

YOUNG WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN SPORT

**Final Report prepared
for SPARC**

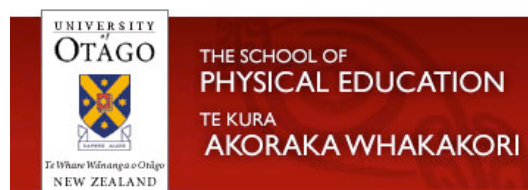
**Lisette Burrows
Jaleh McCormack
School of Physical Education
University of Otago
P O Box 56
Dunedin 9054
New Zealand**



Young Women's Engagement in Sport

Lisette Burrows & Jaleh McCormack

**School of Physical Education
University of Otago
P O Box 56
Dunedin 9054
New Zealand
Telephone: +64 3 479 8991
Fax: +64 3 479 8309
<http://physed.otago.ac.nz>**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge and express our gratitude to the students and staff of our four participating schools for their time, candour and willingness to assist us in our quest to understand what helps and hinders young women's engagement in sport. This project was funded by a SPARC research grant and we would like to especially acknowledge the support of Grant McLean.

ABSTRACT

Sport is widely regarded as a social good – something that contributes to both the health and social capital of young people. Sport is also, as numerous lay and academic commentators attest, something of a rite of passage for young people in New Zealand. Anecdotal evidence suggests, however, that not all children regard engagement in sport in these ways, nor do they necessarily reap the aforementioned benefits. Underpinned by theoretical and methodological tools derived from youth studies and the sociology of childhood, this research explored the ways in which 71 diverse young women engaged (or disengaged) with sport in four distinctly different secondary school contexts and communities.

Whilst young women described unique relationships with sport across their lives and a range of understandings of sport, there was one aspect of sport which they valued that was remarkably similar – to have fun with friends. The young women's experience of sport within school contexts varied markedly in relation to the way in which their schools valued and delivered sport. Our research suggests that the categories of 'participant' and 'non-participant' and the descriptors of constraints and facilitators do not necessarily reflect the realities of young women's relationships with sport. Rather, young women negotiate their engagement (or disengagement) with sport in relation to the exigencies of their lives - moving in and out of 'participation' in both formal and informal versions of 'sport' and responding in a range of ways to family, school, cultural, community, national and, importantly, their own imperatives.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements and Abstract

| | |
|--|-------|
| Table of Contents | i-ii |
| Section 1: Introduction | 1-2 |
| Section 2: Literature Review | 3-8 |
| Section 3: Research Design/Methodology | 9 |
| 3.1 Research Aim and Questions | 9-10 |
| 3.2 Research Process | 10-12 |
| 3.3 A Note on the Structure of this Report | 12 |
| Section 4: School 'Sketches' | 14 |
| 4.1 Rowbury | 14-15 |
| 4.2 Leyton | 15-17 |
| 4.3 Kahikatea | 17-19 |
| 4.4 Middleton | 19-21 |
| Section 5: Thematic Analysis Across the Four Schools | 22 |
| 5.1 How Do Young Women in Diverse School, Community and Cultural Settings Understand and Experience Sport? | 22 |
| 5.1.1 Understandings of sport | 23-25 |
| 5.1.2 Changing experiences across the life-course | 26 |
| 5.1.3 Understanding sport in connection to ethnicity and family | 27-30 |
| 5.2 What Impact Does the Role of and Value Accorded to Young Women's Sport in School Have on Female Students' Understandings and Experiences of Sport? | 30 |
| 5.2.1 Resourcing | 32-33 |
| 5.2.2 Opportunities | 33-35 |
| 5.2.3 Staff involvement | 35 |
| 5.2.4 Status of sport | 35-37 |

| | | |
|------------|---|--------------|
| 5.3 | What Constrains and Facilitates Young Women’s Participation in Sport in Diverse Secondary Schools and Communities? | 38 |
| 5.3.1 | Competitive nature of sport | 39-40 |
| 5.3.2 | Ability | 40-42 |
| 5.3.3 | Physical Education | 42-43 |
| 5.3.4 | Sociality | 43 |
| 5.3.5 | Time | 44 |
| 5.3.6 | Family | 45-46 |
| 5.3.7 | Cost | 46-47 |
| 5.3.8 | Summary | 47-48 |
| 5.4 | How Do Young Women Who Do Not Participate in Sport or Who Are Engaged in Other Forms of Recreation Understand Sport? | 49 |
| 5.4.1 | The complexity of participation | 49-50 |
| 5.4.2 | Non-participation in different school contexts | 50-52 |
| 5.4.3 | ‘Not on the radar’ | 52 |
| 5.4.4 | Negativity towards non-participants | 52-54 |
| | Section 6: Summary | 55 |
| 6.1 | Understanding Sport | 55-57 |
| 6.2 | The Impact of Different School Contexts | 57-58 |
| 6.3 | What Constrains and Facilitates? | 59-61 |
| 6.4 | ‘Non-participation’ | 61-64 |
| | References | 65-68 |

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Sport and recreation have long been regarded as pivotal to the lives of young New Zealanders (Clark, 2006; Key, 2008; SPARC 2008; Stothart, 2000). Research regularly reports on the social, economic and health benefits of youth sports participation (Hills, 2007; Morris, Sallybanks, Willis, & Makkai, 2003; Smith & Parr, 2007) and multiple government and private agencies across the globe have invested significant human and economic capital in the promotion of sport for youth. In New Zealand, for example, sport for young Kiwis has been identified as a national priority (Key, 2008; SPARC, 2009) with the recent investment in Kiwi Sport attesting to the Government's commitment to encouraging the participation of young Kiwis in grassroots sport (Brimble, 2009). Similarly, in Australia, substantial funds (*e.g.*, \$116 million for 'Building a Healthy, Active Australia' in 2004, \$3 million for a national 'Wellbeing Plan for Children' in 2007) have been allocated to promoting more active Australian youth.

Despite this flurry of governmental activity, we know surprisingly little about why young people participate in sport (or not), or what constrains and facilitates their engagement in it, or what they value in relation to their participation (Allender, Cowburn, & Foster, 2006). As Mayall (1994, 1996, 1998), Smith (1999) and others working within 'new social studies of childhood' and geography (*e.g.*, Holloway & Valentine, 2000; James & Prout, 1990) and Education studies (*e.g.*, Hayes, Mills, Christie, & Lingard, 2006; Lingard, Hayes, & Mills, 2003) have repeatedly asserted, children are infrequently consulted regarding their perspectives on matters which adults believe are of concern to them. Yet if any of the raft of policies and programmes currently promulgated are to gain purchase, understanding how children themselves conceive of sport, why they choose to participate (or not) and what they *do* and *feel* in relation to sports participation would seem important.

Two main approaches appear to characterise the research that *has* endeavoured to understand the place and meaning of sport in young people's lives. Firstly, a range of quantitative survey-style studies that seek to assess the amount and types of sport that young people engage in, and secondly, ethnographic work using interviews and focus groups to understand what drives youth participation in sport and what they perceive as the barriers and facilitators to engagement in it. The former kinds of studies are those that are primarily used to support and justify the kinds of policies

and interventions alluded to above. For example, when preparing New Zealand's national Physical Activity Guidelines for schools (SPARC, 2007), research consulted predominantly included large-scale population studies that sought to measure population physical activity levels, or assess the effectiveness of physical activity or health interventions using Likert scales and other quantitative measures (e.g., Bauman, Bellew, & Booth, 1996; Carr, 2001; Keays & Alison, 1995; Ross & Gilbert, 1985). Very few of these kinds of studies are explicitly focused on children and, as yet, there are few standardised tests or measures of physical activity that have been applied cross-culturally to yield an understanding of how New Zealanders stack up alongside other nation states with regard to physical activity levels. Nevertheless an assumption that young New Zealanders are more sedentary than they used to be prevails in public and professional parlance (Ministry of Health, 2001, 2004; Sport and Recreation New Zealand, 2006). As Donovan (2009) points out, informal investigations with school children undertaken by Sport Otago suggest that widely held presumptions about a drop out of sport for 12 to 14-year-olds do not necessarily reflect the reality of what is happening from the perspective of children and young people themselves. As he suggests, "adult administrators may be worrying about things that do not actually concern the children...Rather than assume we know what they want, the kids want to be asked and listened to" (p.11).

SECTION 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this brief review of literature, we draw on the qualitative evidence base accumulated to date, pointing to the key themes emergent in this work and its implications for the foci of the proposed study. We are cognisant that large-scale quantitative survey-type studies have been published that illuminate patterns of sport participation in relation to demographic indices (e.g., age, ethnicity, socioeconomic determinants and gender), afford insights into the sport and recreation choices of young people, and delineate motivations for participation and/or non-participation in sport. However, given our commitment to understanding young people's engagement in sport from their own point of view, the research reviewed primarily comprises qualitative work that seeks to understand how and why young people participate in sport within and outside of school contexts.

In 2006 SPARC commissioned a study drawing on both qualitative and quantitative methods to examine why teenagers are dropping out of sport participation between the ages of 14 to 17 years. In this study teenagers were asked how they feel about sports participation and the most significant themes to emerge were related to friends, fun, fitness and socializing. When considering what would prevent young people from dropping out of sport, the report acknowledges that there will always be young people who 'love and dislike sport,' that some will prefer leisure activities to competitive activities like sport, that parents are influential in young people's enjoyment and enthusiasm for sport, that less active teens are more likely to continue with sport if their friends are playing alongside them, and that sport must be fun at all levels to keep them engaged.

In 2005 SPARC also commissioned a qualitative study exploring the value of sport for 11 to 14-year-olds. In that study young people were defined as 'non-actives' and 'actives' with regard to their level of participation in sport. The findings included the notion that participating in sport involved a level of risk-taking and that, whilst active young people felt confident about risk-taking and therefore able to participate in sport, inactive young people did not. In other words, the issue was not with sport but with young people's self-confidence and attitude to risk-taking. Non-active young people were noted to be engaged in a range of non-sporting activities which provided opportunities for them to connect with other people and define themselves. The authors suggested that sport needed to prove it could offer these opportunities to

attract non-active young people to take part in sport. The study suggested that attitudes to sport are formed early in life and recommended targeting this time in young people's lives to ensure that positive attitudes to sport are developed. Finally, the key to sport participation identified in that study was having a strong foundation for sport consistently supported in school and at home. The focus of that study differs markedly to our research in that it seems to focus on what can be done to get young people to participate in sport, whilst our own study is more about what can we learn from young people's engagement or disengagement to alter sport and to meet the young people's changing understandings, desires and needs in relation to sport.

The two studies commissioned by SPARC also set out with an explicit agenda – to identify ways to increase the participation numbers and levels of New Zealand's young people in sport. This was not the purpose of our study; rather it was an attempt to understand the way young women engage or disengage with sport and how they understand and experience sport, not necessarily with the view to determining how to get more of them to play sport, but to develop an appreciation for the complexities of young women's relationships with sport.

Allender et al.'s (2006) review of qualitative studies on youth and adult participation in sport in the UK affords a useful starting point. Although it interrogates UK-specific populations, it provides significant insights regarding both the motivations for young people participating in sport and the benefits accrued from participation. Out of the 24 studies included in the review, most focused on research with young people in community settings. Gender, ability, social networks and family support shaped young people's engagement across these studies, with developmental distinctions discerned in relation to both motivations and barriers to participation. For young children, parental support, a desire to try new things and have fun with friends were motivating factors while, for adolescents and young women in particular, body shape, weight management and the opportunity to socialize with mates rated strongly as motivations to engage in sport. Barriers to participation for the young children in these studies included the competitive and highly-structured nature of sports, while, for older young people, negative experiences at school, peer pressure, the domination of boys and lack of teacher support were articulated as inhibiting participation in sports.

Variations on the above themes are evident in an emergent body of socially-critical, qualitative work in the field of young people's engagement in sport and physical

education across Australasia, Canada and the UK.

In Canada, for example, researchers have used focus groups, 'draw and write' techniques and individual interview methods to study young people's understandings of physical activity and sport. Studies conducted with immigrant youth (Shea, 2006), Francophone and Anglophone young people (Rail, 2004), youth with motor disabilities (Seely, 2002) and young people in St Johns, Newfoundland and Labrador (Beausoleil, 2008) have yielded considerable insight with regard to the ways young people engage with health, physical activity and sporting practices and, despite the distinct communities studied, some remarkably similar findings have emerged. For example, across each of these studies, participation in sport and/or exercise was consistently regarded as an indicator of 'health' *and* 'fitness,' as a source of 'fun,' an opportunity to socialise and a means for establishing an identity as valued students in school cohorts. Across these studies, schools, parents and friends were regularly identified as key sites for acquiring information about physical activity and sport; cultural and gendered differences in sport participation were also readily apparent, especially in Shea's (2006) work with immigrant youth.

As Messner & Sabo (1990), Garrett (2004) and numerous others (e.g., Williams & Bedward, 2002; Whitehead & Biddle, 2008) have suggested, sport has enduringly been linked with so-called masculine traits such as the achievement of muscularity, the development of strength and the fostering of a competitive spirit - values that do not necessarily cohere with young women's and some young men's understandings of who they are or who they wish to become. Nor do the competitive ethos and individualist aspirations embraced by many sports people necessarily appeal to those whose cultural and familial backgrounds support collective engagements in physical culture (e.g., kapa haka).

With respect to the ways that ethnic identities influence engagement in sport, several researchers have begun to explore how young people from Asian communities are experiencing sport. For example, Strandbu (2005) has investigated the experiences of Muslim girls in sport, Johnson (2000) has explored perceptions of barriers to physical activity among Asian communities and Kay (2006) has investigated family influences on Muslim young women's participation in sport. Our study contributes to this emergent body of work that seeks to recognise and understand the ways in which ethnicity and cultural practices shape young people's engagement in sporting communities.

In Australia, several researchers have begun to interrogate children and young people's understandings of physical culture more generally, and sport in particular, in diverse socio-cultural contexts. The Life and Physical Activity Project, for example, has an on-going commitment to understanding the place and meaning of physical activity in young people's lives, and studies conducted under this rubric have generated significant understandings of this in relation to variously-located children and young people. Macdonald et al.'s (2005) research with young Australian children points to the pivotal role of 'fun' in children's experiences of physical activity, their albeit superficial understanding of links between sport and healthy lifestyles and the importance of everyday 'play' as a site for pleasures derived from free and spontaneous engagement with others.

Studies exploring the role of physical activity in older students' lives also yield compelling insights with regard to the ways that adolescents readily link physical activity to 'work' on the shape and weight of their bodies (Wright, O'Flynn and Macdonald, 2006). As was the case in Allender et al.'s (2006) work, for young women a slender body was desired and for young men, a muscular, bulked-up body was the desired goal. Other work in an Australian context by Leahy and Harwood (2006) began to illustrate that meanings for physical activity and engagement in it are significantly contoured by cultural and spatial location, material constraints and class, pointing to the importance of non-universalist accounts of what sport might mean or 'do' for all children everywhere.

In relation to young children's perspectives, MacDougall, Schiller and Darbyshire's (2004) focus-group work with 204 Australian children aged 4 to 12 years yields considerable insight regarding the meanings that children attribute to concepts like 'sport,' 'play,' 'physical activity,' 'exercise' and 'fitness.' As they attest, "the meaning of 'play' was immediately recognisable in all focus groups as different from sport, physical activity and fitness" (p. 379). For the participants, descriptors associated with play included "'fun,' 'spontaneity,' 'interactions with friends,' 'not too competitive' and 'not too aggressive'" (MacDougall et al., 2004, page 380), whereas those associated with exercise and fitness were largely confined to things like 'running around,' power-walking, muscle building, gym circuits and weight-lifting. The responses to the prompt 'play' also evoked a sense of neighbourhood and community, while those provided in relation to sport, physical activity and/or fitness generally did not. MacDougall et al.'s (2004) work reminds us that young people's positioning in a life-span (i.e., child vs adolescent vs young adult) inevitably contours

their understandings of sport and their motivation to participate in it.

In the United Kingdom, Smith and Parr's (2007) research exploring young people's views on the nature and purposes of school-based physical education yields interesting insights pertaining to the current study, despite its focus on physical education rather than sport. The importance of fun, enjoyment and sociality to young people's experience of and perceptions of physical education was strongly foregrounded in this work as was the case in Macdonald et al.'s (2005) study. Together with the notion of physical education as cathartic release, that is, a welcome break from the rigours of academic work, the 15 to 16 year olds in their study also offered justifications for physical education based on its health-promoting properties and its assistance in the development of game and sport-related skills. Interestingly, in contrast to the above-mentioned studies, Smith and Parr (2007) conclude that the notion that physical education can play a role in improving the health status of students was evidenced at a 'surface' level in student responses, yet rarely expressed in their lived experiences of physical education – a conclusion further supported in the work of Harris (1994) and Williams and Woodhouse (1996) from the UK.

Prior work that Burrows and colleagues have done with National Education Monitoring Project data affords some insight into young New Zealanders' perceptions of the value of sport (e.g., Burrows, Wright, & Jungersen-Smith, 2002; Wright & Burrows, 2004; Burrows & Wright, 2004a, 2004b; Burrows, Wright, & McCormack, 2009). Although space prohibits a full review of that work here, some of the key conclusions emerging from that work included the fact that many students equate 'being healthy' with 'being fit,' 'being fit' with 'looking good,' and sport as a potential vehicle for the achievement of all three. Further, a recent New Zealand study exploring the engagement of young year 9 to 13 students with physical activity imperatives points to the extensive involvement of some young people in sports and their understandings that this involvement signals their commitment to pursuing a 'healthy lifestyle' (see Burrows, 2010).

In summary, it would seem that the small amount of empirical work that has sought children and young people's perceptions on their participation in sport has produced some remarkably consistent findings. Sport as a vehicle for fun, enjoyment, getting fit or healthy, and sociality are themes shared across most of the studies reviewed. The ways that geography, socio-economic index, culture, gender and familial support

either facilitate or constrain engagement are also enduring themes among these studies.

A body of international scholarly work in Physical Education has recently contributed to the above, described, qualitative evidence base. O'Sullivan and McPhail's (2010) edited text *Young people's voice in Physical Education and Youth Sport* and Wright and MacDonald's (2010) edited collection *Living physical activity: Young people, physical activity and the everyday*, in particular, exemplify a research trend towards encouraging young people themselves to share their understandings and experiences of engagement in sport. The more than 20 chapters across these two texts draw on child-friendly methodologies and a range of theoretical perspectives in an effort to understand youth participation in sport and/or physical activity from their own perspectives. It is envisaged that the proposed project may contribute to this emergent body of enquiry that seeks to understand the place and meaning of sport in young people's lives and may do so by specifically attending to what children themselves think, know and practice in relation to sport in a New Zealand context. As Allender et al. (2006) suggest, seldom do qualitative research findings inform policy decisions. The proposed project may yield compelling and rich insights into the contextual and individual exigencies that shape young people's participation in sport, potentially affording opportunities to understand the 'lived' realities of young people's experience in sport in ways that may contribute to policies and practices attuned to these.

Section 3: Research design / methodology

As discussed in the literature review, large scale quantitative surveys have yielded some information regarding the patterns of engagement in sport of young people and the sports they prefer to play. Unfortunately, these kinds of studies tell us little about what influences young people's capacity and/or desire to engage in sport nor much about what they value (or not) through their participation. As Allender et al. (2006) suggest, historically, research into young people's participation in sport and physical activity has deployed quantitative methods, using cross-sectional surveys with predetermined questions that afford little insight into what facilitates and/or constrains young people's participation. As they suggest, "an alternative approach is required which is sensitive to the contextual, social, economic and cultural factors which influence participation in physical activity" (and sport) (p. 827). *This* is the approach used in this project.

Our research design and the methodology used is informed by the premise that sport is not a one-size-fits-all phenomenon and that differing social, economic and cultural micro- and macro-contexts, together with gender, will inevitably shape youngsters' desire and capacity to engage in sport both within and outside of school contexts. Given its aim of listening to young women, the study primarily adopted a **qualitative approach**, enabling the researchers to provide multiple opportunities for building the young participants' point of view into the analysis of the research. Ethnographic case studies (Stake, 2000) allowed for the in-depth analysis needed to capture the interplay between cultural forces, social institutions and identities.

3.1 Research Aim and Questions

The overarching aim of the project is to investigate young women's engagement in sport across their families, schools and community contexts. Specific research questions are:

1. How do young women in diverse school, community and cultural settings understand and experience sport?
2. What impact does the role and value accorded to young women's sport in school have on female students' understandings and experiences of sport?
3. What constrains and facilitates young women's participation in sport in

diverse secondary schools and communities?

4. How do young women who do not participate in sport or who are engaged in other forms of recreation, understand sport?

3.2 Research Process

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the University of Otago Ethics Committee, and thereafter four secondary schools were recruited. Schools were selected on the basis of their social and cultural demographics (i.e., two single sex and two co-ed schools, schools with students from Maori, Pacific and Asian communities) and their geographical location (i.e., Greater Wellington region). Education Review Office reports and school prospectuses provided information regarding the importance and value ascribed to sport in the schools and schools with a range of orientations towards the role of sport were purposefully selected.

Young women students in year 12 and 13 classes at each of the schools were introduced to the project by their teachers and participation was encouraged from those who participated in school sport and those who did not. The focus of year 12/13 young women students was guided by findings in prior studies that suggest that young women aged 15 to 17 years are most likely to 'drop out' or refrain from engagement in organised sport (Garrett, 2004). The careful selection of these students was essential to ensure the inclusion of young people from a range of backgrounds and with different experiences of sport participation and/or non-participation.

The principal form of **data collection** was through paired interviews (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) with the young women selected for the study around specific topics such as: current participation patterns; use of local communities for sport and leisure; barriers and challenges to participation in sport; understandings of sport; attitudes and feelings about sport in relation to other life experiences; and current feelings about their involvement or non-participation in school and/or club sport.

In addition to the student interviews, physical education teachers, sports coordinators, principals and other relevant staff were invited to participate in short interviews about the role, value and delivery of sport for young women in their respective schools, their perceptions of young women's participation levels and

'issues' their particular school and community face in relation to engaging young women in sport. This provided important contextual information against which the students' testimony could be 'read.'

School sport programs and policies were also collected. Visits to the school permitted the generation of detailed observational data of young women students' sporting activities, informal physical activity taking place in the school grounds, the clustering of groups within the school and the architecture and layout of the school.

A total of 71 students and 16 staff were interviewed across the four schools; the numbers at each school are displayed in Table 3.1. As part of our ethical commitment to provide students and staff with anonymity, we use pseudonyms for each school throughout this report and in all presentations and publications.

Table 3.1 Number of staff and students interviewed across the four schools

| School | No. Students | No. Staff |
|---------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Rowbury | 21 | 4 |
| Leyton | 20 | 4 |
| Kahikatea | 16 | 4 |
| Middleton | 14 | 4 |
| TOTAL | 71 | 16 |

Two approaches were used in the **analysis** of the qualitative data: (a) the development of rich contextualised 'case studies' for each of the four school study sites; (b) a thematic analysis across the data sets addressing each of the research questions. Both forms of analysis will contribute to the generation of theory about sport participation and its relation to young women's social, cultural and geographical locations in subsequent papers. The data set comprising interviews, field notes, policies and programs, and visual and textual information collected from media coverage was coded to identify key themes and patterns related to the major questions under investigation. The qualitative software program NVivo was used to assist in this process. While drawing on grounded theory traditions, the thematic analysis was based upon multiple readings of the data by the researchers and informed by recognition of contestative/alternative interpretations of language and meaning in keeping with post-structuralist critique (Scheurich 1997).

3.3 A Note on the Structure of this Report

It is important to acknowledge that in a report of this nature we are unable to report *everything* that we feel is important for people to know about what young women think, know and do with regard to their sporting participation. A series of papers for academic and professional journals is planned to permit a more in-depth analysis of the data. These papers will be accessible through the SPARC website.

Firstly, we present four 'sketches' based on the data gathered from each of our study sites to paint a picture of the school context within which our participants engage or disengage with sport. We draw on student and staff interviews, observations and field notes and school documents to create an interpretation of sport at each school. Our research design centred on exploring diverse schooling contexts and communities and these sketches help to demonstrate the distinctly different ways in which sport was conceived of and made available to young women. Pseudonyms for each school are used throughout to protect participants' anonymity. We capitalize these pseudonyms in the report in order to help the reader keep track of the school context pertinent to the material being discussed.

Secondly, we present a thematic analysis drawing more heavily on the young women's testimony, with the explicit intention of prioritizing their perceptions to explore in detail the four research questions outlined above.

SECTION 4: SCHOOL 'SKETCHES'

In what follows we briefly describe each school's orientation toward sport, drawing on policy documents, staff interviews and interviews with young women to afford a picture of how sport operates in each school and how it is valued alongside other aspects of schooling (e.g., academic foci, cultural activities, music).

4.1 Rowbury

ROWBURY is a decile 10, fee-paying girls' school with an enduring reputation for academic excellence. It has a smaller number of students in attendance than the other three schools in this study. While not regarded as a 'sporty' school, staff and students nevertheless described their school as one where sport intersects with a culture of achievement, recognition of success, and an expectation and desire to be involved and contribute to school life. Sport was understood to be valued by the school and was also important in helping to balance students' commitment to academic excellence.

Um, we're a real academic school, like we're known for our academics, like there's a real push within school to have girls participate in sport. And I think that's to balance out the academics [Staff Member, Rowbury].

Signifiers of the value of sport to the school are evident in the human resources attributed to it. There are four teaching staff in Health and Physical Education, a Director of Sport and a Sports Co-ordinator. All students are required to take Physical Education classes across all year levels at ROWBURY. In the senior school, all students are required to take a one-hour class of 'Recreational PE' per week. In addition, a small number of students study Physical Education as an academic subject, accruing points towards NCEA. Students are also encouraged to participate in school teams across more than 20 sports.

Within the school the principal is noted for her expectation that all students will participate in at least one extra-curricula activity, which has been understood by many to mean one sport per student. Furthermore, the principal aims to increase the students' rate of participation in sport from a stable 80% to 95%. All ROWBURY staff are required to lead one extra-curricula activity per year, and the teachers interviewed all felt that the staff at ROWBURY value sport and its role in the girls'

lives. One teacher noted tension when students reach their senior years as expectations about their commitment to academics and the time they dedicate to sporting pursuits come into conflict. Teachers of academic subjects were noted to believe that the girls should prioritise their academic pursuits. Teachers working in the arts were also less supportive of the school's approach to sport. It was felt that students were more readily given time out of school to take part in representative sporting fixtures than for other cultural activities, which, by this reckoning, were deemed less important. Teachers identified pressure and competition amongst the girls to get selected for top school sports teams and a 'drop-out' of sports if girls did not make top teams.

In terms of physical resources, ROWBURY is particularly well-furnished for sporting pursuits, boasting large fields, numerous courts and two gymnasiums, including dance studios and weights rooms. Sport has a prominent physical presence in the school with the classrooms looking out onto the playing fields, courts alongside the main entrance, a bespoke building housing a new gymnasium, and a cabinet of sporting trophies displayed in the main foyer listing the names of Sport Captains alongside the school's Head Students and Duxes on large, engraved boards. When asked, "How important is sport in this school?" one of the students responded, "it is very important, just take a look at the new gym." The new state-of-the-art gymnasium is an impressive structure, with ornate exterior cladding helping to denote it as an important fixture at the school. This is just one way in which ROWBURY is signalling to students, parents, staff and the community that this school values sport. The staff at ROWBURY were also aware that, for the most part, the students at their school came from families who were able to financially support their daughters' sporting pursuits, whether this be in the form of buying equipment and uniforms, paying registration fees for numerous codes and competitions or providing transport and having the time to attend games and trips out of town because they were not working or could arrange to take time off work.

Part of it I think is that our parents have the money to have their girls involved in sport. Like, if there's extra coaching or whatever, they pay it. If they need, you know, spikes or whatever, they buy them, whereas other schools I've taught at, where families struggle, the parents just go, oh, well, you don't play that sport then. Whereas here that money is not an issue. [Staff Member, Rowbury]

At ROWBURY recognition is given for excellence, for being the best at something. This is no different for sports. Girls that make the top school team in their code are

awarded with a school badge, there is a celebratory dinner at the end of each year to honour the success of elite sportswomen, regular assemblies are held to acknowledge sporting success, results from each code are read out and an award is given to the sportswomen and sports team of the month and sporting accomplishments are regularly printed in the school newsletter. Elite sportswomen who take part in competitive sports are celebrated at this school.

As well as supporting conventional sporting codes, ROWBURY offers a comprehensive social sport programme specifically designed to attract non-participants. Lawn bowls and social badminton have recently been added to the mix in an effort to broaden the range of sporting experiences available to young ROWBURY women. While some young women play competitive sport in the community, the Director of Sport encourages students to represent the school. In so doing, they fulfill expectations to contribute to the school and receive recognition for their efforts and achievement within the school.

In summary, sport at ROWBURY was understood to play an important role in students' lives. For teachers it provided a balance in the girls' lives – it gave them an opportunity for some 'down-time' from their academic pursuits and to spend some time socialising with friends. Sport was also noted as an important way to develop relationships amongst students across different year levels and served as a vehicle for demonstrating one's commitment to and enthusiasm for school life.

4.2 Leyton

LEYTON is a large, decile 9 co-educational school that is not readily acknowledged by either staff or students as a 'sporty' school. At LEYTON around 50% of the student population is engaged in some kind of sport on a regular basis and girls have a higher participation rate than boys. Sport largely comprises traditional codes such as football, rugby and netball. Engagement in sport is encouraged, yet not overtly pushed, as Principal and teachers recognise that sport is not something in which all young women necessarily want to participate, at least in its conventional, competitive form. Music, Stage Challenge and Drama are valued alongside sport as extra-curricula activities of benefit to students, yet, in no sense is participation in any or all of these activities mandatory. As the Deputy Principal puts it, "we don't have a rule that you must play a winter sport; we don't have any rule that you must be involved in an extra-curricular activity, it's purely voluntary." In so saying, several staff spoke of

the ways in which socio-economic context, family difficulties and so on mean that what goes on within schools is crucial for the young people whom they serve. Sport, together with other cultural, musical or artistic pursuits were valued as having the potential to provide young people with a positive LEYTON 'experience.' A desire to assist young people to engage with school was expressed by staff here. That is, if students were not engaged through the curriculum, they might come to school to get involved with the sport, music and/or cultural opportunities which the school afforded.

As a very large school, the logistics of organising coaches, volunteers, uniforms, transport and so on for 800-900 students can be overwhelming at times. Relatively few staff are able to spare the time to coach, umpire and/or manage sports teams and the school relies largely on the goodwill of senior students (around 80), parents, aunties, uncles, friends of family and ex-LEYTON students that want to give back (120) to resource school teams. The appointment of a Sports Director and support staff has eased the burden somewhat, yet, as the director herself suggests, co-ordinating parent volunteers alone is a challenging task and ensuring that the school philosophy regarding sport is emphasised coherently across and within the numerous codes is no mean feat. The recent establishment of a Sports Committee is going some way to addressing these challenges.

The individual sports you know, we need new uniforms here, we need this, we don't have enough, we're dealing with how do we cater for one, the elite athletes and keep them playing for the school, but also how do we cater for those kids who you know, just want to come out and play sport and want to play with their friends, how do we get coaches to realise that you know, the philosophy that we have is that getting those kids out there playing sport, they must have fun, and I think it's particularly true with girls, they're not as interested in winning as they are in enjoying, and so the Sports Committee is trying to give it some balance, and set some strategic direction and trying to keep things moving. Also I think trying to get more community involvement set up and encourage more parents, committees, clubs for each, for the codes. [Staff Member, Leyton]

The school's philosophy is not necessarily one focused exclusively on winning in sports, but rather one of encouraging students' participation for the social, health and personal benefits which sport affords.

We make that clear to the volunteers when they come along, yeah um, focus on the athletes' needs and we've got to remember that we're actually here for the students (laugh) not because we want to coach the Silver Ferns. I mean, it's good if we can help you on that pathway,

but primarily we're here, we're volunteering, should be putting our hands up because we want to help the youth at Leyton, in sport, you know. [Staff Member, Leyton]

Some students agreed that staff encouraged them to take part in sport, particularly in their first years at high school and then again in their final years at school. They noted, however, that there was no expectation that all must or should participate. At LEYTON, opportunities to join sports and activities were regularly advertised by the school and student achievements in top-level sports were readily acknowledged and celebrated in the school's newsletter and at assemblies. Indeed, some students felt that recognition of sporting achievements outweighed achievements in other areas. In so saying, elite sporting achievers perceived relatively little support in the management of their 'extra-curricula' sporting and schooling commitments. They were encouraged by their teachers to prioritize schoolwork and were expected to complete academic work within the same timeframe as their classmates, despite substantial absences when attending national and international competitions and training events. These students respected the school's policy regarding this, and did not necessarily think that they should be entitled to special treatment.

At LEYTON, the exigencies of after-school work for students, shifting priorities as teenagers and financial challenges mean that, while students may like sport, their commitment to it (particularly competitive sport) is not necessarily as strong as the Head of Physical Education would like it to be. He suggests that LEYTON is "certainly not in the top echelons of sport by any means" yet, in his view, "the co-ed schools in general are not quite as good as the single-sex schools" in the sporting stakes.

In summary, while there is plenty of encouragement to play sport, a wide range of sporting pursuits on offer, and regular recognition of student achievements in elite level sport, there was no expectation that all students should participate in sport. Rather, a shared understanding that some students like sport while others have interests in music, drama or kapa haka permeated interviews with both staff and students at LEYTON.

4.3 Kahikatea

KAHIKATEA is a large, urban school with a decile rating of 5. It is situated in a

community well-stocked with state housing. A large proportion of the students at KAHIKATEA are identified as being of Maori and Pacific Island nationality. Sport at KAHIKATEA is wholly focused on competitive codes with an estimated 50-60% participation rate. While not necessarily regarded by staff as a 'sporty' school, the students interviewed felt that their school was sporty, with the top teams achieving considerable success and these achievements being celebrated in school assemblies and newsletters. Relatively few staff members were involved in supporting school sports teams and there was no sense that the Principal prioritized sports' participation at KAHIKATEA. Some teachers perceived a privileging of cultural events (e.g., music; Stage Challenge; school productions) over sports achievements, noting that time out of school was readily granted for engagement in these events but not necessarily for sports.

Large fields, netball courts and a modest gymnasium with a small weights room are the key sporting facilities. Sport was largely organised by one part-time sports co-ordinator and one of the Physical Education teachers also acted as the Director of Sport. Boys dominated the play space on the occasions we visited this school. However, it was girls who dominated the senior Physical Education classes. No social sport opportunities are provided at KAHIKATEA, which means that only those students with a desire to compete in official codes are involved within the school.

Interviewer: Is there anything at Kahikatea that's kind of more a social type sport?

Staff Member: Can, is sport ever social? ... I mean I've never taken a field, gone on a running track with any sense of coming second. But that's me. Other people I'm sure, I mean they have social volleyball, I couldn't imagine playing anything of the sort.

Interviewer: At this school?

Staff Member: No outside!

The first-fifteen rugby team appears to attract the lion's share of resources at KAHIKATEA, with students in other codes or at lower levels sometimes struggling to find the money for registration and uniforms in which to represent their school. Students themselves undertake numerous fund-raising activities and/or take paid jobs to fund their involvement in sport. Coaches are largely drawn from the community, yet, according to students, their quality can be variable. Several students felt that they were not resourced well to achieve in sports within the school context and preferred to participate in out-of-school community contexts with friends and

whanau. Staff spoke about the financial difficulties some families faced and the implications this had on students' engagement in sport. They also spoke about students' responsibilities and commitments to Church and family as affecting their capacity to take part in school sport.

So there's a lot of um babysitting goes on to allow older siblings and parents to work to get money to pay for things. And we don't know about it because it's all so... a huge sort of pressure, you know whether it's pressure or whether it's compulsory or not. But there was a huge pressure from the churches here, which I've never experienced anywhere else in the world on people to attend. So they can go to church before... I ended up, yesterday afternoon I ended up coaching, I had two teams, netball um... and the other one was for a girl I coached two years ago, and she had to go to attend a church meeting after school at 3.30. So that's had an impact on her. Now if you were to take that girl and put her into a different school would that happen? I don't know. [Staff Member, Kahikatea]

Students did not believe that they were necessarily encouraged to participate in sport at KAHIKATEA. Nor did they perceive sport to be valued more highly than other cultural pursuits such as music, Stage Challenge and the school's drama productions. Sport, at KAHIKATEA, was simply "something to do," alongside a range of other cultural pursuits on offer.

4.4 Middleton

MIDDLETON is a large, all-girls secondary school situated in the city in a mixed commercial and residential suburb. It is a decile 10 school which accommodates young women from a broad catchment. MIDDLETON is regarded by its staff and students as a 'sporty' school, a school where many young women take part in sport and contribute to their school's many sporting successes. There are six Physical Education teachers, a full-time Sports Director and part-time Co-ordinator. The Principal is highly supportive of sporting activities within the school, which was demonstrated by a desire to be interviewed as part of this study. The Principal was noted as regularly attending matches, ensuring sporting activities were well-resourced and readily acknowledging students' sporting successes.

Students and staff alike were cognizant that sport was highly valued at MIDDLETON. The Principal described the role of sport in the school in the following way:

I think it's key. I think it's one of the really sort of important corner stones of the school...compared to when I was at school...when actually sport was very much the poor relation. And if you were an academic girl, you didn't do sport. On the whole the top girls here all do sport...top academic girls all do sport as well as doing something cultural as well. So I think there's an expectation that they will take part in something. You know obviously some kids don't...but the vast majority do...and some girls take part in, of course, more than one...you know, they get totally carried away. So I think it really is linked to the sort of values that we try and promote in the school...you know, of leadership and involvement and participation...as well as aiming for excellence. [Principal, Middleton]

Few staff were engaged in young women's sporting activities; there was no requirement that staff should coach or manage teams and few took up this opportunity. The Principal was of the view that forcing teachers to take up such roles was uncalled for and would potentially result in a negative experience for both students and staff.

The Head of the Physical Education department noted that parents were highly engaged in their daughters' sporting pursuits at MIDDLETON. They were able to support the school and their daughters by providing transport to competitions, coaching and managing teams and being there to offer support and encouragement during games.

The school focuses on offering a range of ways in which young women can take part in sport. Numerous codes are supported, with competitive teams and social teams in most. Students are also encouraged and, in some cases, expected to coach and manage younger students' sports teams. In social sport, students are able to determine their own team, how they organise themselves, whether or not they practise, have a coach and how they get to games. They are supported in all of this by a very active Sports Director and the rule that there must be one dedicated contact person - a young woman prepared to ensure that her team turns up to games and communicates with the Sports Director.

MIDDLETON is a school that has acted on many young women's desires to take part in sport in an alternative way to highly structured and competitive school sport. The Principal is very supportive of social sporting opportunities and is cognizant of what the students want out of these opportunities:

... it just means that if you want to have a netball team with your mates...or have a badminton team with your mates...you can do it. And no one stresses about it...no one worries that...you know, oh you don't have a practice...well, you don't have to practise... you're a social team, just get out there and play...get some activity in your life. ... most of them quite like playing sport...so they don't mind having a bit of a run-around...that's alright. You know...if they've been a really good netballer...or a really good badminton player...or a really good soccer player...but suddenly they realise they actually haven't got time...because of whatever else is going on in their life...but they still want to keep at it...it's a great way to do it. [Principal, Middleton]

Similarly Physical Education classes are structured so that there are opportunities for young women to continue with senior Physical Education in two forms - either a highly academic class (achievement standards) or a less academic, more skill-based class (unit standards).

At MIDDLETON there is no expectation that every young woman must play sport at school. The school focuses on encouraging young women to play and on offering a range of opportunities to make sport desirable and easy to take part in. What matters most is that each young woman is engaged in some activity within the school, whether it be on one of the many committees organizing students' engagement in a range of activities (environmental action, technology, Amnesty International etc.), cultural activities which are prominent at MIDDLETON, or sport. Sport did not necessarily dominate other aspects within the school; academic success was important and participation in cultural activities was also highly recognized and visible in the school. The young women at this school shared this understanding regarding the school as a place where lots of young women were engaged in sport in a myriad of ways, but many were also engaged in other activities and this was entirely appropriate and supported by their school.

SECTION 5: THEMATIC ANALYSIS ACROSS THE FOUR SCHOOLS

In what follows we draw together testimonies from students and staff across all four of the above-outlined school contexts to address each of the research questions framing this study. While space prohibits a full and detailed rendering of the multiple ways by which young women conceived of and experienced sport, we endeavour to point to the key themes emergent from students' narratives in relation to our four questions. A summary of key findings is offered at the conclusion of this section.

5.1 How Do Young Women in Diverse School, Community and Cultural Settings Understand and Experience Sport?

Young women value and participate in sport in diverse ways. Their experience is contoured by family, friends, logistics, anxieties, the exigencies of shifting foci as they progress through school, socio-economic circumstance, the structural organisation of sport in their schools, their perceptions of what 'counts' as 'sport' and their orientation towards the competitiveness that seems to characterise much school sport. Overwhelmingly though, what mattered about sport to these young women was its capacity to afford them opportunities to have fun with friends.

Young women were acutely aware that the kind of sport valued most within their schools was competitive in nature. For some, this was fine. For others (both competitive and social sports aspirants) competitive sport was a 'turn-off,' something that yields anxiety and/or a desire not to participate at all.

Young women were cognizant of a range of benefits afforded them through participating in sport. A capacity to excel, the thrill of 'recognition,' opportunities to socialise, to be with and make friends, health benefits, the feeling of 'winning,' the opportunity to give back to one's school, and the chance to interact with peers, community and family were each cited as reasons to participate in sport. At KAHIKATEA students were also highly aware of the range of social skills that could be developed through participation in sport, as exemplified in the following four comments:

I think that sports are good for anyone, I mean like playing a team sport I think gives you good life skills. [Young Woman, Kahikatea]

*You get a lot out of sport you know, being in a team and all that you know you get a lot of qualities that you might not have if you don't.
[Young Woman, Kahikatea]*

*From playing sport you get that whole working hard and being a team.
[Young Woman, Kahikatea]*

Tolerating others and things like that. [Young Woman, Kahikatea]

Young women's engagement in sport is a complex phenomenon. There were no simple explanations yielded for why (or why not) young women participated in sport in this study. Rather, the young women negotiated their engagement in sport alongside multiple other commitments, desires and realities throughout their school years. These included the prioritising of academic work in senior years, necessities and/or desires to engage in paid employment, the need to care for family members, religious and cultural commitments, the desire to socialise and a preference for engagement in other activities (e.g., music, drama, kapahaka, barbershop).

5.1.1 Understandings of sport

Young women across the four participating schools advanced a range of understandings about what constituted sport. Overwhelmingly, sport was regarded as a physical, competitive activity that was a fun thing to do with friends. Activities like dance, kapa haka and Stage Challenge were regarded by some as sporting activities, particularly by those at KAHIKATEA, yet across the other schools, most reserved the term for games focused on 'winning.' Activities like walking, kicking a ball around in the backyard with family and friends, going to the gym and/or attending ballet lessons were *not* sport under this definition. In so saying, when many of the students were asked to talk about their engagement in sport, a large number referred to these less 'traditional' activities, thus signaling perhaps that, whilst they know these activities are not regarded as 'sport' by people in general, in their own lives these activities count. There were varying perceptions on the degree to which social sport 'counted' as sport. At KAHIKATEA, for example, the notion of social sport made little sense to staff while at ROWBURY and MIDDLETON, staff *and* students felt social sport afforded those who could not, would not or did not want to take part in competitive codes an opportunity to 'play,' albeit for different reasons.

How young women understood 'sport' clearly contoured their desire (or not) to participate and influenced the degree to which they regarded themselves as 'able' in

sporting contexts. A view of sport as wholly competitive is a turn-off for some girls who would simply prefer to have a laugh and a game with friends. Trials were a 'trial' for many of the young women, who, whilst active, did not necessarily feel equipped to participate in a process of elimination en route to selecting the 'top' teams. Social sport afforded young women an alternative way of thinking about their capacities, and an opportunity to participate unencumbered by the rules and routines of competitive codes.

Questions about what they enjoyed about sport and why they played it yielded a richer understanding about how young women think about and experience sport. Opportunities to socialise, get fit, belong to a team, keep out of trouble and maintain a 'balance' in their lives were some of the reasons advanced for playing. The motivations for taking part in sport reported in our study were somewhat different to those reported in Allender et al.'s (2006) review of qualitative research, in which body shape and weight management were noted as strong motivators for young women's participation in sport, alongside opportunities to socialize with mates. The young women in our study rarely mentioned 'body shape' or 'weight management' and even 'health and fitness' were not mentioned as often as 'having fun and spending time with friends.'

For both self-confessed 'sporty' girls and so-called non-participants, 'winning' was often cited as a reason to play, yet, for many, the chance to hang out with friends and the 'enjoyment' factor overwhelmingly topped the list of reasons for why it's good to play sport. Especially at KAHIKATEA and LEYTON, students felt that there was little point in playing sport unless it was fun. Indeed, their participation was not necessarily motivated by a desire to play sport, but rather to be with their friends. In many instances across all four schools, girls' sporting choices were utterly contoured by friendship – wanting to be with friends, wanting to make new friends, or wanting to maintain existing friendships through participating together in sports. At MIDDLETON, one of the participants talked about setting up a Year 13 social soccer team so that she could spend time having fun with her friends. The students organised and coached themselves, decided whether or not to practise and how they would get to games. They played in a competitive league and were doing well. However, the point of the exercise was to make it possible for a group of friends to spend time together on their own terms – it had little to do with the sport, or the winning. Another example of the way in which young women used sport as a vehicle to hang out with friends was evident at ROWBURY, where senior girls had formed a

social hockey team. They had given their team a humorous and unique name, which had gained them kudos around the school. They had also organised to attend the end-of-year Sports Dinner where their friends were receiving accolades for their sporting successes. The hockey girls had organised their own badges to honour their own success as a bunch of friends having fun.

ROWBURY girls shared many of the understandings outlined above but sport was also valued for the opportunities it yielded to demonstrate one's commitment to the school. Engagement in competitive sport *and* social sport was perceived as a way of giving back, of supporting the school ethos, of being a well-rounded 'ROWBURY girl.' At ROWBURY there was a strong sense among the participants that it was important to play sport *for* the school. Participating in school sport was regarded as a means of contributing to school life, to the standing of the school in the community, and to one's own value within the school. A consequence of this is that most of the young women participated in sport organised by their school; indeed, many noted that they did not think they would play sport if it was not for their school, with their friends and organised by the school staff. In contrast, at KAHIKATEA, students were of the view that it did not matter where you played sport; indeed, many of the young women we spoke to played in numerous contexts - at school, clubs, church and in the community. They did not articulate a sense that they were playing *for* their school, but rather for their team and for themselves, although some young women did talk about how they wanted their school to be known in the community for its sporting successes. At this school, community sport seemed to be very significant in the lives of the young women to whom we spoke. They talked about playing in club teams and social teams alongside their family members - opportunities they valued highly. This afforded them a range of opportunities: to spend time with their families, to, in some cases, support family members by contributing their skills as part of a team, to interact with adults and get to know a range of people, to be challenged by higher level club competition and to engage in social, family-oriented sport for fun.

In line with the young people in Macdonald et al.'s (2005) study in Australia, young women at ROWBURY held an understanding that sport was an important opportunity to achieve 'balance' in one's life - a chance to have some 'downtime' from the rigours of their studies and other pursuits. This view was rarely mentioned by the young women in other schools.

5.1.2 Changing experiences across the life-course

In a similar vein to the findings reported by MacDougall et al. (2004), many of the young women talked about how their experiences of sport and indeed, for some, their motivations to play sport had changed across their life-course. Memories of sport at primary school were universally recalled fondly. Sport during this time was understood to be all about fun. There was no emphasis on ability, anyone could join in and you could play any game you liked. Boys and girls played alongside each other without difficulty. Sport was not competitive and the girls did not talk about feeling anxious, self-conscious or embarrassed about their engagement in sport. Sport at secondary school is understood to be something quite different. Ability became an issue. Choices had to be made about which sport to play. Competition became the name of the game. Whilst many girls signed up for sports in their first years at secondary school, some felt too shy not knowing anyone or uncertain about their ability and did not want to participate in trials. Compulsory Physical Education classes became the primary sites in which to understand and experience sport. For many of the young women, PE classes in their junior years were something to be dreaded. Sport became something they had to perform, to compete in, to be measured in and to achieve in; it was no longer just for fun. As the young women moved into their senior years at high school, sport became an important part of identity for those involved in top teams and, for others, a relic of their childhood. Girls wanting to hold on to the fun of sport at co-educational schools seemed to take their sporting interests to the community, or to take up physical activities with friends. Girls continuing to take part in sport at school talked about their struggles to manage their time and commitments. Sport became a casualty of some young women's busy lives, but, for others, was placed above all else. The sporting paths that each girl described were unique to their own situations, understandings and desires, but there was also much in common. The shift from primary school sport to secondary school sport was significant; some thrived and others opted out. At the single-sex schools this was less marked as social sporting opportunities were plentiful at their secondary school and they were encouraged and supported to continue with sport. Decisions to opt out of sport at these schools were more in line with girls being unable to make the top team and not desiring to be part of anything less, or other commitments and interests taking precedence over sport – as time became scarce, sport became less desirable.

5.1.3 Understanding sport in connection to ethnicity and family

Despite quantitative research making connections between ethnicity and sports participation (SPARC's Active New Zealand Survey, 2007-08), ethnicity was not necessarily a contouring factor for young women's participation in sport in this study. The SPARC Active New Zealand Survey 2007 – 08 reported that nationally women were less likely to participate in regular physical activity than men and were less likely to take part in more structured aspects of sport and recreation. Pertinent to the issue of ethnicity and sport, it also reported that Asian women were participating at lower levels than the total female population. We attempted to encourage some young Asian women to participate in our study and were successful in two schools. We also asked many of the young women and staff members, regardless of their ethnicity, if they thought that ethnicity had anything to do with sport and what they made of the finding about Asian women being less likely to participate in sport.

At ROWBURY many of the young women could not relate to these questions; they were not accustomed to differentiating students on the basis of ethnicity. Ability and each girl's individual talents and interests, where she was likely to succeed or what she preferred to do were what mattered, not her race or culture. The young women who identified themselves as Asian at this school did not fit with the finding in SPARC's survey; they were active sportswomen. They suggested that this finding might hold true for recent immigrants, but not for Asian women who had been raised in New Zealand.

Not really sure, I've never paid too much attention to it you know, I kind of don't really look for those kind of things, but um, you know we have quite a few people at our school all different varieties taking part, that's what I've heard. [Young Woman, Rowbury]

Well I don't think we have, I mean we have kind of a medium-size Asian population, community, it's hard to say but you know, I dunno, I mean I don't think it really matters, everyone kind of gets into it, most commonly they're the really smart people but they still get into it as well. [Young Woman, Rowbury]

Young women across the schools thought that young Asian women might be more likely to be amongst those students who did not participate in sport but this was not to do with their ethnicity but rather because of their own and their families' prioritization of focusing on their studies, either to ensure they performed well or simply because this was their passion, what they excelled at – they were 'smart.'

Student One: Yeah, there's not really many that play.

Student Two: I always thought it was just 'cause they're smart. It's just their thing, they're smart. [Young Women, Rowbury]

I think the case of like the only people I can think of that are Asian and don't do sport are the ones who are busy with so many other things. I think the only way that would influence people is by like for instance Asian parents, this may sound a bit racist, but they seem to put more pressure on their children, which means that they're more pressured to do well academically. [Young Woman, Rowbury]

Student One: I don't think it's that they don't take part in sport. I think that their parents push them more to be academic rather than sporty.

Student Two: So they don't think they should be.

Student One: 'Cause in Asian families it's all about the education like, it's really into education side. So I don't think it's that they don't play sport. I just think it's that the academic part is more prominent in their life. [Young Women, Leyton]

At LEYTON and KAHIKATEA, some sports were readily acknowledged as predominantly played by students of specific ethnicities, however, being 'Asian,' 'Pakeha,' 'Maori' and/or 'Pasifika' was not necessarily a defining factor in how, why or what sport young women would participate in. Rather, family disposition toward academics or sport was what many students regarded as important. The values embraced in one's home and/or community, rather than ethnicity per se, were what informed young women's dispositions towards sport.

Different families were noted to prioritise and understand sport in different ways. For example, one young Indian woman talked extensively about the way in which her ethnicity shaped her understanding of how she ought to behave in relation to sport and yet it was her family's disposition towards sport that she grappled with the most. She loved netball, thrived on competition and had made it into the school's top team - no mean feat in a large urban secondary school. However, her parents had stopped supporting her enthusiasm for netball years ago. They were uncertain about the match between competitive, physical sport and their understandings of femininity and the traditional roles of Indian women. They felt that she should give up her commitments to netball and dedicate herself to her studies in preparation for the future. Her parents were, however, very supportive of their daughter's participation in Indian dance. That is to say, they were not opposed to her spending time in physical pursuits, nor seeing their daughter's body move, so long as it was in a way that matched their own ideas about the kinds of ways in which this is appropriate.

Yeah I have to ask myself, like last year I made a decision, I was like OK, I'm not going to play sport, any sport at all. I was just, I'll be what everyone wants me to be sort of thing. But then it sort of backfired and I got asked to play...so it is a very difficult decision to make. Like until maybe, like when I was in primary school, playing sport was all good, my parents were for it, they were like, yep, go for it. And then when I got to intermediate my Mum stopped supporting me, like she was you should stop playing you know, and then Dad kept supporting me and then when I got to college Dad sort of like, OK it's gone a bit far now, sort of thing. But I don't know, I don't want to like disrespect my parents and not do what they say. But I'm really passionate about it, you know? Like, if I didn't have netball, I'd be completely lost pretty much you know. I'd see and I'd get really jealous like. And at the start of last year I think I went to one of the games, and I just couldn't keep watching because I was just so jealous. [Young Woman, Leyton]

It is not because she is Indian that this young woman may become a 'non-participant,' but rather because of a complex interweaving of her own understandings of sport, those of her parents and the way in which these intersect with the cultural values bound up in her ethnic heritage. The negotiations that this young woman undertakes to engage in sport exemplify the complex nature of young women's understandings and experiences of sport.

The testimonies of two young Muslim women also required us to question our assumptions about the interplay between religion, ethnicity and sport. These young women were undoubtedly asked to participate in the study to contribute views from young women who were perceived to be 'non-participants.' One of these young women recalled her experiences of Physical Education classes as something that she simply could not and would not do. She talked about being expected to play rugby alongside boys and simply could not contemplate participating in such an activity. On the other hand, her friend did try to take part because she did not want to be perceived as a 'non-participant' by her peers or the teacher. She developed strategies to avoid getting caught up in the games, such as avoiding the ball and moving in line with a bunch of students but not making herself available to take a pass. Neither of these girls felt comfortable in this sporting context. One of the assumptions made by staff at this school and by the field researcher (JM) was that it would be culturally inappropriate for young Muslim women to participate in sport, especially alongside boys. However, these young women went on to talk about how they played a lot of sport when they were younger and that they still play soccer with their siblings and people in their neighbourhood and, in fact, one of the girls spoke about her grandparents continually urging her to get outside and play sport. The girls

also regularly went swimming with their friends at public pools, taking advantage of a female-only facility. Far from 'non-participants,' these girls were very active. But their participation was invisible. They did not play at school, they did not take part in PE, they did not play in community teams or for clubs, but they did take part in informal games and activities with people they knew. What mattered to these girls was the context within which sport was taking place; this either afforded them opportunities or precluded them. Their religion, culture and family were not constraining their participation in sport; the school-sporting context simply could not accommodate what they needed in order to be able to take part.

The testimony of young women in this study suggests that ethnicity does not necessarily contour young women's engagement with sport. What is more significant is the way in which families understand and prioritise sport in their daughters' lives and whether or not young women are able to negotiate their continued participation in sport if they desire to, given these circumstances. It is clear though that we must be careful about making assumptions that link ethnicity with particular family values and practices in relation to sport as, in our study, these assumptions were not borne out. Similarly, we must not assume that young women are entirely influenced by their families' views regarding sport; young women in this study certainly demonstrated that they are engaged in negotiations with their family and their friends regarding their participation in sport.

5.2 What Impact Does the Role of and Value Accorded to Young Women's Sport in School Have on Female Students' Understandings and Experiences of Sport?

The young women's experience of sport within school contexts varied markedly in relation to the way in which their schools valued sport. Schools have very different sporting ethoi, ways of organising and valuing sport, and orientations toward the role of sport in young women's educational experience. These present very different opportunities for young women's engagement in sport, and, to some extent, contour their sense of themselves as 'able' in sporting contexts. Our initial question focused on the role and value accorded to sport but it became clear that the way sport is organised and delivered in schools also differs and has a marked affect on young women's participation in sport.

School culture in this study appeared to play a significant role in shaping young women's participation in and experience of sport. That said, there were young women who would play or would not play sport regardless of the way in which their school values sport. The way in which a school values sport, how the Principal and senior administrative staff understand the role of sport in school and thereby organise their school to reflect this, how sport is consequently resourced within the school, and how students are encouraged and supported to take part in sport, all have a role in shaping young women's take-up and experiences of sport.

At ROWBURY, sport was afforded a particular value as something that could provide hard-working, academic students with balance in their life, through down-time, relaxation, being physical and experiencing success (for those engaged in competitive sports). The way sport was understood and valued was clearly articulated to the students: from the Principal's assertion that all students should take part in an extra-curricula activity; that participation rates should be raised to 95%; through the provision of compulsory recreational Physical Education at all year levels; through encouragement to take part in social sport; and through a repeated mantra that balance in life is important to success. The girls at this school seemed to have taken up these understandings and valued sport as having the potential to provide these things in their life. Their participation rate was very high and they generally reported positive experiences of school sport.

In contrast, at KAHIKATEA the Principal was noted to be disinterested in sports, or at least to appear that way; the sports department was noted to be under-resourced and struggled to support those students who wanted to play sports. Despite considerable success in some codes, sport was understood by many young women as just another thing one could do to fill in time. Many young women responded to this environment by taking their interest in sport elsewhere, (e.g., playing in community leagues), participation rates were middling and many students reported frustrations with the way their school sport experiences were organised, recognised and resourced.

Each of the students across the four schools, regardless of ethnicity, prior experience of sport, ability and/or inclination to participate, was acutely aware of the priority accorded to sport in their respective schools. ROWBURY students were in no doubt that their school was widely regarded as an 'academic' school. Nevertheless, a school ethos which prioritised achievement, leadership capacity and recognition of

success rendered participation in sport an attractive option alongside the academic rigours of their day-to-day school life. Students eagerly pursued the accolades which they knew would come from excelling in sport. Indeed, in some cases it was not sport per se, but rather the recognition attached to it that motivated participation. Further, a desire to give back, to contribute to school life, to 'do it for the school' were unanimously expressed by all of the young women interviewed at this school.

At LEYTON, the situation was somewhat different. Yes, successes in sport were recognised, via newsletters, accolades in assemblies and so forth, but there was little sense of a need to participate in sport to achieve recognition. That is, young women could see that sport was valued but did not necessarily feel any compunction to participate in it because of this. At KAHIKATEA, only athletes who excelled in sport were recognised, and students certainly expressed sentiments that those who were good at sport were well-known around the school, yet not necessarily liked more because of their success. At MIDDLETON, young women's success in competitive sport was clearly linked to the school's identity. Participation in social sport was high across the school cohort yet, as was the case at ROWBURY, girls were aware that engagement in competitive sport earned recognition and rewards that were not available to those playing social sport.

5.2.1 Resourcing

Significant differences across the four schools were discerned with regard to the human and physical resourcing of sport. ROWBURY featured a state-of-the-art gymnasium, together with spatial and equipment resources that contributed to students' sense of sport as an important activity within their school. Separate distinctive uniforms for each of the sporting codes were provided by parents and staff and parental involvement in managing and supporting teams was substantial. ROWBURY also had significant resourcing in the form of dedicated sports co-ordinators, a resource that was minimal at KAHIKATEA and limited at LEYTON. At MIDDLETON, a highly-organised system of student volunteers took responsibility for organising and managing school teams, while at KAHIKATEA, unless one was in a top team, relatively little resourcing for coaching etc. was available. For those students who preferred a less competitive engagement in sport, around 20 social sporting options were offered to ROWBURY girls and a similar volume of diverse social sports to MIDDLETON girls. Social options were offered but not necessarily well-resourced at LEYTON and at KAHIKATEA; the only option within school

available to students was playing for a competitive code.

How each school resourced and organised sports within the school clearly influenced both the likelihood that girls would participate and the nature of that participation. For example, KAHIKATEA's exclusive focus on competitive sport effectively excludes young women who may perceive themselves as having less ability and those who have no desire to compete. In this scenario, it would not be surprising for girls to regard themselves as 'not sporty' and thereby express little interest in taking part. In contrast, at ROWBURY and MIDDLETON social sport opportunities were abundant and having limited ability or disliking competitiveness were not constraints to participation in sport at these schools. Yet in so saying, it would be incorrect to assume that the value and resourcing each school accorded to sport over-determined young women's participation. Across each of the schools, distinctly different modes of organisation and values were attached to sport, and, in each, there were young women who would participate (or not) no matter how their school valued and/or supported its students to do so.

5.2.2 Opportunities

Across the four schools a diverse range of opportunities for young women to engage in sport were afforded. Both single-sex schools offered extensive social sporting opportunities together with the traditional competitive codes, while the co-educational schools predominantly emphasised competitive sports. Indeed, at KAHIKATEA, despite considerable student interest in 'just having a game,' staff interviewed saw little value in offering social sporting opportunities. A mismatch between student desire and staff valuation of competitive sport seems to exist at this school. At LEYTON, opportunities for casual engagement in social sports were available, but, as signalled in the above section, the resourcing of these was limited compared to those resources allocated to competitive codes. For many of the young women at both girls-only schools, social sport provided an opportunity to engage in ways that suited their lifestyles, priorities and desire to simply have fun. As several young women from these two schools acknowledged, without social sport they would likely do nothing at all.

School-based Physical Education and/or recreation classes, in several instances, afforded young women who would otherwise not have considered taking up a sport,

an opportunity to try out assorted sporting activities. At MIDDLETON and ROWBURY, in particular, girls' enjoyment of PE ignited a desire to play in either social or competitive teams.

The role and delivery of Physical Education also differed across the four schools and offered different opportunities for young women to engage in sport. Obviously, at the single-sex schools young women were able to participate in girls-only classes. Whilst few of these girls had experienced anything other than this kind of environment in which to participate in sport, a couple had been to co-educational schools and noted that all-girls PE classes were quite different. The sense they gave of the differences was that an all-girls environment was less competitive and combative; girls did not fear being hurt or ridiculed and they felt able to give things a try even if they thought they would fail. Their teachers too, who had experience of co-educational classes, noted that it was much easier to engage girls in single-sex classes and that the presence of boys sometimes had the effect of making the girls, even those who had great sporting ability, self-conscious and less likely to fully engage. At both of the co-educational schools teachers had trialed single-sex PE classes. They noted differences but found that the boys missed the moderating effect of the girls – this made it difficult for some of the less 'able' boys to take part and the highly competitive, 'sporty' girls did not like single-sex classes because they felt that classes were not as challenging. Some of the young women at LEYTON who had not continued with PE in their senior years noted that they would certainly have preferred and felt more comfortable in an all-girls PE class in their junior years. But significantly their issue was not with boys per se, but with the way in which boys behaved (or were allowed to behave) in their classes, the way in which they dominated activities and undermined girls' confidence to take part.

At the senior level at KAHIKATEA, girls were more likely to take Physical Education classes than boys and they were also noted to be talented. At LEYTON, girls were out-numbered by boys in senior classes and some talked about needing to develop strategies to cope with the presence and behaviour of boys in order to take part in these classes. For ROWBURY girls, compulsory recreation classes afforded an opportunity to take a break from academic work and achieve some balance in their school day. At MIDDLETON, two forms of senior Physical Education classes were offered to accommodate girls' different interests in the subject - one focused on academic achievement and the other was more skill-based. Diversity, rather than commonality, characterises the four-school cohort. That is, students at different kinds

of schools most certainly have very different opportunities to engage in sport and physical education within their school gates.

5.2.3 Staff involvement

Across each of the schools, staff, in particular, acknowledged the pivotal role of the Principal and Senior Management in shaping their school's sporting culture, resourcing and participation. Recognition of the value of sport offered by principals in each school differed. The principals at ROWBURY and MIDDLETON were known to be very supportive of sport, whilst the Principal at LEYTON was supportive of extra-curricular activities rather than sport specifically, and the Principal at KAHIKATEA was noted to be less supportive of sport than other activities.

While students did not necessarily comment on the way their Principal valued sport, comments regarding the value and resourcing of sport at each school did seem to reflect the position which principals were understood to hold. Aspects such as whether or not the Principal turned up to watch weekend sports games, the extent to which sports achievement was recognised, the nature of support provided to elite level sportswomen who needed time out from their academic studies, all influenced young women's perceptions of the value of sports at their respective schools.

At ROWBURY, the Principal's commitment to raising the sporting participation rates of young women across her school was reflected both in her expectation of staff support for sport and in her expectation that each young woman would participate in at least one sport during their time at ROWBURY. The presence of staff as coaches, managers and supporters of school teams was noted by young women, while at KAHIKATEA and LEYTON, little evidence of a staff presence or commitment (outside of the Physical Education department) was cited. In the case of MIDDLETON, the Principal was visibly supportive of sports participation and the students themselves appeared to rather effectively organise their own engagement in social sport.

5.2.4 Status of sport

Sport, in both its competitive and social expressions, was distinctly and differently valued at each of the four schools and students generally seemed cognisant of whether or not their respective schools did/did not value sport, particularly in terms of the different sporting codes. While, for some, the privileging of specific codes (e.g.,

boys' rugby and cricket at KAHIKATEA; hockey at ROWBURY; netball at MIDDLETON and LEYTON) was a source of irritation - an 'unfair' practice - other young women understood *why* these codes were valued and/or were not bothered about the privileging of some codes over others.

The young women at each school were aware of the way in which sport was valued in their school and, for the most part, this matched the views of their teachers. Girls at both ROWBURY and MIDDLETON were acutely aware that sport was valued in their respective schools and, whilst challenging to discern a one-to-one relationship between the school's valuing of sport and the girls' participation, most acknowledged that their school's celebration of and commitment to the role of sport in their education *was* a motivating factor. In contrast, young women at LEYTON and KAHIKATEA did not sense that sport was particularly valued at their schools, but neither were they particularly bothered by this. That is, an understanding that 'sport is either your thing or it's not' permeated their testimonies *and* those of their teachers.

One of the distinctive differences between the schools is the extent to which they offer social sporting opportunities. As signaled in the case studies, for some young women across each of the schools social sport afforded opportunities to hang out with friends and have fun without the pressures of trials, regular practices and an overly competitive environment. For those young women who participated in social sport, the differential levels of organisation, support and recognition attributed to their teams compared to the competitive ones was noticed.

At KAHIKATEA there was no such thing as social sport – sport was something for those interested in competing to win. Indeed, from staff perspectives at KAHIKATEA, there seemed little point in offering sports that were not competitive by nature, nor aligned with traditional sporting codes. At LEYTON, the predominant focus of resources and recognition is on elite sport. While social sport is available, it is not acknowledged as something one receives recognition or support for.

At ROWBURY, success and achievement in everything is valued. Young women's achievement in elite sports is valued, but so, too, is participation. Social sport was understood to provide an important opportunity for these heavily-committed young women to relax and take some time out from their studies, to be active and to enjoy themselves with friends. It was also a mechanism to increase participation rates in sport at the school. At MIDDLETON, elite sport is highly valued by those who play it,

yet the organisation of and participation in social sport is encouraged, valued and celebrated by both staff and students. Like ROWBURY, MIDDLETON also offered a comprehensive menu of social sporting opportunities, yet the rationale was more one of affording non-skilled girls a chance to 'have a go' rather than contributing to the school community. The distinctive rationales advanced across these two schools which both embrace social sport usefully illustrate the way in which single policies/strategies can be adopted for different reasons. It is the distinctive cultures, ethoi and values displayed by each of the four schools with regard to sport that is a stand-out feature of this study.

Young women at each of these schools had different opportunities to engage in sport. Some schools seemed better able to cater for a broader range of young women's motivations or desire to play sport than others. Whilst this is undoubtedly connected to resourcing and the capabilities of local families and communities to support the school and their students in sporting endeavours, it is also connected to the leadership in schools, the importance placed on attempting to provide different opportunities, the flexibility around the organisation of sport (supporting students' engagement in organisation – student coaches and managers, friendship teams, decisions about whether or not to practise) and recognition of the value of diverse forms of participation in sport.

What seems particularly clear is that the two schools that provided social sports in an organised, resourced and recognised manner were able to cater for a large number of young women who wanted to play sport for reasons other than to be a successful sportswoman. In contrast, the schools that were unable or did not provide such opportunities seemed less able to meet the needs of these young women, whom, in the case of KAHIKATEA sought their social sporting opportunities within the community, and whom, at LEYTON, sought alternative, informal, physical activities in their community.

5.3 What Constrains and Facilitates Young Women's Participation in Sport in Diverse Secondary Schools and Communities?

While initially we conceived of this question as a relatively straightforward one – i.e., what helps and hinders young women to engage in sport? – the testimonies of the young women we interviewed suggests that constraints and facilitators are not necessarily simple matters. Indeed, what are constraints for some are facilitators for others, and how each is conceived is related to the dimensions of each individual young woman's life – their shifting priorities, time, personal history, anxiety, family, culture, conceptions of 'ability,' logistics and structural matters.

It is important to point out that for some young women the notion of something constraining or facilitating their participation in sport was nonsensical. Their worldview was one in which sport was irrelevant in their lives; they had no desire to participate in sport, did not value sport, and, importantly, did not perceive this to be problematic. For these young women participation in sport was not contingent on removing barriers nor providing 'carrots'; it just simply did not and would not feature in their lives.

For the majority of young women in our study identifying what constrains and facilitates their participation in sport came about through their talk related to how they engaged and experienced sport, or why they didn't engage in sport. Many of the young women raised similar issues, however, the way in which this impacted upon their participation in sport differed. For some, a particular barrier was a mere nuisance, while the same barrier for another young woman meant that they could only participate in a limited fashion or not at all. Similarly, what some young women noted as helping them to participate in sport would simply make their participation easier or more enjoyable, for others it would be the difference between taking part or not.

The constraints faced by young women are numerous and complex. Constraints are not only personal matters but are present within a range of contexts including familial, school and community, and, more broadly, occur at institutional and societal levels. Many constraints to participation in sport are not something that can be overcome by individual young women themselves, but are entrenched in, for example, the approach that a school takes to delivering sport, or the value that a family places on

sport, or the economic situation within which young women, families, schools and communities find themselves. The constraints experienced by young women are not necessarily a simple 'thing' that can be fixed with a particular solution, thereby opening the way for their participation in sport. Many constraints are interconnected and young women negotiate different constraints at different times in their lives. It is also important to point out that many things perceived as constraints by others are not necessarily understood in this way by the young women themselves. These so-called constraints may simply be part of a young woman's reality.

Our research suggests that the descriptors of constraints and facilitators do not necessarily reflect the realities of young women's relationship with sport. Rather, young women negotiate their engagement (or disengagement) with sport in relation to the exigencies of their lives - moving in and out of 'participation' in both formal and informal versions of 'sport' and responding in a range of ways to family, school, cultural, community, national and, importantly, their own imperatives.

That said, looking across the data we were able to identify a range of constraints that were common to many young women, albeit that they affected each young woman's engagement in sport differently. We present these here but make clear that these are not presented in any particular order of significance. Our study was not concerned with trying to discern which constraints were the most common or had the most effect on participation but rather with trying to explore the complexity and dimensions of young women's engagement in sport.

5.3.1 Competitive nature of sport

Many young women noted that the competitive nature of sport in secondary school was the reason why they did not participate. This is not to say that some young women did not thrive in this competitive environment; indeed, for some, school sport was not competitive enough. However, for many young women participating in competitive sport was the antithesis of what they desired from their engagement in sport. These young women were often looking for an opportunity to play with friends in a non-competitive environment and to have fun without necessarily needing to improve their skills or have talent/ability. Whilst this kind of sport was readily available at the single-sex schools, the girls in co-educational schools felt that their options were limited. The availability, organisation and encouragement to take part

in social sport apparent at the two single-sex schools were clearly facilitating young women's participation in sport. These two schools had high participation rates, and a significant proportion of sport played was social sport, albeit primarily still within an inter-school competition. Many young women attending these schools talked about the opportunities available to them to continue with sport in a way which suited their motivations for taking part and the changing demands in their lives. As their commitments to other pursuits, to their studies, to paid jobs, to boyfriends and to socializing increased, they were able to switch from competitive sport to social sport which required less time and commitment, involved no pressure and provided a cherished opportunity for them to relax, have fun and be with friends.

An overwhelming proportion of the young women in this study spoke of their desire to engage in sport, yet not necessarily in competitive ways. Opportunities to side-step 'trials,' to play games with friends and to be valued for their participation in sports that didn't necessarily reap 'wins' for the school were desired. While cognisant that the lion's share of resources would go to competitive sports, young women wanted opportunities to be supported (via quality coaching and logistical support) to play in less competitive contexts.

Across the dataset, amongst girls engaged in highly competitive and non-competitive sports and those not engaged in school sport at all, 'fun' and 'friends' were pivotal to their engagement in sport. This brings into question the way in which sport is currently understood and delivered within secondary schools, where, for the most-part, Physical Education is focused on skill development and participation in sport requires entry into an interschool *competition*. These kinds of opportunities do not match what many young women value or desire from sport.

5.3.2 Ability

Related to the nature of school sport being predominantly competitive, many young women talked about their anxiety related to participating in sport at school. They were primarily concerned with ability - whether or not they would have the ability or be perceived as having the ability to take part. The mere possibility that they would lack ability and thereby embarrass themselves was enough to prevent a number of girls from taking part. Trials were noted to be particularly stressful and, in the view of many, were considered to be unnecessary, except in cases where a top, competitive

team is being selected. Many girls also noted the impossibility of starting a new sport at secondary school because one was unlikely to have developed the ability of others who had started at a younger age and would not know the people playing in the team.

Interviewer: ... why do some girls drop out?

Student: I guess it is kind of to do with expectation. You know like, in primary and intermediate it was all for fun, you're just doing whatever you felt like doing, but when you get to high school it's like the school's so big, like the zone for it it's so massive that like, all kids have like a real good ability at sport. So if you want to try for something if you want to be in a top team you have to be good at it... [Young Woman, Leyton]

Interviewer: Is there anything that really turns you off about sport?

Student: Not being very good at it. I wouldn't want to be in like, the worst team 'cause I'd just feel like there'd be like, maybe no point in something, if I was like with a bunch of kids a lot younger than me or something, I just wouldn't really wanna do that. [Young Woman, Rowbury]

Interviewer: What do you think might happen in the future? What will happen in year 13? Do you think you'll carry on with some social sport or will you just forget it altogether, or what do you think might happen?

Student One: Just social sport, I mean I'd like to get involved in another competitive sport but I can't see that happening. Because of the, I dunno, it just seems like it's not my thing anymore, you know there is certain people who do their competitive athletics and stuff like ... And um, I dunno, just time commitment and getting, you sort of, with sports I reckon, you have to be, they have to be your sports, like you know how when you start from a young age and it's like everyone knows that you do that sport, I couldn't just start like running competitively or something 'cause it would be like what are you doing?

Student Two: You can't just take up the sport and be good at it, like you have to done it from an early age sort of.

Student One: You have to have done it previously.

Student Two: So you can't really beat some people who have done it, like their whole life, you just know them and it's like, I dunno, and then once you're, I dunno you just can't be as good because you didn't start when you were young as they did. [Young Women, Rowbury]

I think it's sort of like...I dunno...partly the trials would put me off, 'cause you never had to like...have trials in...like, intermediate...or stuff like that. You just automatically got in. I guess I just kind of

thought that maybe I wasn't good enough to some extent. That so...I'd probably be really bad at it. [Young Woman, Leyton]

Student One: Coz when you do trials it's like putting yourself out there, you know? And if if you suck you know (laugh), like um yeah...

Interviewer: Then everyone can see you, who is good...

Student One: Yeah. [Young Woman, Leyton]

Oh it was really confusing because, all the girls had been playing in that team for years, so they knew each other, they knew the coach, and I was like the new one, and they knew all the routines. So I was like lost... [Young Woman, Leyton]

Trials are really intimidating. Yeah like they're probably the worst thing. [Young Woman, Leyton]

5.3.3 Physical Education

Marked differences in the physical education and sporting experiences of young women at co-educational and single-sex schools were noted. For students at co-educational schools, especially in junior high-school years, fears and anxieties about how boys respond to their sporting abilities and their bodies were heightened. Similar to the work reviewed by Allender et al. (2006), many young women attending co-educational schools spoke of the way in which the presence and/or behaviour of boys hindered their participation in sport at school, particularly in Physical Education classes. Staff at the single-sex schools talked about the differences they noticed in teaching single-sex and co-educational Physical Education classes where, for the most part, girls were much more likely to be actively engaged in single-sex classes. That said, the senior co-educational classes at KAHIKATEA were dominated by girls who were highly engaged in their classes and many of the senior girls spoken to at both LEYTON and KAHIKATEA, who continued to take part in Physical Education, preferred mixed-sex classes because they provided the opportunity to compete against boys, to prove their capacity and to challenge perceptions that 'girls can't play.'

Student One: Mmm, I sorta, I did heaps of things in primary school, like pretty much like there was all like these tournaments, random hockey tournaments and netball tournaments. I was like, OK, I'll just do that. And then sort of when we got to high school everything was a bit more serious. So you couldn't just like jump in and

be in the touch team and just go for the fun 'cause everyone was more serious.

Interviewer: Yeah OK. And can you remember any of the sort of experiences of what sort of happened then when it got too rough, like did you get hurt or what ended up happening ...?

Student Two: No, I didn't get hurt. It just like wasn't fun anymore because like when you play with guys they always take it so like personally and like I don't know even with the girls it became really competitive. Like, it wasn't really for fun anymore. [Young Woman, Leyton]

I think at the senior level particularly would be, a small minority of girls compared to boys and boys can make comments, you know if they drop the ball they go aaagh, and they'll be like oh like, they might whisper and say don't pass to Jenny and they're only joking but little comments like that, like boys can make girls feel quite self conscious, and I think it's also the physical thing with maybe wearing shorts um, breasts bouncing up and down if they run you know, those kinds of things can, and girls don't like to get sweaty either, all those sorts of issues but yeah, yeah. [Staff Member, Leyton]

The girls felt, I don't know if the boys were trying to show off to me, if that was part of it, um, but they (the boys) just seemed to love it and the girls didn't want to make a mistake, they were scared to make a mistake, because of what the boys would say and, you know, and shame them, as they used to say shame, shame is what they used to say all the time. [Staff Member, Rowbury]

5.3.4 Sociality

Other studies have shown the importance of sociality in young people's engagement in sport. This was a feature in our study too. Friends were noted to be both a constraint and a facilitator. Young women talked about taking up sport because of their friends' encouragement and participation, but also dropping out of sport because of friends' non-engagement. Some did not want to play sport because it impinged on the limited time they had to hang out with friends, whilst others took part in sport to have time to hang out with friends.

Socialising maybe...Academically people are probably concentrating on it more than sport, because they don't really consider it as important. But also you know like parties and other things that kind of take over your weekends and boys and socialising becomes more of a priority than sport. Things you'd rather be doing. [Young Woman, Rowbury]

5.3.5 Time

Time was a key constraint raised by many young women across all of the schools. These young women lead busy lives, juggling their studies and other school commitments, paid work, family work (chores and caring for family members), religious and cultural commitments, socializing and other pursuits (music, drama, etc). Sport was noted to be a time-consuming activity, particularly when involved in competitive level sport. Many young women dropped out of sport because they chose to prioritise other activities or, in some cases, were unable to find the time due to other increasing commitments. Some of these girls wanted to play sport and imagined that they might be able to when they finished secondary school, which is why they did not see themselves as non-participants. The limited nature of understanding young women as participants/non-participants is discussed later in this report.

I went through a stage where I just didn't even want to do it, it was, like I wanted to spend more time with my friends and it was taking up all my time. It's quite demanding and you kind of get to a point where you need your exam time and you need your friend time and you need to just catch up with everything else in your life. ... Yeah, it's quite like overwhelming and you just kind of want a break [Young Woman, Rowbury].

Um, I don't know if it's particularly girls. It might be more with girls, what I've seen over the last ten years or so. It's expensive to be a teenager these days, and the peer pressure and I think that probably affects girls more, the iPods, the cell phones, it's not just the cell phone but it's the style, you know. The bill every month for paying for this kind of stuff um, and so I think more kids today have more part-time jobs. They're working more um, I mean I know this is about girls but we had a first fifteen rugby trial and the coach just decided that they wanted to have a trial game and it was like three days down the road and they said, 'look we're going to have this game.' Um, quite a number of the boys said, 'look I'm working, I can't get off, I don't want to get off,' you know, 'I need the money, I've got my lifestyle to support,' and that's one of the things that I've seen ... [Staff Member, Leyton]

A key feature for these senior students was the increasing demands of their schoolwork and their focus on doing well in school to set themselves up for the future. Sport was often a casualty of young women's and/or their family's necessity to focus on their studies.

5.3.6 Family

When talking generically about what might constrain a young woman's participation in sport, many spoke about the influence of family (i.e., whether or not parents played sport, took their children to sport, and encouraged them to try different sports when they were younger). Family proclivities were clearly linked to girls' participation in some of the young women's responses, but certainly not in all. Indeed, at times the presumptions of staff that if parents are not supportive of their girls' sport then girls will be less likely to participate was not necessarily born out in the responses of the young women whom we interviewed. Assuredly, sport was discouraged by some families, particularly those whose priority was academic achievement for their daughters, but, in other cases, young women were needed to be involved in religious and cultural activities, to help take care of younger siblings, and to complete household chores, or to take up paid jobs. In these situations, sport was neither an option, nor a priority. In still other cases, young women continued to play sport despite the preference of their families for a focus on school-work. In such instances, young women weighed up the feelings of success and fulfillment they gained from sport against the risk of disrespecting their parents' wishes.

Important to note here is the markedly different resources that families across the four schools are able to marshal in order to support their girls' engagement in sport. While some were heavily committed to attending girls' games, managing teams and so forth, for others the exigencies of family commitments and paid work rendered this an impossibility. Assumptions from some staff at KAHIKATEA in particular, that parents were simply not interested in supporting their children's sport, were not necessarily born out in student interviews. In several instances young women were actively involved in church or community-based sporting opportunities and playing sports with family members. Indeed, many young women pointed to the pleasures of participating with people of different ages, with friends and family. It was not necessarily the case that families were not supportive of sport, but rather that their preference was to participate in out-of-school contexts at times that fitted around family lifestyle needs and priorities.

Like I've taught at other schools and we've gone to a game, no parents have come, you know, then you drive them all home, whereas here we often drive the kids to the game and then all the parents pick them up or, you know, have come and watched and take them home...whereas, um, I taught at a decile one school and, because the parents are working and there's younger brothers and sisters and stuff.

If the kids, if the parent says, 'you've gotta go home and look after your little brother,' that's it, ...that's the priority. Whereas here it just seems like parents have the time to be able to take them wherever [Staff Member, Rowbury].

5.3.7 Cost

In connection to the different resources that families across the four schools had to support their daughters' participation in sport, the costs associated with sport were a significant barrier to many in at least three schools and to an extent also at the fee-paying girls' school. Essentially, some families have enough money to be able to support their daughters' involvement in sport, other families do not, and a consequence of this might be that their children cannot participate in particular sports or in any sport at all. This is not to say that families who may not have *enough* money do not value sport or do not want their children to participate, or, indeed, would not find a way to make this happen. Neither does this mean that families with *enough* money would necessarily use it to support their children to participate in sport. It simply means that for many members of staff and students in the schools that we worked in, money was understood to affect young women's (and young men's) participation in sport. Money was required to pay registration fees that were understood to be expensive and rising and it was required to purchase uniforms, equipment and to transport children. Any one of these expenses could prove a barrier for some families and the consequence might well be the decision not to participate at all. Schools were clearly trying to alleviate, to the best of their abilities, the barrier of cost by providing uniforms, organizing transport, capping registration fees, and offering payment schemes. However, it is likely that, despite these efforts, many students, particularly those attending low-decile schools, were unable to participate in numerous or particular codes or indeed in sport at all because of the significant expense that they and their families would need to cover.

Part of it I think is that our parents have the money to have their girls involved in sport. Like, if there's extra coaching or whatever, they pay it. If they need, you know, spikes or whatever, they buy them, whereas other schools I've taught at, where families struggle, the parents just go, 'oh, well, you don't play that sport then.' Whereas here that money is not an issue. [Staff Member, Rowbury]

... the money...I mean, it costs so much to play sport...and fees kept going up...and they had a really good deal...that you could...if you played...like, netball for example...you paid whatever it cost...but if you played...a range of sports, you could...like, three sports...and

they'd cap it at \$100. And then if you had families...so if you had siblings and things as well, there was a...financial...thing set up for that. ... Well, we got funding from somewhere. Mmm, 'cause otherwise it would be a barrier. They just can't afford it. [Staff Member, Middleton]

These kids would show up to a basketball game and their little brother had their shoes and so they've got nothing to play in. Like they'd come in their jandals and, 'oh, sorry, I,' you know, 'my brother's got my shoes.' Here the kids have all the gear they need, they've got cleat for soccer and spikes for track and that kind of thing is never an issue. And like PE at NAME of SCHOOL, kids never had PE gear. It was such a struggle and here everyone's got PE gear, they show up everyday with their little shirt and their shorts and ... I'm not spending the first 20 minutes going, 'where's your gear, can you go and borrow some?' Like they just, they have it. And if it's a sport where you actually need a piece of equipment, like, I don't know, softball, you need a glove or, you know, whatever it is, these kids would have it. Whereas those kids don't. [Staff Member, Rowbury]

5.3.8 Summary

Every young woman faces constraints to participation in sport, yet the effect of these constraints differs. That is, some young women are able to overcome particular constraints in order to participate in sport, either by themselves or with the support of other people and institutions, whilst others are not well-positioned to do so. For some young women a particular constraint may merely pose a *difficulty* in participating, whilst for others that same constraint may constitute a *barrier* to participation, preventing them from taking part in sport at all. There is no simple 'fix' for alleviating constraints to young women's participation in sport because individual young women experience and respond to these in diverse ways. That said, the young women's testimony does point to some opportunities for facilitating their participation in sport within the school context. An attempt to understand what young women value and desire in their engagement in sport by their school could lead to the provision of an array of opportunities which are more in tune with the different ways in which young women are able to or might wish to engage in sport. These might include offering non-traditional sports, providing opportunities for physical activity, providing social sport that caters to the interests of young women who wish to play in a competition and those who simply want to play, providing opportunities to organise their own team and their level of commitment to sport, offering opportunities for single-sex PE classes, giving young women choices about the types of sports played in PE classes, minimizing the costs associated with sport (particularly social sport to make it more accessible should young women wish to take part), dedicating

staff to organizing social sporting opportunities, ensuring they meet the desires of young women, ensuring sports programmes are running smoothly and are appropriately resourced and, finally, valuing the broad nature of sport and young women's engagement in this spectrum of sport within schools. Naturally, these are big demands on schools that are already stretched both financially and in terms of staff resourcing, facilities and curriculum time, however, the onus is not necessarily on individual schools to make these kinds of changes, but rather there is an opportunity here for secondary school education as a whole and Physical Education in particular to consider how it could better meet the sporting needs and desires of young women (and young men) in the school context.

5.4 How Do Young Women Who Do Not Participate in Sport or Who Are Engaged in Other Forms of Recreation, Understand Sport?

Our research suggests that the categories of 'participant' and 'non-participant' are relatively meaningless and do not necessarily reflect the nuanced and complex realities of young women's relationship with sport. Rather, young women negotiate their engagement (or disengagement) with sport in relation to the exigencies of their lives - moving in and out of 'participation' in both formal and informal versions of 'sport,' responding in a range of ways to family, school, cultural, community, national and, importantly, their own imperatives. Young women are engaged in a diverse range of physical activities, in and outside of school, some of which 'count' as sport, and others that don't. Very few young women in this study were not currently engaged in some kind of physical activity.

5.4.1 The complexity of participation

At the outset of this project we assumed that it would be relatively straightforward to separate girls according to their engagement in sport – those that currently participate in sport and those that don't. Similarly, when we asked staff at each school to help us identify potential participants along these lines, they did not articulate any difficulty; that is, they had a clear idea of who would be a participant and a non-participant. At some of the schools staff managed to identify even numbers of so-called participants and non-participants who were approached and agreed to take part in the study. The young women were told that we were interested in hearing from students who were 'into' sport and those who were not and perhaps came to the interview with an idea of why they had been selected – for their observed participation or non-participation in sport at school. One of the first things we asked the pairs of girls was how they perceived themselves, with phrases like 'sporty,' 'into sport,' 'interested in sport' or 'not into sport at all.' Whilst this was straightforward for some girls, others found this very difficult to answer. They considered how they were perceived by others, what they felt about sport currently and in the past, whether or not they had or currently played, what their desires were, perhaps in spite of the reality of their current situation. It became clear that positioning young women as 'participants' or 'non-participants' was relatively meaningless and did not reflect the way that young women come to understand themselves in relation to sport, nor the way in which they negotiate their engagement with sport in line with other factors in

their lives.

Young women who were regarded as 'non-participants' by their Physical Education teachers were often engaged in sport and/or physical activity in community settings. Whilst their participation may not register in school records, student testimony would suggest that schools' monitoring of participation rates does not necessarily afford an accurate picture of the diverse ways in which young women engage in sport.

Many young women regarded themselves as not 'sporty' school students, which inevitably meant one of two things. Firstly, they either perceived or had been told by others that they did not have sporting ability or, secondly, they did not like what they understood sport to be - primarily competitive team sports. What is particularly striking, however, amongst the cohort that regarded themselves in this way, is the fact that several talked fondly of playing sport in other contexts – in primary school, with family, church, in the community, informally, or doing different types of activities which they did not necessarily perceive as sport – for example, dance, gym, running and swimming. Many of these young women, who either perceived themselves to be non-sporty or were regarded by others as non-participants, were, in fact, very active.

Dance is a case in point. Across all four schools, many girls were heavily involved in dance, both within and outside of school contexts, yet were nevertheless perceived as 'non-sporty.' These young women regarded themselves to be highly fit, dedicated, athletic and as equals to top sportswomen, but did not receive this recognition from their school, peers or teachers. If they wished to own it, they had to fight for a 'sporty' identity. On the other hand, many of these elite dancers did not really see themselves as 'sporty,' happily consigning dance to a non-sports category. The interesting point to note here is that most of the markers used to identify sporty girls - agility, fitness, balance, stamina, dedication, time commitment, performance – could comfortably be assigned to these young dancers, yet because their 'code' was not regarded as 'sport,' the accolades, kudos and esteem which they noted others receiving for their physical capacity was not necessarily accorded to them.

5.4.2 Non-participation in different school contexts

It was much easier to comfortably not engage in sport at some schools than at others. At ROWBURY, for example, a culture of participation and contribution to the

school underpinned many decisions to take part in sport. Girls who did not take part in sport talked about the need to have other passions and for their dedication to these to be visible. At ROWBURY, a commitment or capacity expressed in another area effectively excused a girl from taking part in sport, while non-participation in sport with no other pursuit on the horizon was frowned upon. Participation in sport was driven from the top. At MIDDLETON and LEYTON, girls who did not play sport did not feel uncomfortable or different. Rather, non-participation in sport seemingly made no difference to their schooling experience whatsoever. Staff at both LEYTON and MIDDLETON were of the view that girls needed to be engaged in some kind of extra-curricula activity, preferably through the school, to facilitate a feeling of connection to the school, yet they did not necessarily feel that this activity needed to be sport. They did not push participation in sport and, in the case of MIDDLETON girls in particular, this was appreciated. At KAHIKATEA, playing sports rendered one popular, yet non-participation in sport was not a problem. Sport and cultural activities were those most celebrated at KAHIKATEA, thus, as long as one was involved in one or the other, some measure of kudos and celebration as a visible entity was assured.

Physical Education classes at secondary school played a significant role in shaping many young women's feelings about sport in school, which, in some cases, lead to their non-participation. PE classes were identified as sites where judgments were made as to whether someone was sporty or not and whether one was a participant or non-participant. For many who perceived themselves as lacking in sporting ability, Physical Education was an uncomfortable class to participate in, especially if the content of these classes was primarily sports-based. The compulsory nature of PE, the ready opportunities for display of physical prowess and the visibility of their failure to measure up all contributed to a negative experience for some young women. Some of the girls in our study identified Physical Education classes as a context that inhibited their participation because of the presence and/or behaviour of boys, the types of activities students were asked to perform and the necessity to perform in front of one's peers and so on. However, this did not necessarily mean that they were not engaged in other forms of sport in other contexts.

Girls who did not engage in sport viewed school sport as competitive and elitist. They talked about sport as an activity reserved for talented people with sporting ability, for people dedicated to sport, for people that were always on show in their PE class and for people who create their identity around sport. Many perceived that there was little

room for other kinds of understandings or engagements in sport, particularly at LEYTON. While some young women could readily identify a kind of sport (e.g., badminton), a sporting context (e.g., social sport) or a format that had worked for them in the past (e.g., in primary school), these were not currently available in their schools, thus they chose not to participate.

5.4.3 'Not on the radar'

Several staff and students pointed out that there is a cohort of girls who are simply not interested in sport at all, no matter how it is conceived. These young women simply did not have a relationship with sport, nor did they desire one. Nor did they regard themselves as non-participants because sport was simply not part of their lives. It was not one of the things which they drew on to create their identities nor to understand their place in the world. For these young women, sport was something which they had to participate in at one point in their past but which was now irrelevant. They did not see their non-engagement as problematic, had no intention of changing their behaviour, nor saw any need to do so. These young women did not perceive themselves as 'lazy,' nor did they seem 'too cool,' nor disengaged from school or other activities. On the contrary, they were simply engaged with other activities, prioritized other aspects of their lives and, for the most part, their friends, school and families were accepting of this. They had alternative interests, other commitments and different ideas about what they would like to do with their time and their friends. In the senior years, in particular, some girls did not necessarily want to commit the precious little spare time they had to sport. Instead, hanging out with mates, relaxing, going shopping and going to the movies were preferred activities. That is, sport is simply not on the radar for some young women; it is an irrelevant activity that contributes little to who they imagine themselves to be. In these instances, it is important to ask whether/if there is a need to change this perception? The young women's testimonies would suggest not.

5.4.4 Negativity towards non-participants

Young women's lack of engagement in sport was, for the most part, not considered problematic or negative by young women across all of the schools. Many of the participants noted that they have friends who do or do not play sport and this does not affect their friendships nor make them think differently of their friends in any way.

At LEYTON, students were adamant that whether you participated in sport or not had little to do with how you were perceived or valued in their school by staff, peers or the community. At KAHIKATEA, students did not perceive non-participants in a negative way but they noted that, if you played sport in a popular or successful team, this had an effect on your value in school, i.e., on being 'known.' At MIDDLETON, sports participation was just one of the many activities available and was not a measure of a person at all. At ROWBURY, the situation was a little different. Whilst many girls shared the views of their peers at the other schools, non-participation in sport for some, at this school, could only be justified by known dedication to some other pursuit.

Embedded amongst the student responses, at ROWBURY and in smatterings across the other schools, was some evidence of judgmental dispositions towards those young women who did not engage with sport at school. For example, at ROWBURY, some sporty girls referred to non-participants as students with 'attitude problems,' as girls who 'thought they were too cool,' as 'lazy' girls or as girls who didn't 'want' to take part. Our analysis would suggest that the reality for the young women so-described was much more complex than this. Those girls we spoke with advanced a range of reasons for their non-participation, few of which could be described as an 'attitude problem.' For example, a young woman at LEYTON explained that she had played sport at her prior school but, on moving to LEYTON, was nervous about joining a team with strangers. Instead, she opted to take a paid job which affords her many of the delights she used to reap from sport (friendship, team work, fun). In another instance, a ROWBURY girl with a passion for Art was concerned about being regarded by others as lazy or a non-participant. She took up a community dance class (Zumba) to help quell her concerns about non-participation, her health status and the 'lazy' identity which she imagined others would ascribe to her.

Few young women cast aspersions on those who did not participate in sport. At KAHIKATEA and LEYTON, in particular, even 'sporty' young women who claimed many benefits from their own engagement were accepting of their peers' decision not to participate in sport. For most of these young women, it was 'who you are' that mattered. For some, sport was integral to their identity, while for others, it was not. As one young woman at KAHIKATEA put it:

I think it is a lot of diversity in this school as far as what you choose to do in your own time...there is some people who do different stuff like

there is dancing or singing or acting or there is tonnes of people can be good in different areas and they are all still I think liked. [Young Woman, Kahikatea]

In summary, identifying a young woman as a 'non-participant' tells us nothing about her understanding of sport, her desire to engage in sport (or not), the complexities of her life that impinge on her choices or abilities to take part in sport, or her past experiences and future plans. There are many and varied reasons why young women choose or are compelled not to participate in sport. The testimonies of young women in this study would suggest that the binary of non-participant/participant in relation to sport is not a particularly useful distinction. Indeed, while several of the young women in this study reported themselves as 'not sporty,' there was not a single young woman who did not engage in some form of physical activity. Their dispositions toward and engagement in sport morphed throughout their lives, contoured by a range of personal, institutional, familial, logistical and cultural factors.

SECTION 6: SUMMARY

The findings of this study are consistent in many respects with previous qualitative work undertaken to examine children and young people's relationship with sport. In line with many of the studies included in the literature review section of this report, the young women in this study overwhelmingly reported that their motivation for taking part in sport was to have fun and because it afforded them the opportunity to spend time with friends. Our findings also support Leahy and Harwood's conviction that non-universalist accounts of what sport might mean or 'do' for all children everywhere are important. That is, the young women's engagement in sport, as reported in our study, was contoured by gender, socio-economic status, family, religion and culture, and significantly by their school context.

Our study also makes a significant contribution to this body of knowledge. A summary of our key findings is included below.

6.1 Understanding Sport

Whilst young women described unique relationships with sport across their lives and a range of understandings of sport, **what they valued in sport was remarkably similar** – predominantly, to have fun with friends. In many instances across all four schools, girls' sporting choices were utterly contoured by friendship – wanting to be with friends, wanting to make new friends, or wanting to maintain existing friendships through participating together with them in sports.

Sport means different things to different young women. For some, it represents an opportunity to excel, to compete and to win, while for others, fun, opportunities to socialise and hang out with family and community are important. The young women in our study rarely mentioned body shape or weight management and even health and fitness were not mentioned as often as having fun, and spending time with friends. How young women understood 'sport' clearly contoured their desire (or not) to participate and the degree to which they regarded themselves as 'able' in sporting contexts.

Whilst there was a great deal of commonality across the dataset regarding understandings of sport, **a few conceptions of sport appeared unique to two schooling contexts.** At ROWBURY, students understood sport as an opportunity to

achieve balance in their lives - to have some 'down-time' from the rigours of their studies. They also understood sport to be an important way in which to contribute to school life, the reputation of the school and their standing within it. At KAHIKATEA, some young women understood sport to be an opportunity to spend time with family, engage with adults and feel part of their wider community.

Young women were acutely aware that the kind of sport valued most within their schools is competitive in nature. For some, this is fine. For others (both competitive and social sports aspirants) competitive sport is a 'turn-off,' something that yields anxiety and/or a desire not to participate at all.

There were varying perceptions on the degree to which social sport 'counted' as sport.

Social sport afforded young women an alternative way of thinking about their capacities and an opportunity to participate unencumbered by the rules and routines of competitive codes.

Young women's experiences of sport were contoured by: their own understandings of sport, their interests, desires, priorities and decisions, family, friends, logistics, anxiety, the exigencies of shifting foci as they progress through school, socio-economic circumstance, the structural organisation of sport in their schools, their perceptions of what 'counts' as 'sport' and their orientation towards the competitiveness that seems to characterise much school sport.

Participation in sport yields many benefits for young women. The capacity to excel, the thrill of 'recognition,' opportunities to socialise, to be with and make friends, health benefits, the feeling of 'winning,' the opportunity to give back to one's school and the chance to interact with peers, community and family were each cited as reasons to participate in sport.

Experiences of sport and, indeed for some, their motivations to play sport had changed across their life-course. The sporting paths that each girl described were unique to their own situations, understandings and desires, but there was also much in common. The shift from primary school sport to secondary school sport was significant; some thrived in the competitive environment on offer and others opted out. At the single-sex schools this was less marked as social sport opportunities were plentiful and they were encouraged and supported to continue with sport.

Decisions to opt out of sport at these schools were more in line with girls being unable to make the top team and not desiring to be part of anything less, or other commitments and interests taking precedence over sport – as time became scarce, sport became less desirable.

Ethnicity is not necessarily a contouring factor for young women's participation in sport. Young people from some ethnic groups were understood to dominate particular sporting codes. However, being 'Asian,' 'Pakeha,' 'Maori' and/or 'Pasifika' was not necessarily a defining factor in how, why or what sport young women would participate in. What is more significant is the way in which families understand and prioritise sport in their daughters' lives and whether or not young women are able to negotiate their continued participation in sport if they desire it given these circumstances. The values embraced in one's home and/or community rather than ethnicity per se were what informed young women's dispositions towards sport. We must be careful about making assumptions that link ethnicity with particular family values and practices in relation to sport. We must also refrain from assuming that young women are entirely influenced by their family's views regarding sport; young women in this study actively negotiated their participation in sport with their family.

Young women across the schools thought that **young Asian women might be more likely to be amongst those students who did not participate in sport**, but this was not to do with their ethnicity, but rather because of their own and their families' prioritization of focusing on their studies, either to ensure they performed well or simply because this was their passion, what they excelled at – they were 'smart.'

6.2 The Impact of Different School Contexts

The way that schools structure and value sport matters. Young women's experience of sport within school contexts varied markedly in relation to the way in which their schools valued and delivered sport. Schools have very different sporting ethoi, ways of organising and valuing sport, and orientations toward the role of sport in young women's educational experience. These present very different opportunities for young women's engagement in sport and, to some extent, contour their sense of themselves as 'able' in sporting contexts.

The way in which a school values sport, how the Principal and senior administrative staff understand the role of sport in school and thereby organise their school to reflect this, how sport is consequently resourced within the school, and how students are encouraged and supported to take part in sport, all have a role in shaping young women's involvement in and experiences of sport. We should be cautious of being over-deterministic about the influence of school contexts on young women's understandings and experiences of sport. As noted by staff and students, there will always be a cohort of students who will play or not play sport, regardless of how it is conceived, valued and delivered in schools.

Significant differences across the four schools were discerned with regard to the human and physical resourcing of sport. How each school resourced and organised sports clearly influenced both the likelihood that girls may participate and the nature of that participation. Yet, in so saying, it would be incorrect to assume that the value and resourcing each school accorded to sport over-determined young women's participation.

Both single-sex schools offered extensive social sporting opportunities, together with the traditional competitive codes, while the co-educational schools predominantly emphasised competitive sports.

The role and delivery of Physical Education also differed across the four schools and offered different opportunities for young women to engage in sport. Single-sex Physical Education classes were understood by many staff and students to support young women's participation, however, this was not universally the case. Young women did not report having difficulties in Physical Education classes with boys per se, but with the way in which boys behaved (or were allowed to behave) in their classes, the way in which they dominated activities and undermined girls' confidence to take part.

Diversity rather than commonality characterised the four-school cohort. That is, students at different kinds of schools most certainly have very different opportunities to engage in sport and physical education within their school gates. Young women at each of these schools had different opportunities to engage in sport. Some schools seemed better able to cater for a broader range of young women's motivations or desires to play sport than others.

6.3 What Constrains and Facilitates?

Every young woman faces constraints to participation in sport, yet the effect of these constraints differs. That is, some young women are able to overcome particular constraints in order to participate in sport, either by themselves or with the support of other people and institutions, whilst others are not well-positioned to do so. For some young women a particular constraint may merely pose a *difficulty* in participating, whilst for others that same constraint may constitute a *barrier* to participation, preventing them from taking part in sport at all. There is no simple 'fix' for alleviating constraints to young women's participation in sport because individual young women experience and respond to these in diverse ways in relation to their shifting priorities, time, personal history, anxiety, family, culture, conceptions of 'ability,' logistics and structural matters.

For some young women the notion of something constraining or facilitating their participation in sport was nonsensical. Their worldview was one in which sport was irrelevant in their lives; they had no desire to participate in sport, did not value sport, and, importantly, did not perceive this to be problematic. For these young women participation in sport was not contingent on removing barriers or providing 'carrots,' it just simply did not and would not feature in their lives.

Many young women noted that the **competitive nature of sport in secondary school was the reason why they did not participate.**

A facilitator for engagement in sport is the provision of non-competitive, social sporting options within school. An overwhelming proportion of the young women in this study spoke of their desire to engage in sport, yet not necessarily in competitive ways. Opportunities to side-step 'trials,' to play games with friends and to be valued for their participation in sports that didn't necessarily reap 'wins' for the school were desired. While cognisant that the lion's share of resources would go to competitive sports, young women wanted opportunities to be supported (via quality coaching, logistical support) to play in less competitive contexts.

Amongst girls engaged in highly competitive and non-competitive sports and those not engaged in school sport at all, **'fun' and 'friends' were pivotal to their engagement in sport.** Friends were noted to be both a constraint and a facilitator. Young women talked about taking up sport because of their friends' encouragement

and participation, but also about dropping out of sport because of friends' non-engagement. Some did not want to play sport because it impinged on the limited time they had to hang out with friends, whilst others took part in sport to have time to hang out with friends.

Finances constrain young women's participation in sport. The rising cost of taking part in school sport is limiting the number of sports in which young women are able to take part and, for some families, is preventing them from taking part in school sport at all. Whilst some schools are able to alleviate the burden of registration/uniform/material resource fees, others are not, and it is likely that many students who may wish to play sport, but know their families cannot afford to support them, do not make themselves known to the school as potential participants.

The presence and behaviour of boys constrains many young women's participation in sport. Marked differences in the physical education and sporting experiences of young women at co-educational and single-sex schools were noted. For students at co-educational schools, especially in junior high-school years, fears and anxieties about how boys might respond to their sporting abilities and their bodies were heightened. In so saying, for some, the opportunity to compete against boys, prove their capacity and challenge perceptions that 'girls can't play' were relished.

Ability was understood to constrain young women's participation in sport. Whether 'actual' or perceived or simply fear of not having ability, a young woman's sporting or physical prowess was understood to determine whether or not she would begin or continue to play sport at secondary school level. Some young women noted that ability determined whether or not sport could be enjoyed and/or should be pursued, while others found that when they were understood to lack ability, they were no longer able to take part in school teams.

Time was a key constraint. These young women lead busy lives, juggling their studies and other school commitments, paid work, family work (chores and caring for family members), religious and cultural commitments, socializing and other pursuits (music, drama, etc.). Sport was noted to be a time-consuming activity, particularly when involved in competitive level sport. Many young women dropped out of sport because they chose to prioritise other activities or, in some cases, were unable to find the time due to other increasing commitments.

Young women understood families as having the potential to hinder or help young women to participate in sport. Young women's testimonies demonstrated that we must be careful about making assumptions as to the reasons for family values and practices in regards to sport and, indeed, to the influence of these on young women's engagement in sport. Family proclivities were clearly linked to girls' participation in some of the young women's responses, but certainly not in all. At times though, the presumptions of staff that if parents are not supportive of their girls' sport then girls will be less likely to participate was not necessarily borne out in the responses of the young women we interviewed. Assuredly, sport was discouraged by some families, particularly those whose priority was academic achievement for their daughters, but, in other cases, young women were required to be involved in religious and cultural activities, to help take care of younger siblings, and to complete household chores or to take up paid jobs. In these situations, sport was neither an option, nor a priority. In still other cases, young women continued to play sport despite the preference of their families for a focus on school-work. In such instances, young women weighed up the feelings of success and fulfillment which they gained from sport with the risk of disrespecting their parents' wishes.

Families across the four schools were noted to have markedly different resources to marshal to support their girls' engagement in sport. While some were heavily committed to attending girls' games, managing teams and so forth, for others, the exigencies of family commitments and paid work rendered this an impossibility.

6.4 'Non-participation'

Young women's engagement in sport is a complex phenomenon. There were no simple explanations yielded for why (or why not) young women participated in sport in this study. Rather, the young women negotiated their engagement in sport alongside multiple other commitments, desires and realities throughout their schooling years. These included the prioritising of academic work in senior years, necessities and/or desires to engage in paid work, the need to care for family members,, the desire to socialise and a preference for engagement in other activities (e.g., music, drama, kapahaka, barbershop).

The category of non-participant in sport is relatively meaningless. Many young

women found it difficult to define themselves in relation to the binary pairing of 'participant' or 'non-participant.' A range of factors were part of their conceptions of their identity as it related to sport - how they were perceived by others, what they felt about sport currently and in the past, whether or not they had or currently played and what their desires were, perhaps in spite of the reality of their current situation. Young women are engaged in a diverse range of physical activities in and outside of school, some of which 'count' as sport, and others that don't. Very few young women in this study were not currently engaged in some kind of physical activity.

Young women who were regarded as 'non-participants' by their Physical Education teachers were often engaged in sport and/or physical activity in community settings. While their participation may not register in school records, student testimony would suggest that schools' monitoring of participation rates does not necessarily afford an accurate picture of the diverse ways in which young women engage in sport.

Many young women regarded themselves as not 'sporty' school students, which inevitably meant one of two things. Firstly, they either perceived or had been told by others that they did not have sporting ability or secondly, they did not like what they understood school sport to be - primarily competitive team sports.

Being a 'dancer' often rendered young women 'non-participants' in the eyes of their school, teachers and peers. For some this was frustrating and they fought to be acknowledged as having physical or sporting prowess and success, while for others this matched their own view of dance - as something other than sport.

The value of sport and the way in which it was organised across the schools meant that it was **easier and more comfortable to be a non-participant in some schools than others.**

Physical Education classes at secondary school played a significant role in shaping many young women's feelings about sport in school, which in some cases lead to their non-participation. PE classes were identified as sites where judgments were made as to whether someone was sporty or not and whether one was a participant or non-participant. Some of the girls in our study identified Physical Education classes as a context that inhibited their participation because of the presence and/or behaviour of boys, the types of activities that students were asked to

perform, the necessity to perform in front of one's peers and so on. However, this did not necessarily mean that they were not engaged in other forms of sport in other contexts.

Girls who did not engage in sport viewed school sport as competitive and elitist.

There is a cohort of girls who are simply not interested in sport at all, no matter how it is conceived. These young women simply did not have a relationship with sport, nor did they desire one. Neither did they understand themselves as non-participants because sport was simply not part of their lives, not one of the things which they drew on to create their identities or understand their place in the world. These young women did not perceive themselves as 'lazy,' nor did they seem 'too cool' or disengaged from school or other activities. On the contrary, they were simply engaged with other activities, prioritized other aspects of their lives and, for the most part, their friends, school and families were accepting of this. In these instances, it is important to ask whether/if there is a need to change this perception? The young women's testimonies would suggest not.

Young women were, for the most part, supportive of their peers' decisions not to take part in sport. Most young women did not perceive non-participation in sport as problematic. Not taking part in sport was simply viewed as a decision or choice someone had made in the same fashion as someone may choose not to take part in music. Young women were very accepting that everyone has their own unique set of talents, interests and circumstances that influence what activities they take up; participation or non-participation in sport was no different.

Embedded amongst the student responses at ROWBURY and in smatterings across the other schools was **some evidence of judgmental dispositions** towards those young women who did not engage with sport at school.

Identifying a young woman as a 'non-participant' tells us nothing about her understanding of sport, her desire to engage in sport (or not), the complexities of her life that impinge on her choices or abilities to take part in sport, or her past experiences and future plans. There are many and varied reasons why young women choose to or are compelled not to participate in sport. The testimonies of young women in this study would suggest that the binary of non-

participant/participant in relation to sport is not a particularly useful distinction.

References

- Allender, A., Cowburn, G., & Foster, C. (2006). Understanding participation in sport and physical activity among children and adults: A review of qualitative studies. *Health Education Research, 21*(6), 826-835.
- Bauman, A., Bellew, B., & Booth, M. (1996). *NSW Health Promotion Survey 1994: Towards best practice for the promotion of physical activity in the areas of NSW*. New South Wales Health: National Centre for Health Promotion.
- Beausoleil, N. (2008, December). *Meanings of health, physical activity and schooling in Newfoundland and New Brunswick youths' narratives*. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.
- Brimble, J. (2009, Spring). News. *Activate, 2*.
- Burrows, L. (2010). Push play every day: New Zealand children's constructions of health and physical activity. In M. O'Sullivan & A. McPhail (Eds.), *Young people's voice in physical education and youth sport*. London: Routledge.
- Burrows, L., Wright, J., & McCormack, J. (2009). Dosing up on food and physical activity: New Zealand children's ideas about health. *Health Education Journal, 68*(3), 157-169.
- Burrows, L., Wright, J., & Jungersen-Smith, J. (2002). Measure your belly. New Zealand children's constructions of health and fitness. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 22*(1), 20-38.
- Burrows, L., & Wright, J. (2004a). The good life: New Zealand children's perspectives of health and self. *Sport, Education and Society, 9*(2), 193-205.
- Burrows, L., & Wright, J. (2004b) Being healthy: Young New Zealanders' ideas about health. *Children's Issues, 8*(1), 7-12.
- Carr, H. (2001). *Physical activity and health: The benefits of physical activity on minimising risk of disease and reducing disease morbidity and mortality*. A report prepared for the Hillary Commission, Wellington, New Zealand.
- Clark, H. (2006, 21st September). *Mission-On: Healthy lifestyles for young Kiwis*. Prime Minister's speech at launch of Mission-On. Retrieved July 24, 2007, from <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=27181>.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2005). *The sage handbook of qualitative research*. US: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Donovan, ?. (2009, Spring). Feature story: High school drop outs? *Activate, 11*.
- Garrett, R. (2004). Gendered bodies and physical identities. In J. Evans, B. Daviews & J. Wright (Eds.), *Body, knowledge and control: Studies in the sociology of physical education and health* (pp. 140-156). New York: Routledge.
- Keays, S.H., & Alison, K.R. (1995). The effects of regular moderate to vigorous physical activity on student outcomes: A Review. *Canadian Journal of Public Health, 86*(1), 62-65.

- Key, J. (2008, June). *Sport for young Kiwis: A national priority*. Speech to Waitakere Electorate Lunch, Henderson. Retrieved July 3, 2009, from <http://www.national.org.nz/Article.aspx?ArticleID=28149>.
- Harris, J. (1994). Young people's perceptions of health, fitness and exercise: Implications for the teaching of health related exercise. *Physical Education Review*, 17, 143-151.
- Hayes, D., Mills, M., Christie, P., & Lingard, B. (2006). *Teachers & schooling: Productive pedagogies, assessment and performance. Making a difference*. NSW: Allen and Unwin.
- Hills, L. (2007). Friendship, physicality, and physical education: An exploration of the social and embodied dynamics of girls' physical education experiences. *Sport, Education and Society*, 12(30), 317- 336.
- Holloway, S., & Valentine, G. (Eds.). (2000). *Children's geographies: Living, playing, learning*. London: Routledge.
- James, A., & Prout, A. (Eds.). (1990). *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood*. London: The Falmer Press.
- Johnson, M. (2000). Perceptions of barriers to healthy physical activity among Asian communities. *Sport, Education and Society*, 5(1), 51-70.
- Kay, T. (2006). Daughters of Islam: Family influences on Muslim young women's participation in sport. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 41(3-4), 357-373.
- Leahy, D., & Harwood, V. (2006, July). *Physical activity inequalities: Fluidity and the dilemma of 'activity' in the lives of young people living in rural areas*. Paper presented at AIESEP World Congress, Jyväskylä, Finland.
- Lingard, B., Hayes, D., & Mills, M. (2003). Teachers and productive pedagogies: Contextualising, conceptualising, utilising. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 11(3), 399-424.
- Macdonald, D., Rodger, S., Abbot, R., Ziviani, J., & Jones, J. (2005). 'I could do with a pair of wings': Perspectives on physical activity, bodies and health from young Australian children. *Sport, Education and Society*, 10(2), 195-209.
- MacDougall, C., Schiller, W., & Darbyshire, P. (2004). We have to live in the future. *Early Child Development and Care*, 174, 369-387.
- Mayall, B. (Ed.). (1994). *Children's childhoods: Observed and experienced*. London: The Falmer Press.
- Mayall, B. (1996). *Children, health and the social order*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Mayall B. (1998). Towards a sociology of child health. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 20, 269-288.
- Messner, M., & Sabo, D. (1990). *Sport, men and the gender order: Critical feminist perspectives*. Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics Books.
- Ministry of Health. (2004). *Healthy eating - healthy action oranga kai – oranga pumau: Implementation plan: 2004-2010*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

- Ministry of Health. (2001). *New Zealand health strategy. DHP toolkit physical activity: To increase physical activity*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.
- Morris, L., Sallybanks, J., Willis, L., & Makkai, T. (2003). *Sport, physical activity and antisocial behaviour in youth. Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice*. Retrieved October 5, 2009, from <http://www.aic.gov.au>.
- Rail, G. (2004, July). *De/re/constructions of fitness and health among Canada's youth: Closing the imperial eye and increasing our understanding of marginalized subjectivities*, Paper presented at ACHPER National/International Conference, Wollongong, Australia.
- Ross, C., & Gilbert, G. (1985). The national children and youth fitness study: A summary of findings. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 56(1), 45-50.
- Seely, M. (2002). *Un/healthy, un/fit, dis/abled: Constructions of health and fitness among adolescents with mobility impairments*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada.
- Shea, J. (2006). *'An apple a day keeps the doctor away': Immigrant youth in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador and their constructions of health and fitness*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada.
- Scheurich, J. J. (1997). *Research method in the postmodern*. London: Falmer Press.
- Smith, A., & Parr, M. (2007). Young people's views on the nature and purposes of physical education: A sociological analysis. *Sport, Education and Society*, 12(1), 37-58.
- Smith, A.B., Nairn, K., & Gaffney, M. (2004). Secondary students' involvement in recreational activities at school. *Children's Issues*, 8(1), 29-34.
- Smith, A. (1999). Children's rights: An overview. In A. B. Smith et al. (Eds.), *Advocating for children: International perspectives on children's rights*. Dunedin: University of Otago Press.
- Sport and Recreation New Zealand. (2009). *SPARC's strategic plan 2009-2015*, Retrieved October 1, 2009, from <http://www.sparc.org.nz/about-sparc/about-us/reports/sparc-strategic-plan>.
- Sport and Recreation New Zealand. (2008). *Active New Zealand Survey 2007-08*. Retrieved April 30, 2011, from <http://www.activenzsurvey.org.nz/>.
- Sport and Recreation New Zealand. (2007). *Physical activity guidelines for children and young people*. Wellington: Sport and Recreation New Zealand.
- Sport and Recreation New Zealand. (2006). *Mission on*. Retrieved April 12, 2007, from www.sparc.org.nz/news/mission-on.
- Sport and Recreation New Zealand. (2005). *'Stay and Play!': SPARC Kids Qualitative Research Report*. Wellington: Sport and Recreation New Zealand (commissioned by SPARC) and retrieved April 30, 2011 from www.sparc.org.nz.
- Stake, R. (2000). Case studies. In N. Denzin & E. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp.435-454). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Stothart, R. (2000). Uncomfortable bedfellows: Sport and physical education, a problematic relationship. *Journal of Physical Education New Zealand*, 33(1), 40-48.
- Strandbu, A. (2005). Identity, embodied culture and physical exercise. *Young: Nordic Journal of Youth Research*, 13(1), 27-45.
- TNS. (2005). *The value of participating in sport: Research with 11 to 14 year olds in New Zealand*. Wellington: Sport and Recreation New Zealand (commissioned by SPARC) and retrieved April 30,2011, from www.sparc.org.nz.
- Whitehead, S.H., & Biddle, S.J.H. (2008). Adolescent girls' perceptions of physical activity: A focus group study. *European Physical Education Review*, 14(2), 243-262.
- Williams, A., & Bedward, J. (2002). Understanding girls' experience of physical education: Relational analysis and situated learning. In D. Penney (Ed.), *Gender and physical education: Contemporary issues and future directions* (pp. 146-160). London and New York: Routledge.
- Williams, A., & Woodhouse, J. (1996). Delivering the discourse: Urban adolescents' perceptions of physical education. *Sport, Education and Society*, 1(2), 201-213.
- Wright, J., O'Flynn, G., & Macdonald, D. (2006). Being fit and looking healthy: Young women's and men's constructions of health and fitness. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 54(9-10), 707-716.