, T. (2000). *Women, Sport and Ethnicity: Exploring Experiences of Differences in Netball*. PhD thesis, University of New South Wales.
- Theberge, N. (2000). "Gender and Sport". *Handbook of Sports Studies*. Eds J. Coakley and E. Dunning. London, Sage Publications. 322-333.
- Thing, L. F. (2001). "The Female Warrior: Meanings of Play-Aggressive Emotions in Sport". *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 36: 275 - 288.
- Vamplew, W. (1992). *The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport*. Canberra, Australian Sports Commission.
- Vamplew, W., K. Moore, J. O'Hara,, R. Cashman,I. Jobling.(1997). *The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport*. 2Rev Ed. Melbourne, Oxford University Press
- Veal, A. J. (1992). *Research Methods for Leisure and Tourism: A Practical Guide*. Essex, Longman; London, Pitman in Association with Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management.
- Veal, A. J. (1997). *Research Methods for Leisure and Tourism: A Practical Guide*. Harlow, Great Britain, Pearson Education.
- Vertinsky, P. A. (1990). *The Eternally Wounded Women: Women, Doctors and Exercise in the Late Nineteenth Century*. Manchester, U.K, Manchester University Press.

Vescio, J., J. J. Crosswhite, K. Wilde, (2003). "Role Models and Heroes in the Lives of Teenage Girls". *Leisure Futures, Leisure Cultures*. Eds S. Colyer and S. Lobo. Quinns Rocks, WA, Praxis Education. 31 – 37

Warren, J. (2002). *Sheilas, Wogs and Poofers: An Incomplete Biography of Johnny Warren and Soccer in Australia*. Sydney, Random House Australia.

Watson, E. (1994). *Australian Women's Soccer: The First 20 Years*. Canberra, AWSA Inc.

Wearing, B. (1998). *Leisure and Feminist Theory*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Sage Publication.

Weiss, O. (2001). "Identity Reinforcement in Sport: Revisiting the Symbolic Interactionist Legacy". *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 36: 393 - 405.

Wikipedia (2007). Footbinding. 20.10.07 [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Footbinding](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Footbinding)

Williams, J. and J. Woodhouse (1991). "Can play, will play? Women and Football in Britain".. Eds J. Williams and S. Wagg. Leicester, Leicester University Press. 85-108.

Williamson, D. (1991). *Belles of the Ball*. Devon, R & D Associates.

Wimbush, E. and W. Talbot, Eds. (1988). *Relative Freedoms: Women and Leisure*. Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

Women's National Football Championships (WNFC) (2005). *2005 Women's National Football Championships Kick Off in Canberra*. 25/10/06 <http://womensoccer.com.au> 2005

Wright, J. and A. Dewar (1997). "On Pleasure and Pain: Women Speak out about Physical Activity". *Researching Women and Sport*. Eds G. Clarke and B. Humberstone. London, Macmillian Press. 80-95.



## **APPENDICES**

- 1. Invitation to participate in research project**
- 2. Interview guide for soccer players**

Hi

My name is Jacinta Ledlin. I play with the Inner West 6's and am doing a research project with the University of Technology, Sydney. The research project is about 'Women, Sport and Identity' and focuses on participant observation and in-depth interviews with women who play amateur sport and in particular amateur soccer. The research project has the support of the Balmain Soccer Club.

I am speaking to a number of players from the InnerWest Club and am interested in speaking to you and hearing what you have to say about your experiences participating in soccer. It will require an in-depth interview of about an hour face-to-face and we can arrange a place to meet that you are comfortable with. The fact that you have been interviewed will remain confidential and you will not be personally identified in the research.

It would be wonderful if you were willing to be involved. If you are interested please contact me on [Jacinta.Ledlin@dcs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Jacinta.Ledlin@dcs.nsw.gov.au) or phone me on 95164088.

Please find following an information letter about the project for your interest.

I look forward to hearing from you

Jacinta Ledlin

# **Women Sport and Identity: An exploration of identity through amateur women's soccer.**

## **WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?**

My name is Jacinta Ledlin and I am a student at UTS doing a Master of Arts – Sports Studies (My supervisor is Professor Kristine Toohey).

## **WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?**

This research project seeks to explore the development, shaping and sustaining of different identities through women's involvement in amateur women's soccer. Specifically, the study will be looking at participants from women's teams in an all-age, lower grades.

The research will observe and listen to women who participate in soccer to determine the links between sport and their identity, it will establish how they see and evaluate their soccer experience and perceive how the activity has affected their group (sports club), internal, social and work identities.

## **IF I SAY YES, WHAT WILL IT INVOLVE?**

I will ask you to participate in a participant observation schedule over a 4-6 week period and/or an in-depth interview, which will be for about one hour.

## **ARE THERE ANY RISKS?**

There are very few if any risks because the research has been carefully designed. However, it is possible that some of the questions asked may raise issues for you or cause you discomfort or anxiety.

## **WHY HAVE I BEEN ASKED?**

You are able to give me the information I need to find out about a woman's perspective on the experience of playing amateur soccer and how that influences your identity.

## **DO I HAVE TO SAY YES?**

You don't have to say yes.

## **WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I SAY NO?**

Nothing. I will thank you for your time so far and won't contact you about this research again.

### IF I SAY YES, CAN I CHANGE MY MIND LATER?

You can change your mind at any time prior to the submission of the research and you don't have to say why. I will thank you for your time so far and won't contact you about this research again.

### WHAT IF I HAVE CONCERNS OR A COMPLAINT?

If you have concerns about the research that you think I or my supervisor can help you with, please feel free to contact me (us) on Jacinta Ledlin 95164088 or Professor Kristine Toohey on 95145102.

**If you would like to talk to someone who is not connected with the research, you may contact the Research Ethics Officer on 02 9514 9615, and quote this number – HREC 2004-064.**

## **Interview Guide for Soccer Players**

1. Can you please tell me how old you are?
2. In a few words how would your friends describe you?
3. In a few words how would your team-mates describe you?
4. In a few words how would your coach describe you?
5. Are you currently involved in other exercise activities or do you play any sports apart from soccer? What are they?
6. Have you been involved in exercise activities or played any sports apart from soccer in the past? If so what were they?
7. How many years have you been playing soccer for?
8. How long have you been with your current club?
9. Can you tell me the story of how you first came to play soccer and how you came to join the soccer club you are currently with?
10. What were your expectations on joining the club? Were they met?
11. Were there other things that happened that you were surprised about or didn't expect?
12. What has made you join or rejoin this club and play soccer?
13. How long do you see yourself playing soccer for?
14. What things in your life would make you give up soccer?
15. What does playing soccer mean to you?
16. What do you think about the physicality of the game?
17. Has it made you think about your body differently? If so, how?
18. Do people in your family know that you play soccer? Do you discuss it with them? Do you think it has any influence on your family relations?
19. Do people at work know that you play soccer? Do you discuss it with them? Do you think it has had any influence on your work relations?
20. Do people in your social group know that you play soccer? Do you discuss it with them? Do you think it has had any influence on your social relations?

21. Do you socialise with people from soccer? If so, where, how and how often?
22. In a few words how would you describe yourself?
23. Has the way you see yourself changed (your identity) since you've been playing soccer? If so, how do you think it has changed?
24. Is there any soccer related experience that you feel has particularly affected you as a member of the soccer team? (positive, negative)
25. Can you tell me more about that experience?
26. Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you for your time