

## Embedding a critical inquiry approach across the AC:HPE to support adolescent girls in participating in traditionally masculinised sport

<p><b>Nadia Bevan</b> <i>Flinders University</i> <i>nadia.bevan@flinders.edu.au</i></p>	<p><b>Jennifer Fane</b> <i>Flinders University</i> <i>jennifer.fane@flinders.edu.au</i></p>
---	---

**Keywords:** critical inquiry, health and physical education, adolescent girls, traditionally masculine sports

### Abstract

Comparison rates between adolescent boys' and girls' sport involvement highlights the significant rate of adolescent girls' cessation of sport participation during their high school years. Despite adolescent girls' lower rates of participation in sport, Traditionally Masculinised Sports (TMS) have witnessed the highest uptake of female sport participation in comparison with traditionally feminised sports and gender neutral sports. With TMS becoming an increasingly popular option for women and girls' sport participation, the expansion of opportunities for women and girls to participate in TMS may offer new avenues for increasing the rate of female sport participation during adolescence. As schools are a setting in which adolescents spend a significant amount of their time, and whose curricular mandate is to engage young people in sport and physical activity, investigation into high school settings and their impact on female sport participation in TMS is timely.

This paper explores the role in which embedding a critical inquiry approach to sport and the gendered nature of sport participation across the national Australian Curriculum Health and Physical Education (AC:HPE) (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013) learning area may support girls' continued sport participation throughout their high school years. It reports on a study which investigated adolescent girls' (n=34) experiences of participation in the TMS of soccer, cricket, and Australian Football. Thematic analysis of the data uncovered key themes relating to the role of schools in enabling or creating barriers for female sport participation. Key themes evident within the data, such as gendered norms and expectations, opportunities for participation, and the under representation of women in TMS are discussed in relation to key ideas embedded in the AC:HPE curriculum (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013). The findings suggest ways in which barriers to female sport participation can be challenged using critical inquiry approaches embedded in the AC:HPE curriculum (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013) and the school and learning environment.

### Introduction

Adolescence is a time when a significant amount of girls drop out of sports or discontinue physical activity (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2011; Gavin, Mcbrearty & Harvey, 2013). Schools play a critical role in enabling or disabling children and youth's sport participation

through both the culture of the school and in the choices offered for male and female sport participation (Mitchell, Gray & Inchley, 2015). While women and girls participate in a range of physical activity and sports, the rates of uptake for female adolescents into Traditionally Masculinised Sports (TMS) in Australia has currently overtaken the rates of uptake of female adolescents in physical activities and sports considered traditionally feminine and/or gender neutral (ABS, 2011). As such, TMS may offer a vehicle to continue or increase adolescent females' sport participation at a time where their participation continues to be significantly lower than that of their male peers.

Offering choices for girls to participate in TMS in schools and community athletic/sporting clubs is a key factor for supporting female adolescent sport participation (Craike, Symons & Zimmermann, 2009; Mitchell, et al., 2015). Less attention has been given to how breaking down social and cultural barriers, both real and perceived, towards girls' participation in TMS may support its continued and increased uptake. This paper reports on a study that investigated the experience of 34 adolescent females who were current participants in a TMS to better understand mechanisms and factors that were supportive, or unsupportive, of their sporting participation. The data highlighted that the role of schools and teachers featured prominently in participants' experiences, though frequently as a barrier or unsupportive factor. Despite that, while similar findings have been found in previous Australian and international studies (Eime et al., 2013; Flintoff & Scraton, 2001; Garrett, 2010), scant attention has been given to how the curriculum itself may be a tool in supporting girls in the uptake and continuation of sport and physical activity both within and outside school contexts.

A prominent feature of the national Australian Curriculum Health and Physical Education (AC:HPE) (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013) learning area is the inclusion of a critical inquiry approach as a key idea, an approach which seeks to give students opportunities to "critically analyse and critically evaluate contextual factors that influence decision-making, behaviours and actions, and explore inclusiveness, power inequalities, assumptions, diversity and social justice" (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013, retrieved from: <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/health-and-physical-education/key-ideas>). While the importance of embedding critical inquiry approaches in physical and sport education is far from new (Laker, 2002; Siedentop, 1994; Tinning, 2002), the continuation of higher rates of attrition from physical education, physical activity and sport of female adolescents in comparison with their male peers reinforces the need for critical inquiry approaches to be a key strategy for student engagement within the new AC:HPE curriculum (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013). As the literature has identified that cultural and social factors impact significantly on adolescent sport participation (see for example Hively & El-Alayli, 2014; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Slater & Tiggemann, 2011), critical inquiry approaches may offer a vehicle for engaging students in critically analysing their own and other's beliefs, behaviours, and practices in relation to the ways in which sport and physical activity participation is highly gendered.

The findings of the study are discussed in relation to the rationale, aim, and key ideas of the AC:HPE (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013) and how critical inquiry approaches may offer avenues for challenging real and perceived barriers to female participation in TMS, both within schools and wider social settings. Challenging social and cultural norms which negatively impact on the sport and physical activity participation of children and youth is a shared aim of both the national curriculum and national/international guidelines, frameworks, and organisations relating to and involving sport. As such, capitalising on opportunities to interrupt and dismantle barriers and challenge harmful gendered social norms is essential to the work of HPE teachers and schools.

## Literature review

While the increase in female participation over the past decade has been statistically significant; males are consistently more likely to play soccer, cricket and football (ABS, 2011). There are a multitude of reasons for this discrepancy including physical, psychological, environmental, time-based, inter-personal, programming, access and opportunity barriers (Johnstone & Millar, 2012). Another important reason for this gendered discrepancy in sport participation is the way in which sport is typically embedded within the development of, and current social constructions of masculinity (Craike et al., 2009; Klomsten Marsh & Skaalvik, 2005; Velija & Malcolm, 2009). Conversely, sport, and specifically traditionally non-feminised sport, does not conform to the gender ideology of femininity, which in many ways opposes participation in sports, specifically TMS (Dodge & Lambert, 2009; Gavin et al., 2013; Leavy, Gngong & Ross, 2009).

A substantial amount of research (see Alley & Hicks, 2005; Berger, O'Reilly, Parent, Seguin & Hernandez, 2008; Cooky, 2009), has demonstrated that social constructs significantly impact the activities boys and girls and women and men choose or are able to play, and more specifically, which sports fall within the socially constructed acceptability of feminine and masculine. Leavy, Gngong and Ross argue that “women have been taught that there are social rewards for conformity to the cultural standard of femininity” (2009, p. 280). Once women conform to these social norms, the fear of non-conformity and consequences of non-conforming continues, with women and girls still living in heavily socially constructed systems (Leavy et al., 2009). Sport participation, especially in TMS, opposes the association between femininity and athleticism, and instead produces dominant understandings of these constructs as oppositional (Cronan & Scott, 2008; Ho, 2014). Shakib and Dunbar's (2002) exploration of high school basketball displayed that girls sporting teams are viewed as ‘less than’ boys, regardless of success. This reinforces traditional gendered ideology that masculinity and athleticism are naturally embedded within males, in ways in which femininity has multiple resistances (Cooky, 2009; Shakib & Dunbar, 2002). Therefore this acts as a limiting factor in female participation and continuation of sport.

The construction of femininity and athleticism, specifically in TMS, is exceptionally problematic for adolescent females as they are at a particularly vulnerable age in relation to body image, self-esteem, physical appearance and pressure to conform to gender ideologies (Bowker, Gadbois & Cornock, 2003; Russell, 2004). Self-esteem, self-efficacy and body image are related strongly to whether females feel they are conforming to their gender roles as based on gender role expectations (Horn, Newton & Evers, 2011).

The intensification of the importance of both physical appearance and popularity has been well documented in adolescence (Bowker et al., 2003; Gavin, McBrearty & Harvey, 2013; Leavy et al., 2009). This is significant for adolescent females as non-conformity to femininity can have social and psychological harmful effects. In female adolescents physical attractiveness is associated with femininity and popularity (Bowker et al., 2003; Dodge & Lambert, 2009). Additionally, there are stereotypes of females who play TMS, including stereotypes of mannishness, non-conforming behaviour and lesbianism (Berger et al., 2008; Daniels & Leaper, 2006), that do not fit within the social norms of femininity society places upon women. Carr states that adolescence is a period where there is “intensified stress on heterosexual femininity during this developmental period” (2005, p. 129). If identified as a lesbian, consequences can include homophobia and sexual rejection among other social punishments, which sustain female coercion to social norms resulting in potential low self-esteem, poor body image and low confidence (Leavy et al., 2009). This demonstrates that adolescent females may be even more vulnerable to express their disinterest in playing a TMS, as they do not want their heterosexuality questioned. For younger girls, the threat of being called a tomboy has negative connotations, due to the links between being called a tomboy, playing sport and

being homosexual (Carr, 2005; Clarke, 1998). Despite increasing acceptance, homosexuality continues to be considered in contradiction of societal norms and impacts upon personal and social perceptions of femininity (Cooky, 2009; Messner, 2002).

The benefits of girls' sporting participation during adolescence is well documented (see Camacho-Minano, La Voi & Barr-Anderson, 2011; Greenleaf, Boyer & Petrie, 2009; Messner, 2002), however there are a multitude of barriers for adolescent girls' sporting participation, especially in regards to TMS. Barriers include perceived stereotypes, conforming to gender constructs of femininity, body image, peers, other priorities such as performing well academically and working part-time, time limitations, opportunity and structural barriers in addition to curriculum-based and other school-based barriers (Craike et al., 2009; Mitchell et al., 2015; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010). This study evoked girls' experiences in relation to schools and TMS to investigate their experiences of participating in sports in which they have been traditionally excluded or discouraged from participating in.

## Method

This paper derives from a larger study that investigated the factors that impacted the participation of females aged 13 to 17 years in TMS. Data was collected via narrative-based focus groups and individual interviews which sought to elicit participant's experiences and motivation for their sporting decisions, and to identify barriers and facilitators to their participation in TMS. Participants were 34 adolescent females, aged 13-17 years from five metro Adelaide sporting clubs who played one of three TMS popular in Australia; soccer, Australian Football (footy), or cricket. A qualitative research design was employed as it can provide an "in-depth understanding" (Anyan, 2013, p. 1) of a particular phenomenon and allow for a deeper understanding of a particular experience through eliciting the experiences of a specific group of people that otherwise may be underrepresented (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). As this research explored the experiences of adolescent females playing TMS, a narrative focus allowed participants in these sports to detail their experiences in relation to the research question (Creswell, 2013). The focus groups and interviews followed a semi-structured format.

Ethics approval was obtained from the University. As participants were minors, they received parental consent, as well as providing their own assent to participate. Purposeful sampling was utilised in order to gather insight and in-depth understanding as described in Patton (2002). All interviews (eight) and focus groups (five) were audio recorded with permission, allowing the interviewer to focus on the interviewee/s and the narrative of the focus groups and individual interviews. The recordings' were transcribed verbatim, using a professional transcription service. Once the transcripts were received, the data was collated and thematically analysed. Thematic analysis and thematic networking took place to ensure that the themes from the data were unearthed, broken up and structured in regards to their significance (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Through the process of coding, specific reoccurring words, sentences or concepts emerged from the data formulating main themes (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). The focus group and interview transcripts were coded using an iterative process (Bean, Forneris & Fortier, 2015).

Analysis of the data uncovered four key themes relating to female adolescent TMS participation and their schooling experience: the gendering of sport, opportunities for participation, peer influence, and role modelling. This paper relates these four themes and key findings of the study to the AC:HPE, specifically in regards to the use of critical inquiry approaches mandated by the curriculum. It investigates how curriculum, instruction, and pedagogy may serve to challenge real and perceived barriers to women and girls TMS participation, and make school settings and school sporting culture more inclusive, diverse, and socially just spaces.

## Results

The following section reports on the four themes uncovered in the data that related to adolescent female participants' experience of being players of TMS within schools. Themes are reported in order of prevalence within the data.

### *The Gendering of sport within schooling experiences*

Participants felt strongly that sport should not be gendered in exclusionary ways.

*"I don't think any sport should be a girls or boys sport...it's just a sport"*

(Participant 02)

However, participants gave many examples of where the gendered nature of language and organisation of sport at the school level was gender exclusionary, such as one soccer focus group who agreed that

*"Trends (in school) is all the girls are doing volleyball, there's a big push for girls to do volleyball, and the boys do footy"* (Soccer Focus Group)

And a participant from a football focus group who stated

*"You don't have that much pressure, (whereas) all the guys in school play footy. For us, if you play footy its cool people say "why don't you play netball?" "Because I'd rather play footy, because that's who I am"...It always goes back to netball because netball is such a girl dominated sport"* (Australian Rules Football Focus Group 01)

Another participant remarked that the language used by teachers and coaches at school was also another aspect of how sport was gendered in exclusionary way.

*"Lot of comparison at school, 'why aren't you as good as him, you play club'"*  
(Participant 01)

and

*"Oh you play soccer, but the boys are always better', physically, it's how it works, they're bigger, stronger, faster, (there's) nothing you can do about it...(but) skill wise, (we're) pretty equal"* (Participant 01)

The use of language and its contribution to the gendering of female adolescent sport experiences has been well documented in the literature and is closely linked with negative sporting experiences and sport attrition (Hill, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2015). This has meant that while playing sport, girls often have the feeling that they are not as 'good' as boys. These feelings may stem in part from structural and funding inequalities in schools and community programs which often allow boys more experience playing sport and more opportunities to be active than girls (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010). This, combined with the use of exclusionary gender language means that female adolescents often feel less-equipped than their male counterparts, who then in turn are likely to think they are better than their female peers in their class (Mitchell et al., 2015).

Within focus groups and individual interviews, participants gave numerous examples of how the gendering of sport and negative connotations towards females who play TMS impacted their participation, enjoyment, and continuation of their sport.

*“I remember last year I didn’t even play (school soccer) because I didn’t, I didn’t want to, I didn’t want to put myself in that situation in front of the guys in my school because I was worried that I was going to be judged all that sort of thing and I’m sure I could hold my own but it’s just that sort of stereotype of what people would say if I did put myself in that situation”* (Participant 02)

*“I remember I did like a school thing and I never went back again because I was the only girl and I was ostracised in front of all these boys, I was the last one to be picked, even though I was like a better player than half of them”* (Soccer Focus Group)

While women and girls’ participation in TMS continues to increase, the above examples demonstrate that there are still a multitude of barriers including structural, socio-cultural, psycho-social factors such as negative gender stereotypes, judgement, and a lack of support (Johnstone & Millar, 2012; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010). While the participants did give examples of where they had overcome barriers, or where things had, from their perspectives, ‘gotten better’, participants desiring to play or continue to play a TMS still feel the need to conform to gender norms and social expectations. This is particularly heightened as an adolescent girl when gender expectations are already at a high-level (Bowker et al., 2003; Horn et al., 2011; Russell, 2004). The excerpt below is an example of the negative gender associations participants felt that inhibited girls’ participation in TMS

*“Some girls don’t want to play footy because they do find it a boy dominated sport, and they may be a bit of a girly girl or something and they just don’t want to go out, and if it’s raining, then slide in the mud while playing”* (Australian Rules Football Focus Group 01)

As the majority of adolescent females desire to meet the social expectations of femininity (Dodge & Lambert, 2009; Gavin et al., 2013; Leavy et al., 2009), being compared to male peers and the entrenchment of inequalities within the school and wider sporting community act as significant barriers (Dodge & Lambert, 2009). Traditional masculinity is embedded within these sports, therefore acting as a substantial barrier for female participants compared to their male peers.

#### *Opportunities for participation*

Based on the participants’ experiences, starting from Primary School and during the transition into High School, there are fewer opportunities for girls to play TMS. Participants shared experiences ranging from no opportunities to play sport, to being presented only traditionally feminine or gender neutral sporting options. In regards to their primary school experience, participants commented most often on a lack of opportunities.

*“I didn’t even think we had a girls’ soccer team until year five and six anyway in Primary School. Before then if you wanted to you had to join the boys’ team and there would only be 2 of you in an entire team of boys which is a bit intimidating at that sort of age”* (Participant 01) [sic]

*“In primary school (I) was presented with netball, softball, not soccer, soccer was a guys’ thing”* (Soccer Focus Group)

*“(We) weren’t allowed to play with the boys in year six and seven”* (Soccer Focus Group)

When it came to their secondary school experiences, a lack of girls’ teams and fellow female players were highlighted as major obstacles.

*“(I was the) only girl was put in a senior boys’ team, everyone thought I was a guy”* (Soccer Focus Group)

*“This morning I went past this board thing with two lists on it, it had the boys’ list and the girls’ list for soccer this...well the winter season and the boys’ list they had extra names not written on the list, like on the side of the paper, and on the girls there’s not one single name, and that made me feel really bad, because I really badly wanted to put my name on it”* (Soccer Focus Group)

Despite primary school being a key time when girls become involved in a TMS (ABS, 2012; Craike et al., 2009), primary school evidenced a distinct lack of opportunities for the study participants. Despite that seven out of eight of the individual interview participations started TMS participation in primary school, their schooling was not a supportive factor. While participants stated that upper primary and secondary school offered more opportunities for participation in TMS, there were still significant barriers at the school level such as the number of teams and players

*“The boys’ soccer teams have five or six teams, one for every year level, (there are) only two or three girls’ soccer teams in the entire school for girls. Netball has approximately 20 teams. (The) girls’ soccer team isn’t very good because there’s girls who have never played before”* (Participant 03)

*“At school, (we) don’t have a competitive girls’ team, it wasn’t important enough, (they) put girls in groups with friends”* (Soccer Focus Group)

Even within the increased availability of TMS in secondary schools, the soccer focus group which contained ten soccer players determined that only two of their eight schools offered soccer for girls, one of which had only a four week knockout event and the other a one day carnival.

Participants also noted that the lack of opportunity for girls to formulate a team within their school, let alone a competitive team. If there are opportunities to play a TMS, particularly in regards to soccer, participants reported that they were only offered the option of a social team, with limited competitive focus. Participants also noted that school restrictions in regards to what sports students are allowed to play also hampered their participation and enjoyment in TMS

*“If you play club sport, a lot of schools make you play that sport at school also, it’s ridiculous”* (Participant 03)

*“School makes school sport compulsory if you play club (have to put school before club)”* (Soccer Focus Group)

*Peer influence*

Adolescence is a time of significant growth and development in terms of perceptions, behaviours, attitudes and values (Bowker et al., 2003; Horn et al., 2011; Russell, 2004). The results of this study found that participants were highly influenced by their peers in relation to their participation in TMS. For example, one participant who recounted times where

*“A lot of friends join in when we kick the footy at recess and lunch, and we teach them new skills....they would otherwise just sit around....some girls do just sit and watch”* (Australian Rules Football Focus Group 01)

Participant’s experiences also often centred on how their participation in sport supported positive peer interactions at school and made them feel valued as athletes and peers. This was evidenced in a focus group discussion where one participant recounted that

*“They (boys) get taken aback when they realise that you know what you’re talking about... (you) gain heaps of respect from the guys, cause it takes a lot of courage to play footy, they appreciate it and you make more friends with them”* (Australian Rules Football Focus Group 01)

For several participants, excelling at a TMS sport was viewed as a positive at school by male and female peers alike

*“At lunchtime guy friends do (play) sport, only two girls join in, and the fact that we can actually over power most of the guys playing soccer, a lot of them are impressed by it”* (Soccer Focus Group)

*“Once you get started a lot of the boys start to respect you more, (they are) surprised at what we (girls) can do.... (You) earn a lot of respect around the community and schools”* (Participant 04)

However there were also examples of where there was peer backlash around perceived gendered norms within school settings such as

*“A lot of boys now think it’s cool (but in) year six/seven boys tease you about being a lesbian or that it’s a boys’ sport, some girls get really upset about it”* (Participant 01)

*“My friends would all tell me that soccer’s such a gay sport when I tell them I play soccer, and then when I actually beat them at it, they realise that it’s not”* (Soccer Focus Group)

The social perception of peers plays a significant role in determining what activities adolescents’ par-take in, including participating in non-feminine sports (Daniels & Leaper, 2006; Leavy et al., 2009). As per the above excerpts, it can be seen that soccer, football and cricket often have specific harmful gender stereotypes which create barriers for females uptake and continuation of these and similar TMS sports.



### *Role modelling within schools*

Role modelling is an important component of sporting participation within school settings. Participants voiced consistent comments about the lack of role models from TMS for girls in schools.

*“Female role models is a massive thing, you never see female soccer players come and talk to schools. Just seeing someone that has done that sort of thing makes you think I can do it or, and if they had the program in place to help you learn that sort of stuff” (Participant 03)*

*“Lots of netball and softball (personalities) come to the school, but you don’t get that for girls’ soccer” (Soccer Focus Group)*

While the inclusion of elite athletes in school sport programs can impact sporting opportunities and participation through role modelling (Dunn, 2015; Payne, Reynolds, Brown & Fleming, 2003; Young et al., 2015), the participants consistently noted throughout the focus groups and interviews that there was no representation of elite female athletes in TMS in schools, despite that nationally the number of elite female athletes in these sports are growing (ABS, 2015; Australian Football League Annual Report, 2015; Cricket Australia, 2016). Another aspect of role modelling mentioned by numerous participants was the lack of female coaching representation both in schools and the wider community, such as a participant who said

*“If I had a female coach when I was growing up that would have made all the impact. I have never had a female coach for soccer playing which clearly shows something. But I think that would have made a lot of impact to me if I had a female soccer player in Australia, people can do it, people can make a living out of that sort of thing” (Participant 01)*

Participants voiced their experiences of a lack of female coaches for female athletes and how this negatively impacted their TMS sporting experience. Despite the importance of same-sex coaches as role models and leaders assisting in the development of young female athletes and their perceptions, values and beliefs regarding women in power and leadership (LaVoi, 2013), participants remarked that they had no, or limited opportunities to benefit from female coaches and role models during TMS sport participation.

### **Discussion**

While sport can play an integral role in improving self-esteem, independence, leadership qualities, increased academic performance, increased self-worth and empowerment for adolescent girls (Greenleaf et al., 2009; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Theberge, 2003), the results of this study identified that schools and the school environment continue to limit opportunities for female participation in TMS. The results of this study show that it is of significant importance for adolescent girls to be in a supportive environment, particularly when participating in a non-gender-conforming sport. Participants shared a multitude of examples where the school environment created and/or perpetuated barriers to TMS participation, coalescing in the four themes explored within the data: the gendering of the sport experience, opportunities for participation, peer influence, and role modelling.

The inclusion of critical inquiry approaches as a key point of focus in the AC:HPE was a considered one (ACARA, 2012; Macdonald, 2013, 2014), supported by strong evidence of the value of engaging young people in thinking critically about the socially constructed nature

of our health practices, beliefs, and behaviours, and the way that these social constructions enable some and disable others in regards to health, sport, and physical activity (Alfrey & Brown, 2013; Wrench & Garrett, 2016). Throughout the four themes highlighted in the reporting of this study, gender and the impact of traditional gender roles and their construction as oppositional to adolescent female's participation in TMS was a key factor. The impact of gender stereotypes and the exclusionary gendering of sport within schools was present in the accounts of all participants when sharing their experiences of the barriers prohibiting their continuation, enjoyment, and even disclosure of their participation in TMS within school. Barriers and experiences should be of key concern for schools and HPE teachers whose mandates are to support physical activity guidelines and the current and future health of students.

The results highlighted two key areas in relation to gender and the embedment of a critical inquiry approach to the content and pedagogies consistent with the AC:HPE. The first is that if teachers and schools are to be role models in regards to sport and physical activity, and guide students in engaging meaningfully with the curriculum, teachers and schools need to engage critically and reflexively in evaluating the current sport opportunities for female students within their schooling context. This includes critical examination of the ways in which overly gendered language is used in school and classroom settings, and the use of gender as a determining factor for student participation in a range of HPE activities including guest speakers/athletes and coaching staff. The second, and of equal importance, is to engage all students in critically analysing gender roles and how gender stereotypes constrain or support people's health, sport, and physical activity participation and how this impacts on overall health and wellbeing. Given the importance adolescents place on peer acceptance (Craike et al. 2009), the need to challenge harmful social construction and exclusionary language to reduce structural and socio-cultural barriers within the school settings is essential to the goal of enabling supportive and accepting environments. As such, the HPE teacher and school have a vital role to play in engaging with the critical inquiry approaches embedded within the content and pedagogy outlined by the AC:HPE to support girls' physical education experiences (Mitchell et al., 2015), particularly in relation to exclusionary traditional gendered roles and expectations.

## Conclusion

Supportive environments such as the school community are of particular importance to assist all students in meeting the AC:HPE curriculum (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013), national physical activity guidelines (Australia Government Department of Health, 2014, retrieved from: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/health-pubhlth-strateg-phys-act-guidelines#apa1317>), and in supporting students to engage in life long practices that support their health and wellbeing. As female adolescents are at particular risk of discontinuing opportunities for physical activity and sport, strategies and opportunities that are supportive of their participation are of paramount importance. As TMS have witnessed the greatest growth in female adolescent participation, women and girls' participation in TMS may offer a vehicle for addressing the current gender imbalance in adolescent sport participation. However, for this to happen, schools and teachers must engage in critical and reflective practice in relation to how schools and schooling contexts currently create barriers for female adolescent participation.

This paper outlines several ways in which engagement with the content and pedagogies embedded in the AC:HPE (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013) can work to support the uptake, continuation, and enjoyment of women and girls in all sports and physical activities, especially those that women and girls have been largely excluded from such as soccer, football, and cricket. Careful and deliberate use of non-gendered exclusionary

language, opportunities, time and space for students to meaningfully engage in critical inquiry of socially constructed gender norms and stereotypes will be essential points of consideration in relation to AC:HPE (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013). In this way, the content and pedagogical approaches informed by critical inquiry approaches can be purposefully targeted to redressing the lack of opportunities for women and girls to participate in TMS as well as sport and physical activity more broadly.

## References

- Alfrey, L., & Brown, T. D. (2013). Health literacy and the Australian Curriculum for Health and Physical Education: a marriage of convenience or a process of empowerment? *Asia-Pacific Journal of Health, Sport and Physical Education*, 4(2), 159-173.
- Alley, T.R. & Hicks, C.M. (2005). Peer attitudes towards adolescent participants in male- and female-orientated sports. *Adolescence*, 40(158), 273-280.
- Anyan, F. (2013). The Influence of Power Shifts in Data Collection and Analysis Stages: A Focus on Qualitative Research Interview. *The Qualitative Report*, 18(36), 1-9.
- Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: An analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 1(3), 385-405.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2011). *Australian Social Trends June 2011: Sport and Physical Recreation* (Cat. no. 4102.0). Canberra, Australia: ABS.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2012). *Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities* (Cat. no. 4901.0). Canberra, Australia: ABS.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2015). *Participation in Sport and Physical Recreation* (Cat. no. 4177.0). Canberra, Australia: ABS.
- Australian Curriculum (ACARA). (2013). Australian Curriculum. Retrieved July 31st 2015, from <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/>
- Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA). (2012). *The shape of the Australian curriculum: Health and physical education* (pp. 1-32). Sydney: Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority.
- Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA). (2013) Australian Curriculum. Version 8.3. Retrieved from <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/>
- Australian Football League (2015). *Australian Football League Annual Report 2015*. Retrieved November 3rd 2016, from <http://s.afl.com.au/staticfile/AFL%20Tenant/AFL/Files/Annual%20Report/AFLAnnualReport2015.pdf>
- Australian Government Department of Health. (2014). *Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines*. Retrieved from <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/health-pubhlth-strateg-phys-act-guidelines#apa1317>
- Bean, C., Forneris, T. & Fortier, M. (2015). Girls just wanna have fun: Understanding perceptions of effective strategies and outcomes in a female youth-driven physical activity-based life skills programme. *Journal of Sport for Development*, 3(4), 28-39.
- Berger, I.E., O'Reilly, N., Parent, M.M., Seguin, B. & Hernandez, T. (2008). Determinants of sport participation among Canadian adolescents. *Sport Management Review*, 11(3), 277-307.
- Bowker, A., Gadbois, S. & Cornock, B. (2003). Sports participation and self-esteem: Variations as a function of gender and gender role orientation. *Sex Roles*, 29(1-2), 47-58.

- Camacho-Minano, M.J., LaVoi, N.M. & Barr-Anderson, D.J. (2011). Interventions to promote physical activity among young and adolescent girls: a systematic review. *Health Education Research*, 26(6), 1025–1049.
- Carr, L.C. (2005). Tomboyism or Lesbianism? Beyond Sex/Gender/Sexual Conflation. *Sex Roles*, 53(1-2), 119–131.
- Clarke, G. (1998). Queering the pitch and coming out to play: Lesbians in physical education and sport. *Sport, Education and Society*, 3(2), 145–160.
- Cooky, C. (2009). “Girls just aren’t interested”: The social construction of interest in girls sport. *Sociological Perspectives*, 52(2), 259–284.
- Craike, M.J., Symons, C. & Zimmermann, J.M. (2009). Why do young women drop out of sport and physical activity? A social ecological approach. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 12(2), 148–172.
- Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. USA: SAGE.
- Cricket Australia (2016). Cricket becomes Australia’s No. 1 participation sport. Retrieved November 3rd 2016, from <http://www.cricket.com.au/news/cricket-australia-census-participation-numbers-women-men-children-james-sutherland/2016-08-23?amp;amp>
- Cronan, M.K. & Scott, D. (2008). Triathlon and Women’s Narratives of Bodies and Sport. *Leisure Sciences: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 30(1), 17–34.
- Daniels, E. & Leaper, C. (2006). A Longitudinal Investigation of Sport Participation, Peer Acceptance, and Self-esteem among Adolescent Girls and Boys. *Sex Roles*, 55(11-12), 875–880.
- Dodge, T. & Lambert, S.F. (2009). Positive self-beliefs as a mediator of the relationship between adolescents’ sports participation and health in young adulthood. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 38(6), 813–825.
- Dunn, C. (2015). Elite footballers as role models: promoting young women’s football participation. *Soccer & Society*, 17(6), 843–855.
- Eime, R.M., Harvey, J.T., Sawyer, N.A., Craike, M.J., Symons, C.M., Polman, R.C.J. & Payne, W.R. (2013). Understanding the context of adolescent female participation in sport and physical activity. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 84(2), 157–166.
- Flintoff, A., & Scraton, S. (2001). Stepping into Active Leisure? Young Women’s Perceptions of Active Lifestyles and their Experiences of School Physical Education. *Sport, Education and Society*, 6(1), 5–21. doi: 10.1080/713696043
- Frels, R.K. & Onwuegbuzie, A.J. (2013). ‘Administering quantitative instruments with qualitative interviews: A mixed research approach. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 91(2), 184–194.
- Garrett, R. (2010). Negotiating a physical identity: girls, bodies and physical education. *Sport, Education and Society*, 9(2), 223–237. doi: 10.1080/1357332042000233958
- Gavin, J., McBrearty, M. & Harvey, W. (2013). Involvement in Physical Activity: Adolescents’ Perceptions of Outcomes. *SAGE Open*, 3(2), 1–10.
- Greenleaf, C., Boyer, E.M. & Petrie, T.A. (2009). High school sport participation and subsequent psychological well-being and physical activity: The mediating influences of body image, physical competence, and instrumentality. *Sex Roles*, 61, 714–726.
- Hill, J. (2015). Girls’ active identities: navigating othering discourses of femininity, bodies and physical education. *Gender and Education*, 27(6), 666–684.
- Hively, K., & El-Alayli, A. (2014). “You throw like a girl:” The effect of stereotype threat on women’s athletic performance and gender stereotypes. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 15(1), 48–55. doi: 10.1016/j.psychsport.2013.09.001

- Ho, M.H.S. (2014). Is Nadeshiko Japan “Feminine?” Manufacturing Sport Celebrity and National Identity on Japanese Morning Television. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 38(2), 164–183.
- Horn, T.S., Newton, J.H. & Evers, J. (2011). Gender conceptualizations in female high school seniors: Relationships with global self-worth and multiple measures of body image. *Sex Roles*, 65(5), 383–396.
- Johnstone, L. & Millar, S. (2012). *Actively engaging women and girls: addressing the psycho-social factors*. Commissioned by the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity. Ottawa: Canada. Retrieved from [http://www.caaws.ca/ActivelyEngaging/documents/CAAWS\\_CS4L\\_Engaging\\_Women.pdf](http://www.caaws.ca/ActivelyEngaging/documents/CAAWS_CS4L_Engaging_Women.pdf).
- Klomsten, A.T., Marsh, H.W. & Skaalvik, E.M. (2005). Adolescents’ perceptions of masculine and feminine values in sport and physical education: a study of gender differences. *Sex Roles*, 52(9), 625–636.
- Laker, A. (2002). *Beyond the boundaries of physical education: Educating young people for citizenship and social responsibility*: Routledge.
- LaVoi, N.M. (2013, December). The decline of women coaches in collegiate athletics: A report on select NCAA Division-1 FBS institutions, 2012-13. Minneapolis: the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport.
- Leavy, P., Gnong, A. & Ross, L.S. (2009). Femininity, Masculinity, and Body Image Issues among College-Age Women: An In-Depth and Written Interview Study of the Mind-Body Dichotomy. *The Qualitative Report*, 14(2), 261–292.
- Macdonald, D. (2013). The new Australian Health and Physical Education Curriculum: a case of/for gradualism in curriculum reform? *Asia-Pacific Journal of Health, Sport and Physical Education*, 4(2), 95-108.
- Macdonald, D. (2014). Sacred ties and fresh eyes: voicing critical public health perspectives in curriculum-making. *Critical Public Health*, 24(2), 239-247.
- Messner, M. (2002). *Taking the field: Women, men, and sports*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Mitchell, F., Gray, S. & Inchley, J. (2015). ‘This choice thing really works...’ Changes in experiences and engagement of adolescent girls in physical education classes, during a school-based physical activity programme. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 20(6), 593-611.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3rd Ed. Thousand Oaks, USA: SAGE Publications.
- Payne, W., Reynolds, M., Brown, S., & Fleming, A. (2003). Sports role models and their impact on participation in physical activity: a literature review. *Victoria: VicHealth*, 74.
- Russell, K.M. (2004). On versus off the pitch: The transiency of body satisfaction among female rugby players, cricketers, and netballers. *Sex Roles*, 51(9-10), 561–574.
- Shakib, S. & Dunbar, MD. (2002). The social construction of female and male high school basketball participation: Reproducing the gender order through a two-tiered sporting institution. *Sociological Perspectives*, 45(4), 353-378.
- Siedentop, D. (1994). *Sport education: Quality PE through positive sport experiences*: Human Kinetics Publishers.
- Siedentop, D. (1994). *Sport education: Quality PE through positive sport experiences*: Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Slater, A. & Tiggemann, M. (2011). Gender differences in adolescent sport participation, teasing, self-objectification and body image concerns. *Journal of Adolescence*, 34, 455-463.

- Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (2015). *Basics of Qualitative Research, Techniques for Procedures and Developing Grounded Theory* 4th Ed. USA: SAGE Publications.
- Theberge, N. (2003). “No fear comes”: Adolescent girls, ice hockey, and the embodiment of gender. *Youth Society*, 34(4), 497–516.
- Tinning, R. (2002). Engaging Siedentopian perspectives on content knowledge for physical education. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 21(4), 378-391.
- Velija, P. & Malcolm, D. (2009). ‘Look, it’s a girl’: cricket and gender relations in the UK. *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics*, 12(4-5), 629–642.
- Wrench, A., & Garrett, R. (2016). Pedagogies for justice in health and physical education. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Health, Sport and Physical Education*, 7(3), 235-250. doi: 10.1080/18377122.2016.1222239
- Young, J.A., Symons, C.M., Pain, M.D., Harvey, J.T., Eime, R.M., Craike, M.J. & Payne, W.R. (2015). Role models of Australian female adolescents: A longitudinal study to inform programmes designed to increase physical activity and sport participation. *European Physical Education Review*, 21(4), 451-466.