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## DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

### Everyday geographies of girls' experiences of physical activity gender, health and bodies

Windram-Geddes, Morgan

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*gender, health and bodies*

Morgan Windram-Geddes

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**EVERYDAY GEOGRAPHIES OF GIRLS'  
EXPERIENCES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:  
GENDER, HEALTH AND BODIES**

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf's extended essay first published in October 1929. "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (Woolf 1989: 4).

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## DECLARATION

I, Morgan Windram-Geddes, declare that I am the sole author of this thesis; that unless otherwise stated all references cited have been consulted by me and that the work of which the thesis is a record has been done by me and that it has not been previously accepted for a higher degree.

Signature:

Date:

I confirm that the conditions of the relevant Ordinance and Regulations have been fulfilled in relation to this thesis

Signature:

Dr. Fiona Smith

## ABSTRACT

As part of the UK government focus on health and concern over girls' drop out from and lack of participation in physical activity (PA) and physical education (PE) policy makers are funding girl-specific school-based programmes of physical activity. Despite the addition of girl-specific and girl-only programmes and initiatives within school-based physical activity and extensive contributions from both the field and the academy, revealing some important reasons for why girls disengage and stop participating, gendered trends of drop out continue. Children's geographies argue that young peoples' voices must be heard and their stories must be told as young peoples' experiences matter to their own and to our collective life. Geographers studying embodiment demonstrate how bodily materiality, conceptualisation and regulation are crucial to understanding spatial relations at every scale (Longhurst, 2005a). Until recently, children's geographies have ignored the body and geographers studying the body have ignored young people as research subjects. Contributing to this gap, my study identifies some overlooked connections between children's geographies, geographies of the body, sociology and feminist studies which are vital for answering the question of what else matters to girls' experiences of physical activity. Adopting a qualitative feminist ethnographic approach, the research explores the geographies of gender and health through girls (aged 10-14) everyday embodied experiences of physical activity (physical education, Fit for Girls and a Primary School Keep Active Club) in Scotland. Research findings show that the everyday embodied geographies of PA and PE, when reflected on in respect to five themes: scale, space(s), gender, health and aging—and the links between them—matter to girls' experiences. Through spaces such as physical education which are underpinned by gendered understandings of embodiment and informed by contemporary health and obesity discourses, girls' experiences are relational. The thesis concludes by suggesting

that political and pedagogical understandings of health and gender are reframed—by paying attention to how girls’ feel their own—socially inscribed and fleshy—bodies and negotiate understandings of health when doing physical activity. Such reframing would provide the spaces necessary for girls to experience healthier and more uninhibited relationships with their bodies, allowing them to participate and engage in a more positive manner with spaces of physical activity.

## Chapter 1

### ***INTRODUCTION***

“Children’s bodies are found to be both the main focus of policy practices and a central avenue of children’s own agency” (Kallio, 2008: 258).

“What else matters? What have we missed out? What else might we have said?” (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 89).

This thesis investigates the everyday embodied geographies of gender and health, through an exploration of girls’ experiences of school-based physical activity. Within this primary intention, I aim to uncover what matters to girls’ everyday embodied experiences of physical activity, establish the ways in which school sport deliverers understand gender and health and utilise such understandings in everyday pedagogies and reveal and analyse recent changes which have been made to address girls’ non-participation in sport in schools. Through a feminist ethnographic approach, which works within a conceptual framework for understanding relationships between embodiment, gender and health, I pay particular attention to ‘what else’ matters “and how we *know* what ‘really’ matters” to girls’ experiences in “thinking and doing Children’s Geographies” (Horton and Kraftl, 2006a: 270). While research into girls’ experiences of PE and sport, giving attention to gendered embodiment, are increasingly available in feminist and poststructural literature (Gorley et al., 2003; Hills, 2006; Hills, 2007), investigations into embodied *geographies* of gender through a consideration of PE and sport experiences, are missing almost entirely (see for exception Evans (2006a)). Additionally, further inquiry into girls’ and young

women's embodied geographies, of health, reaching beyond gender as the sole lens for analysis is limited (Kuhlmann and Babitsch, 2002).

The subdisciplines of feminist geography and children's geographies expand our understanding of social and material constructions and experiences of women, children and young people and childhood (Kraftl, 2006) and gendered experiences of embodiment (Evans, 2006a; Longhurst, 2001); Children's geographies are well placed to investigate embodied geographies of gender and health as the sub-discipline increasingly engages with questions of bodily conceptualisation/representation, discipline and performance (Horschelmann & Colls 2010) set within a wider geographical shift towards theorising and researching questions of bodily discipline and resistance (Rose, 1993), otherness (Johnston, 1996), and matter and mattering (Longhurst, 2005a; Colls, 2007; Evans, 2009). Drawing from these literatures as well as from work in sociology, allows me to push further in answering the question of 'what else?' matters *to girls* as they experience physical activity and physical education. Horton and Kraftl (2006a) argue that attention to such things as everydayness, material things, practices, bodies and affect, ongoingness and education and spacings—things which the wider social sciences engage with but which have been until recently, largely ignored by children's geographers—can allow for a better understanding of what really matters to the geographies which make up and are lived by children's lives. With the exception of affect, this thesis pays attention to such "things", within a consideration of the everyday geographies of gender and health through embodiment, revealing much more of what matters to girls' experiences. Such revelations are crucial at a time when much of the PE and wider sport experience is shown to be unenjoyable for girls and where enjoyment is a crucial factor in determining whether or not children (Hemming, 2007) and women (Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2007)—when given the choice—elect to participate in physical activity. Findings from my study may allow for those concerned about girls' lack of



participation to learn much more about why girls stop enjoying and participating in physical activity and physical education.

The question of matter and mattering is maintained throughout the thesis with attention to what (experientially or tangibly) matters to whom and why? Paying attention to what matters to different groups (female pupils, PE teachers, policy makers and myself) and the relations between such matterings I am able to bridge gaps and tensions between political and practitioner agendas, academic research and theory and girls' experiences of fleshy bodies and embodiment. I maintain overall, that the voices, stories and experiences of girls are paramount and necessary for bridging political-researcher-practitioner divides; accordingly girls' experiences must be examined in a way in which creates open and honest dialogue.

I begin answering the question of matter and mattering through this introductory chapter by outlining the rationale for my study (Section 1.2). First through a critical presentation of relevant statistics from the Health Survey for England 2008 (The National Health Service, 2008) and 2003 Scottish Health Survey (The Scottish Government, 2003a) which inform recent health policy measures, I outline the context in which my study is situated (1.2.1). Second, I present the relevant health policies, initiatives and organisations involved in improving children's health through physical activity provision (1.2.2). By questioning the ways in which children's—and now, specifically girls'—bodies matter to and are framed by United Kingdom (UK) and Scottish government health policy, and national agencies and organisations for sport and physical activity, I outline the primary rationale for my study (1.2.3). I also answer Horschelmann & Colls' (2010) call to reach beyond simple engagement with bodies as research objects through a consideration of my own embodied experience as a personal rationale for and intimate place from which the research began (1.2.4). Section 1.3 presents the thesis aim and supporting research questions. The chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis structure (1.4).

## 1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH

“Child obesity is a complex public health issue that is a growing threat to children’s health, as well as a current and future drain on National Health Service (NHS) resources”(The Audit Commission et al., 2006: 9).

“Schools are being urged to introduce more female-friendly fitness activities such as Zumba classes and rollerblading because so many girls are opting out of exercise” (Hughes, 2012: 1).

Within a concentrated and increasing concern expressed by politicians, over childhood obesity in the UK, Scotland and other western nations (Evans, 2006b; Kirk, 2006; Evans & Colls, 2009a; Evans & Colls, 2009b) children’s and most recently, girls’ bodies are becoming a focus for policy action. While the bodily matter—weight, of all children’s bodies, serves as a focus for recent UK obesity and health policy initiatives, girls and young women are at the present, a concentrated focus of policy concern. To attract more girls to do more sport, contemporary forms of fitness and exercise such as Zumba and boxercise have recently been offered in schools, PE departments have installed hair dryers and offered beauty vouchers as incentives for participation in extra-curricular sport and aesthetics options such as dance and gymnastics are being added to Standard Grade physical education (Lindohf et al., 2009). By drawing on English and Scottish Health Surveys and UK and Scottish health policy discourse on physical activity and obesity in children and girls, through this section, I present the ways in which the matter (Body Mass Index (BMI)) of girl’s bodies—and what girls do with their bodies in the context of ‘health’ related behaviour of physical activity, matter to contemporary policy. While my research was qualitative in nature and did not gather or analyse quantitative data, it is imperative that Health Survey data

results are presented and discussed as they present the basis from which government health policy is mobilised and from which school-based programmes of health and physical activity have justified rationale, support and funding.

### *1.2.1 UNITED KINGDOM HEALTH SURVEY FIGURES ON CHILDREN'S PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND OBESITY*

Recent Scottish (The Scottish Government, 2003a) and English (The National Health Service, 2008) Health Surveys in the UK reveal that there are clear differences between girls' and boys' participation in physical activity, with marked declines in participation in overall physical activity in girls reported as girls reach the ages of 12-13—the age(s) just after which girls transition from primary to secondary school (Scottish Executive, 2003, National Centre for Social Research, 2008). Findings from the Health Survey for England (HSE) (The National Health Service, 2008), based on self-reported levels of physical activity—which are limited due to the exclusion of measurements of physical activity participated in as part of the school curriculum (i.e. in PE class)—show that 35% of girls met UK government recommendations<sup>2</sup> for physical activity for children (aged 5-18). The percentage of girls participating in physical activity show a decreasing trend however, corresponding to age, with only 12% of girls aged 14 meeting government recommendations. Among boys (aged 2-15) the trend is less consistent with 43% of boys' aged 2 reporting recommended levels and 32% of boys aged 15 reporting recommended levels.

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<sup>2</sup> UK government recommendations on physical activity on which these survey measurements are based were revised in July 2011. The new physical activity guidelines were established by four UK Chief Medical Officers for early years (under fives), five to eighteen year olds and adults (19-64) and older people (65+) in July 2011. These guidelines state that children and young people (5-18 year olds) should engage in “moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity for at least 60 minutes and up to several hours every day” (Department of Health, 2011).

The Scottish Health Survey (SHS) (The Scottish Government, 2003a) also did not measure time participating in PE because “it was assumed that the amount of activity carried out by children as part of the school curriculum would be similar for all children [boys *and* girls] of the same age and so would contribute a ‘standard’ additional amount of activity for each child” (The Scottish Government, 2003: 86). The 2003 SHS displays similar results to the 2008 English survey, wherein 77% of boys and 70% of girls aged 2-4 participated in physical activity for the recommended 60 minutes per day. As age of children increased however, the survey shows that boys’ activity levels at the age of 13-15 remained high, at 68% meeting government recommendations whereas girls’ physical activity levels between ages 13-15 fell to 41% achieving recommendations; this figure never recovered. It is the aim of the Scottish Executive, as a long term target, to achieve 80% of children meeting government recommended levels of physical activity (The Scottish Government, 2003a).

At the time of researching, UK government recommendations were set by the 1997 Health Education Authority (now known as the Health Development Agency) stating that “all young people (aged 5-18) should participate in physical activity of at least moderate intensity for one hour per day. Young people who currently do little activity should participate in physical activity of at least moderate intensity for at least half an hour per day” (The Scottish Government, 2003: 85). Further recommendation that all children should participate in “physical activity of at least moderate-intensity, to enhance and maintain muscular strength and flexibility, and bone health” is not addressed through the Health Survey (The Scottish Government, 2003a: 85).

The 2003 SHS notes that for children, there is less evidence of direct benefits of physical activity, while the Department of Health (2011) now argues that current recommendations—of 60 minutes and up to several hours of physical activity per day for young people (aged 5-18)—are based on a variety of research and findings which associate this amount of time spent doing

physical activity with longevity, reduced risk of heart disease, osteoporosis, diabetes, various forms of cancer, and obesity. The SHS (2003) offers several explanations for the earlier limited evidence of physical activity benefits for children:

“The lack of strong links between children’s health and physical activity may be due to the lack of clear health and disease end points in children; the difficulties in doing research with children (e.g. ethical clearance, confounding role of sexual maturation); the lack of time for inactivity to have a deleterious effect on health; and the lack of variability in the health outcomes assessed” (The Scottish Government, 2003a: 85).

Despite limited evidence, the SHS argues that physical activity may benefit children as a result of acquiring direct health benefits from being an active child, improvement of future adult health as a result of health benefits acquired as a child and an increased likelihood of continued participation in physical activity into adulthood, therefore indirectly improving adult health (The Scottish Government, 2003a).

In addition to measuring physical activity, the SHS (2003a) presents physical activity figures alongside measurements of overweight and obesity. Providing definitions of terminology, the Scottish Health Survey uses the terms overweight and obesity to refer to an “excessive accumulation of body fat” where ‘overweight’ and ‘obesity’ “denote different degrees of excess fatness, and overweight may be thought of as a stage where an individual is at risk of developing obesity” (The Scottish Government, 2003a: 111).

With attention to gender disparities, the Scottish Health Survey (The Scottish Government, 2003a) shows that among girls, 63% of those classed as ‘normal weight’ met government recommendations for physical activity as did 59% of those classed as overweight and 65% of girls

classed as 'obese'. The figures for boys were 75% ('normal' weight meeting government recommendations, 76% (of overweight boys meeting recommendations) and 72% (of obese boys meeting recommendations). Therefore "no relationship was found between physical activity levels and children's body mass" (The Scottish Government, 2003: 94). The Scottish Health Survey (2003) notes that the lack of correlation between overweight or obesity and physical activity levels echoes some earlier studies (including Cole et al., 1998; Rolland-Cachera, 1999) but contradicts others (including Cole et al., 2000; Chinn & Rona, 2002) which found lower physical activity levels among those children classed as overweight or obese. Commenting on the differences between the findings, the survey acknowledges that the latter studies which found correlations between Body Mass Index (BMI) and physical activity levels used objective measurements (not self-reported questionnaires or interviews), whereas the survey itself and the former studies utilised self-reported evidence and so therefore "should be interpreted cautiously" (The Scottish Government, 2003: 94). The HSE (2008) additionally acknowledges that while the "exact degree to which inactivity has contributed to rising levels of childhood obesity is not known, physical activity has become a vital policy area in attempt to reverse the current trends by 2020" (The National Health Service, 2008: 119).

Despite acknowledgement by the respective Health Surveys of the limitations (absence of data on PE time, lack of evidence for associations between children's physical activity and health and lack of correlation between physical activity and obesity), the 2003 Scottish Health Survey directly informs Scottish government policy. Survey results are used to secure government support and funding for programmes of physical activity such as those enacted through the Youth Trust, **sportscotland**, and Active Schools (AS) for all children. Uncritical reliance on and use of base figures from the 2003 SHS and 2008 HSE argues for truth in the correlations between inactivity, obesity and ill health in children (Kirk, 2006). Survey data and uncritical truths between physical

activity and obesity are also increasingly being evoked through Scottish specific initiatives, such as Fit for Girls (FfG), and national organisations, such as the Women Sport and Fitness Foundation (WSFF)—with specific interest in improving girls’ participation in sport and physical activity. The 2003 Scottish Health Survey figures inform the Scottish Executive’s strategy for children’s physical activity as published by the Physical Activity Task Force through publication of “Let’s Make Scotland More Active: A Strategy for Physical Activity (2003). “The...document names the Scottish Health Survey as the key tool to measure progress and review these targets every five years” (The Scottish Government, 2003a: 85). The 2003 SHS figures prompted mobilisation of the Scottish government to “act collectively to prevent overweight and obesity, both to contribute to achieving our purpose of sustainable economic growth, and also towards achieving a healthier Scotland” (The Scottish Government, 2010: v-vi).

Such discourse views children within the context of concern for national health, arguing that clear links exist between the (politically desired) matter/weight of children’s—and specifically girls’—bodies and the health of the nation. Section 1.2.2 discusses relevant school-based policies and programmes informed by the above Health Survey data; I consider how the policies and programmes understand and confirm assumptions about child health, obesity and physical activity. I discuss additional initiatives and changes aimed only at girls and the ways in which girls’ participation in physical activity is framed in reference to obesity and gendered assumptions about girls and sport in Section 1.2.3.

### *1.2.2 UNITED KINGDOM AND SCOTTISH HEALTH POLICY INITIATIVES ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND CHILDREN*

The UK government and the Scottish government response to Health Survey findings directs more attention towards schools—spaces where children spend the majority of their time,

and to the physically 'active' spaces of physical education (PE). Physical education, which is "valued and resourced because of the work it does in shaping" physical abilities and physical fitness (Wright & Burrows, 2006: 278) and physical educators are now increasingly located in a place of inescapable accountability for both creating and monitoring the health of young people. As the obesity epidemic is increasingly taken as truth (Evans, 2009), Kirk (2006: 127) argues that physical educators will find themselves increasingly implicated in and responsible for the "alleged decline in children's fitness and their increasing fatness". While there is concern that such discourses could have a potentially damaging impact on children's health and wellbeing (Kirk, 2006) by creating anxiety or perpetuating fat-stigma and prejudice (Solovay & Rothblum, 2009) there is little knowledge of how such discourses are mobilized within the school and impact on children's experiences and feelings in relation to their own embodiment and other's bodies as children engage with physical activity (see Evans et al. (2007) for exceptions).

To implement school-based initiatives, the Scottish Government is working jointly with **sportscotland**—Scotland's national agency for sport and the Youth Sport Trust—a Loughborough based charity dedicated to the future of children through sport and physical activity (Youth Sport Trust, 2009). Scottish initiatives share a common aim of increasing the intensity of Scottish children's physical activity levels and participation in physical activity. Additionally, the programmes are tied to the Scottish Government's national strategy for sport; the specific vision is for Scotland as a country "where sport is available to all; where sporting talent is recognised and nurtured; and a country achieving and sustaining world-class performance in sport" (**sportscotland**, 2009).

The formal Active Schools (AS) Network, one of the first schemes to be introduced in Scottish Schools in 2004, followed the success of several pilot programmes in both primary and secondary schools. Positions developed by **sportscotland**, for Active Schools Coordinators in



primary and secondary schools focus on three aspects of increasing children's activity levels: activity during PE, active travel to school, and activity outside of school hours. The Active Schools Network is involved in the provision of taster sessions of non-traditional activities, after school clubs, developing further links with community sports members, and promoting walking and cycling as means of transportation.

Wider curricular changes, within physical education, focused on teaching and improving health but not directed specifically at girls are also appearing in Scottish curriculum within the new Curriculum for Excellence (The Scottish Government, 2011a) framework. Curriculum for Excellence, which has evolved since 2011, makes the thesis a timely project for considering aspects of the new curriculum. Under this framework, the former subject-specific curriculum is restructured into eight curriculum areas: Expressive arts, Health and Wellbeing, Languages, Mathematics, Religious and moral education, Sciences, Social studies and Technologies. Physical education now resides in the Health and Wellbeing Area. Such placement emphasises that pupils learn and understand the links between physical activity and health. The CfE "Experiences and Outcomes" document explains the content which pupils should be learning about through the links between physical activity and health:

"Learners develop an understanding of their physical health and the contribution made by participation in physical education, physical activity and sport to keeping them healthy and preparing them for life beyond school. *They investigate the relationship between diet and physical activity and their role in the prevention of obesity. The experiences and outcomes are intended to establish a pattern of daily physical activity which, research has shown, is most likely to lead to sustained physical activity in adult life.* Physical activity and sport take place in addition to planned physical education sessions, at break times and

lunchtimes in and beyond the place of learning” (The Scottish Government, 2011b: 9, emphasis added).

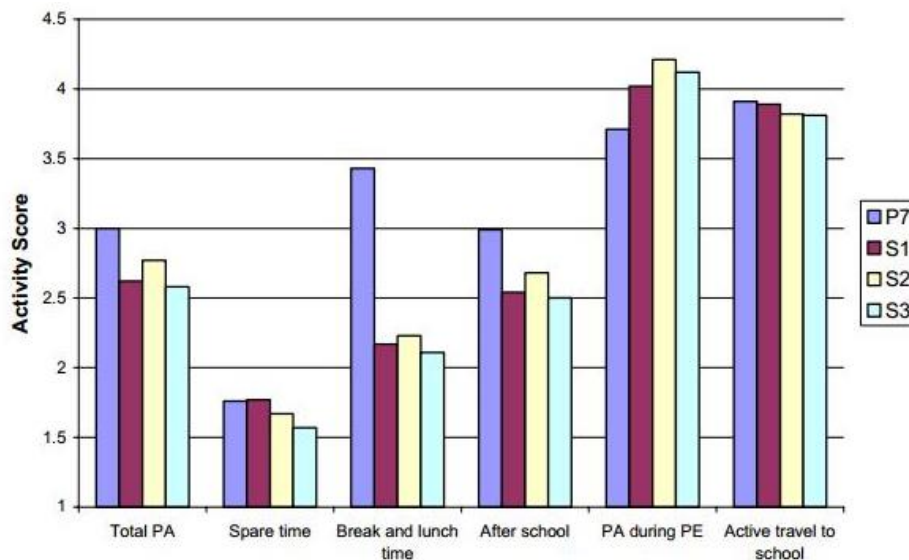
It is clear that CfE establishes links and relationships between physical activity, health, food/diet and body weight through the Health and Wellbeing Outcomes. Through the Health and Wellbeing curriculum, pupils are taught that knowledge of diet and physical activity in relation to and for the prevention of obesity is vital as pupils prepare for their futures. Through such aforementioned programmes and public health discourses, educators are being encouraged, and in some cases their jobs depend on, the reproduction of health messages and the ‘creation’ of health in the young people they teach. Evans et al. (2007: 61) point out that it was recently suggested that “a school’s success should be defined and measured by Ofsted in terms of not just its academic performance but how well it has reduced the ‘collective waistline’ of its student population as measured on BMI scales”. While school-based and curricular changes are now in place to create additional and varied programmes of physical activity for all children and convey knowledge about health, changes which focus on improving girls’ participation are discussed in Section 1.2.3 below.

### *1.2.3 UNITED KINGDOM AND SCOTTISH HEALTH POLICY INITIATIVES ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND GIRLS: A GENDERED DISCOURSE*

Increasingly, organisations and initiatives concerned with girls’ participation in physical activity draw on Health Survey data to justify and support a call for the government to address girls’ participation in particular. Adding to the gap created by the Scottish Health Survey (The Scottish Government, 2003a) data by excluding measurements of PE time, Niven et al. (2009)

conducted a longitudinal study of 200 Scottish school girls from Primary 7 to Secondary 3 (P7-S3)<sup>3</sup>. The study, which collected data on physical activity through self-reported measurements, show a decline between Primary 7 and Secondary 1 and 2 (P7-S1/S2), in girls' physical activity during spare time, break and lunch time and after school. The results are displayed in **Figure 1.1**. Interestingly, self-reported physical activity during PE time increased between P7-S1/S2 and declined slightly from S2-S3.

**Figure 1.1: P7-S3 Scottish Girls' Average Physical Activity Scores (Niven et al., 2009).**



Adding to a gap in the UK wide Health Survey data on children's participation in physical activity during curricular time, including PE, The Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation (WSFF) (2012: 3) surveyed just over 1,500 girls and boys throughout the UK on their attitudes to and participation in school-based and wider sport and physical activity, but relied heavily on 2008 Health Survey for England statistics in the WSFF report. Upon reflection of "a nation of inactive

<sup>3</sup> In Scotland, children begin school in Primary 1 (P1) between the ages 4 ½ and 5 ½ depending on their birthday. Children continue in primary school for 7 years, ending their final year of primary school in Primary 7 (P7). Children are then required to attend secondary school for four years (S1-S4) until the age of 16. Secondary school years S5 and S6 are optional continuing years.

girls” the WSFF states that “the facts” about girls’ participation “are clear and depressing”. In respect to girls, The Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation (2012: 3) notes that although the UK as a whole nation has a distinct problem with levels of activity, fitness and obesity, “the problem is particularly critical among girls.”

Without correlating Health Survey for England (The National Health Service, 2008) figures on girls’ physical activity and obesity, The Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation (2012) argues that “the UK has the worst rate of obesity in Europe and the third worst rate of obesity in the OECD...The lack of activity of *girls* matters for policy makers” because “the proportion of obese *women* in the UK is predicted to increase from 26% to between 35% and 43%” While acknowledging that this is a *prediction*, the Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation (2012: 10) then draws on NHS Choices and original research published in The Lancet (Wang et al., 2011) to note that the “rise *will* lead to an extra 668,000 cases of diabetes, 461,000 extra cases of heart disease and 130,000 cases of cancer over the next 20 years” (emphasis added). Such a transfer of support for present physical activity to prevent future ill health, Evans et al., (2007: 57) argue, “unproblematically” evokes an understanding[that] “more sport = more health”, and that bodily health can be achieved through exercise and weight loss, affirming Kirk’s (2006) theorization of the exercise = slenderness = health triplex. As part of the recommendations published in the WSFF report, WSFF “urged schools to introduce more female-friendly fitness activities such as Zumba classes and rollerblading” as a result of a decline in girls’ participation in PE” (Hughes, 2012: 1).

In Scotland, new initiatives and policies are turning towards ways in which to involve more girls in sport and physical activity. The Fit for Girls programme is one recent initiative which is rolling out to all 380 Scottish secondary schools over a three year period (2008-2011), coinciding with the duration of my fieldwork, making the thesis a timely contribution to knowledge of the programme’s framing and relation to some girls’ experiences. Fit for Girls aims to increase girls’

and women's participation in sport and physical activity and proposes to meet the aim by increasing girls' *current* participation and providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary to assure *future* participation as girls' become women (Lindohf et al., 2009, emphasis added). The emphasis is on sustaining physical activity and designing a programme which brings about a lifestyle (for now and for the future), rather than a temporary change. A cooperative initiative between the Scottish Government, **sportscotland** and the Youth Sport Trust named, Fit for Girls, offers the rationale for the programme.

“In our current climate of increased concern for girls' and women's health, childhood obesity and the economic, physical and mental health cost of inactivity, the [Fit for Girls] programme aims to stimulate discussions around inventive approaches to reverse the trend” (Lindohf et al, 2009: 3).

The rationale, underpinned by contemporary obesity discourse, argues for creative approaches to increasing girls' participation. Fit for Girls emphasises collaboration amongst PE staff, Active Schools Coordinators, and local community sport and activity organizations and the programme places a fundamental emphasis on involving and consulting girls during the phase of action plan development with the hopes that by giving girls a voice and the responsibility of a choice in designing activities, they will be more inclined to continue lifelong participation in sport and physical exercise. I revisit this structure of FfG throughout the thesis when examining the relationships between and among Fit for Girls managerial staff, Active Schools Coordinators, PE teachers in schools, and girls participating in the programme. While the aim is for the programme to be implemented in all Scottish secondary schools, the programme is not a requirement of the

national PE curriculum and accordingly many of the changes and additions related to improving girls' physical activity may take place outside the space of PE.

A pilot programme (known as the Girls in Sport and Physical Activity initiative), which preceeded FfG, was launched in 27 Scottish secondary schools<sup>4</sup> and it is useful to look at the approaches adopted in the pilot schools to understand the ways in which girls are positioned in reference to sport and physical activity. The FfG pilot programme, adopted a holistic view of approaching girls within the FfG programme aim of increasing participation in physical activity and creating a sustainable lifestyle of physical activity. In practice, the pilot programme identified particular girls, who were known as having low rates of participation in PE, for various reasons including being embarrassed by appearance, size or weight, feeling failure in PE, lacking confidence when trying new or (what are perceived to be) difficult activities, bullying, or periods of illness (Lindohf et al., 2009). Some particular and popular activities in the pilot included the implementation of a 'girls only' swimming club and relaxation of PE kit requirements which allowed girls to wear long trousers<sup>5</sup> instead of shorts, plain t-shirts as well as t-shirts over their swimming costumes where swimming is part of the curriculum. Additionally, a programme was designed to increase girls' participation at Bannockburn High School (Stirling), in Standard Grade PE, which was not often chosen by girls at Bannockburn due to games-based and traditional activities (football, basketball, swimming, badminton, and canoeing) and the presence of boys. The new Standard Grade (SG) PE was redesigned to include an aesthetics option (which no boy chose to participate in) and included trampolining, gymnastics, dance, volleyball and netball. In

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<sup>4</sup>The 27 schools were situated in the Local Authorities of: Shetland Islands, North Ayrshire, Stirling, East Dumbartonshire (2 schools), City of Edinburgh (2 schools), Falkirk, Argyll & Bute (2 schools), Glasgow City, Aberdeenshire, East Lothian, Midlothian, Perth & Kinross, Moray, Dumfries & Galloway (2 schools), East Ayrshire, West Dumbartonshire, West Lothian, East Renfrewshire, Clackmannanshire, North Lanarkshire, Aberdeen City, Scottish Borders, and Orkney Islands.

<sup>5</sup>Sometimes referred to as 'trackie bottoms'

2006, 12 girls selected SG PE; following redesign of the Standard Grade PE, 38 girls selected the course in 2007.

Outcomes also included modifications to the spaces of the changing and showering facilities. In some instances, changing rooms were redecorated, graffiti removed, hair dryers and straighteners installed, and broken mirrors replaced. These changes, in most cases, were directly implemented by the girls themselves who spent time painting, and redecorating and discussing with maintenance staff and facilities managers the possibilities of installing hair dryers and new mirrors (Lindohf et al., 2009). The pilot programme was hailed as a success because 72% of the 27 schools which participated in the pilot experienced some increase in girls' participation in physical activity. The average rate of participation increase was 9% and in six of the pilot schools, girls participation' surpassed or equalled boys' participation (**sportscotland**, 2011).

While Fit for Girls, Active Schools, and changes to curricular and extracurricular sporting provisions to "change Scotland's couch potato culture" (The Scottish Government, 2004: 1) provide new and unique forms of physical activity for children and girls specifically to participate in, the underlying goals are set within UK obesity strategy and gendered understandings of girls in sport. Accordingly, my concern and the thesis rationale are threefold:

First, with the exception of Fit for Girls, and the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, none of the aforementioned Health Surveys, programmes, or policy initiatives indicated consulting with girls on the experiences of their body—and of how it feels to be measured or grouped; how it feels to have fat or to be physically active, and how it feels to be a girl, fat, thin, physically active or not. Girl's experiential accounts are missing almost entirely from policy rhetoric while at the same time programmes and changes aimed specifically at improving girls' physical activity participation are materialising throughout the UK.

Second, as demonstrated through Sections 1.2.1, 1.2.2 and 1.2.3, it is the increasing matter—body weight—(Colls, 2007) of children’s and girls’ bodies and behaviours related to physical activity which matters to policy makers and educators couched inside a concern for future child and national health. “Bodies therefore matter” to contemporary obesity discourse “because of what they *are* and what they will *become*” (Evans, 2009: 22, emphasis in original). UK political health discourse, supported through formal school-based programmes of physical activity is underpinned by and based on a fear of fat as a threat to individuals, national health (Rice, 2007) and the ecology of the planet (Gray, 2012), without attention to how health discourses of obesity may intra-act with girls’ feelings about their bodies and impact on girls’ practices of health and engagement with physical activity (Kirk, 2006; Evans et al., 2007). In particular, through the thesis, I argue that political concern with girl’s bodies which construct thin and fat bodies dualistically such that thinness = fitness = health and fatness ≠ fitness ≠ health, may have an unintended negative impact on many girls’ overall health and wellbeing and embodied engagements with physical activity.

Third, the provisioning of girl-specific or girl-only activities without critically addressing traditional gendered assumptions deeply rooted in the practices and pedagogies of physical education—as I explore further through the literature review in Chapter 2—may continue to perpetuate dualisms (masculine/feminine) which “obscure differences within” these categories and “reproduce narrow and overly simplistic ways of thinking, talking and behaving” (Macdonald, 2003: 210). Research into gendered experiences of PE—which I explore further through the literature in Chapter 2, reveals that traditional understandings of embodiment within PE are derived from cultural location and separation of male and female sports. Such understandings encourage different bodily usages within physical education both permitting and supporting the dualistic development of traditional masculinities and femininities (Wellard, 2007b). Accordingly,



drawing on gender as a lens for analyses of girls' embodied experiences of PE—as I do in Chapter 6, is useful in highlighting how sexist attitudes, approaches and pedagogies may continue to dominate educational spaces of physical activity and sport (Macdonald, 2003; Williams & Bedward, 2003); less is known however, about experiences of gendered embodiment when intersected with health, such as happens inside spaces of physical education where teachings of embodiment, health and physical activity/sport collide; I attend to this gap in Chapter 7.

#### *1.2.4 PERSONAL RATIONALE FOR RESEARCH*

In addition to what matters, from the perspective of policy, the research matters to me personally whereby I derive my commitment to the research from experiences of my body in relation to movement—physical activity. The feelings I have about myself are a result of my own—past and present—encounters and intra-actions with other discursive and material—fleshy—bodies. By allowing a little space to autobiography within social science research, one can “combine cultural analysis with stores of the self, resulting in thick description that helps to further understanding of individuals' and groups' lives” (Longhurst, 2011: 875). Longhurst (2011: 875) argues that her “selves”—that is, her personal experiences of weight gain and loss and her academic experiences researching body size—“are not separable”. While I remain careful in advocating the inclusion of autobiography as therein lies the criticism that self-reflexivity is unable to reveal new knowledge (Salzman, 2002) I do not feel that I can write about ‘the body’ or anyone else’s embodied experiences without first recognising and revealing how my own embodiment is implicated in my beliefs and understandings. By situating my embodied experience of physical activity in my research, I follow feminist and postmodern calls to ‘situate’ knowledge and contribute to a breakage of the (arguably dangerous) mould of discussing ‘the body’ without

discussing 'my body', past and present. As Rich (1984: 215) notes:

“Perhaps we need a moratorium on saying ‘the body’. For it’s also possible to abstract the body. When I write ‘the body’ I see nothing in particular. To write ‘my body’ plunges me into lived experience, particularly: I see...white skin, marked and scarred by three pregnancies, a sterilisation, progressive arthritis, four joint operations, calcium deposits, no rapes, no abortions, long hours at a typewriter...to say ‘the body’ lifts me away from what has given me a primary perspective. To say ‘my body’ reduces the temptation to grandiose assertions.”

When I write ‘my body’ I see white skin, marked by a twin pregnancy and a body which has experienced long periods of starvation and intense exercise in a vain attempt to avoid being called ‘fat’ (by my uncle) ever again. Growing up in a rural part of the United States I swam competitively from the age of seven and tried other organised sports too—namely basketball and softball. I also spent many unstructured hours of out of doors, roaming my neighbourhood, fishing in the local stream, climbing trees, riding my bike, and generally moving about without thinking much about why I moved, other than the notion that I enjoyed being outside and running around, unstructured by adult rules.

At University I continued swimming, this time in a non-competitive manner as a way of preparing for the academic day ahead. I also joined the university kayak club and participated in river trips and slalom kayak events. As the year went on I could feel my shoulders getting bigger and more muscular. That summer I went away on a holiday with my parents, aunt and uncle. The apartment we rented on our holiday had a swimming pool and in the evening I would spend an hour or two swimming laps. One night I exited the pool and pulled my towel around my chest,

shoulders bare. I walked into the apartment we were all sharing together. My uncle said to me, “wow, you’re getting fat aren’t you”? I measured five feet, four inches tall and weighed 52 kilogrammes. I brushed the comment aside, but I went off to have a shower and sobbed to myself for the rest of the evening.

Upon return to University that autumn I stopped swimming altogether and lost interest in kayaking as well; I did not want to have ‘fat’ shoulders. I joined the local running club and started logging the miles with them and more on my own. From reading sports magazines I knew that running could help you ‘shed kilos’ and from the look of the runners on the glossy pages it gave you the body of a lean greyhound. I also joined the university gym spending hours being a hamster on the treadmill. I learned that I could survive on one meal a day—lunch at 11am in the dining hall—the only time I saw my friends. I would wake up and go to the gym at 6am to exercise without breakfast. My stomach would scream all through morning lecture “feed me, feed me” but I distracted myself with chewing gum or coffee! I would eat a big lunch and then—because subsisting on one meal a day had a laxative effect—rush to use the toilet before my next class. After attending a few more classes I went to the gym to exercise again. In the evenings when my stomach would scream for food again I would busy myself with online chats with far away friends, or pointless walks around campus.

These habits continued for a year. I lost 11 kilogrammes and stopped menstruating entirely. I no longer enjoyed sport; rather I became a slave to it. My body was no longer my own; it belonged to the electronic counter on the treadmill where each calorie burned fuelled me to run another minute. I measured my success by kilogrammes lost rather than seconds shaved from race times. I went from being a happy, healthy, young woman who found enjoyment in swimming to being depressed, unhealthy and out of control with eating and exercise habits. In my second year at university, I enrolled in a course in Women’s Studies (as the department is known at Penn

State). It was only through learning the theories and pedagogies of feminist scholars that I was able to reclaim my health, my body and my life.

While my battle with anorexia athletica and bulimia—as I came to learn were the terms for my ‘behaviour’—will never end, through mindfulness and immersion in feminist scholarship, my relationship to sport and physical activity is returning to one of enjoyment rather than torture. I feel more comfortable in my flesh; it is my own. I am not afraid to swim, lift heavy weights or eat cake. I no longer count the calories or refuse to fuel my body with the proteins, fats and carbohydrates necessary for building and repairing muscle and tissue after training or racing. I now belong to a training group where I am a nationally ranked Scottish athlete and have found my own success on the national team measured by numerous race wins and personal best times rather than number of kilocalories burned. It is these personal experiences of and engagement with my body which incite my academic commitment to the growing field of fat studies which sets out to “map the contours of the vexing boulder of weight based oppression” and “helps to move that obstacle from our shared path, freeing us to enjoy authentic—rather than alienated—embodiment” (Wann, 2009: xviii).

Accordingly, I make no apology for having an agenda, for talking openly about forms of oppression including sexism and sizeism, while acknowledging that my thesis is limited by the voices and stories I have not included and the theories I do not attend to. I remain committed to the feminist project of revealing forms of oppression; I am in particular concerned with oppressive structures “which alienate people not only from their own and others bodies, but from involvement in physical activity and sport” (Evans & Penney, 2002: 6). This thesis therefore subscribes to a belief and understanding that ‘health’ “is not a number” on the scale “but rather a subjective experience with many influences” (Wann, 2009: xiii); I align my work with recent work in health geography which emphasises “individuals’ complex experiences of health...and the

associated politics of identity” in attempt to break away from the view that an individuals’ embodiment is either statically healthy or unhealthy (Hall, 2000: 21). Through researching embodied geographies of gender and health through girls’ experiences of physical activity, I draw specifically on the developing interest among geographers, sociologists, feminists and other critical scholars concerned with the politicisation of body size (Evans, 2006b; Evans & Colls, 2009a) through the interdisciplinary field of fat studies.

Geographers involved in doing fat studies work are increasingly researching the perspectives and emotional embodied experiences of anti-fat attitudes on those who self-identify or are labelled as fat (Colls, 2006; Hopkins, 2011; Longhurst, 2011). In respect to thin bodies of girls suffering or recovering from anorexia nervosa and/or bulimia, Evans et al., (2007) demonstrate the negative impact of obesity discourses on girls’ attitudes towards their bodies in respect to the embodied performance of ability in physical education. In following Longhurst's (2005a: 248) critical engagements with obesity which pave the way “for geographers and others interested in spatiality to take up the issue of ‘fatness/corpulence/bigness’”, I do attend to the voices of those girls experiencing fatness and fat stigma within physical activity and PE. To my knowledge however, there is an absence of critical feminist geographical inquiry into the impact of anti-fat/fat threat messages on girls’ relationships with their bodies. Furthermore, considerations of the feelings and experiences of girls of all bodies sizes and shapes, when doing physical activity, is distinctly lacking in the literature.. To this extent, rather than focusing solely on girls of a particular body size, I engage with the voices of girls on all sizes of the bodily continuum, paying attention to how “weight-based attitudes...constrain[ed]” girls of all weights, shapes and sizes with my study (Wann, 2009: xviii). There is also limited feminist geographical engagement with body fat as dynamic, having agency and capacity, shifting “the focus from what matter is i.e. what fat represents, to what matter is capable of doing” (Colls, 2007: 355). As I set out to “do fat studies

work”, I maintain consistency with the word choice preferred by those working in this field (Wann, 2009: xii):

“In the field of fat studies, there is agreement that the O-words [overweight and obesity] are neither neutral nor benign...In fat studies, there is respect for the political project of reclaiming the word *fat*, both as the preferred neutral adjective (i.e., short/tall, young/old, fat/thin) and also as a preferred term of political identity.”

While I do engage with and question the truth in some statistical figures provided in UK Health Survey data in Section 1.2, this thesis does not present detailed critiques of the scientific evidence on associations between inactivity, obesity and ill health or disease (such as heart attacks, cancer or diabetes) as many have successfully done (Gard, 2005; Kirk, 2006; Evans & Colls, 2009b; Evans, 2009). Nor does this thesis “deny that fatness is experienced as problematic by many people not least because of the associated stigma and discriminatory practices that many people are subjected too” and “that for some, weight loss can help to relieve medical, emotional and social difficulties (see Bovey, 2002)” (Evans & Colls, 2009b: 1060-1061). Instead I critically question the ways in which contemporary discourses about health and the body are both presented and received as ‘truth’ by policy makers and the impact which such truth has when translated into school-based programmes of ‘health’, on girls’ emotional and physical health and wellbeing and engagement with physical activity. Furthermore, I attend to the ways in which girls experience and feel their bodies and bodily matter, fat, sweat, and so forth, contingent upon spatial and temporal contexts.

I am aware that my bodily physique continues to be seen by others as ‘slender’ and ‘healthy’ and through research encounters, I encountered compliments from participants about

my thinness or questions seeking my (presumed) expertise about exercise practices and health due to the nature of my research; this is a point of consideration that I return to reflexively throughout the thesis in the ways in which I believe my body weight/shape allowed me access to certain participants' stories at the same time that it may have restricted my access to other participants' stories.

As a self-identified feminist and someone who is committed to the project of revealing injustice, Wann (2009) and those working within fat studies indicate that they welcome me and my thin self not as an ally but as a colleague, maintaining that I must recognize my own position in relation to "weight-based privilege". I must recognize the extent to which my relationship to weight-based privilege at 163 centimeters now with a fluctuating weight of 45-47 kilogrammes "is both internalized" in the beliefs I carry with me and impose on myself and others "and external" through my "interactions with people, institutions, and social and material conditions that are affected by [my] weight" (Wann, 2009: xii). Within attention to 'everydayness', 'material things', 'practices', 'bodies', 'education and spacings' (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a) this thesis pays attention to what else matters, to girls' experiences requiring detailed and critical feminist engagement with health policy, practitioner agendas and practice, girls' embodied experiences and reflexivity of my own fleshy and socially constructed/marked body.

### **1.3 RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS**

Following from the context and rationale outlined above in Section 1.2, this thesis draws on and contributes to key debates within geography on embodied experience(s), gender, and health by investigating the everyday embodied geographies of gender and health, through an exploration of girls' experiences of school-based physical activity. A feminist ethnographic

approach and related methods, discussed further in Chapter 3, were employed to achieve this aim and to answer the three supportive research questions which I identify in Table 1.1 below and discuss individually in the paragraphs which follow.

**Table 1.1: Research Questions**

1. What matters to girls (aged 10-14) in their everyday embodied experiences of physical activity (including PE and other school-based sport)?
2. How do school sport deliverers (PE teachers and Active Schools staff) understand and utilise gender and health in everyday practices and pedagogies?
  - 2.1 How do girls feel about and interpret teachers' everyday understandings of gender and health through physical activity and physical education?
3. What are the recent (2009-2012) changes made to address girls' non-participation in physical activity within the school?
  - 3.1 How have such changes materialised in each study school?

Research question one, which is addressed throughout the thesis is answered by focusing on girls' everyday embodied experiences in PE classes and other school-based sporting activities and programmes (Fit for Girls activities and Keep Active Club activities). A focus on embodied experience requires attention to the things that go on with and in one's body, including feelings associated with bodily movement and the body touching the space(s) outside, which (Horton & Kraftl, 2006b) argue, are imperative to our understandings of social and cultural theory. When the body touches—encounters both tangible and discursive—spaces outside of its material boundaries, an individual begins—in childhood—to build an image, which Horton & Kraftl (2006a: 77) argue is “fundamental to lived experience.” “How we are seen by others, or imagine we are



seen by others, or—more to the point—how we experience ourselves and our bodies, is fundamental to our lived experience; it *is us*” (Horton & Kraftl, 2006b: 77). That is, our body image makes us who we are and we in turn—as a result of our relationships to our own and other’s embodiments—are also a part of its making. “Embodiment is implicated in everything children see, say, *feel*, think and do. To this extent, we need to address and understand the role of the body and its materiality in children’s [and young people’s] constructions of social relations, meanings and experiences...” (Woodyer, 2008: 358, emphasis added). Feelings of fear, hatred, and other “affects...experienced as relational reactions” to situations are embodied acknowledging that it is impossible to ignore the emotions that accompany, are derived from, permit or inhibit bodily encounters (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 79).

Accordingly, I argue that embodied knowledge or knowledge of emotional embodied experience(s) is central to understanding wider social relations, constructions and conceptions such as those of gender and health. In maintaining the argument of paying attention to “*what matters?*” to children and in children’s geographies, maintaining an “openness to, and appreciation of the...emotional” may help us better understand what matters to girls’ experiences of physical activity (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 260, emphasis added). While I give space to the emotional within the thesis, I maintain that the focus is on the ways in which the emotional was informed by the embodied. That is, attention was given in the first place to the body, feelings of and about the body encountering itself, material and tangible objects and spaces and other bodies.

While much is now known about how children’s bodies are constructed through western socio-political health discourse, which is increasingly filtering into school-based ‘health’ programmes, little is known about how children feel about, experience and negotiate (resist, subvert or conform to) these programmes. I reveal much more of what mattered to girls’

everyday embodied experiences by engaging with how girls felt about doing PE and other sport in respect to spaces (Chapter 5), gender (Chapter 6), health (Chapter 7) and enjoyment (Chapter 8). Chapter 5 additionally focuses intently on everydayness with attention to the bodies, material things and practices which make up and are relational within the spaces of physical education.

In addressing research question two, feminist perspectives provide us with a framework to understand culturally gendered discourses, practices and experiences of sport (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002). The cultural arena of sport is widely understood to be a highly gendered space, but also a space which is generative of health, and the act of doing sport or exercise is widely understood to be healthy. Accordingly, it is important to understand the intersection of gender with health in the context of spaces of sport and exercise. The school provides a useful site for understanding intersections of gender and health for two reasons. First, the school provides the main space where government programmes aimed at changing children's health are increasingly being implemented. Second, schools are not immune from or closed to discourses—such as those of class, race, sexuality, gender and health operating (outside of school walls). Individuals—pupils, teachers and school management—contributing to the discourses operating in school spaces pass through, are a part of and experience wider spaces where discourses are constructed. Drawing on “work of feminist geographers” (for a summary, see Laurie et al., 1999) Holloway et al. (2000: 631) argue that

“...all parts of the multilayered institutional culture [of the school] were informed by wider sets of ideas embedded in British society (and beyond), with, for example, teachers drawing on the jargon of wider educational discourses about the entitlement curriculum, and pupils drawing on wider understandings about appropriate masculinity and femininity. In this sense the school is a porous space, constructed through its links with

the wider place, the wider sets of interlocking social relations within which it is embedded. Equally...the school is an important site through which gender and sexual identities are reproduced.”

Therefore it is important to investigate the ways in which government discourses of health inform and flow through programmes of health in schools, revealing how PE teachers and Active Schools staff are a part of creating, adopting, or challenging wider government or cultural constructs of health. Girls’ experiences and observations of health in the context of sport and exercise are informed in part by the teachings they receive in school as well as through encounters at home and with popular culture. It is therefore important to enquire about how girls themselves conceptualise and ‘practise’ health as well as the origins of their knowledge. I touch on the themes of gender and health in Chapter 4 by attending to the ways in which PE was structured in the three secondary schools. Chapter 5 begins an exploration of gender issues in relation to everyday spaces of sport. I address explicitly, conceptualisations, understandings, practices and experiences related to gender in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 draws also on gender, additionally weaving discourses, practices and experiences of health into the analysis.

Relying on presumed assumptions about the categories of girls/boys “as a way of focusing ‘problems’, programmes and strategies” has led to recent additions and changes within schools in attempts to improve girls’ participation in physical activity and physical education (Macdonald, 2003: 210). To answer research question three, Chapter 6, addresses specific changes which have been made within the fieldwork schools to directly target girls’ non-participation. By paying attention to the ways in which girls are understood as a homogenous group—different from boys, which informs assumptions about their sporting interests and competencies/abilities, Chapter 6 analyses changes which have been made through curricular provisioning, material/tangible spaces

and through the Fit for Girls programme. The feminist project of deconstructing dualisms remains a central part of my research, not only in respect to conceptions of masculine/feminine—but in reference to related embodied dualisms of health and age (the healthy body and being/becoming). I attend to the literature which informs my understanding of dualisms in Chapter 2.

#### **1.4 CONCLUSIONS AND THESIS STRUCTURE**

This chapter provided the context and rationale for the thesis and presented my research aim and supporting questions. Taking on a project which moves beyond identifying girls as a ‘problem’ for not engaging positively in physical education (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001) prompts me to return to Horton and Kraftl’s (2006a) question of “what else?” matters to girls as they experience physical activity or PE. With attention to bodies and embodiment, gender and health, this thesis answers a call to pay attention to the “ostensible most everyday mundane, banal, unremarkable facets of lives led by children” (Philo & Swanson, 2008: 201) for it is these things precisely which Horton & Kraftl (2009) argue, matter profoundly to childhood and children, are unknown or unrecognised by adult actors who govern many children’s lives and are also missing from the spaces where policy agendas on children are written. While I do not include boys’ stories or experiences, by understanding girls’ experiences and through focusing—in part—on gendered embodiment, my research may also add a further understanding to how masculinities and femininities are constructed, performed and taught through institutional spaces of sport are limiting to many young people—boys and girls alike. I return to reiterate this point in Chapter 6.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review for the thesis, drawing from relevant academic literature in geography, sociology, feminist studies and children’s geographies on the body and

embodiment, gender and health to pull out important contributions which inform my study and highlight gaps which are addressed through my work.

Chapter 3 presents the justification for and an explanation of the methodological approach for the research. I present the research design, explicitly engage with issues of ethics and provide a thorough discussion of the methods used to investigate girls' embodied geographies of gender and health in and through the institutional space of physical activity within the school.

Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 form the empirical chapters and are developed around geographical themes of scale, space, gender, health, and age with continued attention to embodiment. Chapter 4 engages with questions of the scaling of children's geographies in the context of physical education in the case study schools. I examine recent government and educational policies and question the extent to which they directly inform the teaching and experience of physical education. Chapter 5 provides a more intimate look at girls' everyday engagement with PE spaces, changing rooms, gym halls, playing fields and community sport spaces, and examines the extent to which such spaces and objects within these spaces contribute to girls' overall experience of PE. Chapter 6 begins to construct a dialogue between PE educators and female pupils with a focus on gendered understandings, pedagogies and experiences of sport and embodiment. The theme of Chapter 7 is health, with a focus on understanding how health is conceptualised and taught by PE teachers and Active Schools staff and how such teachings inform girls' embodied understandings and practices of 'health' in relation to sport or exercise. Chapter 8 looks at themes of being and becoming through sport by considering what 'age' and changes in age mean for girls' enjoyment of and engagement with physical activity over time.

While the empirical chapters (4-8) could be read as standalone chapters, the structure of what appears to be neatly bounded chapters is informed and limited by the thesis format. As I maintain throughout the chapters, it is impossible to isolate the empirical data as there are infinite

relationships and connections between the themes which I have chosen to focus on (scale, space, gendered embodiment, health, and age). Furthermore, some themes such as embodiment and gender are addressed—to varying degrees—throughout the thesis. Discussion of the Fit for Girls programme is also threaded throughout the thesis as it relates to themes from multiple chapters. Other themes such as materiality and the creation of dialogue between female pupils and PE teachers are addressed in one or two chapters. While the overall theoretical framework for the thesis is the body—its matter and mattering, fleshy and socially constructed experience, and site of both power imposition and resistance—each chapter takes inspiration from a unique source which I discuss explicitly at the outset. Chapter 9 presents a final summation of what matters to this thesis, making connections between the literature, research questions, methodology and findings. The conclusion also presents policy recommendations, acknowledges the limitations of my study and signposts several directions for future research. While Chapter 1 attended to the matter of children's and girls' bodies and in respect to policy matters, I turn now to Chapter 2 to explore the ways in which the body and children and young people, as subjects of research, matter to contemporary debates in feminist geographies, geographies of the body and children's geographies.

## Chapter 2

### *CONCEPTUALISING BODIES, CHILDREN, GENDER AND HEALTH*

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 provided the rationale and contextual basis for the thesis highlighting the matter and mattering of children's and girls' bodies to policy and to my personal commitment to the research. Through the rationale, Chapter 1 presented Health Survey data and health policy discourse which informs school-based programmes and curriculum and new initiatives to improve girls' participation in physical activity; the rationale showed how socio-political discourse on the child body through contemporary health and obesity policy, views children with a concern for their bodily becoming—futures, and neglects both knowledge and understanding of gendered embodied experience. To reveal what is currently important within the literature relevant to my study, about the relational themes explored through the thesis—namely, bodies, gender and health, this chapter engages with feminist, geographical and sociological perspectives, highlighting the foundations on which I build my research theory and practice.

An increasing number of geographers have considered the body as a subject of research (Callard, 1998; Nast & Pile, 1998; Longhurst, 2001; Colls, 2007), recognising the significance and markings of bodies as gendered, sexualised, disabled, classed and so on, and what these 'markers' mean for the negotiation of the body in various spaces—spaces which are themselves marked (Longhurst, 1994). While a majority of work in geographies of the body focuses on adult bodies, until now most of the work in children's geographies has neglected the child body (for exceptions see Aitken, 2001; Horton & Kraftl, 2006a; Horschelmann & Colls, 2010; Horton & Kraftl, 2010). I

situate my work explicitly in this gap by weaving theoretical understandings of the body and embodied experience into work with children and young people.

The literature review maintains a focus on returning to the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. In particular, I attend to research question 1 by exploring writings on the body and embodied experience through Section 2.2 with attention to the ways in which the body has been approached in geography, relevant to my study and the usefulness of the body as a category of analysis. Section 2.2 draws explicitly from feminist and geographic literature, situating my thesis within a feminist theoretical framework. As girls are the subject focus for the research, Section 2.3 addresses recent and relevant debates within children's geographies and sets up the context from which I explore embodiment in studies of children and young people through Section 2.4; the themes of gender and health which attend to research questions 2 and 3 are introduced in Section 2.3 and explored explicitly through children's bodies in subsections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2.

## **2.2 QUESTIONS OF THE BODY**

"...we all have bodies and we are all some place" (Nast & Pile, 1998: 1)

"Surely therefore we all know what the body is" (Longhurst, 2005b: 91).

Recent engagements with the body in geography have attended to questions of the body, wrestling with our belief and understanding in both the uniqueness and relational experience of bodies (Nast & Pile, 1998), how we understand certain bodies as in transition, between states of health as it is socially constructed and lived/felt through fleshy/internal bodily experience (Moss & Dyck, 2003), the influences—and usefulness (Horschelmann & Colls, 2010) of geographers'



embodied identity on their research (Longhurst, 2001), and why we—researchers of gender and geography—place such an importance on attending to knowing and understanding the body (Longhurst, 2001; Longhurst, 2005b).

Contemporary geographic engagements with the body and embodiment informed and influenced by feminist theory, while focusing primarily on adult bodies and experiences, are nonetheless important to our knowledge of socio-spatial relations. To this extent, I draw on recent engagements with the adult body in geography, within influence from feminist theorists, making steps towards understanding the usefulness of the body as a subject of research, and embodiment/embodied experience as a category of feminist and geographic analysis. The approaches, which inform my study, are discussed below: ‘the geography closest in’, ‘other bodies’, and ‘transcending dualisms’.

The first approach to the body in geography has been understood through theorising the body as the scale which is closest to the individual self, through engagements with Adrienne Rich's (1984) work on ‘the geography closest in’. The historic use of ‘the geography closest in’ is that the “self-awareness” is expanded in a linear manner “away from the body as the self touches and comprehends larger and larger environments” (Aitken, 2001: 65). From this understanding, the body is the most intimate scale of experience. The more recent ‘geography closest in’ perspective considers “...how bodies are made and used through place; it is a concern with the inscription of power and resistance on the body, concurrently involving issues of performativity, body politics and the body as a site of contestation” (Simonsen, 2000: 8). From this perspective, the body is ‘scaled’, and understood as the scale *on which* forms of structure and power (such as that of politics) assert control and dominance, as well as the scale *from which* individuals can assert resistance and contest hegemonic norms. For Rose (1993) the female body was, in particular, a site of struggle—located in a particular time and place. For Kallio (2008) the child body in

particular, is the primary site of power inscription and resistance. Recently feminist geographers and others, have theorised the body as a site of resistance (see Cream, 1992; Rose, 1993; Bell, 1994). This is a perspective I return to consider further through Chapters 4 and 5.

The second notion through which the body has materialised in geographic discourse is through the notion of 'other' bodies. Feminist writings provide the foundations from which much of the geographic work on bodily otherness is derived. Butler (1990; 1993) argues that the body is materialised, marked by and negotiated through social processes. Butler (1990) uses her understanding of the body in this way to argue that sex (male/female) is a constructed category and the effect of institutional structures acted upon the individual, rather than the other way around. The sex/gender dualism pervades historic feminist writings informed by the notion argued by Stoller (1968) that female and male genitalia influences but does not determine gender identity. It is rather through negotiations with and lessons from others, which begin post-birth that one is constructed to identify as either a woman or a man (with the requisite qualities of these identities). On writing *The Second Sex*, French existentialist and feminist, Simone DeBeauvoir (1989) works towards deconstruction of the sex/gender dualism which pervades constructions of male/female, arguing that that one is not born a woman or a man; rather, one becomes a woman or a man. Inside this becoming—a woman—process, women are othered and constructed as deviations from the normal—male; this understanding creates dualisms whereby the female is associated with the body and given the identity of the body with all of the following qualities: irrational, natural, passive, childlike and so forth (Kirby, 1991).

Geographers engage with this concept of 'other' bodies arguing that bodies—which may display visual markings of 'difference'—are labelled as 'other'; as a result, those bodies which carry certain labels—such as homosexual, disabled, non-white, non-western, and more recently, obese or fat bodies—are often denied access to certain spaces and opportunities in western society

(Solovay & Rothblum, 2009). Poststructural and feminist perspectives describe how the material and tangible of the visible body, forms the basis for hegemonic justification of *inferior* 'otherness' (Sibley, 1995). Geographers conceptualising 'other' bodies have considered how socio-spatial location marks otherness on/to bodies, wherein bodies are 'othered' in and by particular material and discursive spaces (Johnston, 1996). Research into the spaces and bodies of adult female bodybuilding, by Johnston (1996) reveals that spaces inside of private gyms and exercise facilities, such as the weights room are coded masculine spaces. Accordingly, female bodies who dare to enter such spaces may be 'othered', unwelcome, discouraged from using, and denied the privileges assigned to those who are classed as belonging.

"Women dominate the aerobics and circuit room, while the men dominate and actively discourage women from participating in the 'Black and Blue Room'. This particular gym confirms the construction of feminine and masculine spaces, and hence bodies" (Johnston, 1996: 328)

Such othering and exclusion may occur explicitly through verbal or physical protest or more subtle tactics such as a neglect of representations of women in the artwork on the walls inside the gym. Work within feminism and geography on the 'otherness' of body and size/shape, is additionally important to my work; such research is now increasingly arguing that the otherness of fat is created through socio-spatial location whereby the presence of fat—on any part, or the whole of the body—is interpreted as a sign of a complete unhealthy body (Evans, 2009). The acquisition of additional 'othered' identities such as 'unfit' may develop through the marking of socio-political discourse of fat and health onto bodies (Rice, 2007). I take up more of this literature in respect to gender and the child body in Section 2.4.

Theorising the body through the geography closest in and othering as above, build conceptualisations of the body solely as a social construct, performed, scaled, marked and othered, through social processes and discourse. To this extent, the third avenue through which geographers have pursued the body is through attempts to deconstruct some of the dualisms inherent in western thinking. Geographers critiquing early feminist engagements with the sex/gender debate for ignoring the sexed body in space (Johnson, 1990; Longhurst, 2001). Johnson (1989; 1990) argues that within the sex/gender discourse, which informs how we come to understand bodies as 'othered', the material matter of the body itself is lost and/or ignored due to fear of being labelled essentialist. Young, (1990) has reclaimed the body within the sex/gender argument by engaging with feminine bodily existence as an inhibited intentionality. Her argument is such that:

“Women do not often perceive themselves as capable of lifting and carrying heavy things...pulling with force. When we attempt such tasks, we frequently fail to summon the full possibilities of our muscular coordination, position, poise, and bearing...Typically, we lack an entire trust in our bodies to carry us to our aims....On the one hand, we often *lack confidence* that we have the capacity to do what must be done...The other side of this tentativeness is...a *fear of getting hurt...*” (Young, 1990: 145-147, emphasis added).

I address this argument in Chapter 6 in reference to the ways in which girls locate and engage with their bodies within gendered spaces of PE and sport. Continuing the critique of social constructionist understandings of the body, more recent approaches argue that limiting our understanding of the body to social construction gives absolute power to language thereby

denying both the fleshy, material existence and experience of bodies and bodily material—urine, blood, fat and the capacity and agency of bodies and bodily matter.

Accounts which engage with fleshy experience argue for the importance of knowing what it feels like to *have* a body which can change as the body itself changes (through pregnancy, menstruation, etc.), I draw on Ramazanoglu & Holland (2002: 153-154) at length:

“Having another human being growing in your own body, having another human being force themselves or objects into your bodily orifices, having disability, disease, age or accident constrain bodily activity, choosing to ‘improve’, beautify or reshape the body, are all events that can be produced in discourses and carry different meanings in different languages and value systems. But they are also constituted as *experiences* and grounded, to varying extents, in inescapable embodiment, as specific aspects of the material conditions of life.”

Ramazanoglu & Holland (2002: 252) emphasise that embodied experiences are derived as much from “language, discourse and representations” as they are from having bodies and bodily matter, which the authors argue, do not require the presence of language for existence. To this extent, as bodies we cannot escape the fleshy, bodily feeling of doing or touching kinetic activities like running or swimming, and the bodily effects of doing movement—such as sweat. Within the above engagement with the body, emotions are weaved into embodiment.

While I do not engage heavily with the concept of emotions in this thesis, I do recognise that emotions are embodied, in as much as the boundaries of the body are negotiated through feelings. To this extent, I carefully acknowledge that my thesis is limited for failing to address the

full extent that emotions played in my participants' accounts. The theoretical field of emotions is beyond the scope of my thesis however I do attend to emotions when there was a direct relation to embodiment. I recognise that "the feelings of pride and pleasure, and/or guilt and shame bound up with dietary, exercise and cosmetic regimes reveal that our bodies are intensely emotional(ised) areas and thus an important focus for, and locus of, work on how and why, what and where we feel (Davidson & Milligan, 2004; Grimshaw, 1999)" (Davidson et al., 2007: 5). Emotional geographies have been successful in revealing how women who are chronically ill experience bodies which are simultaneously socially constructed and have a material experience (which is comprised of the emotional, biological and economic affects) (Moss & Dyck, 1999). Accordingly, a shift in one of these entities, (discourse or materiality) inevitably affects, and is experienced by, the other.

Recent work on geographical engagements with emotion and affect have argued that affect is the "active outcome of an encounter" (Thrift 2004: 62) and can be used to understand the "the motion of an emotion" (Thein 2005: 451) and goes beyond "'touchy-feely' versions of emotion" (Thein 2005: 451) to have practical and political application and relevance. Thein (2005) rebuts this argument showing how geographic engagements with affect steal attention from and fail to recognise how emotion also prioritises relationality and intersubjectivity.

Bodily encounters and relations with material and discursive spaces, events and other bodies provide meaning in our lives, make us who we are and can be used to explain our responses (Lupton 1998). It is this understanding of emotion that I subscribe to where emotion may be reflected in girls' experiences which were both relational and personal, revealed as they discuss both their experiences of being with other bodies in PE and their personal engagements with physical activity. Embodied emotions then, may flow into girls' engagement with health and relationships with their own and others bodies within spaces of physical activity.

Longhurst (2001) develops our understanding of the body attending to embodied emotions through her theorising of 'close(t) space', in reference to the space that a body consumes and is consumed by with reference to both the material and the social. Close(t) space is then considered to be space which is both *close*—near, familiar and intimate and *closet*, "socially constructed as too familiar, near, intimate and threatening to be disclosed publicly" (Longhurst, 2001: 123). Drawing on Julia Kristeva's (1982) theories of abjection and abject bodies, Longhurst (2001) challenges those theorising on the body to 'come out of the closet' space of the body and talk about/theorise/research such space(s). Abjection is defined by Kristeva (1982) to be the feeling of anxiety and fear resulting from encountering bodily fluids and solids. What underlies abjection is the fear that these abject objects (menstrual blood, urine, tears) reveal and problematize the seemingly 'concrete' border between self and other. This seemingly 'concrete' border is in fact uncertain and ambiguous. "[Abjection] does not radically cut off [create a border to] the subject from what threatens it—on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger" (Kristeva, 1982: 3). Feelings of anxiety are created because a separation between the subject (body) from the object (body fluid/solid) can never truly be achieved (Sibley, 1995). The fear of encountering bodily fluids and solids, as I attend to in Chapter 5, is heightened in public space, both with respect to abject of the subject's body and the abject of other bodies.

Longhurst (2001) and (Sibley, 1995) argue that close(t) spaces serve as sites of both oppressing and resistance. The focus for (Longhurst, 2001: 123) is part of the political project of revealing how the instability of such spaces threatens order and "to ignore close(t) spaces is to ignore that which is coded as intimate, 'queer', feminine, banal and Other." Theories of close(t) space and abjection, are useful in highlighting the ways in which individuals and cultural and academic practices participate in a discourse which is designed to conceal bodily effects. While this effort involves much time, energy, and economic investment, the reality is that the body itself

will go on resisting such practices through the myriad of ways in which bodily processes are ever-present. Abjection and close(t) space is concerned primarily with the intimate physiological process of the body and the social responses (abjection) to and experiences of such processes. In respect to bodily materiality, regulation and representation of bodies and embodied experience I draw on close(t) space in Chapters 5 and 7.

However, such above accounts of the body are limited in two ways; first such accounts treats bodily matter as a thing, which can be acted upon (impregnated or raped, as Ramazanoglu & Holland (2002) discuss through revealing the experiences of such actions as above) maintaining that language continues to be the thing which matters (Barad, 2001). Second, while Longhurst (2001) and Ramazanoglu & Holland (2002) make progress in destabilising the essentialist/constructionist dualism, this work maintains the overarching mind/body dualism, as this approach prioritizes what it feels like to have a body and bodily effects—fat, blood, urine—matter. Moss & Dyck (2002) argue that “distilling experience, such as the existential angst of being within the contest of social regulation, to one of an unmediated state of being does not consider seriously the complexities arising from social and cultural relations and interaction” (Moss & Dyck, 2002: 23). For Moss & Dyck (2002: 33) the remedy for overcoming the mind/body dualism, lies in recognising and theorising that “there exists something *in between* oppositional constructs”, something that is between the social and cognitive experience and material/fleshy existence (emphasis added).

Moving beyond and taking up this critique, more radical approaches to embodiment are able to demonstrate that bodily matter is not solely a thing which can be acted upon, but nor is it something which comes to exist independent of social relations, feelings and contexts. Approaches which take up the body in this manner, understand the body and bodily matter as itself capable of doing—touching, moving or sweating and possessing agency. For while we do



not need social relations and language for sweat or fat to appear or materialise, we cannot remove sweat or fat from the socio-spatial context in which it both comes into existence and acts. Arguing that “it is vitally important that we understand how matter matters” Barad (2003: 803) develops an approach to bodily matter as ‘intra-active’. In doing so, she destroys representationalist accounts and their ontological understandings of matter as inert and immutable. Fighting off critiques of biological reductionism or social constructivism, she argues that through

“an agential realist account, it is once again possible to acknowledge nature, the body, and materiality in the fullness of their becoming without resorting to the options of transparency or opacity, the geometries of absolute exteriority or interiority, and the theorization of the human as either pure cause or pure effect while at the same time remaining resolutely accountable for the role ‘we’ play in the intertwined practices of knowing and becoming (Barad, 2003: 812).

Colls (2007) engages with bodily flesh—namely fat, in this manner, and her work is important for my study as I investigate the ways in which girls feel their bodies moving through kinetic spaces of physical activity—running or swimming—in Chapter 7. Drawing on previous work (Butler, 1993; Nelson, 1999; Barad, 2001), Colls (2007: 353) argues that reclaiming and theorising matter as intra-active within “social and cultural geography and for geographical accounts of fat bodies” is imperative.

Demonstrating how social constructions of fat bodies and critical academic engagement with experiences of social constructions of fatness, evoke bodily matter only as passive, acted-upon, Colls (2007: 358) argues that such constructions, support the imposition of “particular

discursive regimes upon fat bodies as lazy, incapable of self-control and irresponsible.” Reclaiming and engaging with fat as “the bodily substance which...we can grab, squeeze, feel moving when we run and walk...” will allow for the reclamation of bodily matter (particularly fat) that “has its own capacities to act and be active” (Colls, 2007: 258). While acknowledging that this is not necessarily a more positive way of engaging with fatness, Colls (2007) argues that such engagement does open up space for fat bodies to surpass and change dominant conceptualisations of fat and fat people as lazy, inactive and unable. I draw on this approach to reveal and challenge dualistic constructions and accounts of the healthy and fit body by investigating how the fleshy body *feels* when doing and touching kinetic activities like running or swimming—sometimes independent from and other times within social spaces of fitness and/or with other fleshy bodies. I also maintain a commitment to theorising, reclaiming and recognising *in between* categories, as fleshy bodies live on a continuum of health, weight, age, and will always be in the process of moving between such unmediated states of being.

Remaining committed to the feminist project, much of which is invested in deconstructing dualisms, while at the same time maintaining the body as a category of analysis is “extremely complex and in many ways highly problematic for an [feminist] agenda that seeks the revaluation of women” (Price & Shildrick, 1999: 217). Within the project of deconstructing dualisms, lies the inevitable paradox for feminists who do engage with the body as an entry point of analysis. In dualisms, the hegemonically inferior side of the dualism—the female, woman, or feminine—is lacking (according to the qualities of the valued term) while at the same time, the borders that delineate the structure of the primary dualism (body *or* the mind) are open to doubt “...such that reliance on sameness and difference is lost: What falls to postmodernist feminism, then, is the task of reclaiming the marginalised female/feminine body without reinstating it as a unified, closed and given category” (Price & Shildrick, 1999: 218).

The project of deconstructing dualisms is of particular interest to me throughout this research, not only in respect to the overarching dualisms of mind/body, and sex/gender, but in respect to embedded and embodied dualisms of essentialist/constructionist, healthy/unhealthy, fat/thin, girls/boys and conceptions of 'being' and 'becoming' of children which I address through the literature in Section 2.3. Within such understandings of fat through theorisations on otherness, additional questions are brought about through engagement with the dualism of fat/thin in respect to conceptualisations of health in Chapter 7. I believe therefore that it is imperative that we focus on what it feels like to have a body which is biologically fleshy and to be a body which is socially inscribed (Longhurst, 1994; Simonsen, 2000; Aitken, 2001). For while we all have bodies (Nast & Pile, 1998) which may be "things...like no others...centres of perspective, insight, reflection, desire, agency" (Grosz 1994: xi), we also have varying presences of bodily matter and effects—such as fat, blood which congeal around us intra-actively (Barad, 2001). My decision to focus on embodied experiences of girls, will address the tensions between fleshy experience and social experience. In particular, I pay attention to what it *feels* like to have a body which is swimming or running, to have flesh or fat, be averse to having flesh or fat, melding with what it feels like to be called, or calling someone 'fat', encountering other bodies, things and structures and how the bodily feeling may change, depending on the spaces and bodies present, inside socially constructed spaces of sport. Furthermore I attend to the ways in which girls and staff build their understandings and experiences of health and fitness through the body.

Much of the recent work within geographies of the body and embodiment—while adding new and important understandings to our knowledge of socio-spatial relations—engages with adult bodies in a way that the experience of bodily *becoming*—becoming a woman, losing or gaining weight, is privileged and theorised. As I move to discuss the literature within children's geographies which is relevant to my study, I note that engagements with bodily becoming may be

at odds with childhood theories of 'being'. Theorists who engage with bodily becoming fail to recognise how the body itself is always in a state of present being—through the constant effort at maintaining and achieving homeostasis—wherein the internal body is constantly involved in responding to changes in the external environment. Children's geographers who argue for recognition of children as beings, with a right to live in the present fail to engage thoroughly with how children's bodies will change and the meanings for such changes as children negotiate various spaces. I consider tensions between bodily becoming and childhood being in Chapter 8.

Turning now towards my primary research participants—girls aged 10-14—I engage with literature on studies of children and childhood in the next section. Ross (2002: 10) emphasised that "there is no one childhood which all children experience". Undeniably, the lived experiences of children vary and are influenced by 'other identities' such as (but not limited to) sex, race, class, gender, and ethnicity (which are contested categories in and of themselves). There is also increasing acknowledgement that body size—height, weight and musculature—contributes to an array of different embodied experiences of everyday life for children and young people (Horton & Kraftl, 2006b; James, 2007). However, there remain important—even cross cultural—commonalities in the ways in which children negotiate societal frameworks of structure and discipline (Jeffrey & Dyson, 2008 and Aitken, 2001) and the ways in which girls negotiate gendered frameworks of sport, education and society. Moving specifically to consider the primary participants in my study—girls between the ages of 10-14, I first discuss the inclusion of children as research subjects in geography and recent developments and debates in the subdiscipline of children's geographies (Section 2.3) before addressing explicitly, children's bodies and embodied experiences (Section 2.4).

### 2.3 CHILDREN'S GEOGRAPHIES

Children as subjects of theory and research in geography have appeared rather recently. Inclusion of children in qualitative research in geography dates to the 1970s with Bill Bunge's (1969) desire to give children representation and a 'voice' in geography while also emphasising the 'victimization' of children (Aitken, 2001; Holloway & Valentine, 2000). Pioneering the merging of secondary data (on infant mortality, brown space, presence of high-rises) with primary qualitative research Bunge (1969) revealed spatial patterns of childhood mental and physical suffering. While Bunge's methodological techniques have been criticised subsequently for being ignorant of ethical principles, his work in urban landscapes nonetheless identified a moral crisis in society and yielded important policy measures (Aitken, 2001). Bunge urged that we must look to the situations of children as a measure of societal wellbeing. "For Bunge, children were a barometer to measure the wellness of society and spatial statistics revealed the patterns of that sickness" (Aitken, 2001: 13). This section looks at engagement with children as a subject of research and important debates arising from recent geographical interest in children and young people.

Contemporary work in children's geographies has evolved from disciplinary research on children outside of geography—particularly from the discipline of sociology. Various theories and constructions of childhood and children have emerged from sociology and psychology and inform contemporary discourse within children's geographies. Dualisms are maintained in thought within children's geographies where constructions of childhood are split according to Prout (2000) by understanding children dualistically, either as 'becomings' which require regulation, shaping, moulding, and control often through education (as children are in the process of becoming adults), or as 'beings' and autonomous actors (agents) whose viewpoints and voices should be heard, recognized, and valued. Conceptions relating to the matter of children's being and becoming are

divided into four categories by Alanen (1992: 99-102). The four categories are identified as developmental, contextual, categorical, and agentic.

The developmental conception of childhood, derived primarily from psychology, believes that children follow a growth pattern which is characterized by stages. This belief firmly separates children and youth from adults and has been criticized for classing children as irrational and incapable of adult reasoning (Prout & James, 1990; Alanen, 1992; McGurk, 1992) The developmental conception treats children as ‘becomings’ on their way to ‘being’ adults.

The second conception, the contextual conception of childhood, builds on the developmental conception but is derived from socialization theories, and argues that childhood itself as a conception is institutionalized (Alanen, 1992 in Ross, 2002). As with the developmental conception, children are viewed as ‘becomings’ with a focus on the future of children and an emphasis on various forms of education to shape such futures. Socialization and culture are viewed as processes necessary to transforming the child into a functioning and productive adult member of society, rather than processes which children actively negotiate, challenge, and participate in. As Ross (2002) notes, with regard to the developmental and contextual conceptions, children’s agency was not recognized nor considered.

Following from inadequacies identified in the developmental and contextual conceptions of childhood, the categorical conception of childhood materialized and sought to identify childhood as a social construction. The French historian, Philippe Aries, was instrumental in identifying childhood—as many know it today—as a social construction, the existence and recognition of which materialized with the institutionalization of education and health. The categorical conception emerged following the idea of childhood as a social construction and emerged in the 1980s to recognize children and childhood as a category which was not biologically ‘natural’ but rather socially constructed and situated (Ross, 2002).

More recently, the final understanding of childhood through the agentic conception draws on and expands the idea of childhood as a social construct and considers and calls for a consideration of children as social actors, actively negotiating their own identities, and the structures in which they live (Prout & James, 1990). The agentic conception is argued for by many contemporary academics, including geographers who critique the flaws in adopting any of the former conceptions of childhood (developmental, contextual, and categorical). These critiques argue that the former conceptions allow for children to be viewed and treated as incompetent, irrational, and dependent, and pave a (dangerous) path for a politics of representation disguised as 'protection' (Ross, 2002; Ruddick, 2007a; Ruddick, 2007b). Additionally, the critiques argue that the former conceptions focus on children's futures (becoming) rather than on children's present lives (being). The agentic conception argues for a reconstruction of the child as being "as a social actor in his or her own right, who is actively constructing his or her own 'childhood', and who has views and experiences about being a child" (Uprichard, 2008: 304). Through the perspective of 'transcending dualisms'—particularly mind/body from which geographers have contributed knowledge of embodied experiences, geographers have been more reluctant to engage with the dualism of children as being/becoming. More often than not, the 'being' side of the dualism is given accolade and attention in children's geographies.

It is the understanding of childhood and children through the agentic conception which informs much of the modern work within children's geographies. Since 1990, geographic research has seen increasing attention towards children and young people (see for example Aitken, 1994; Matthews & Limb, 1999; Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Aitken, 2001; Sibley, 1995), highlighting how children's knowledge, experiences and representations are important for understanding socio-spatial structures and relationships. Over the last decade or so, work in children's geographies (which for the moment, encompasses work in youth geographies) has grown, focusing primarily on

children's agency in localised and small spaces of the home (e.g. Valentine, 1997; Robson & Ansell, 2000), the park, the playground, (e.g. Karsten, 2003; Thompson & Philo, 2004) and—more recently—the school (Evans, 2006a ; Hemming 2007; Rawlins, 2009).

Following the development of children's geographies as a burgeoning sub-discipline, recent critiques argue that children's geographies are overwhelmingly local (Ansell, 2009), qualitative (Philo, 2000; Halfacree, 2004) absent in policy debates (Smith, 2004) and lacking in rigorous debate, specifically around issues of agency and competency (Vanderbeck, 2008) and theorisation of children as being or becoming (Uprichard, 2008); furthermore, others argue that the label of 'children's geographies' may not allow for inclusion of teenage and youth perspectives and also fails to acknowledge how research with children is different from research with teenagers, not only in respect to institutional codes of ethics, but also dependent upon "the nature of the research and the perceived competence of the children" (Skelton, 2008: 24) neglecting the lives of teenagers and older young people (Skelton & Valentine, 1998). Ansell's (2009) critique offers that within children's geographies, there is an overwhelming emphasis on micro-scale—local research which limits the ability of children's geographers to engage with issues of policy relevance and wider geographic discourses. Drawing on Latour (2005) and his work in developing actor-network theory to confront the dualistic pairings of global/abstract and local/concrete, Ansell (2009) calls for children's geographers to adopt a flat ontology with a focus on embodied subjectivity, an argument which I take up in Chapter 4.

Hopkins & Pain (2007: 287) argue that we should be working towards a creation of a "relational geographies of age" by making connections between geographies of young and old. While I do not give the same attention to teacher's experiences as I do to the girls, I argue that by incorporating the stories, knowledge and observations of old(er) individuals whom have a teacher-student relationship with the young(er) female pupils in my study, I was able to create a dialogue



within my analysis. Highlighting interactions and relationships between the two assumed bounded identity categories is necessary for creating such a dialogue. It has been argued that such a dialogue between children and “those who are actively involved in constructing the policies and discourses that affect children” (Ansell, 2009: 205) is crucial because “we are all actors in the policy process” (Penney & Evans, 2002: 21). Therefore the only way to achieve a transformation of girls’ experiences of PE and physical activity is through an opening up of dialogue between the girls themselves and the teachers who actively structure the PE experience.

Returning to the dualism of understanding children and young people as either being or becoming, rather than adopt either the formerly discussed conception of children as becoming—the approach commonly adhered to within policy discourses or the contemporary approach to children as being—as commonly used in children’s geographies, my thesis is informed by Uprichard’s (2008) work, which argues for a reconstruction of children as being *and* becoming. While acknowledging that this is not a particularly new argument (see Lee, 2002) and is in fact an increasingly utilized theory, Uprichard (2008) forms her argument around what she calls the ‘inherent arrow of time’. Making particular reference to Pirogogine’s (1980) work, rooted in the physical sciences, on time as both being and becoming, Uprichard (2008: 303-304) highlights the failure of dualistically constructing children as either being or becoming, noting that,

“Whilst the extant conceptions of the becoming child are problematic, from a temporal perspective, and an ethical one, it is also problematic not to consider the being child as someone who becomes an adult...this is particularly because of the inherent arrow of time and temporality of being and becoming in the world.”

However, while I agree with Uprichard's (2008) deconstruction of the inherent binaries of being and becoming in relation to children, I am unsettled with her use of time as the definitive (and parallel) entity of explanation. I am also unsettled with Uprichard's (2008) argument that children are both being and becoming. Instead, I believe it would be more fruitful to form a discussion of children and young people as *between* being and becoming within the framework of embodiment.

Moss & Dyck (2003) draw on work by Mouffe (1992) and Young (1990) to stress the importance of recognizing and theorizing the 'in between' categories. Moss & Dyck (2003) use the examples of bisexuals, (in between (and both) hetero and homosexuals) and work on the concept of community (which fluctuates continuously with the addition and subtraction of diverse bodies and tangible structures) to inform their thinking about chronically ill women's bodies which are "in between' hegemonic discourses—not quite ill but not quite healthy, almost deviant, almost disabled and almost abled, both very nearly normal and very nearly deviant" (Moss & Dyck, 2003: 33). In relation to understandings of health and body size/weight, as I attend to in Section 2.4.2, theorising the in between categories allows for a disruption of the dualisms of thin/fat in reference to health.

Additionally theorising young(er) people—particularly those classed as adolescents or teenagers—as the ages of the girls in my study are often defined) as *between* being and becoming highlights the shifting and fluid identities of young people and their embodiments. Barrie Thorne asserts that adolescence is the *transition* period between the 'asexual gender system of childhood and the overtly sexualized gender systems of adulthood' (Thorne, 1993: 135, emphasis added). Visible bodily changes/development are what seem to define adolescence, yet it is important to note that the variation in onset of bodily changes is considerable, from girls completing puberty at eleven to thirteen and boys ranging in age from thirteen to fifteen (Tanner in Thorne, 1993).

While adolescence is historically believed to be a sexual stage, bodily changes are in no way immune to or ignored by social processes which serve to gender and are engendered by individual bodies. As Aitken (2001: 7) noted,

“The fluidity of terms to describe kids and teens seems appropriate to their shifting identities and so I make no excuse for, indeed I make a point of, slipping between concepts such as infant, toddler, youth, child, adolescent and teenager. I do so not to denigrate the important differences between toddlers and adolescents but to point out the baggage (and disempowerment) that is associated with these terms. What particular kind of bodily comportment does the term toddler suggest? What does it mean, for example, to call a 13-year-old a teenager, a gangly youth, an adolescent or a pubescent child.”

As Aitken (2001) identified in the quotation above, there are some notable differences between toddlers and adolescents but what forms the larger critique, is the politically contrived distinctions of the categories of toddler, child, adolescent, teenager, adult, and so forth as well as the recurring binaries of adult/child which are so commonly recognized, and which place and devalue adolescents in the ‘fuzzy’ grey area, in between. The body of the adolescent is perhaps situated at the crux of the bodily continuum, as it represents the equivocal and undefined boundary between the (supposed) easily defined categories of child and adult.

Rather than using the terms toddler, youth, child, and so forth, interchangeably as Aitken (2001) has, I rely on how western social conceptions of childhood and adulthood understand the in between period of adolescence as a *transition (in between)* period. There remain important bodily changes (some visible on the body, and others ‘visible’ in the ways in which the body

presents itself and is socially received) which occur during this transition which inform how adolescent bodies engage with, enjoy and negotiate space, somewhat different from how children negotiate space, particularly through emotions and experiences of enjoyment. Also of importance to this study is how (socially constructed) spaces and other bodies engage with the sexed and gendered adolescent female body, somewhat different from how spaces and other bodies engage with the girl-child body. I believe that the theoretical work on childhood and children is important for and informs my study of adolescent female embodiment. I further this argument through my analysis in Chapter 9.

Not only would this discussion be of use for children's geographers, and studies of childhood, but equally it would provide food for thought for those (geographers and others) theorizing on the body—geographies of corpulence. This also situates children's embodied experience—to be a result of past everyday experiences, capable of forming, enjoying and negotiating the present, and with potential for the future. The emphasis in theorising the 'in between' category allows for an opening up of what matters to children as they experience their embodiments with an emphasis on what it feels like to be doing sport and physical activity—bodily sensations and feelings related to touching spaces, encountering other bodies.

With attention to theoretical understandings of children and childhood, children's geographies has added much to our understanding of how children's lives are constructed, socially and spatially regulated and planned as well as how children experience, contest and negotiate their own lives. Many such understandings however do not make explicit consideration of the child body. Pulling from and weaving together works within children's geographies and geographies of the body, as I do in Section 2.4, therefore allows a more focused understanding for how the child body is approached, contextualised and matters within the literature—and the usefulness of such approaches for my study.

## 2.4 YOUNG(ER) BODIES

Children's geographies have been slow to address the embodied experiences of children and young people (Aitken, 2001). This reluctance is first, in part due to historic studies of childhood, rooted in biology. Critics argue that such former approaches to childhood were reductive and accordingly contemporary social scientists engaging with children and childhood fearing similar criticism, engage with the child body by primarily focusing on social constructions and representations (Prout, 2005; Woodyer, 2008). James et al. (1998) and Woodyer (2008), argue that the loss of focus on the child's body in social research leads to an incomplete understanding of social processes:

“While bodies are present as an empirical phenomenon in child-centred ethnographies, there is little consideration of the body as a corporeal entity. There is a failure to appreciate the role of embodiment in the process through which children participate in social life” (Woodyer, 2008: 350).

Second, the lack of interest in theorizing and researching children's and youth bodies, may in part be due to the identity of the researcher (as an adult) and her/his attempts to situate her/himself within her/his research—which is not easily done if you are not a child. This hypothesis however ignores the fact that we all experienced childhood and (generally) hold memories of childhood which influence how we negotiate our embodied adult lives and adult identities, and even our approach to research (Horton & Kraftl, 2006b) and how we (often as parents) attempt to negotiate and structure our children's lives. Rawlins (2009: 1093)

demonstrates how parents' "memories of their own childhoods were also important in their narratives of family eating practices."

Third, the exclusion of children's bodies may be due in part to the challenges and paradoxes present in the (majority accepted) recent collective academic belief that we need to discuss/portray children and youth as 'beings' whereas when speaking of/researching on bodies academics most often emphasise and theorize bodily 'becoming' (Bell & Valentine, 1997) with attention to flesh and human material matter which is always in the process of growing or losing or gaining weight (Longhurst, 2001) . There is a tension lying at the interface of exploring both childhood being and bodily becoming which I explore in Chapter 8.

Finally, I would also argue that part of the reason for exclusion of discourse about the body in children's geographies is related to maintaining hegemonic norms of what is considered 'acceptable' and legitimate in geographic research and theory. Longhurst (2001: 25) explains, "what constitutes appropriate issues and legitimate topics to teach and research in geography comes to be defined in terms of reason, rationality, and transcendent visions, as though these can be separated out from passion, irrationality, messiness and embodied sensation." Last, yet cardinally, with respect to ethical research practices, there remain complications in gathering primary data on children's and youth bodies and embodied experiences—a challenge I attend to in relation to methodological choices in Chapter 3.

Recently, children's geographers are beginning to incorporate theoretical work on the body within research on/with children (Horschelmann & Colls, 2010). Within the budding contingent of children's geographers who are theorising and researching children's bodies, there is a move to expand the ways in which children's geographers could research and theorize the child body. In response to this call for incorporating the child or youth body into children's geographies, recent work addresses "contestations that exist in relation to dominant ways that the bodies of

children and young people have been positioned, constructed and deployed across a range of policy and popular contexts” (Horschelmann & Colls, 2010: 1). This work is important in showing us how children—through the body—are constructed, understood and situated, often through adult power structures of parental or political control (Prout, 2000, Aitken, 2001).

Additionally, recent work by Ansell (2009) and Horton & Kraftl (2009b) also makes steps towards incorporating the body into children’s geographies. Ansell’s (2009) work is particularly useful in my attention towards the scaling or de-scaling of childhood in respect to the provisioning of Curriculum for Excellence and government health targets for children. While a number of geographers have recently critiqued the usefulness of scale in human geography (Marston et al., 2005), chapter 4 draws from Ansell’s (2009) work to understand how the body provides an understanding that for children there are real, felt, experienced differences between relations of near and immediate (space, objects, events) and far and future.

The focus of much of this work, however, is often the construction, representation, resistance or discipline of the body that is being researched rather than the fleshy or social embodied *experience(s)* of the child or young person. While bodily representation and conceptualisation is important to my research, it has real limitations (as addressed in Section 2.2), accordingly I attend to the ways in which conceptualisations of health and gender flow within girls’ experiences of their embodiment—which is sometimes relative to, and other times challenges, conceptions. Such childhood bodily experiences, I argue may be particularly tied to everydayness, as Horton & Kraftl, (2006a: 77-78) urging for the ways in which children's geographies could and should engage with the child body argue:

1. “An attention to bodies might direct us to all manner of (ostensibly small and banal) bodily details and goings-on which matter profoundly in the geographies which concern us”

Bodily details include feelings and sensations of the body in relation to the spaces surrounding and of which the body surrounds. Such spaces are made up of matters—material things produced by bodies. In a further paper, Horton & Kraftl, (2006b) argue that material things especially, the smallest, most banal, every things are those which may matter the most to children and are therefore worthy of academic attention. I pay attention to everydayness, material things and their relation to bodies in Chapter 5. Paying attention to children’s embodied experiences, also allows children’s geographers to reflect more on “our own embodied experiences (of being ‘children’s geographers’). For the embodied acts and experiences of doing research are, too-often, hushed up (Moje, 2000)” (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 77-78). I agree that the embodied experiences of both the researcher and the researched are of importance and can be understood, at times in dialogue with each other. Furthermore, we are interested in particular research subjects as a result of our embodied and spatial positioning or location and past experiences (as I made explicit in Chapter 1). I continue this argument in Chapter 3 where I discuss the role of reflexivity in ethnographic research and continue to pay attention to my embodied acts of doing research, reflexively throughout the thesis.

I now turn to a discussion of the literature in which children, their bodies and embodied experiences are present from three perspectives most relevant to my research. Drawing also on earlier debates about the body from feminist and geographic perspectives on adult bodies (Sections 2.2 and 2.3), this discussion considers gendered spaces (inside and outside of the school)



and bodies (2.4.1), construction regulation and feelings of healthy through child bodies (2.4.2), and lastly embodied power relations between adults and children (2.4.3).

#### *2.4.1 YOUNG(ER) BODIES, GENDER AND SPACE*

The institutional and educational space of the school and various spaces within the school (classrooms, bathrooms, dining halls) provide spaces for feminist geographical enquiry into gendered practices and experiences (Holloway et al., 2000). Additional feminist work considers the gendering of spaces related to sport and physical activity such as the space of fitness centres and playing fields (Johnston, 1996) and physical education (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002). Much of the research on gender in institutional space has highlighted how “gender and sexual identities [might] be constructed and contested through institutional spaces [and] also that our understandings of these institutional sites are themselves actively produced through notions of gender and sexuality” (Holloway et al., 2000: 618). Key to these ideas is that institutions—and my research is interested in the school as an institution—“are located within places (which must themselves be theorised as porous rather than bounded)” (Holloway et al., 2000: 618). Whereas the school space and the discourses within the school space are actively involved in creating a child’s gender identity, the school itself is situated in a particular place and the discourses within the school are additionally informed by and intra-act with wider social and political rules and codes outside of the institutions’ boundaries (Shilling, 1991). (Rawlins, 2009: 1087) clearly demonstrates how institutions themselves are the spaces within which relationships between “normative values” of the state and “individual choices” are mediated through.

Holloway et al. (2000) provide a case study of three English schools to explore how the gendered spaces of the school and particularly the information technology (IT) classroom is

reflected in girls' and boys' attitudes towards and participation in IT. Also important to this research is how the discourses of teachers and between teachers and students reaffirmed traditional gender roles in the IT classroom. Conclusions from this research argue that boys were more likely to express an interest and enjoyment in using computers and used computers more often and in a variety of spaces (home, school) and for a wider variety of projects than girls. Additionally, boys more than girls, viewed computer skills as necessary for their future careers. Drawing from these conclusions, the authors suggest that policy makers look towards "teachers' classroom practices and pupil cultures when formulating policies if they [policy makers] want to promote social inclusion [in IT]" (Holloway et al., 2000: 630). Much of the work on gender is concerned with the ways in which girls miss out on opportunities to participate and learn skills relative to those which are valued in society (IT, science and maths) arguing for gender equity.

Much like the space of the IT classroom, the space of PE and its associated qualities—sports and equipment which defines and fills the space—are often viewed as masculine spaces or domains. The gendered discourse of the space of PE and of the activities and sports provided in (British) PE, are derived from wider public (western) discourse which "teaches girls [and boys] to polarize (heterosexual) masculinity and (heterosexual) femininity and their associated collective [gendered] identities"(Cockburn and Clarke, 2002). Much research on girls' experiences of sport, physical education and physical activity (PA) has focused on gender and the body or embodiment as lenses of analysis, revealing that gendered assumptions of embodiment encourage and permit the development of masculine and feminine sporting identities (Wellard, 2007b). The labelling of specific spaces and/or sports and activities within the school as masculine or feminine is derived from wider labelling of spaces and sports/activities outside school bounds. I highlighted in Section 2.2, how the otherness of bodies occurs through space, through the development of normative

codes of gender and; within this understanding, bodies which do or will not confirm to socio-spatial codes of normality, are othered.

Cockburn & Clarke's (2002) research reveals how girls are either identified as 'doers' of PE which marks and others them as tomboys outside of the space of PE, or they are identified as 'non-doers,' of sport which marks them as "girlies" within the space of PE. Either identity label creates a double-bind for girls as they move in and out of the space of the PE class. If girls are classed as 'non-doers' of sport they are met with exasperation from many PE teachers (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002). Girls classed as 'non-doers' conform to the hegemonic constructions of femininity; they are challenged and requested to drop this identity in the space of PE. If girls are classed as "doers" they, and often their boyfriends (if they have boyfriends) are asked to defend their heterosexuality (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002). As some research reveals, a woman or girl who chooses to participate in such sports as those labelled masculine may have her sexuality called into question as part of the process of othering (Johnston, 1996; Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Heywood & Dworkin, 2003). Cockburn & Clarke (2002: 661) argue that classing girls as 'doers' or 'non-doers' results in

"a paradox, a double standard to which teenage girls and young women are subjected...Either girls resist the dominant forces of the gender order and its hegemonic masculinity...or they resist the more localized forces of PE like those who are described by Rebecca as being 'into boys' by disengaging with sport and PE altogether. In this way teenage girls and young women either jeopardize their comfortable 'belonging' in the collective ('girlie') feminine identity, or they risk their positions both as successful students, as autonomous individuals with the lifelong benefits and enjoyment of physical activity".

Heywood & Dworkin, (2003) conducted focus groups with boys and girls in American elementary and high schools to engage in dialogue about media representations of the bodies of six women sports figures. Often these sports icons were met with comments from the students such as “that’s the woman who took off her shirt” (Brandi Chastain), “Is that the woman with the nails?” (Marion Jones), “sexy mama” (Women’s Professional Billiards Association Champion, Jeanette Lee) (Heywood & Dworkin, 2003: 134-140). As these comments are reflections of wider portrayals of women in sport, the comments reveal the media construction of women’s bodies in sport which often overemphasize femininity in its entirety or of specific body parts such as the breast, hair or fingernails. This reinforces the ways in which girls or women who play sport or do physical exercise in any space are often asked to confirm their femininity and heterosexuality through visual expressions and decorations of the body.

Within the space of the Scottish school, core physical education is a curriculum requirement for all boys and girls in year groups S1-S4. Dominant masculine discourses operating within many PE classes is one that runs counter to the dominant gender discourses operating within many wider (cultural and school) spaces outside of the PE class. Girls are required to participate in the institution of PE which in many schools, “runs counter to [the] emphasised femininity [of girls and women] so sanctioned by most of society” (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002: 654). While uniform requirements have relaxed over the years, British PE curriculum requires all students to wear a ‘kit’ or uniform which includes t-shirts, shorts and trainers or tennis shoes (Evans, 2006a). Girls are most often required to remove all jewellery and tie back long hair. I consider the extent to which discourses, practices and negotiations such as these operated within my research schools and intra-acted with girls’ experiences of PE in Chapter 6.

As introduced in Section 2.2, Young (1990) explores gendered embodiment through a theory of inhibited intentionality wherein feminine body comportment is understood to be inhibited when confronted with a bodily task requiring forward physical momentum. Young's (1990) understanding of inhibited intentionality, which I explore in depth through Chapters 6 and 7, is employed in geographic perspectives on girls' embodied experiences. Evans (2006a) investigates girls' experiences of PE, drawing in part, on the theory of inhibited intentionality in respect to femininity, to understand girls' learned and performative feelings of shame when participating in masculine spaces of sport and physical activity.

While extensive work within feminist, poststructural and sociological perspectives explore the themes of gender and the body through investigations of girls' experiences of PE and school sport (Flintoff, 2008), my concern is twofold: first, despite feminist contributions to research and practice, girls continue to disengage and stop participating—pointing to a lack of enjoyment on behalf of many girls. Second, much feminist and pedagogic researchers are increasingly concerned that by not participating, girls “lose out in terms of their rights to access the beneficial aspects of participation in sport such as health, self-esteem, and enjoyment” (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002: 651) . (see also (Talbot (1986) and The Health Education Authority (1995). But within such concern lies an implicit assumption that participation in sport is unquestionably beneficial: healthy and enjoyable for girls (more sport = more health (Evans et al., 2007)). Therefore, much more work remains to be done in maintaining gender, while furthering the analysis of girls' experiences through themes of health and the body. As physical education—particularly in Scotland with the redesign of PE into the Health and Wellbeing framework of Curriculum for Excellence—is increasingly tied to and tasked with teaching and creating health, it is important that a closer examination of these intra-related themes is present in research with children and young people.

#### 2.4.2 *YOUNG(ER) BODIES, GENDER, HEALTH IN CHILDREN'S GEOGRAPHIES*

An increasing number of children's geographers are engaging with questions of health in respect to 'obesity'. On the one hand, in support of popular obesity discourses and research, (Cunningham, 2003: 126-127) argues that "Geography enjoys a reputation as holistic discipline...that is precisely what it needed to help unpack the complexity of the childhood obesity problem". On the other hand, in critique of popular obesity discourses, a number of geographers researching with children are asking critical questions about government health policy and the various school programmes designed to change children's eating practices and physical activity levels (Hemming 2007; Colls and Evans 2009; Evans 2009; Evans and Colls 2009; Rawlins 2009).

Isono et al. (2009) point out that adults voluntarily avail themselves of weight loss programmes through dieting and exercise; however, as Gard & Wright (2001) urge, when such programmes or methods are introduced through schools, where children's attendance is mandatory—even when the intention of weight loss is not explicit—we must question the ethics and pay attention to the ways in which children and young people experience and interpret these programmes. Contemporary discourses of public health policy and programmes aimed at children in attempts to curb or monitor obesity levels have been critiqued by geographers in a number of ways with particular attention to children's bodies (Colls & Evans, 2009; Evans, 2009; Evans & Colls, 2009). These critiques are concerned with the ways in which health is 'measured', and built dualistically through thin, not fat bodies; additional critiques are concerned with the ways in which feminine health is constructed, as well as the ways in which children are positioned with emphasis on both the future of the child and the relationship between child and state health, creating a relationship of assumed responsibility. I explore these critiques and the ways in which they inform my research through this section.

Programmes of 'health' which have a common focus on constructing healthy bodies are critiqued for being couched inside a western government supported discourse which dualistically constructs health as the visibly thin, fit and firm body and un or ill health as the fat and unfit body (Evans & Colls, 2009b; Evans, 2009). Dualistic constructions of health arise from the use of the Body Mass Index to 'measure' bodies and health. Body Mass Index is calculated using the commonly accepted equation, weight (kg)/height (m<sup>2</sup>). BMI classifications are presented in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1: Body Mass Index Classifications**

<b>Underweight</b>	<b>Normal/Healthy</b>	<b>Overweight</b>	<b>Obese</b>
BMI < 18.5	BMI 18.5-24.9	BMI 25.0-29.9	BMI > 30.0

BMI measurements are used widely by medical and health experts, schools and individuals to determine health. The UK government and the National Health Service (NHS) support the use of the Body Mass Index (BMI) calculation to determine what a healthy weight is for an individual's height. Such classifications construct a binary between thin and fat, reserving the category of 'normal/healthy' only for those individuals with BMI between 18.5 and 24.9. Within such labelling bodies, are either healthy or unhealthy with little regard for the total emotional, embodied experience of the person (Buragard 2009; Wann, 2009). The National Institute of Health (NIH) recognizes that the BMI score is a "reliable indicator of total body fat" but the limits are "that it [BMI] may overestimate body fat in athletes or others who have a muscular build" and "underestimate body fat in older persons and others who have lost muscle mass" (National Institutes of Health). Additionally, the current cut-off for overweight (BMI 25) was reduced from a

BMI of 29 in 1999. This move made “millions of people who were previously [classed as] ‘normal’ weight instantly overweight” (Evans & Colls, 2009b: 1058).

For children, the use of BMI is a particular concern to some critics as it must account for age, relying “on the assumption that all children grow at the same rate” (Evans & Colls, 2009b: 1058). For children the category ‘overweight’ is identified as a weight falling above the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile on 1990 age growth curves. Evans and Colls (2009) draw on an interview with the inventor of BMI figures for children, Tim Cole at the Institute of Child Health, who stated that the figures are not absolute and serve little or no basis for establishing whether a child is healthy or not.

Despite such concerns in measuring children’s health through BMI, expressed by both health professionals and academics, BMI measurement programmes have run in English schools through the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) which Evans & Colls (2009b) investigated through focusing on children’s experiences of the measuring procedure. While I did not investigate body weight measurement or monitoring programmes, and did not include any quantitative data analysis through my own research, I did engage with observations and participant reflections on fitness ability testing and measuring which I address in Chapter 7. Accordingly, theoretical engagements with BMI are important to my study because an uncontested and politically supported belief in the ability of BMI to measure health may be translated into wider and everyday social and moral readings of bodies and reach into spaces where additional bodily measurements—of ability—are conducted. Evans, (2006b: 261) argues that dualistic discourses of health which drive many school-based health programmes, are contributing to “moral readings of (fat) bodies”. In other words, through everyday relations with others, within spaces which carry overtones of or are underpinned by health policy, such as PE, one does not need a scale and metre stick to make measurement of and visible judgement on a



person's health. I draw on work by Evans & Colls (2009b) and Wann (2009) to illustrate this point further.

Evans & Colls (2009b) argue that such moral readings of certain (particularly fat and obese) bodies as either 'at risk' or more 'risky' than other (non fat or non-obese) bodies, are tied to and are held as justification for various discriminatory, stigmatizing and demoralizing practices of those individuals who do not conform to a very specific (socially accepted, thinner) body type. Medicalizing body weight through a correlation of a measure of BMI with underweight, normal/healthy, overweight or obese, (Wann, 2009: xiii) argues, "fuels anti-fat prejudice and discrimination in all areas of society. People think if fat people need to be cured, there must be something wrong with them. Cures should work; if they do not, it is the fat person's fault". This thinking "give[s] permission on a daily basis for ridicule and harassment and the right to publicly monitor the body shape of others" Gard & Wright (2001: 546). Such cultural and political moral readings and polarised discussions of bodies as either healthy or unhealthy have been attributed to such—primarily female—conditions as anorexia and bulimia and poor body image (Bordo, 1993, Rothblum, 1994 and Rice & Larkin, 2005). I consider the extent to which moral readings of weight—without the assistance of scales—and health on girls' bodies operated amongst girls and PE teachers, in Chapter 7.

Not only is health dualistically understood through associations of weight, but when health is paired within understandings of fitness—as is often the case in PE—and femininity, embedded dualisms arise. Embedded within the critique of the dualistic construction of health is a consideration of gendered constructions of the healthy feminine body. The healthy female body is often presented in contemporary western culture, with images of the fit, slim, slender, beautiful, and *controlled* body. In opposition, the fat female body has been culturally constructed and represented—in the media—as the body which is lazy, out of control, unhealthy, and undisciplined

(Dejong 1980; Dejong and Kleck 1986 cited in Bell and Valentine, 1997). To this extent, exercise or physical activity is understood as the practice through which the feminine body, in particular, must engage in to create slenderness or thinness and therefore health. Understood in this way, the thin feminine body is viewed as representative of fitness and health at the same time that the fat body is viewed as representative of unfeminine (Hartley, 2001) unfit (Rice, 2007) and unhealthy. Such one-dimensional understandings of body size/shape and health may hinder the possibility and potential for girls and women to break away from and challenging such notions. At the same time that programmes and policies of health aimed at children are shown to adhere to one-dimensional understandings of the body, size, weight, physical fitness and health, there are additional critiques related to the quality and act of responsibility for children which recall earlier discussions of 'being' and 'becoming' referred to in Section 2.3.

Children's geographers critique government funded and supported health programmes for constructing childhood first as a time during which children should be regulated, moulded and shaped—primarily through education—into *future* adults (Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Prout, 2000). The critique involves a consideration of responsibility wherein childhood is seen as a time during which adults should act responsibly and be responsible for children. These two critiques are explored below.

The first construction of childhood as a period for education is driven by the construction of the behaviour of children as innately natural yet requiring moulding and shaping from adults (society) to achieve eventual societal acceptance and 'become' adults. Valentine (2009: 4) writes:

“The process through which children make the transition from childhood to

adulthood has therefore been about the management and discipline of children's bodies both to protect them from harm until they are adult enough to be responsible for themselves and also to discipline them in order to ensure they learn to behave in controlled, what are perceived to be adult-like ways."

This critique suggests that government health related programmes are designed to make present children into future adult citizens who will be healthier than they currently are. Socialisation and culture are viewed as processes necessary to transforming the child into a functioning and productive future adult member of society, rather than processes which children actively negotiate, challenge, and participate in at the present (Ross, 2002). Children's bodies are identified as those bodies most in need of 'attention' through education and socialisation and those bodies which are most reflective of state health (Rice, 2007) Gard and Wright, 2005). Accordingly, the body of the child is linked to the health of the school and the health of the nation (James, 1995; and Rice, 2007). The rationale for the Fit for Girls programme confirms this understanding: "It is undisputed that increasing participation in physical activity and sport is good for national health" (Fit for Girls, programme overview, 1). Thus it is such practices and policies in the space of PE where children's bodies and physical activity and consumption habits are measured and monitored to encourage both the "well being of the *future* adult" and the health and well being of the *present* nation (James, 1999; 25, emphasis added).

Particularly the media, biomedical discourse, and the government support and construct the ideal healthy body as the thin body and in particular it is the child's body which is targeted in programmes of monitoring and measurement to assess children's body mass and provide a picture of national health.

“This explicit linking of the welfare of children’s bodies to the future welfare of the nation was a consistent feature of nineteenth century social and political thought and bears witness to the growing perception of the temporality of childhood and the temporary, but none the less critical, nature of the child’s body: it was a body that needed to be nurtured in the present, its changes and development monitored, to ensure the well-being of the future adult it would become” (James, 1999; 25).

Rice's (2007) research reveals that a variety of (Canadian) public health campaigns (both in and outside schools) equate first, the solidness of body muscle with strength of the nation and second, the health of children with the health of the state:

Through a chain of binaries and signifiers, messages that associated firm active bodies with national strength also linked a flabby sedentary citizenry with stagnation of the state. Signifying the future health and prosperity of western nations, children typically were targeted as a group needing special attention (Rice, 2007: 163).

Not surprisingly then, children are encouraged to respond positively (i.e. participate) especially within the space of the school, to state-led initiatives to develop norms of an active, embodied form of citizenship through sport and physical activity.

In relation to physical activity within obesity discourses there is a constant emphasis on what the body should become—thin and therefore healthy and what the body should avoid—fat and therefore unhealthy. There is little to no encouragement for children to participate in physical activity out of pleasure or freedom of movement (Evans et al., 2007) or to deeply investigate the reasons why so many children and young people find physical activity unenjoyable.

The second construction of childhood is driven by the construction of children in contemporary western public health discourse as 'irresponsible' and incapable of making 'healthy' decisions, therefore requiring a more responsible body—governments, parents, and teachers—to do the decision making (Rawlins, 2009). As Hemming's (2007: 367) research shows, the reason for children's decisions often lies in emphasis on "emotional experiences of fun and enjoyment" but this does not necessarily mean that the choices they make are unhealthy ones. There is an acknowledged difficulty in discussing responsibility particularly as it refers to both "a quality, that is, being responsible and as an action, that is, acting responsibly" (Colls & Evans, 2008: 616). Many governments claim their actions as acting responsibly for children. The (UK) government has assumed 'responsibility' for children and has distributed various responsible roles to other adults in authoritative positions (such as teacher and parental roles), within the space of the school. Some of these programmes which are tied to dominant discourses of health aim to measure and reduce the size of children's bodies through changes to the school's physical built environment or curriculum. Additionally, governing bodies have designated certain (adult) people (some parents and teachers) to possess the quality of being responsible.

Colls & Evans (2008) and Evans et al. (2003) identify that the above belief and rationale for taking responsibility for children away from children, is problematic for several reasons. First, is the underlying assumption that various foods and activities are clearly divided into categories which are good (healthy) or bad (unhealthy). With respect to food, such categorising creates a moral reading of food such that the labels 'fresh', 'natural' 'fat free', 'no-sugar' are assigned to 'good' foods, while the labels 'high salt', 'high fat', 'high sugar' and so forth, are assigned to 'bad' foods (Colls & Evans, 2008). With respect to activities, watching television, playing computer games and other sedentary activities are labelled 'unhealthy' while running, jumping, playing sport, dancing, and other activities which involve vigorous body movements are labelled as

'healthy'. This categorisation which attaches emotions and anxiety and creates disciplinary relationships between food, exercise and the body is identified as problematic by those researching and theorising conditions such as anorexia (Evans et al., 2005) and bulimia and anorexia athletic (or the female athlete triad).

Categorising food and activities individually and relationally as 'good' or 'bad' is apparent within much of western culture in such spaces of the home and school, where in assertions of control and discipline intra-act with micro-negotiations between children and adults. Such negotiations, initiated by adults perpetuate the binaries of healthy and unhealthy. In the home children are often given sweet treats (unhealthy or bad food) as rewards for conforming to parental rules and requests (good behaviour). At an early age then, children are taught that sweet, salty, high fat (bad) food is a reward for good behaviour, conforming to adult desires. In primary school, Hemming (2007: 365) reveals that physical activity/active play/sports (healthy activities) which were enjoyed by children, are sometimes withdrawn for punishment of bad behaviour:

"...if children did not co-operate and behave well, an effective consequence to discourage such behaviour was to withdraw fun and enjoyable sports and active play. Children who behaved badly could find themselves losing break time and active play on the playground, and if the whole class failed to co-operate during PE, the lesson could be stopped and the children returned to the classroom."

In Hemming's (2007) study physical activity was viewed by many young children as a fun activity and accordingly was held as ransom for good behaviour; physical activity is taken away upon production of bad behaviour. When children learn to adapt and tailor their behaviours to satisfy

or fulfil adult wishes and desires, and/or to achieve something that they wish for (a sweet or the chance to do a fun activity), they may be increasingly drawn into a disciplinary relationship with their own bodies, wherein they are increasingly alienated from their desires and wishes as they have to satisfy the desires and wishes of others, in order to achieve an end goal. Effectively, children are learning to deny what their bodies truly need in terms of nutrition and physical activity.

Lastly, it may be true that many children's rationale for eating a certain food or doing a certain activity is because that food or activity creates enjoyable emotional and embodied sensations or feelings. However, this does not mean that children of any age innately believe certain foods (fruits, vegetables, low-fat, low-sugar foods) and certain activities (PE, sport, dance, and so forth) are full of or absent of 'fun' qualities. Nor does it mean that children lack general knowledge about public health discourse (Hemming 2007 and Rawlins 2009). Children, in school were not historically directly given responsibility for their own health, but they may have a better understanding of their health than is often recognised.

Interestingly, a number of academics demonstrate how individualist discourses now are being introduced to schools "which places the responsibility for health firmly with the individual" (Gard & Wright, 2001: 543). Within contemporary obesity discourses, "responsibility for health" is increasingly placed "firmly with the individual. Physical education practices thus focuses on individual attitudes and behaviours on the assumption that each individual is at risk of overweight/obesity". Within obesity discourses where health is understood to be the embodiment of a thin, or not fat form, students are taught to take and accept responsibility for their behaviours "on the assumption that each individual is at risk of overweight/obesity" and has a role to play in preventing it (Gard & Wright, 2001: 543). This individualist discourse of responsibility is clearly visible in the new Scottish Curriculum for Excellence Health and wellbeing,

'Experiences and Outcomes' document. The document explains that pupils should be learning about health through the links between physical activity and health including through an investigation of the relationship between diet and physical activity and *pupils' role in preventing obesity* (The Scottish Government, 2011b, emphasis added).

This discourse may make it very difficult for "young people to either escape or avoid the normalising effects of obesity/health discourse" (Evans et al., 2007: 65). However, if we look more towards how children privilege enjoyment and pleasure in their lives and experiences (as I do in particular through Chapters 5 and 8), we can see how they may be able to negotiate, resist or challenge the hegemonic structures within discourses of health and how children's knowledge of and experiences of their own bodies may point towards more holistic ways of understanding health. It is this role, of children as active agents within the space of the school, which I turn to now, with a consideration of how children negotiate, resist, and challenge, the hegemonic structures of the school.

#### *2.4.3 POWER AND AGENCY IN CHILDREN'S GEOGRAPHIES*

Children are asked, even expected, to conform to a variety of gendered and bodily social 'norms' yet they also hold an arguable amount of agency over the spaces in which they occupy (i.e. home, school, park, youth club, etc.) and may actively challenge disciplinary codes and hegemonic norms such as those of traditional femininity or sexuality. The concept of children's social agency has been heavily researched by many children's geographers; within this is a call, for children to be heard, valued and self-represented. However, when citing the danger in children's geographic work as consensus based research, Vanderbeck (2008: 397) notes that "...the standards by which children would be deemed incompetent to make decisions or represent



themselves is a point of non-discussion. Although the subfield has repeatedly foregrounded children's competent agency, the theoretical/empirical/political case for maintaining aspects of adult authority is rarely discussed". In the space of the school and particularly within spaces which support obesity discourses while at the same time desire to see girls' participation in physical activity increase, "the case for maintaining adult authority" must be questioned (Vanderbeck, 2008).

The space of the school and the classroom are sites of constant negotiation, changing power differentials, and contestation between educators (undeniably with their own experiences and beliefs) who are expected to deliver a curriculum (mandated by the government) and students who are expected to follow, perform and achieve at the same time as they are learning and wanting to develop their identities. As Hemming (2007) notes, often the curriculum (and the government agendas on which the curriculum is based), contradicts children's values and discourses. The curriculum, government agendas and school management may also contradict and/or restrict individual teacher's values and discourses placing limitations on some teachers who do not conform to the status quo. Additionally, as previously discussed in Section 2.4.1, gendered notions of what is considered appropriate, in terms of bodily presentation and behaviour in one space of the school—such as in the space of PE—is problematically inappropriate in other spaces. Thus the curriculum of PE (and gendered discourses), often contradict gendered discourses and notions of appropriate femininity for girls outside of PE. This refers specifically to "ideological (as well as structural constraints" such as those "pressures to conform to emphasised femininity: to be traditionally pretty, to appear conventionally fashionable, and to pay constant attention to their appearance" which

“...severely limit [girls] behaviour outside the norm of emphasized femininity and particularly within the gendered domain of physical education. Clearly contradictions will arise between this emphasized femininity so sanctioned by most of society, and the institution of PE, where the requirements of teenage girls and young women run counter to it” (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002: 652-654).

Not only are government (and other) programmes limited in addressing these issues, but disciplinary practices in the primary school, such as withholding PE unless better behaviour is achieved or handing out detentions, may work against (future) secondary school health initiatives which aim to increase children’s and specifically girls’, activity levels. It is important to understand how children of all ages are, in different ways, already in the processes of negotiation and challenging curriculum and other aspects of the school through embodied and emotive actions and expressions and through their own understandings and experiences through the body when engaging with concepts such as ‘health’ and ‘gender’.

Saugeres notes, ‘individuals are not passive recipients of [...] structural constraints, they are themselves active agents in the reproduction and negotiation of institutional reality and structures’ (Saugeres, 2000: 589 in Hemming, 2007). So, while on the one hand, children are expected to conform to curriculum requirements, the reality of the classroom is that in a variety of discursive and material ways, children are actively involved in defying, constructing, and modifying curricular beliefs and school rules—often through embodied acts of refusing to bring or wear mandatory PE kit, sitting or ‘opting out’ of specific activities, participating unenthusiastically in activities, or subverting dominant constructions of themselves—their bodies. Additionally, and under this framework of negotiation and agency, power, as it is theorized by Foucault (1978, 1980, 2003) is a set of nested actions and reactions to actions. Gallagher (2009) demonstrates this

nesting effect stating that “large-scale powers depend for their effectivity upon smaller power relations. A state policy is only able to change school practices via a vast web of smaller power relations between MPs, civil servants, administrators, teachers, social workers, classroom assistants and children” (Gallagher, 2009 : 91). Elaborating on the nesting of power theory Gallagher (2009) demonstrates how actions of power do not always produce the outcomes desired by those who are presumed powerful and sometimes while desirable outcomes are produced, there may be additional undesirable side effects. I return to this question of understanding power as nested—a set of actions upon actions—in Chapter 5.

To encourage more girls to participate in sport and physical activity, and return girls’ engagements with physical activity and relationships with their bodies to ones of health and enjoyment, discourses of health and gender, which shape curriculum, delivery and social relationships, must be questioned and challenged, and engaged with intra-actively. We must look towards girls’ understandings and experiences of health and gender for better knowledge of how girls’ feel about their own and others bodies inside physical activity spaces. I address this argument in Chapters 7 and 8.

## **2.5 CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter followed from Chapter 1 where I discussed the body with respect to its matter (material, weight) and mattering from political and personal perspectives. Intra-active relations between the socially constructed and marked body and fleshy experience are the primary foci for the research; accordingly, this chapter first mapped relevant debates on the body from feminist and geographic engagement with the adult body through concepts of gendered conceptualisations, markings and negotiations in space. Continuing through engagements with

the body as intra-active, I argued that theorising embodied experience—with specific attention to having a fleshy body and feelings derived from matter touching, acting and being in gendered spaces of sport, is necessary for understanding socio-spatial relations and dominant power structures of gender and health.

More recently there has been an explicit move to consider the child body and embodied experiences of children within children's geographies. I situate my thesis within this move, maintaining that everydayness—and the material things, practices and bodies that go along with everydayness, may be particularly important to children's experiences (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a; Horton & Kraftl, 2006b). As well as drawing on the recent literature on children in geography and making explicit connections between theories of childhood and the child body, my thesis utilises understandings of gendered embodiment, performance and capacity—agency, in the space of physical education (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002 and Evans, 2006a) to address, in part, my second research question. The institutional space of the school is not immune to the wider gendered discourses operating outside school bounds. Therefore I reviewed related literature which considered the gendering of spaces—and the bodies which occupy such spaces—of sport and fitness inside and outside of school.

Spaces of and bodies within sport are often assigned masculine labels or identities. Sport and fitness and their respective discursive and material spaces and characteristics are additionally labelled as 'healthy' by western discourse. Therefore, this chapter reviewed literature, which critiqued the ways in which health has been constructed by the UK government. This literature reflects on dualistic and moral constructions of health, the use of BMI to measure child health and responsibility for health. This section of the literature review addressed part of my second research question which seeks to address government and popular western cultural supported discourses of health. My final research question addresses changes made within the school to

specifically address girl's participation, within the understanding of girls as a closed and unified category as discussed in Chapter 1. This question is threaded throughout my thesis, but I focus specifically in Chapter 6 on the ways in which girls intra-act with wider conceptions of gender associated with bodies, spaces and activities sport and physical activity. The literature review has identified the issues which are of importance to my study drawing from children's geographies, geographies of the body, feminist geographies and sociology; furthermore, I have identified the gaps which the thesis seeks to fill by focusing on 'what matters' to the embodied geographies of girls' experiences of physical activity. An opportunity that focusing on embodiment and embodied experience affords the researcher, is that it allows for a better understanding of what participants see, say, do, think or are (Harrison 2000 in Horton and Kraftl 2006), because everything "we do is done with and through our bodies" (Horton and Kraftl 2006: 77).

For my study, embodiment provides the focus for analysis through an understanding of how girls experience (through the material and discursive body) various spaces of school sport and exercise. Drawing on embodied experience, through a feminist approach, contributes to additional knowledge of the ways in which we—as academics, parents, teachers, sports providers, girls themselves, and other interested individuals—understand girls' experiences of and participation in sport and exercise. The question of 'how' to do research on and with 'the body' and gendered embodied experience requires that we pay attention to the research methodology and design. Moving closer to the field, I present the research methodology and design now in Chapter 3.

## Chapter 3

### *METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND RESEARCH DESIGN*

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

“Approaching embodiment...requires careful thinking about the methodologies which we use to research young lives” (Horschelmann & Colls, 2010: 6-7).

“If children’s geographies are to connect with, and contribute to the broader discipline, then the methodological insights must be afforded the attention they deserve” (vanBlerk & Kesby, 2009: 2).

Designing a research methodology which is able to capture and reveal intra-active fleshy experiences and embodied conceptualisations of young people through the themes of health and gender requires careful planning. Linking the methodology explicitly to the research questions outlined in Chapter 1, the study adopts a feminist ethnographic approach to work with female pupils and school sports providers (PE teachers and Active Schools staff) in two Scottish primary schools and three Scottish secondary schools. The ethnographic approach required my participation in the research as both a subject and object (Abu-Lughold, 1991) adopting multiple and sometimes changing roles. Specifically, the approach involved the use of multiple qualitative methods facilitating and enabling the various participant groups to express their understandings, experiences and knowledge and allowing an understanding of my identity, influence, and involvement in/with the research, to varying degrees, through the process of reflexivity. In addition to the role of researcher I was also a participant, at times doing PE with the pupils or

carrying out tasks at the request of teachers; in the primary schools I held an additional role as the facilitator for a girls' Keep Active Club.

Increasingly, feminist researchers and children's geographers agree that researchers must attend to ethics by reflecting critically upon the chosen approaches adopted when researching participants' everyday lives, not as an afterthought, or only during the fieldwork stage, but before, during and after the research takes place (Hopkins & Bell, 2008; Jaggar, 2008). As Stacey (1988: 23) demonstrates, attention to research ethics is imperative, especially when research depends upon the development of intimate human research relationships such as is the case in ethnographies. Accordingly, my discussion of research ethics, rather than presented as a standalone afterthought, is threaded throughout this chapter and appears in subsequent empirical chapters where research encounters required reflexivity when encountering ethical dilemmas. However, I also make explicit my understanding of and commitment to ethics in Section 3.4 with attention to ethics and reflexivity in the field. This chapter presents first, the rationale for the methodology (3.2), second a presentation of the research design (3.3), third, a discussion of ethics (3.4) and fourth, a detailed discussion of the individual methods (3.5). A discussion of data analysis is presented in Section 3.6 and I conclude with a discussion of the limitations of the methodological choices and critical reflection (3.7).

### **3.2 FEMINIST ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODOLOGY**

Within the sub-discipline of children's geographies, those who have focused on the role of embodiment to children's social negotiation and situation include among others, Grogan (2010), Holt (2010) and Horton & Kraftl (2009b). A commitment to gathering embodied experiences presents researchers with particular challenges and opportunities. Horschelmann & Colls (2010)

point out, that emotional and embodied responses/experiences can be difficult to collect/capture by traditional methods such as focus groups and interviews which require verbal responses/interactions. Furthermore, translating what it feels like to be hit by a ball thrown by a boy, or swim with fat on the body, into words, will always be limited because such feelings cannot be felt or recreated through the reading of written text. The closest solution is to develop an ethically sound ethnographic account which—as much as it can—goes beyond the verbal and allows the researcher to simultaneously observe and participate (as much as possible) in the social action they are attempting to document. While also recognising that my own inability to know what such experiences feel like hinders the translation between participants' stories and my written account, the rationale for this approach is that; by “being there” and actively taking part in the interactions at hand, the researcher can come closer to experiencing and understanding the “insider’s” point of view (Hume & Mulcock, 2004: xi).

Geographers Longhurst et al. (2008) Colls (2004) and Woodyer (2008) have effectively employed participant observation and reflexivity as methods to investigate embodied experiences of their participants. Colls (2004) accompanied her participants—women who were shopping for new clothes—sharing the experience of trying on clothing. It is evident that by sharing the shopping experience/activity with her participants, and reflecting on her subjective involvement in the experience, Colls was able to achieve “a deeper level of significance” about how the clothing/fashion industry and related practices of sizing women’s clothing affect the management of women’s emotions related to clothes shopping. Ethnographic methods employed in the aforementioned studies enabled the researchers to experience various activities, events and practices of research participants’ lives and reflect personally, as a researcher on what it feels like to do things and have experiences which are familiar to research participants.



A number of geographers have employed an ethnographic approach to understand and reveal embodied experiences of movement. Petersen (2011: 101) effectively investigated embodied experiences through participant observation, in her PhD research to understand how non-motorists make safe passage through “mobile spaces” planned and regulated for vehicular movement. Drawing on Lefebvre’s (2004) method of rhythmanalysis, (Petersen, 2011) outfitted 15 respondents with wind-shielding lapel microphones and digital recorders, accompanying participants on their daily cycle commutes. In an early presentation of her results at the Association of American Geographers (2010) annual meeting, Petersen (2010: 4), demonstrated how this technique permitted her to experience and understand:

“...the varieties of vehicularity cyclists embody in active negotiation with cars, and to play act in cyclists’ invented thirdspace solutions to discriminatory infrastructure [such as stoplight sensors that are only triggered by automobiles]. Actual mimicry of cyclists’ habitual safe way-making practices elucidated the relationship between cyclists’ human means--shoulder-hugging, gap-dwelling, rule-fashioning and inter-modal communication—and the ‘vehicular’ mandates of streets for automobiles.”

Within an ethnographic approach, Woodyer (2008) also overcame difficulties in translating embodied responses and experiences into analyzable research data by videoing participants in her research into children’s use of toys, and asking them to reflect on the experience. While ethnographies which include various and multiple methods may be successful in drawing out embodied experiences, in part through the researchers’ own experience, feminists who have utilised an ethnographic approach are both critical and supportive of the methodology.

When reflecting on the question of what constitutes feminist research, Ramazanoglu & Holland (2002: 16) argue that it is

“...politically *for* women; feminist knowledge has some grounding in women’s *experiences*, and in how it *feels* to live in unjust gendered relationships. These appear to be the only grounds on which something distinctively feminist might be claimed for diverse approaches to methodology” (emphasis in original).

Jaggar (2008: viii) instead argues that “feminist research is not to be identified with any particular objects of study, neither is it identical with any specific set of theories, doctrines, or knowledge claims”. The only common ground in feminist research from this perspective is reached through a feminist approach which “is defined by its commitment to producing knowledge likely to be useful in opposing the many varieties of gender injustice” (Jaggar, 2008: 457). While some feminist researchers argue that feminist approaches are commonly linked through “the particular political positioning of theory, epistemology and ethics”, there are numerous and very different ways through which feminists approach and analyse their research (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002: 16). While there remain conflicting views about *what* characterises feminist research and *how* feminists should conduct and analyse their research, feminism has made important contributions to how researchers (feminist and non-feminist alike) are able to consider or reveal gender—and other forms of—injustice not only through the research process but also before entering the field and afterword through dissemination.

Specifically feminist ethnographic methodologies from the disciplines of anthropology (Bolin & Granskog, 2003) and geography (Johnston, 1996), have been employed to research women’s embodied experiences of sport and exercise. Feminists who have developed

ethnographies within frameworks which set out to destabilise and reveal gendered power relations argue that the ethnographic approach can allow for women to study women through intimate and interactive processes (Duelli Klein, 1983). Adhering to aims of destroying power relations inherent in understandings of adult/child, children's geographers are also increasingly utilizing a feminist ethnographic approach to understand children's everyday practices of work in India (Dyson, 2008; 2010), children's knowledge of land, environmental conditions and experiences of work in rural Sudan (Katz, 1986), and young people of colour and the relationships between misrepresentations of such young people and wider processes of financial disinvestment from their neighbourhoods (Cahill, 2006).

Others who have designed and conducted feminist ethnographic research critique the approach for being unable to destabilise power relations due to internal relationships between research participants—relationships which precede the research encounter. Stacey (1988) draws on her experiences with the process and product of feminist ethnographic work, in a study of family and gender relationships in Silicon Valley CA. In respect to the process, Stacey (1988) shows how relationships between her participants, namely a fundamentalist Christian who was involved in a closeted lesbian relationship and her lesbian lover, placed her into a tangled triangle of expected trust, potential betrayal and above all questions of ethics for her research. Such positioning questioned Stacey's (1988) ethical commitments wherein she felt a deep sense of intrusion and potential betrayal of her participants. "Fieldwork represents an intrusion and intervention into a system of relationships...that the researcher is far freer than the researched to leave" (Stacey, 1988: 23). Such dissonance between the binding of a researcher to the system of relationships and the participants own binding, may be even more concrete within schools where pupils are not only implicated in social relationships but, and perhaps even more so, bound to institutional structures of schooling. Furthermore, within schools, relationships which precede the

research encounter carry predetermined power relations between adults and children—teachers and pupils. My own experience with numerous research relationships, calling into question the ethics of feminist ethnographies are attended to as I discuss several research encounters in the methods outlined through Section 3.5.

In addition to the ethical challenges that preexisting relationships between my research participants, presented me with, a number of participant's responses and actions towards others required that I make decisions on whether to respond or remain silent. Attending to this decision in more detail in further paragraphs, I signpost it here justifying that my decision to remain silent when presented with sexist or fatist comments or behaviours was done in the belief that it was not my role in the space of the research to confront, judge or change the beliefs or behaviours of my participants; instead my role was to gather and document knowledge and experiences so that I could develop a feminist analysis of the spaces of my research, with the view towards the future when I would have the ability, time and knowledge to share the many varieties of injustices operating. So in essence, silence within the space of the research was necessary so that I would be allowed unbiased and free flowing behaviours and opinions which would prove necessary for the analysis and my commitment to revealing injustice would have to wait until a future date. As I state in my concluding chapter (9) I was able to reveal and share my knowledge and the unjust practices and dialogues which weave in and out of primary and secondary school physical education through the publication of various forms of media reaching both academic and non-academic audiences, and perhaps most useful, reaching those for whom the research was committed—the girls and young women in my study—through further engagement with girls groups in one of the schools where I conducted research.

While I experienced multiple challenges through the choice to do ethnographic research, with multiple actors in the space of the school, I believe my attention to detail through reflexive

practice allowed for a constant evaluation of the commitment to ethics which is crucial in feminist research. I discuss now in Section 3.3 the design of the research.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research design involved a series of steps from deciding upon which primary and secondary schools to include in the study, access first to the schools and PE departments and second to female pupils, what year groups of girls to include and choices between the spaces in which to conduct particular methods (focus groups and interviews). While the research was designed above all to be able to effectively and ethically collect and reveal embodied experiences, I was required to maintain some degree of flexibility in working through institutional timetables, PE teachers assumptions, requests and personal schedules, and female pupils own desires and interest in my project. In this section I outline the research design used for the study, attending to my choice of schools and participant groups and drawing connections between the research questions, methods and participant groups.

#### *3.3.1 THE SCHOOL SITES AND PARTICIPANT GROUPS*

The research was accomplished within two primary schools and three secondary schools in Scotland. The rationale to do research within schools stemmed from the knowledge that schools serve as the primary site for the implementation of government funded programmes of health physical activity. Working within schools allowed me to address my three research questions, all of which centre around intra-action of experiences, practices and understandings within schools and among teachers and female pupils. The research questions, linked to

participant groups and methods are displayed in Table 3.1 below and discussed in further detail through this section. The methods are discussed in more detail in Section 3.5.

**Table 3.1: Research Design<sup>6</sup>**

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>Participants</b>
What matters to girls (aged 10-14) in their everyday embodied experiences of physical activity (including PE and other school-based sport)?	Focus Groups  Kinetic Focus Groups	S1-S4 girls in PE in three state funded Scottish secondary schools  P6-P7 girls in two state funded Scottish primary schools
How do school sport deliverers (PE teachers and Active Schools staff) understand and utilise health and gender in everyday practices and pedagogies?  a. How do girls feel about and interpret teacher's everyday understandings of health and gender through physical activity and physical education?	Participant Observation  Focus Groups  Kinetic Focus Groups  Semi-structured interviews	Secondary School PE Primary School Keep Active Club  S1-S4 girls in PE in three state funded Scottish secondary schools  P6-P7 girls in two state funded Scottish primary schools  PE Teachers and Active Schools Staff from each school.
What are the recent changes made to address girls' non-participation in physical activity within the school?  a. How have such changes materialised in each school?	Participant Observation  Semi-structured interviews	Fit for Girls Programme and PE spaces in all three secondary schools  PE Teachers, Active Schools Staff and one deliverer involved in FFG activities

<sup>6</sup> Participant numbers and schools included in the secondary school focus groups can be found on page 125 (Table 3.3). Participants and schools for semi-structured interviews can be found on page 131 (Table 3.4).

To answer research questions 1 and 2, I conducted participant observation of and focus groups with Primary 6 (P6) and Primary 7 (P7) girls, who participated in a Keep Active club in two Scottish primary schools and Secondary 1 (S1) through Secondary 4 (S4) girls in core PE classes in three Scottish secondary schools. My choice to involve girls between the (approximate) ages 10-14 was driven primarily by the Scottish Health Survey (The Scottish Government, 2003a) which revealed in Chapter 1, that a noticeable decline in girls' engagement with physical activity (while excluding PE time) occurs at the age between 10/11-12—at the transition from primary to secondary school, with the drop-off never recovering. To enhance these results by providing a longitudinal study to track quantitative data on girls' physical activity levels including PE time, Niven et al. (2009) show that there is a noticeable drop off between the P7-S1 transition during break/lunch times and after school, but an increase in self-reported physical activity during PE time. Using the quantitative data and age determinants as a starting point from which to begin a qualitative analysis, I was interested to determine if girls' embodied experiences were unique to the age groups, and if the experiences of primary school girls were noticeably different from those of secondary school girls.

Involving girls in core—mandatory—PE was based on my desire to gather experience and knowledge from a variety of girls, rather than limit my research to the experiences of girls who were particularly interested in sport and enrolled in extra PE or certificated/standard grade (SG). However, because girls who take certificated PE are also in core PE, some of them were included in the study. As I was interested in enquiring about differences between the year groups and because core PE is only mandatory until the fourth year of high school I did not believe it relevant to speak with girls in S5/6. Details about the composition of each secondary school focus group are discussed and displayed through a table in Section 3.5.5.



I was sensitive to that the primary school girls may have been more interested in sport as participation in the Keep Active club was voluntary. However, over the term it was revealed that girls made the decision to participate in the club for a number of reasons: some were genuinely interested in athletics and sports like Ana and Lauren (P6, Rosefield Primary) who did gymnastics and horse vaulting and Eva and Bethan (P6) who were heavily involved in athletics, and rock climbing. Other girls such as Kiera and Helena (P7) seemed to join because their friends were joining and these girls only participated in activities when their friends participated. Still others may have been encouraged to join by parents or carers for a variety of reasons. Iona (P6, Rosefield Primary)'s mum told me that she switched Iona's piano lesson from a Tuesday to a Wednesday night so that Iona could come and do the Keep Active Club. Accordingly, the club was not necessarily exclusively comprised of 'sporty' or 'active' girls who like to do athletics. Iona (P6, Rosefield Primary) often shared with me that she wasn't a sporty person and didn't really like running. At one point she said "I prefer reading to sports".

The schools were selected to reflect diversity in geographic location and social demographics. While I also aimed to include a school which had published success through the Fit for Girls pilot programme, I was not granted access because the school did not agree to my request for research. All three secondary schools were located within Central Scotland, with two schools further to East coast. The choice of particular primary schools was driven primarily by professional contacts with Active Schools Coordinators and my role—which pre-existed the PhD—as a volunteer athletics club leader in one of the research primary schools. Both primary schools were located in East Central Scotland and serve as the feeder primaries for two of the respective secondary schools (Cherry Tree Primary feeds into Sunnyside High and Rosefield primary feeds to Pleasant Hill). At the time of researching, Pleasant Hill was a co-educational state-funded secondary school, located on the outer edge of a small town. The pupil role was approximately

1800, one of the largest in Scotland. Sunnyside, also a co-educational state funded school, was the oldest of the schools and located on a split site within a small town with pupil enrolment of approximately 1400. Willow High was a new building, constructed last year and located within a small city. The school is a co-educational Roman Catholic school. At the time of researching, Cherry Tree Primary was a co-educational state funded primary school located in a village. The enrolment fluctuated noticeably from year to year as approximately 70% of the student population was from service families. Rosefield, located in a small village, also a co-educational state funded primary had enrolment of approximately 150 pupils.

Research questions 2 and 3 were addressed through observations of and semi-structured interviews with PE teachers and Active Schools Coordinators. My decision to involve PE teachers and Active Schools Coordinators—their observations, opinions and experiences of engaging with girls through PE class—was derived from a desire to research the social-site (Marston et al., 2005) of physical education, with the recognition that we—researchers, teachers, pupils, policy makers—are “all players in this gender game” (Evans & Penney, 2002: 5).

Research question 3 was additionally addressed through observations of Fit for Girls programme activities in all three research schools and observations of changes to PE curricular and extra-curricular programming and material changes to the built spaces of PE. A number of changes were made explicitly within the secondary schools to address and in attempt to improve girls’ participation, and I reflected on my observations of such changes in relation to girls’ experiences of and feelings about sport and physical activity offered during the focus groups. Following decisions on which participant group to involve and which method to use in answering each research question, I began accessing schools and participants. I describe the process of access to each school and participant group in Section 3.3.2.

### *3.3.2 ACCESS AND RESEARCH TIMELINE*

Research with children involves an additional consideration as contact with children must often (legally and logistically) be established through adults known as gatekeepers (teachers, parents, staff of youth centres, etc.). For researchers trying to access certain research participants, gatekeepers can serve as protective or restrictive boundaries to research. Children and young people "...are surrounded by adults who act as 'gatekeepers' controlling researchers' access and children's and young persons' opportunities to express their views" (Mason, 2005: 46). Gatekeepers may serve to protect children and young people from potential harm by research/researchers and gatekeepers may serve to restrict and censor children's participation in research (Mason, 2005). At other times, as my study shows (see Section 3.5.5) gatekeepers may work in the opposite manner, requiring participation from individuals.

In any case, researchers must work and negotiate with gatekeepers if they wish to access certain populations, particularly children. "...adult gatekeepers...control the spaces that children and young people access" (Sime, 2008: 67). As Bushin (2009) argues, researchers seeking to access children often face multiple layers of gatekeeping; to this extent, initial access to children was negotiated through encounters with Active Schools Coordinators and/or School rectors as initial gatekeepers and Principal Teachers of PE and other PE teachers as secondary gatekeepers. Importantly however, access does not imply consent and once receiving approval from teachers and schools to carry out my research within their school, I began a further process of gaining informed consent from individual participants. I attend to issues of informed consent through Sections 3.4 and 3.5.

Access to primary schools was done initially through conversations with the respective Active Schools Coordinators whom then arranged meetings with the head of the school (Rosefield) and a teacher who was involved in organizing sporting activities (Cherry Tree). After gaining approval and consent from these respective teachers, I advertised my research and the Keep Active Club to P6-P7 girls at Rosefield and Cherry Tree Primary schools; I discuss the details of consent with the girls themselves in Section 3.5.1.

Access into each secondary school was negotiated through different members of staff and senior management as this section discusses. Each secondary school and each teacher had varying demands on their time and different expectations and requests of me as a researcher in the school as I explain throughout this chapter. Furthermore, the duration of time I spent in each school was different depending on teacher's flexibility. I had to carefully negotiate with each teacher and remain mindful of the demands on their time as both teachers of pupils and employees of the school. I began fieldwork in September of 2010 and continued through December 2011 however, as this section discusses, I encountered roadblocks to accessing schools and pupils throughout the research, resulting in various stages of the fieldwork being completed in a non-linear fashion. As Porter and Abane (2008) have demonstrated, the demands on children's and young people's time are numerous. Therefore, researchers who decide to work with children and young people within the school space must pay attention to limitations of time.

The fieldwork should not interfere with aspects of 'school life' such as exams and course work. I encountered particular difficulty trying to conduct focus groups just prior to the Christmas/winter holiday as this was the time during PE class when pupils "do social dancing to prepare for the dances that we do at our Christmas dance. We only do it for two or three weeks just before the dance" (Jessica, S3 Sunnyside). Teachers at Willow High did not want to excuse pupils from learning this part of the curriculum so they asked that I reschedule my focus groups for

after the winter break. Additionally, attention to ethics meant that I had to negotiate with schools on questions of informed consent and wait for long periods until I received confirmation of parental consent forms, thus pushing the research back further than intended. The final timeline for the fieldwork is shown in **Table 3.2** below:

**Table 3.2: Fieldwork Timeline**

<b>2010 September</b>	<b>October</b>	<b>November</b>	<b>December</b>	<b>2011 January</b>	<b>February</b>	<b>March</b>	<b>April- November</b>	<b>2011 December</b>
Rosefield/Cherry Tree Keep Active Participant Observation (PA)	Rosefield/Cherry Tree Keep Active (PA)	Rosefield/Cherry Tree Keep Active (PA)	Rosefield/Cherry Tree Keep Active (PA) and Focus Groups (two meetings)					
Pleasant Hill FFG PA	Pleasant Hill FFG PA	Pleasant Hill FFG and PE PA and PE Focus Groups	Pleasant Hill PE PA	Pleasant Hill PE PA/Interviews with PE Teachers				
		Willow High PE PA	Willow High PE PA	Willow High PE and FFG Observations	Willow High PE and FFG PA/PE Focus Groups	Willow High PE and FFG PA/Interviews with PE Teachers		
Sunnyside Interview PE Teacher						Sunnyside PE PA		Sunnyside PE Focus Groups

Access to each secondary school began with a letter sent to the head of PE, (Sunnyside and Pleasant Hill) school rector, (Pleasant Hill) and Active Schools Coordinator (Willow High). My decision to send letters to multiple members of staff and senior management was made based on a desire to inform multiple members of staff and senior management of my project , with the uncertainty of which member would need to grant approval. These letters can be viewed in Appendix A.

My research at Sunnyside was conducted over a period of 12 months. At Sunnyside I received an initial warm reception from the head of PE whom I was introduced to through the Active Schools network where I had recently volunteered delivering an after school athletics club go P6-7 boys and girls. I met with the head of PE in June following an athletics event at the high school that I was involved in helping with. He welcomed me to begin my research at Sunnyside in September when the school resumed from summer break. However when I re-contacted him in September he informed me that it would no longer be possible for me to do research at Sunnyside as the PE department had recently been assigned a Teaching Student and my presence would cause additional disruption. I was very disappointed but understood the rationale. I was still interested in speaking with Mr. Kimball about his experiences and observations of teaching so I asked him if he would agree to be interviewed. He did and we met in late September for an interview.

In February of 2011, after a discussion with my supervisors it was agreed that I should reconnect with Mr. Kimball to see if it was now possible to do some fieldwork at Sunnyside. I approached Mr. Kimball via email to enquire if it was possible to at least come and observe, even if I was unable to formally conduct focus groups with some of his female pupils. Mr. Kimball agreed that it was fine to “come for an informal visit” anytime I wished; I arranged to go and spend time in the PE classes for the first two weeks of March 2011. During my time at Sunnyside I

was able to speak to a variety of girls—those who sat on the benches and refused to bring or change into PE kit, those who were ‘just going through the motions’ of doing PE and those who were actively involved and genuinely appeared to enjoy taking part. However, I was unable to gain in-depth knowledge of girls’ experiences.

At Pleasant Hill, I received an email reply to my letter from the school rector, informing me that the rector had been in contact with the head of PE who was very happy for me to do my fieldwork in the school. I was given the telephone number of the PE department and asked to get in touch to set up a meeting with the head of PE. After meeting Mr. Witherspoon (head of PE at Pleasant Hill) we arranged that I would come into Pleasant Hill and begin the participant observation phase of my fieldwork in October 2010. Observations of PE at Pleasant Hill were done twice a week with four PE classes (S1-S4) for 9 weeks from October 2010-January 2011. Observations of FFG at Pleasant Hill were conducted once a week over the duration of the FFG programme which ran from October through December 2011. Focus Groups were conducted at Pleasant Hill during the Observation phase.

At Willow High I received an email reply from the School Sport Development Officer and she expressed an interest in my research but was unable to assist in facilitating my access to the PE department as she is not directly involved with teachers. However she passed on my email and contact details to the Active Schools Coordinator (Mrs. Lynne) who contacted me and facilitated my introduction to the PE department at Willow High. Observations of PE at Willow High were conducted once a week with four PE classes (S1-S4) from November 2010 through March 2011. Observations of FFG at Willow High were conducted over the duration of the FFG programme which ran from January 2011-March 2011.

After reflecting on my time in the field, as my focus groups in the primaries and at Willow High and Pleasant Hill had finished, I considered alternative pathways to accessing girls to do focus



groups at Sunnyside. While I was able to spend time during these weeks speaking with girls who sat out of PE as well as engaging with others, playing short tennis while having conversations and conversing with girls while helping out in PE classes, I was keen to gain a better understanding of girls' experiences through focus groups as I had done at Pleasant Hill and Willow High but I did not want to interrupt any more of Mr. Kimball's time. A few months later I learned that Mr. Kimball had left his job at Sunnyside and was replaced by a new head of PE. I asked the Sunnyside Active Schools Coordinator if he would introduce me to the new head so that I may speak to him about the possibilities of doing focus groups. I met with the new head of PE at Sunnyside in November 2011 and he helped facilitate my access to girls in S2-S4 so that I was able to inform the girls of my research and carry out focus groups in November. Due to miscommunications, I was unable to conduct focus groups with girls in S1 at Sunnyside.

This section has presented details of the schools, and broad details of participant groups, linking my methods with each group. Specifics of each focus group composition are discussed in Section 3.5. Additionally, this section discussed the negotiation and final achievement of access to each research school. However, access cannot assume consent and I move now to discuss specific issues of informed consent within my discussion of ethics. Attention to ethics is maintained throughout the remainder of the chapter.

### **3.4 ETHICS**

"[e]thics is concerned with *respecting* research participants throughout each project, partly by using agreed standards" (Alderson & Morrow, 2011: 11, emphasis added). Respect should involve *protection*, from harm that can occur during or as a result of the research, through informed consent and agreed confidentiality. Respect should involve '*rights*', particularly for

children, as in the right to be researched (in an ethical manner), and listened to in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1990). Researchers may be required to comply with any number of (sometimes conflicting) ethical as well as legal (as the two are not one in the same) standards and research.

The legal standards that the research adhered to involved a Disclosure Scotland clearance and approval from the University of Dundee Research Ethics Committee. Prior to contacting the schools, I obtained a police clearance via Disclosure Scotland. Disclosure Scotland is an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government. The Agency supplies employers and voluntary sector organizations with applicant's criminal history records (Disclosure Scotland, 2010). This is done to aid in recruitment of 'safe' individuals, particularly when work with vulnerable people such as children is a component of the job—paid or voluntary. I needed three Disclosure Scotland checks as I occupied multiple roles—researcher at the University of Dundee and volunteer athletics coach for two councils. At the time of researching, each council required individual checks.

I gained approval from the University of Dundee Research Ethics Committee which is housed in the School of Psychology, prior to commencing the fieldwork. The University adheres to (the UK Department of Health's) Research Governance Framework and UK Legislation (which is informed by both global and European Union directives) for research ethics. However, as I discuss through the section, conflict between University ethics standards and gatekeepers' desires and requirements arose during the fieldwork, and particularly before beginning focus groups with secondary school girls.

Alderson & Morrow (2004: 99) remind us that gatekeepers such as teachers "can grant researchers access to children, but cannot consent to the research". To this extent, I was actively involved in informing all individual participants about my research, fully revealing all potential

risks, affirming anonymity and confidentiality and giving time for participants to consider my project before asking them for consent. I was required to gain parental consent, but I also gained consent from the girls themselves. "In order for participants to begin to allow a researcher into their 'world', they must be clear as to how this world will be exposed" (Emond, 2003: 105). This requires that researchers provide detailed information about their study and the participant's role, confidentiality and any risk involved in participating in the study. Once the participants are made aware of complete details of the research they can make an informed decision and consent to whether or not they wish to participate. According to Alderson & Morrow (2004), informed consent means being provided with all of the necessary information (in any number of forms) about the research, being able to say yes or no (verbally or otherwise), having time to make the decision without pressure, having the opportunity to ask questions of the researcher(s) and discuss the research with others (parents/friends/etc.), and having the opportunity to leave the research at any time without justification/explanation. Because my participants were under the age of 16, parental consent is required by Scots law from at least one parent or carer; however as I discuss, in one school parental consent was not obtained as the school insisted they were acting *in loco parentis* and could give consent for the girls.

Gaining consent in the primary schools, I spent time in each of the two primary schools one afternoon speaking with P6/7 girls about the Keep Active club and my research, informing them that by making a decision to join the club, they would also be making a decision to participate in my research. If the girls were interested I gave them a leaflet with a consent form attached to take home with them (See Appendix B). If the girls wanted to participate, they had to return the leaflet with their signature as a proof of consent as well as a parental signature of consent. Available on the leaflet was my contact email. I received one email from a parent who

was interested in hearing more about the study and one email from a girl who eventually became a participant indicating that she was 'really excited' about the club.

In the secondary schools, consent to observe PE classes and Fit for Girls activities, was granted by PE teachers and activity coordinators. Most PE staff and Active Schools Coordinators introduced me to the pupils in PE classes informing them of my presence and purpose. Staff in PE classes also highlighted that I would be asking female pupils to participate in focus groups later in the term. I also produced flyers describing my research and my presence as a participant-observer in the PE class over a number of weeks and distributed the flyer to all of the pupils. This helped them understand more about why I was in their class because some of them may have been absent on my first day—when the introduction was made and others may not have been paying attention or interested as I was introduced. These flyers can be viewed in Appendix D. As an observer I was always open and honest with both female and male pupils of my purpose in the class. However, while doing participant observations with the FFG programme at Pleasant Hill I found it very difficult to assure that all of the girls knew why I was present. The difficulty arose because the Active Schools Coordinator who initially organized the sessions informed me that he would introduce me on the first day. He failed to do so, and I found myself feeling 'lost' as the activities began; the group of participants was also very large ( $n= 60-70$ ) and I did not have time to go around and explain to everyone why I was there. Furthermore, it did not appear that any of the girls were concerned or interested in my presence; instead they were having fun with their friends trying new activities. I felt that my introduction would actually have hindered their experience and enjoyment of the activities. Over the next few meetings of the FFG group I was able to speak to more and more girls, informally about my research and while I was never given a formal introduction, I was tasked at times with taking attendance and collecting money (for the Zumba instructor).

Recruitment and gaining consent for the focus groups with secondary school girls in PE classes was done with the help of the PT of PE in each school. I spent time in each of the schools during the participant observation phase speaking to girls both formally as a whole class and informally to individual girls about my study. I sought informed consent both from the girls themselves and at Sunnyside and Willow High and from the parent or carer of my participants. However at Pleasant Hill this was negotiated, as teaching staff argued that the school was acting in loco parentis and it would take a considerable amount of time to send home consent forms for parents to sign and return. I informed my ethics committee of this conflict with the school and they responded that this is not the “usual code of practice” and would have to be discussed at the next meeting. I continually re contacted the ethics committee awaiting approval for this change, but never received a reply. As I was in danger of losing this school and the chance to do focus groups with the girls at Pleasant Hill, I renegotiated with the school arguing the parents needed to be informed about my study and we agreed on an opt-out approach whereby forms (Appendix were sent home for parents to read and to sign if they did *not* want their daughter to participate. I did not receive any returned forms from parents at Pleasant Hill.

At Pleasant Hill, I was actively involved in the recruitment phase and spent time in four classes (one of each year group), speaking informally and formally about my research, handing out information leaflets and consent forms during the participant observation phase. All of the girls in each of the year groups at Pleasant Hill chose to participate in the focus groups. At Willow High recruitment was done for me by proxy through the PT of PE who distributed my leaflets and parental consent forms to girls in each target year group. This meant that I spent more time at the beginning of each focus group, making sure the girls understood my research and were still happy to participate. I also conducted a one-to-one interview with one girl at Willow High, on suggestion of Mr. Mackenzie, the head of PE. The girl was a “repeat offender” according to Mr. Mackenzie,

who refused to bring her kit and participate in PE and was excused by a medical note from her mother which Mr. Mackenzie did not believe to be legitimate. I did not initially feel comfortable interviewing this girl on request of Mr. Mackenzie as I felt she was a captive audience, sitting in the classroom during PE time. However I agreed with Mr. Mackenzie that I would go into the classroom and speak with her and tell her about my study and I would interview her only if she wanted to be interviewed. After explaining my study in full detail to her, she agreed to be interviewed and while the social context was missing from my discussion with her, her responses contributed an additional understanding of one girls' negative experience with physical activity. At Sunnyside the PT of PE arranged for one class from each target year group (with the exception of S2) to meet with me so that I could explain my project in full, returning two weeks later to conduct the focus groups with the girls who had chosen to participate and whom had returned consent forms. The majority of the girls whom I had spoken to at Sunnyside chose to participate in the focus groups.

All participant and school names were changed to preserve anonymity. Initially I had intended to choose pseudonyms for all of the participants. However, girls in primary school Keep Active club were keen to select their own pseudonyms. To this extent, I used the pseudonyms selected by the primary school girls but I selected pseudonyms for the girls in secondary school and the providers of sport and exercise. Ethical issues arose while recruiting for girls to involve as focus group participants—a process which was carried out during the participant observation phase. Events and encounters which required further sensitivity and reflexivity of ethics reoccurred throughout the remainder of the fieldwork, while conducting focus groups and as I continued to move in and out of the spaces of physical activity within each research school. After gaining consent from girls (and in most cases, their parents) to carry out focus groups, I began the focus groups and, in most schools, continued my participant observation work. Section

3.5 discusses the methods of participant observation, focus groups and interviews in further detail.

### **3.5 THE METHODS**

This thesis employed a variety of qualitative methods to fulfill the research aim of revealing girls' embodied geographies of gender and health through school-based physical activity. Valentine (1997b) notes that researchers often utilize a variety of methods for one research project, a technique known as triangulation in order to improve validity. "The term comes from surveying, where it describes using different bearings to give the correct position. In the same way researchers can use multiple methods...to try and maximize their understanding of a research question" (Valentine, 1997b: 112). Employing a mixed-method approach to his work in children's geographies, Hemming (2008: 155) argues for the use of the term 'crystallisation' instead of triangulation in concurrence with Richardson (1994) in the understanding that "mixing methods can only produce a deeper and more complex view of the issues under investigation rather than improve validity". While Hemming (2008) utilised three unique methods with the same participant group, I employed a combination of methods with two different participant groups. I used participant observation and focus groups with female pupils where the focus groups were split into traditional focus groups (with secondary school girls) and kinetic focus groups (with primary school girls). With PE teachers and Active Schools Coordinators I employed participant observation and semi-structured interviews. This section discusses each of the methods used with respective participant groups. I discuss the methods roughly in the chronological order in which they were used, by discussing participant observation, focus groups and lastly, semi-structured interviews. While Hopkins (2007) argues that the broader geographical setting, timing (in relation

to local/national/global events) and social context are particularly important in considering the focus group method, I attend to these issues as they had influence on and within *all* of the chosen methods.

### *3.5.1 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION AND REFLEXIVITY*

The ethnographic method of participant observation has increasingly been employed to investigate embodied experience. In the next three sections, I discuss the multiple positions—both self and participant directed—that I occupied through participant observation, exploring reflexively, how these roles interacted with the research data and participant-researcher relationships. Sharing and experiencing the lives of research participants, is central to the method of participant observation. In contemporary ethnographies, it is widely recognised that sharing and experiencing the lives of the researched, inevitably leads the researcher into various relationships with his/her participants. “Central to participant observation is the development of relationships between researcher and participants, through everyday events and interaction” (Hemming, 2008: 153).

My use of participant observation developed into multiple roles for myself in the field. To this extent, it was imperative that I maintain reflexive of my impact on and relationships with the research(ed). Reflexivity has encouraged researchers to pay attention to how their presence and actions during the research process may affect both the research (data and results) and the lives of the participants (both during the research process and long after the research has concluded). Some ethnographers argue that being reflexive of the researcher’s position is methodologically necessary “if participant observation is to be accepted as worthwhile research tool” (Emond, 2003: 106). In contemporary social research, it is widely agreed—but not as often discussed—that the



position of the researcher is not objective or neutral or disembodied. Instead, because “researchers are subjective and carry with them unique individual biographies, the knowledges they produce are necessarily affected” (Moser, 2008: 384). To this extent, an increasing number of researchers are attentive to how their positionality may influence—in a myriad of ways—the research process. Moser (2008) and Jansson (2010) are also critical to how the researcher’s “social and emotional qualities”—their personality, which goes beyond positionality can influence the research and all involved parties (Moser, 2008: 383). “It is thus crucial to consider the nature of the interactions one has with the people with whom one is building relationships during fieldwork” (Jansson, 2010: 19). In my particular case this meant a consideration of and reflection on my interactions with and relationships between gatekeepers—head teachers, PE staff and Active Schools Coordinators—whom I also included as participants in my research and primary and secondary school girls. In addition, throughout this chapter, I show how staff-pupil relationships which pre-existed the research encounter, coupled with staff and pupil expectations of me impacted my ability to engage with these respective participant groups.

At Sunnyside, Pleasant Hill and Willow High, I made observations on/in and participated in a variety of spaces relevant to the overall PE and school physical activity experience. Such spaces included traditional PE spaces like the gym halls, swimming pools and playing fields. I also researched in ‘other’ spaces outside the tangible boundaries of the sporting spaces but where teachings about health and physical activity and relationships between staff and pupils continued. Such spaces included PE staff offices (PE base), school corridors or hallways, and—at times—changing rooms<sup>7</sup>. Participant observation was recorded through note-taking in diary format both during and following each observation. At times it was difficult to take notes while observing as I

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<sup>7</sup> I discuss my access to and time spent in the changing rooms in relation to ethics and relationships between my research participants throughout this chapter and Chapter 6.

also participated in the field by both taking part in PE and carrying out tasks like collecting valuables for PE teachers. Maintaining a reflexive diary allowed me to consider my experience and the shared experience of the research process, and the coaching sessions (with primary school participants), as well as my influence and involvement in the lives of the research participants and my multiple (inevitably shifting identities) during the research.

### *3.5.2 REFLEXIVITY THROUGH PE AND FIT FOR GIRLS*

My research role within PE in the secondary schools assumed the—shifting and multiple—identities of a teacher’s-helper, participant in and observer of PE. Having the role of multiple identities in the research field gave rise to a number of ethical issues, particularly due to preexisting power relationships between teachers and female pupils and negotiations of participant’s expectations of me and my positionality and personality. Furthermore, I believe that my own embodiment (arguably a thin one) both allowed and excluded participant’s sharing of knowledge and experience. Through the research, my positionality—which included my societal position and personality (Moser 2008) as well as my bodily presence, and how I was positioned by my participants, alongside previously existing power relationships between staff and pupils, had a great impact on my ability to engage with participants and negotiate the research space.

My role when doing research with the Fit for Girls programme in the secondary school was as both a participant and a helper (at Pleasant Hill) and as a coordinator (at Willow High). My positioning by staff members differed between the schools. My role when observing PE classes at Pleasant Hill and Willow High was primarily as an observer. At Sunnyside however, I was positioned as both a teacher’s helper and observer. At Willow High, staff expected that I take the primary role as an observer and I spent most of the time moving around the gym hall watching the

pupils as well as taking time to speak with girls sitting on the side. At Pleasant Hill, while I helped at times, carrying equipment, or refereeing a rugby match, I was primarily expected to be present as a researcher. I did ask at times if I could participate (and at times some of the S1 girls who seemed to look forward to my presence also asked if I could participate). At Sunnyside I was asked to assume more of a teacher's-helper role, collecting valuables or checking in changing rooms for truant pupils. These responsibilities were placed upon me, in part out of a lack of communication between the head of PE (whom had initially consented to the research) and his staff members whereby staff members assumed me to be a PE teacher in training. At one point while observing swimming lessons at Sunnyside Mrs. Pat asked me to give advice to a pupil on how to do a flip-turn (tuck turn). I considered such requests by staff to assume identities beyond the role of researcher. Because I made a request of the school and staff for the use of their space, some of their time and energy, I felt that I had to comply with some of their requests to help with day to day tasks.

Much of the literature on research ethics with children and young people discusses the ethical implications of the researcher's claimed multiple identities during the research project particularly in researcher with vulnerable groups. In many of these research spaces, the researcher seeks to conduct research work while occupying an additional role such as student-teacher, outreach worker or practitioner (Blazek, 2011). At other times, researchers position or aim to position themselves as full participants, particularly in ethnographic or participatory research. Many of these research relationships are constructed in spaces of research occupied by one participant group, such as homeless youth or children in a rehabilitation setting (Dachner & Tarasuk, 2002; Beckett, 2004; Kaime-Atterhöga & Maina Ahlberga, 2008). Lesser attention has been paid to how the researcher's identity may be multiply constructed by different research participants occupying the same space—particularly when one of the participant groups has also

served as a gatekeeper to the research—and how and why these constructions may have ethical implications for the research.

I discuss two fieldwork encounters in particular, which made me question the ethics of my research. The first happening occurred over the duration of the observational fieldwork whereby I was asked to enter the changing rooms in PE (an experience I consider further in Chapter 5) at Sunnyside and Willow High. At Sunnyside I was asked by staff in this school to enter into changing rooms for a number of reasons whether it was to collect valuables for safe keeping prior to PE class, search for pupils who had snuck out of PE class, or to ‘make sure the kids didn’t muck about’ while changing. I believed it was a breach of ethics to enter the changing rooms and I did not feel comfortable with any of those requests; as I wrestled with my own feelings of unease, I negotiated staff requests at Sunnyside by going into the changing rooms, rather timidly and asking for valuables while at the same time averting my eyes, or holding the door to the changing room slightly ajar with my foot so that the pupils knew of my presence but I did not go inside so as not to interrupt their privacy.

Second, I reflect on the role of my embodiment—as a thin(ner) individual, reflecting how it presented me with particular challenges and required reflexivity. While qualitative research is embodied through researchers (Coffey, 2007) and we carry with us our own beliefs—indeed part of my rationale for the research is personal (see Chapter 1)—I never intended to centre myself as a research subject. However, it became apparent that the socially inscribed thinness of my body mattered to PE teachers who were keen to demonstrate knowledge in support of the popular health discourse regarding physical activity and obesity. Through interviews with seven academic ethnographers, Walford (2007: 7) reveals how researchers’ bodies influence “what they [are] able to do in ethnographic work and thus the data they were able to generate”. The author highlights how researchers’ bodies can influence their ability and the research itself through limitations of

the body when—for example—the research involved playing an instrument or dancing. For me, it was not the limitations of my body that influenced my ability to conduct research. Rather, it was the way in which my body was interpreted—in particular by PE teachers, in respect to wider social conceptualisations of health. Uncensored beliefs about fatness, health and physical activity in relation to female pupils were shared with me by PE teachers within the confines of their offices (as I discuss in Chapter 7). Outright expressions of fat hatred were shared with me by one female pupil. As a result of my thin(er) body size, while I gleaned participant's feelings about health in relation to fatness and obesity and physical activity, I may also have been denied much knowledge of fat girls' experiences. As researchers it is imperative that we pay attention to how our bodies are implicated in the research and/or interpreted by research participants, and reflect on what kind of knowledge this allowed or denied us (Windram-Geddes, 2012).

These—sometimes unintentional—multiple, fluid, and shifting roles required that I pay careful attention to both how I was positioned and how I positioned myself through the research process. While the identity of helper was not initially intended, and upon reflection, place me in a position where I felt vulnerable, unsure and led me to question the ethics of the moment, it also allowed me to experience some of the everyday events of PE—such as the collection of valuables—which as I show in Chapter 5, mattered immensely to some girls during the focus groups.

My experiences as a participant-observer in PE classes and through Fit for Girls activities raise a number of ethical-methodological questions for social researchers who conduct in-depth ethnographic research, which seeks to include the knowledge and experiences of different groups of individuals occupying the same space, where pre-existing culturally defined identities—such as teacher-pupil—operate. I argue that my ability to develop an ethical research relationship with female pupils in the secondary schools was dependent on and differed according to the varying

degrees of pre-existing power operating in relationships between pupils and PE staff, as well as the different ways in which staff positioned me in respect to their pupils. My question of ethics was also very much dependent on what I feel to be personal questions of ethics, resulting from both my positionality as well as my own experience of high school PE classes and changing rooms as a girl in the United States.

### *3.5.3 REFLEXIVITY THROUGH GIRLS KEEP ACTIVE*

While I did not intentionally set out to ‘help’ or participate in PE activities (as discussed above), in the secondary schools, I did intentionally plan to occupy the dual role of athletics coach/facilitator-researcher in the primary schools. Participant observation in the primary school after school athletics club warrants a more detailed discussion as my dual role of researcher-coach, drawing on my experience/skills in athletics were important in the context of the study.

Buckingham & Degen (2010) draw on their (non-academic) skills of teaching yoga to ‘reach’—and research with—a group of individuals (women working as prostitutes) whom may otherwise be very difficult to reach. The method of teaching yoga and experiencing yoga in the space of the women’s centre alongside the marginalised women allowed the researchers to engage with participants and access sensitive information in an ethical manner. Cautioning however, that yoga is just one ‘tool’ available to them in their ‘toolkit’ Buckingham & Degen (2010) note that other researchers may have different tools and/or experiences/skills that they should look towards. In addition, the researchers highlight that the yoga courses developed only *after* negotiations with and upon the suggestion of the research participants who were not particularly interested in the previously researcher-suggested idea of gardening. Thus, it was not the ‘tool’ initially proposed or preferred by the researchers to investigate embodied experience. This caveat

highlights the importance of maintaining flexibility when proposing methods and approaches for investigating embodied experience. I learned the skills of a competitive athlete from extensive years spent running for my school and University track and field and cross country teams. I have recently learned the skills of teaching or coaching young people in athletics through a volunteer position with a local primary school and through personal observations of the coach of my local athletics club. Therefore I believed it to be a valid and useful research method to draw on my experience and skill by provisioning an athletics club to engage with a selection of my proposed research participants—primary school girls.

Because the concept of children's and young people's agency is a key consideration in this thesis, I adopted a format in the coaching sessions which allowed for participants to contribute to designing the programme content for the athletics club. For my first meeting with the girls in the Keep Active Club, I provided a 'taster' session of athletics so that the participants had the chance to experience a variety of athletic activities. On the first day of meeting for each club there were approximately 10 girls. We spent the time playing an 'ice-breaker' game and getting to know each other's names. Then I spent time showing the kit bag that I was able to use (on loan from the ASC) to the girls. We talked about the activities that the girls would like to do over the course of the term, and these included running, playing games, football and also having unstructured 'free' time.

While negotiating my dual role as Keep Active Club facilitator-researcher was at times, very difficult, as I wrestled with my desires to let the girls design and control the activities alongside their expectations that I would resolve conflicts between them when disputes arose during team games. I additionally had to negotiate expectations from school management that I was 'in charge' of the club and this presented me with particular difficulty because I rarely felt 'in charge', due to both my body size (I was smaller than some of the P6/7 year olds) and my

personality as a rather quiet, non-confrontational person. When—as often happened as Cherry Tree—girls decided to pull out sports equipment from the gym closet before the club started I was torn between letting them go about to their heart’s content doing whatever they wanted with the equipment and asking them to place it back in the closet so that we could ‘get on’ with the day’s planned activities.

Reflexivity was maintained throughout the participant observation phase with the primary school girls. Through reflexivity, researchers are increasingly paying attention to how the research is a shared and embodied process of creation between researcher and participants. As Colls & Horschelmann (2009: 2) emphasise, the value in the research process exists not exclusively in doing research on the body but in considering “the place of our own body/ies in the research process and the multiple contingencies that co-product bodies ‘through’ the research process rather than simply engaging with a body/bodies as ‘a research object’”.

Participating, observing and coordinating sports activities with girls of different ages and reflecting on my role and multiple identities as a researcher, co-participant and athletics coach allowed, in part, for a ‘space of betweenness’ to be created/reached (Katz, 1992). Drawing on Katz (1992) in research with young people, Woodyer (2008) articulates how space can be created between researcher and participants through a focus on shared experiences:

“Our [researchers] experience of an event is personal and partial, and thus cannot represent the experience of another. However we can move to a ‘space of betweenness’ (Katz, 1992) where our partialities—our relational knowledges (Harker, 2005)—meet...Our relational knowledges may be complementary, they may be contradictory, but they can inform each other. As Katz suggests...we can engage our differences in enabling ways; we



can share, learn and transform...Knowledge is actively created—performed—in the shared space of betweenness; hence the research becomes framed as a shared process of knowledge creation” (Woodyer, 2008: 358).

I recall one particular moment during my fieldwork where I believe a ‘space of betweenness’ was created by interactions between myself and my participants. This space of betweenness allowed me to ‘see further into’ the lives of my participant.

I recall an encounter with Abbie (P6) during one session of the after school Keep Active Club. We were all playing a game called ‘Chipmunks and Squirrels’ a game I borrowed and adapted from Carol Goodrow’s website [www.kidsrunning.com](http://www.kidsrunning.com). Instead of using unifix cubes as Goodrow (2008) advises, because I did not have any unifix cubes, I used plastic Easter eggs for a game where you throw all the eggs in the middle of the field and the kids are divided into two teams with team baskets at opposite ends of the field. The objective is to gather as many eggs into your basket on your side of the field and there are two rules.

Rule #1: Carry only one acorn at a time.

Rule #2: You may steal from the other team if you want to take the time to run the distance to the other side.

(Goodrow 2008).

I played on the opposing team to Abbie and when I went to ‘steal’ an egg from her team’s basket she tackled me, roughly pulling on my legs and arms to prevent me from stealing her team’s eggs. As an ‘adult’ I felt strange being tackled by a 10 year old but she was strong and so instead of stepping away or allowing her to tackle me uncontested, I resisted her tackles. I pushed

her away and used my own embodied force to try and counteract her force. This encounter gave me two insights into the research: First, that Abbie considered me to be—at least in this present moment—‘an equal’ and felt comfortable enough in the relationship that had developed between us over the term through the Keep Active Club, to play in the same rough manner with me as she would with her peers. Abbie allowed me to participate in her world. Second, through her forceful tackles, she reinforced the emotions expressed in the focus groups about her enjoyment in “rough stuff like rugby and rounders because it’s fun” (Abbie, P6 Rosefield Primary). I did not set out to create this encounter with Abbie; however, when reflecting on the encounter in respect to my research questions and measured against Abbie’s own responses during the focus group I was allowed insightful knowledge.

Salzman (2002) argues that reflexivity should be used carefully if the researchers’ experiences and the “space of betweenness” is included and sought as a component of the research. Salzman (2002: 811) confronts the argument that reflexivity can enlighten, substantiate or generate new knowledge highlighting that “...the succession of new understandings and frames commonly results from new researchers taking a different view, rather than from a change of heart by the original theorists or researchers.” Remaining reflexive about participant-researcher relationships may not have provided new contributions to knowledge through my participation in the lives of the research participants. However, I believe that it allowed me to consider my research aims, aid in designing the later stages of the research—focus group methods, and develop relationships with my participants which may or may not have changed my current ways of thinking. It is important to take care that while researchers may incorporate their own experiences and non-academic knowledge or skills, that they are aware, that they do not privilege their own experiences over those of their participants.

It is also necessary to be mindful of how much of the research is about the researchers' experiences and how much of the research is about the participants' experiences. "No social researcher starts from scratch in a state of social, intellectual or political isolation. All researchers, however inexperienced, carry intellectual, emotional and political baggage with them" (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002: 148); ethnographic approaches present the researcher with particular personal and academic dilemmas when negotiating the "boundaries between the private and preexisting selves that they bring with them to the field and the researcher selves that they must develop once they arrive is constantly confronting" (2005: xvii). As I divulged in Chapter 1, I brought with me to the space of the research, my past experiences of and engagements with eating and exercise which inform my current beliefs, practices and understandings.

My decision to utilise the aforementioned ethnographic approaches in the study schools, was made in attempt to "articulate the interrelationships of physical activity and issues of gender relations, asymmetrical ideologies of gender, and embodiment through a feminist and interpretive lens" (Bolin & Granskog, 2003: 7). Reflexivity and observations also aided in designing the focus groups. I believe that it was useful and necessary to conduct participant observations prior to the focus groups so that I would be able to build up a relationship with my research participants allowing them to feel relaxed and comfortable talking to me during interviews. Hemming (2008) spent considerable time as a school classroom assistant first carrying out participant observations in attempt to make children more comfortable in his presence and therefore more willing to share uncensored views and opinions during interviews. Pre-existing understandings of teacher-pupil roles and related power struggles impacted participant expectations of me and impacted my ability to carve out a 'researcher identity'.

#### 3.5.4 FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups which generally involve four to twelve participants plus a facilitator/moderator discussing a topic defined by the researcher were initially designed by American sociologists to reveal impacts of wartime propaganda during World War II (Merton, 1987). In geography, it has been argued that focus groups are ideal for understanding the “socially constructed nature of knowledge; the multiple meanings that people attribute to places, relationships, processes, and events are expressed and negotiated thereby providing important insights into the practice of knowledge production” (Cameron 2008: 116). An increasing number of geographers are using focus groups (Longhurst, 1994; Hopkins, 2007; McKee, 2009). However, Hopkins (2007) points out that writing and reflection on the process and critical and creative ways in which focus groups are used, is limited.

In attempt to think more “critically and creatively” (Hopkins, 2007: 528) about doing focus groups with primary and secondary school girls, I devised a unique method which I call kinetic focus groups. Initially I proposed to use kinetic focus groups with both primary and secondary school participants, but after discussions with PE teachers over the feasibility of conducting the focus groups in this way with secondary school girls I abandoned the idea in favour of traditional focus groups for secondary school girls. I employed kinetic focus groups with primary school girls in December 2010, during the last two weeks of a Girls’ Keep Active Club. Reflecting on her research, Bushin (2009: 18) writes that “using flexible techniques whilst using a particular research method has the potential to allow for all children to engage with research processes, if they choose to, hence the heterogeneity of children’s experiences may be revealed”.

Prior to the focus groups, the girls participated in an 8-week term of a ‘Keep Active’ Club doing activities designed by the girls themselves. Participant observation of the primary school

girls allowed me to first engage and develop relationships with the participants before formally conducting focus groups with them. The girls who attended the Keep Active club were a highly energetic bunch and while not all of them would consider themselves to be sporty or even particularly interested in physical activity, as you will see, they were more than enthused about running about with their friends and playing active games. The activities we did during the duration of the term ranged from relay races to 'free active time' when the girls would run about individually playing jump rope, doing cartwheels, whacking tennis balls and whatever else took their interest from moment to moment. It was my desire to give the girls space, time and choice to do or try any physical activity which they may be interested in. My observations of and relationship with the girls during this time helped me design the kinetic focus groups. Due to the highly energetic nature of the group I wanted to design my research method to both capture and sustain their interest in my research questions and give them the usual opportunity to "go hyper" as one girl put it during the club session. Bushin (2009: 18) remained flexible during her interviews with young migrant children, and was conscious of their short attention span so at times they took "a break from interviewing and played, or the children did another activity for a while and talked to me again afterwards".

The rationale for my design of kinetic focus groups with the primary school girls was two-fold. First, as a number of researchers have demonstrated through shared movement with research participants, the shared kinetic movement of individuals walking, running, practicing yoga or cycling, provides a medium through which communication can be more open and fluid (Lee & Ingold, 2006; Buckingham & Degen, 2010; Petersen, 2010). Lee & Ingold (2006) argue that the shared movement of walking in which individuals are facing the same direction, encourages a closeness, a form of socialisation that cannot be achieved in the same way through face-to-face (in which individuals are facing opposite directions) seated conversation—as is often the style of a

semi-structured interview. Lee & Ingold (2006) emphasise that it is the direction in which researcher and participants are facing which is important in evoking a certain closeness; Buckingham & Degen (2010) and Petersen (2010) emphasise that it is the shared experience of simultaneous movement and discussion which evokes the closeness. Therefore, conducting focus groups in conjunction with a kinetic activity, regardless of the direction faced by researcher and/or participants, may allow for more authentic and candid data to be revealed. "Here the focus is on what actually happens during a walk that might lead to particular perceptions of the body, self and environment" (Lee & Ingold, 2006: 69). The movement of the body may evoke perceptions or realisations of the experience which may be otherwise confined, unnoticed, or forgotten in the space of the seated or still body or the interview room. Chapter 7 returns to questions of bodily movement and embodied feelings of moving the body through different physical activity spaces.

Second, as previously considered, because my participants for the kinetic focus groups were young girls aged 10-11 in Primary 6/7, who were also participants in an after school Keep Active activities club, I was sensitive to both their needs and desires as young people and the recognition that they cared more about running around and doing their activities than they did about my research project. I often had to remind them about my research and would receive responses like "when are we helping you out with that thing you're doing at college?" I did not want to disrupt or 'poach' to borrow Gallagher's (2009: 93) words, from the time they expected to be doing an activity.

I initially proposed to use the 'travelling' space of the cool-down jog during the last 20 minutes of the after school athletics club, as the 'site' for the focus groups with primary school girls. After a number of weeks interacting with the girls as the 'organiser' of their Keep Active Club, I made the decision that trying to conduct a focus group with the girls while running with them for 20 minutes was impractical and likely to fail. I decided this because over the course of

the term, I observed that the girls preferred to do activities which both required very short attention spans and which involved their imaginations like making up obstacle courses and then carrying each other around on piggyback through the obstacles. I thought it unlikely that the girls would sustain a jog for 20 minutes during a focus group. Additionally, the school placed limitations on our range of movement and I was reprimanded at one point by a head teacher, because of issues of “health and safety” for jogging through the school parking lot with the girls. During her PhD research, Rawlins (2008) was confronted by school management team who were concerned about the grammatical errors in children’s research diaries. Like Rawlins (2008), I had to negotiate between expectations and rules of school management and my own desires and expectations for the research. Due to the limited space we had available for running, I was unable to facilitate a route long enough to accommodate a 20-30 minute cool-down jog/focus group. Nearing the end of the term, I redesigned my focus groups accordingly.

I decided upon the following configuration for the focus groups which were conducted in the space of a gym hall over a two-week period at the end of the 8-week term of the Keep Active Club: For the focus groups the girls self-selected into 4 groups of 2-4 friends per group. The kinetic focus groups were designed such that there were four large posters in the four corners of the gym hall. Above each poster was written a question (sometimes accompanied by an image of (a) female athlete(s)). The questions and images can be viewed in Appendix E. Questions used specifically in the focus groups are viewable in Appendix F. Below each poster was a tape recorder and coloured pens. The gym halls were large enough that the tape recorders only picked up the conversations of the girls at each station/poster respectively. The tapes were transcribed verbatim and the transcripts and the posters (with writings and drawings) were coded and analysed both manually and by using N-Vivo 9 Qualitative Research Software.

Before beginning the focus groups, I asked the girls to use the pens to write or draw their responses to the questions on the large poster provided. I also asked them to discuss the question amongst themselves speaking into the tape recorder as they did so. The focus groups were kinetic or active because they were done in conjunction with an activity (dodge ball at Rosefield Primary and netball match at Cherry Tree). At the start of the session, I explained the activity whereby I would turn on music for a period of time during which the girls could play their game of dodge ball or netball. I would stop the music and that was their cue to run to a poster/question with their other group members. I gave them approximately 10 minutes at each poster/question station before turning on the music again for them to return to their dodge ball or netball games. I stopped and started the music 4 times so that each group could have a chance to visit all of the poster/question stations. The total duration of the activity was one and a half hours. During the dodge ball and netball games, I played with the girls, actively engaging as a full participant. During the focus group/poster visiting times I rotated around the room to visit the stations and prompt the girls on the questions and make sure tape recorders were turned on and working. I had an assistant with me, a member of the Active Schools Network who initially facilitated my fieldwork by setting up the Keep Active Club and giving me access to the school.

The space and movement of the focus group activity done in between sitting and answering the questions allowed and provoked the participants to think about how they felt when doing the activities. The movement also allowed for a wider consideration of 'other' movements done outside of the space of the focus group such as those done with family, friends or outside of school as well as the 'movements' of sport and exercise of 'other' girls and boys, which were equally important to my research. I felt that the focus groups were successful in many ways but, similar to the participant observation phase of the research, also fraught with challenges. The



activities, for the most part, also held the girls attention and with the facilitation of the Active School's Coordinator and myself, kept the girls' focused on my research.

At other times during the focus groups, I felt that the girls fooled around, didn't care about my project and/or were not giving me the 'kind of data' I was looking for. At one point, while transcribing the focus groups I typed out this conversation between Jess and Emma (P6, Cherry Tree):

Jess: "Well if you can hear us, then can we have aaaaaa, yeah, and we want to have Morgan forever!! And forever! And can I have pepperoni, no not pepperoni, no can I have a Margharita pizza with pepperoni on it please? Thanks."

Emma: "I want a pepperoni pizza with pepperoni and cheese in the crust, thanks."

While it was sweet to hear that Jess wanted me to stay and continue doing the Keep Active Club, an indication of her enjoyment of the sessions over the term, it was similarly frustrating that the girls were using the tape recorders to 'play' phone order pizza, rather than answer my research questions. By doing this the girls were actively resisting answering some of the questions, perhaps not because they did not want to answer them, but because it was more fun to play at ordering pizza and they had never had the chance to use a tape recorder before. For them, the tape recorders were a novel device. The girls knew that the tape recorders were an important tool for me—as an adult—and they were interested in making use of them for their own purposes. Christensen (2004) describes how some of the children in her study took the tape recorder and began questioning Christensen, thereby reversing the researcher-participant/adult-child relationship. In Burke (2005) one of the children begins to tell an unrelated story about 'some cheese' in response to the researcher's request for the child to tell a story about what was

happening in a photograph. The posters and pens that I gave the girls were also subverted in many ways, with girls drawing pictures or writing worlds unrelated to the research. In the end, I did not use the posters for analysis, relying only on the tape recordings.

While conducting focus groups as described above presented me with numerous challenges and required careful planning and construction, I believe it substantiated and authenticated the research material to a greater extent than a traditional sit down focus group with these groups of girls.

### *3.5.5 TRADITIONAL FOCUS GROUPS*

As noted in Section 3.5.2, the focus groups with primary school girls were unique to those with secondary school girls. The focus groups with secondary school girls were conducted in a traditional sit-down manner, during or at the end of the participant observation phase. I conducted a total of 16 focus groups with secondary school girls in PE and one focus group with two girls who were participants in the Pleasant Hill Fit for Girls activity. **Table 3.3**, showing the number of participants, age/year group and PE class of each secondary school focus group is displayed below. In addition, I conducted a one-to-one interview (using my focus group questions) with a girl in S4 at Willow High—as discussed in Section 3.4. In this section I discuss the composition of the focus groups, timing, location, and ethics.

**Table 3.3: Secondary School Focus Group Participants**

	S1		S2		S3		S4	
<b>Pleasant Hill</b>	Core PE 6 girls	Core PE 7 girls	Core PE 7 girls	Core PE 8 girls	Foundation fitness 8 girls	Foundation fitness 7 girls	Highest fitness 4 girls	Highest fitness 5 girls
<b>Sunnyside</b>	NONE		1 class Core PE 8 girls  1 class Core PE 8 girls	Core PE  8 girls	Core PE  8 girls		Core PE  12 girls	
<b>Willow High</b>	Core PE  4 girls		Core PE  4 girls		Core PE  6 girls		Core PE  5 girls	

As **Table 3.3** displays, focus groups were conducted with S1-S4 girls in a variety of PE classes. The composition of each focus group was such that the girls were all the same approximate age. The focus groups at Pleasant Hill were the only ones where it was clear that the participants were friends (as they had self-selected into respective groups). However the participants in all of the other focus groups were all familiar with each other and within each focus group were smaller groups of friends (an observation I confirmed during the participant observation phase). Discussions were most interactive between those who felt most comfortable with each other. At Willow High, the participant numbers (n = 4-6) in each focus group were much smaller as the recruitment method was different.

Hopkins (2007) argues that “the timing of focus groups in terms of local, national and global events and circumstances” has an important influence on the nature of focus group

discussions. Within my focus groups this was apparent when the timing of the focus groups at Pleasant Hill coincided with the teaching of Scottish country dancing (SCD) or ceilidh dancing in PE classes in the run up to the school Christmas dance. On reflection of my positionality as a non-native, schooled in the United States, I was ignorant of this tradition, taught to all primary and secondary school pupils in the weeks preceding the Christmas holiday. However, through our focus group discussions, because the girls were just about to do SCD, it was at the forefront of their minds and they shared with me many of their experiences of doing ceilidh dancing. This prompted me to consider it worthwhile to ask the head of PE if I could continue my participant observation phase allowing me to witness this uniquely Scottish tradition. The experience of SCD, while never intended as a focus of my research became an important part of girl's experiences of 'growing up' which I consider in Chapter 8.

The location of the focus groups is also deserving of attention. At Pleasant Hill the PT of PE showed me a communal multi-purpose space in the school corridor across from the PE base which was used during lunch and breaktimes as an eating space and had cafeteria style tables. I used this space for all focus groups at Pleasant Hill. At Sunnyside I was directed to use the cafeteria space with the same cafeteria style tables as at Pleasant Hill. At Willow High I was given a classroom space to use. Hopkins (2007: 532) asks us, when conducting focus groups within schools, to pay attention to how "a number of factors, such as the presence of other authority figures...as well as the ethos of the school can all influence the nature of the discussion". The communal/cafeteria spaces used at both Pleasant Hill and Sunnyside allowed for two events worth reflecting on.

At Pleasant Hill as the discussion turned towards girls' frustrations with having to change out of their PE kit and back into school uniform when they had PE at the end of the day and did not have to walk past the school rector to go home, one girl looked around and said "I hope Mr.

Novell is not listening in on this” (Sarah S3, Pleasant Hill)! The communal space at both Pleasant Hill and Sunnyside meant that teachers and other pupils were also using the space at times, passing by or sitting near—often as a result of exclusion from a class. Accordingly, at times other individuals—not involved in the research—intentionally or unintentionally heard parts of our discussion. During one of the focus groups with S2 girls at Pleasant Hill, one staff member interrupted us at one point, asking—in a disciplinary tone—“what exactly are you girls doing out here?” The girls and I were engaged in a heated discussion about doing football and rugby with boys and I was sitting in the middle, with my hair in a ponytail, wearing similar clothing—a sweatshirt and tracksuit bottoms—to the girls. The teacher did not assume me to be an authority figure and assumed that because it was during class period, that the girls were skipping out on PE in favor of chatting in the café area. I assumed my authority at that point and explained the research to the teacher. On another occasion a teacher at Sunnyside mistook me for a pupil and asked if I was one of the new students.

The questions asked within the focus groups were important as well. I provide a detailed schedule of the focus group questions in Appendix G. It is generally agreed that researchers start focus groups with questions that put participants at ease and ‘break the ice’ and move to ask more difficult or sensitive questions in the latter part of the discussion (Longhurst, 2003). I first asked about girls’ general experiences of PE and moved latterly to enquire about details of their interactions with boys, doing specific sports, and what they felt about PE kit, and teaching staff. I also found after conducting the first three focus groups that I had to adjust and change the beginning questions. Initially I asked girls what their experience of PE was; “what is PE like for you?” This was often met with blank stares and I found that it was too broad of a question to ask. I modified it to ask girls to talk about some of their “best and worst” memories of PE. While the questions were initially “standardized across all focus groups” (Cameron 2008: 124), I allowed the

focus groups to unfold in a conversational manner, giving participants the chance to voice issues of importance to them (Longhurst, 2003). Had I stuck strictly to the focus group script, I would have missed out on girls' experiences of the discursive and material space of the changing rooms which forms a large part of my analysis in Chapter 5. Allowing the focus groups to flow and take direction from the girls' interests and experiences worked better in the secondary schools than it did in the primary schools (as I discuss in section 3.5.3). Interestingly, at times when the secondary school girls themselves pointed out that they felt they were "veering off topic" I found these to be the most revealing and rich portions of the transcripts allowing me insight into girls' intimate and personal practices of eating and exercise—"sometimes when you do loads of exercise you have to eat like loads of chocolate" (Sienna S4 Sunnyside)—which form part of the discussion in Chapter 7.

In regards to ethics, Hollander (2004) asks researchers to consider that when the focus group ends, a participant's relationship with others in the group continues; accordingly comments made during the group may have implications for the participant's relationship with others—both involved and not involved in the focus group—later on. During one of the focus groups with S3 girls at Pleasant Hill, Carla pointed out that she felt insecure in first and second year PE when she was in a class with sporty girls like Katja. Jemma, one of the other focus group participants responded in a threatening manner "you mean Katja Komel? She's not like just my best friend or anything!?" It was clear that Carla did not intend to personally insult Katja: "I know she's your best friend, it's just embarrassing when you're in PE with her and she can do everything and you can't" (Carla). Carla was simply using Katja—and specifically her 'sporty-ness' as an example of why she felt uncomfortable and embarrassed doing PE in first and second year. Jemma, however, interpreted Carla's comment as an insult to Jemma's best friend and I had to remind the girls that what was said within the space of the focus group had to remain confidential.

Longhurst (2003) also points out that focus group participants may express sexist, racist or in my case, 'fatist'<sup>8</sup> comments and that researchers should pay attention to how to deal with such situations. An S4 girl in the highest ability fitness group at Pleasant Hill shared that she hates and cannot stand fat people. While I did not offer my opinion on the matter and let the comment pass without judgement, Longhurst, (2003: 127) notes that "sometimes...being non-judgemental might simply reproduce and even legitimize interviewees' discrimination through complicity".

In respect to the above issues, I believe that conducting focus groups with secondary school girls was a useful method for exploring girls' embodied experiences of PE and physical activity. When one member of the focus group shared personal experiences, this prompted others to reflect on their own and either confirm or contradict the initial member's experience. The social context prompted girls to recall events and experiences that happened both with each other and with other classmates during PE class earlier in the year or in previous years. While the focus groups used with secondary schools are a traditional method, it may be argued that it is difficult to capture and record embodied and emotional experiences through methods requiring verbal responses/interactions (Colls & Horschelmann, 2009); however, through asking questions which allowed for participants' exploration of their memories and what mattered to them in their experiences of PE and sport, I paid careful attention to and was able to access girls' emotions.

Additionally by being open about some of my own experiences of high school PE in the United States, I opened myself up for girls to feel comfortable sharing more about their own experiences. For example, prompted by a discussion about school uniform and PE kit, I shared with a group of S3 girls at Willow High, my experiences of going to a public school in the United

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<sup>8</sup> (Sociology) discrimination on the basis of weight, esp prejudice against those considered to be overweight [from FAT + -ISM, on the model of RACISM] **fatist** *n & adj* (The Free Dictionary 2012).

States where I was not required to wear specific school uniform or a particular colour or type of PE kit. By letting these girls into my world and sharing some of my past experiences of growing up as a girl, doing PE in America, they wanted to know more about my experiences and share with me more about their own experiences, particularly their feelings about having to “wear lost property when you forget your kit...just like spare stuff which is kinda disgusting because you don’t know who it’s been on” (Claire, S3 Willow High). I explore Claire’s feeling in more depth in Chapter 6. (Hume & Mulcock, 2004: xx) argue that “revealing parts of ourselves and our backgrounds often enhances our relationships with others and encourages the sharing of information that informants might otherwise be reluctant to disclose”.

Furthermore, linking the focus group method with participant observation of girls’ in their PE classes and various other spaces of physical activity, allowed for substantiation and enhancement of embodied experiences generated in the focus group analysis. Participant observation alone would not have allowed for me to access girls’ memories/stories of PE which were crucial to understanding how girls’ past experiences informed their current beliefs, understandings and practices.

### *3.5.6 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS*

“Interviewing in geography is so much more than ‘having a chat’” (Dunn, 2005: 79).

Using interviews in qualitative research can substantiate or fill gaps in knowledge left by other methods such as participant observation and allow the researcher to discover individual experiences, opinions and behaviours/practices. With PE teachers and Active Schools Coordinators in each study school, I utilised semi-structured interviews where a predetermined



order of set questions was asked but I allowed for flexibility and spontaneity, “offering participants the chance to explore issues they [felt were] important” (Longhurst, 2003: 117). The questions I asked were ‘open’ in nature, as I sought to gain an understanding of staff experiences and observations of teaching girls through PE. A list of questions asked during the interviews can be found in Appendix H. **Table 3.4** displays the teachers and their respective schools.

**Table 3.4: Key Providers of Physical Activity and Schools**

Sunnyside	Pleasant Hill	Willow High	Rosefield Primary	Cherry Tree Primary
Mr. Kimball (Principle Teacher (PT) of PE)	Mr. Witherspoon (PT of PE)	Mr. Mackenzie (PT of PE)	Nathan (ASC)	John (ASC)
	Ms. Brown (PE Teacher)	Mrs. Phillips (PE Teacher)		
	Kevin (FFG session deliverer)	Mrs. Lynne (Active Schools Coordinator (ASC)		

The interviews were conducted at various points throughout the fieldwork and difficulties were encountered at times. Interviews were cancelled and rescheduled on a number of occasions due to ever unpredictable and changing staff commitments; interviews were interrupted at other

times by phone calls, pupils or the presence of other people in the space such as during the interview with the head of PE at Sunnyside where the cleaning lady began vacuuming halfway through the interview. Interviews were conducted in various spaces including the offices of Active Schools Coordinators, classrooms designated for use by PE teachers for seat-based work, and communal meeting spaces.

All interviews except for the interview with Mr. Kimball (PT PE at Sunnyside) were conducted during or after the participant observation phase. Similar to my desire to develop a familiarity with the girls during the participant observation phase, prior to conducting the focus groups, I felt that it was useful for staff members to get to know me before conducting the interviews. As noted, during the participant observation phase, I spent time in the PE bases at each school which allowed me to converse with and observe the staff informally over the duration of the research. I was sensitive to demands on staff work time and asked them to decide on the best time that would suit them for the interview. Mr. Witherspoon was the only teacher who desired to be interviewed out-with school working hours.

### **3.6 METHOD OF ANALYSIS**

Data analysis was conducted to identify patterns and themes which eventually resulted in the empirical chapters for the thesis. Using the research questions and literature review as my starting point, I employed a coding strategy for each individual transcript and also coded across the transcripts. The data was analysed using a manual method as well as a computer based method through the software NVivo9. I found it more useful and more 'real' at times to sit down with printed transcripts and a pen, making handwritten notes and drawing out connections than I did using a mouse to highlight and run queries on codes. Because the research was conducted

with different participant groups (primary school girls, secondary school girls and adult providers of sport and exercise), I had to read both across the transcripts/participant groups as well as within them. This was an important part of the analysis as I was able to build up a dialogue between participant groups which was not part of the original methodology but which I argue (through Chapters 6 and 7), is crucial to understanding relationships between female pupils and providers of sport and PE. Additionally, as the research used multiple methods which resulted in the production of multiple pieces of data—focus group and interview transcripts as well as fieldnotes, I also had to read across these pieces. Reading through focus groups and interviews was an important part of confirming—or contradicting my observations and recordings in the fieldnotes.

Using NVivo9 allowed me to import my transcripts—and other documents, pictures and sources—and code them in a manner which is often used by ethnographers by developing a set of descriptive and analytic codes. Descriptive codes were identified, primarily from focus group and interview transcripts. Cope (2005) defines descriptive codes as ones which reflect patterns or themes which are obvious or are stated by participants. Descriptive codes in my study included such codes as ‘boys’, ‘fat’, ‘thin’, ‘eating’, ‘fit’, ‘PE kit’ and ‘changing’. Once a system of descriptive codes was developed I was able to run queries to identify patterns or relationships between codes. Latterly, analytic codes were developed and applied upon identification of relationships between the descriptive codes. For example, I was able to identify relationships between ‘fat’ and ‘fit’ and ‘PE kit’ and ‘changing’ by running queries and paying attention to gaps in the literature review and a focus on the codes in relation to theories of embodiment.

I initially found it very difficult initially to identify four or five main themes which could be developed into empirical chapters. Much of the data, as the chapters do reveal is relational and dependent, intra-active—making it difficult to separate out neatly bounded themes. However, by

maintaining the focus on gendered embodiment while utilising themes which are prominent in children's geographies (scale, space, gender, health and age) with attention to everydayness, I was able to develop the chapters.

Cope (2005) asks how can we know that certain things mattered and others did not? By utilising themes identified by Strauss & Corbin (1990), Cope (2005) offers that the researcher is able to find out what is important to the research—which includes finding out what is important to the researched. 'Conditions', 'interactions among actors', 'strategies and tactics' and 'consequences' are offered as the four themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) necessary for revealing what is important. Focusing on 'conditions' I was able to uncover how certain spaces, activities and individuals within certain spaces made certain participants feel certain ways. Focusing on 'interactions among actors' was particularly important to my study as this gave way to such empirical sections as 'doing PE with the boys' and whole chapters such as 7 and 8 where I weave a 'dialogue' between female pupils and PE staff. Within the theme of 'strategies and tactics' I was able to understand how certain things (such as PE kit requirements, policies on changing into and out of PE kit) related to girls' experiences, resistance to doing PE and feelings about such things. When coding for 'consequences' I had to look first at descriptive codes related to 'cause and effect' such as 'then', 'because', 'as a result of' (Cope, 2003). Some consequences related to disciplinary structures or the passage of time, whereas others were less obvious. For example, as discussed in Chapter 5, after the material PE kit was identified as a significant barrier to girls' participation, changes to PE kit have been made in the last 5 years, offering girls more flexibility and freedom in their kit choice. However, despite these changes, girls continue to disengage or drop out of participating in PE. Therefore it was important to look beyond just the material kit itself, into the intimate spaces, structures and relationships which developed around the practice of changing into and out of the kit.

The coding process was repeated several times and because I conducted the focus groups with the girls at Sunnyside High, at a much later date than the focus groups with girls at Pleasant Hill and Willow High, I also coded all of the transcripts again following discussions with the girls at Sunnyside. I developed a coding structure whereby I grouped my codes, and was able to see any relationships or connections between the individual codes and the groups. Some code groups, although rather intimate and detailed were much more prominent and important than other code groups. For example, in respect to 'spaces' of sport and PE, codes related to the practices and spaces of the changing rooms were much more prevalent than codes related to practices and spaces of the gym hall. Furthermore, some codes which I first developed through reading and coding initial transcripts and fieldnotes had to be dropped as they became less important as the fieldwork progressed.

### **3.7 LIMITATIONS, LEAVING AND CONCLUSIONS**

The methodology was designed to be—above all—feminist, committed ethically, to revealing girls' embodied experiences, while remaining sensitive to the lives of participants. While I believe that my study was able to reveal many of the ways in which girls experience their embodiments through spaces of physical activity, involving also the accounts and observations of those who contribute to girls' experiences (PE teachers and Active Schools staff), it was also limited. This section discusses the limitations of my study, leaving the field and concludes the methodology chapter.

Doing research in schools limited my ability to engage with girls in a more relaxed space, outside of the institutional codes of behavior and socialisation. Furthermore, while my observations involved boys (when PE was mixed-sex), I did not conduct focus groups with boys;

therein my account of the experience of physical education and physical activity will always be partial. My aim was to include a variety of stories and experiences therein my rationale to do research with girls in core PE may have excluded the stories of very highly engaged or sporty girls.

Focus groups were limited in their ability to reveal more private accounts and experiences. While girls were forthcoming in their accounts and descriptions of PE spaces (Chapter 5), stories of doing PE with boys, playing rugby (Chapter 6) and their feelings—both personal and relational—about health, physical activity and body size (Chapter 7), they were reluctant to engage with personal feelings of bodily/biological change related to adolescence. While teachers shared with me observations and opinions on girls' engagements in PE in relation to bodily changes during adolescence, girls did not share such experiences with me. The focus group context and composition may not have been the only limiting factor; as most of the focus groups were conducted in open/public spaces within the school, girls may not have felt comfortable sharing stories of developing breasts or menstruating knowing that other pupils and teachers may over hear. Despite these limitations, I was able to gather a variety of experiences and stories which allowed me the knowledge needed to develop the thesis analysis around the core themes of scale, space, gender, health and age.

As the observations and focus groups with primary and secondary school girls concluded, it is important that attention is paid to how the researcher 'leaves' the field. As Emond (2003) notes, ethnographers often describe how they gained access to participants and the relationships that developed during the research but "what is less well described is the way in which these relationships are ended and the impact that leaving has on those being researched". I think it is important to discuss the researcher's findings and interpretations of the research with participants. I believe that collective dialogue could be achieved by organising and inviting the girls who participated in the focus groups to present their thoughts; to this extent I offered that I return

to the schools and give a short presentation and involve the girls. This could open up further dialogue between pupils, their teachers and key individuals involved in provisioning school sport and exercise. However, none of the schools were welcome to this idea, although a number of sports providers did ask me for a final report; staff may have viewed a formal presentation as an additional logistical and administrative task for them to organize.

While the study schools did not want to invite me to return and present my findings and involve the girls in a presentation, they were particularly interested in the research findings because many government programmes are working, alongside sporting bodies and schools to 'tackle' the 'problem' of non-participation in sport and exercise among girls. To this extent, I provided each of the schools with a short document outlining my findings and recommendations. I also decided to find alternative routes to disseminating my findings and was able to present some of them to a 'health and wellbeing' working group at Pleasant Hill. Because much of my research engages with contemporary public health policy and is interested in the ways in which government programmes of health are enacted through schools I met with Alison Johnstone, MSP for the Green Party to share with her my findings. I also organized a talk entitled 'How our Fear of Fat can Make us Unhealthy' to reach a wider public; I will present the talk at the Café Science Extra Series at Dundee Sensation Science Centre on 9<sup>th</sup> January, 2013.

This chapter has outlined the research methodology, design and methods for research with primary and secondary school girls and key providers of school sport and exercise. Ethnographic methods of participant observation and reflexive diary, followed by focus groups with pupils and semi-structured interviews with key providers of school sport and exercise provided an effective way of investigating embodied experience. As the space and activities of sport and exercise formed important components of the research, I made methodological connections through kinetic focus groups by focusing on somatic experiences, observations and

verbal communication. In keeping with feminist traditions, attention to ethics has been maintained throughout the chapter and continues to be maintained at various points throughout the thesis. Not without considerable personal and ethical challenges, the ethnographic approach allowed me to better understand the lives of my participants and through maintenance of reflexivity I was “able to take a step back from the relationships” which were formed with participants “long enough to identify and reflect upon some of the taken-for-granted rules and expectations of the social world” which I was studying (Hume & Mulcock, 2004: xi). I now move to the empirical section of the thesis which begins in Chapter 4 by mapping the educational frameworks which inform PE in Scotland which are scaled and enacted through the fieldwork schools, and impact on girls’ embodied experiences.



## Chapter 4

### ***THE QUESTION OF SCALE FOR UNDERSTANDING GIRLS' EMBODIED EXPERIENCES OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION***

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

I move into the field now by beginning with an examination of the scaling of physical education. This chapter maps and examines the political and educational processes and structures of PE and how they are interpreted and enacted in each case study school; such processes and structures are connected to, and inform, female pupils' embodied experiences of PE. Rather than understand emotional and embodied geographies health and gender through PE as a linear or hierarchical process or one whereby one or two variables act upon and are used to explain girls' experiences, I approach the complete thesis through an examination of the multiplicity of scales, keeping physicality—embodiment—and what matters, at the forefront of the discussion. By engaging the recently theorized concept of flat ontology (by Marston et al., 2005), this chapter draws on “the processes, decisions and events that shape the world” of PE, a world which female pupils in each of the three case study schools “perceive, interpret and act upon” (Ansell, 2009: 204).

This chapter begins with a discussion of flat ontology (Section 4.2) and an “argument for studying humans and objects in their interactions across a multiplicity of social sites” (Marston et al., 2005: 427). Everyday decisions and negotiations between PE staff, school management, and pupils results in the “social site” of physical education which “inhabits a neighbourhood of practices, events and orders that are folded variously into the other unfolding sites” (Marston et al., 2005: 426). Following Marston et al (2005) I reject traditional hierarchies of scale and draw on the concept of flat ontology while maintaining Ansell's (2009: 206) argument, in relation to

children's geographies, that physicality "poses a qualitative distinction between relations of near and far".

The chapter then moves to demonstrate how girls' embodied experiences of PE are not limited to encounters within the 'local' scale of the gym hall or playing field (Section 4.3). Drawing on Ansell (2009), I sketch how wider government discourses of health and education guide and inform contemporary practices of the Scottish physical education curriculum through the implementation of Physical Activity Guidelines and the Curriculum for Excellence. I continue by demonstrating how—despite the introduction of health and educational policies which appear to have a uniform and generic impact on the ways in which physical education is taught—individual schools have retained historic structures grouping pupils by sex and ability or fitness level. These structures prompted direct embodied encounters as I go on to explore in subsequent chapters. This chapter sets the foundations for the exploration of connections between various political and institutional/educational structures and girls' embodied experiences. Through specific attention to the themes addressed in the remaining empirical chapters (6-9), I continue this relational exploration.

## **4.2 UNDERSTANDING FLAT ONTOLOGY**

Marston et al. (2005) first trace the history of geographical development of scale theory. The authors note Taylor's (1982) work on the social construction of scale which links the development of hierarchical levels of scale to the development of capitalism and separates urban, national, and global levels of scale, emphasising the latter as the scale that matters most. From Taylor's (1982) model, Marston et al. (2005) sketch the trajectory of scale theory through to Smith, (1984; 1992; 1996) who unravels hierarchical assumptions of scale and argues for an economic

model “seeing scale as the always malleable geographic resolution of competition and cooperation” (Smith, 1996 in Marston et al., 2005: 418). Howitt (1993) and Swyngedouw (1997; 2000; 2004) conceptualise scale as relational and argue for recognition of “the interpenetration of the global and the local” (Howitt, 1993: 38 in Marston et al., 2005).

Despite recent attempts to disrupt the vertical models of scale by Howitt (1993), Swyngedouw (2004) and Massey (2004) among others, Marston et al., (2005: 419) are troubled by the maintenance of a “foundational hierarchy – a verticality that structures the nesting so central to the concept of scale, and with it, the local-to-global paradigm”. This foundational hierarchy of scale—whether theorized vertically or more recently, horizontally—maintains a stretching across space that is defined by different vantage points (above for vertical and below for horizontal) (Marston et al., 2005). Therefore, their critique rests on the argument that if horizontal and vertical understandings of scale only differ in terms of the “‘point of view’ from which space is marked” then there is no purpose in maintaining the distinction between vertical and horizontal models (ibid: 420).

Marston et al. (2005) developed what they describe as a ‘flat’ ontology, rejecting entirely the concept of scale, in part because they consider it impossible to retain a local/global distinction that is not firmly tied to other binaries...The alternative they propose is “materialist but poststructuralist and non-dialectical” (Jones et al., 2007: 264). This requires no “‘outside over there” that, in turn, hails a “higher” spatial category’ and no ‘prior, static conceptual categories’ (Marston et al., (2005: 424-25) cited in Ansell (2009: 197). Drawing on Schatzki (2002) Marston et al (2005: 425) propose the “social site” as the tool/solution for understanding how “the layout of the built environment - a relatively slow-moving collection of objects - can come to function as an ordering force in relation to the practices of humans arranged in conjunction with it”.

Rejecting the “flow” solution offered by Deleuze (1994), Marston et al. (2005) argue that processes, bodies, relations, objects and events are not solely fluid or flows; conceptualising them as such ignores both materiality and the reality that in life, things that ‘appear’ to flow such as people and commodities, also cease motion and become blocked. As I discuss further in Chapter 6, the event-space of the changing room was a place where the flow of girls between PE time and other classes became blocked as bodies collided in a cramped space all with the same intention of changing quickly to make it to their next class. Brielle (S2 Sunnyside) shared that “there’s not [enough time to get changed]...you’re all like trying to get changed and people are getting changed in the middle of the room.” Therefore, the sometimes ordered, sometimes chaotic, space of PE becomes the social site in which things such as bodies, practices, objects and rules move (and cease to move), interact and connect with the respective qualities of other sites. While I focus on physical education as a social site by maintaining a flat ontological perspective, I also maintain Ansell’s (2009: 201) argument that “an understanding of scale that rests on material relations requires a qualitative (but not dualistic) distinction between relations that are near or far”.

#### *4.2.1 A FLAT ONTOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILDREN’S GEOGRAPHIES*

While Marston et al. (2005) develop a theoretical framework for understanding the world geographically through flat ontology rather than assuming a pre-existing scalar hierarchy, Ansell (2009) considers how this ontology may be useful specifically for the sub-discipline of children’s geography. Research into the geographies of childhood and youth has been critiqued from several perspectives for developing into a sub-discipline of consensus-based research both through a core theoretical assumption—children’s competent social agency (Vanderbeck, 2008) and through

'small' scale foci of the research—namely the home, school, and so forth (Philo, 2000; Ansell, 2009). Ansell (2009: 191) states that the fixation on the 'local' presents children's geographers with two particular problems:

“First, focusing on the parochial sphere and small-scale social action of children leaves unchallenged the processes that affect children across national settings or even worldwide...Second, the localism of children's geographies is a concern because, while research deals predominantly in empirical studies of the everyday lives of children, and not the wider processes, discourses and institutions to which these connect, children's geographies are not seen as relevant by other geographers.”

Ansell draws on flat ontology and embodied subjectivity offering a solution to the above problems. She urges children's geographers to view children “as nodes of material connections to places near and far – nodes that are embodied, perceiving, acting, expressing, connected with other humans and with objects, both natural and social beings, but not fully aware autonomous agents” (Ansell, 2009: 199). While I agree that attention should be paid to wider processes which connect to children, I maintain—and demonstrate through Chapter 5—that everydayness itself is capable of revealing wider processes.

To this extent, Ansell argues that it is important for children's geographers to inquire beyond the direct experiences and opinions of children themselves. “Besides researching with children, we need to research with those who are actively involved in constructing the policies and discourses that affect children, while recognizing that these individuals, too, have limited knowledge and limited perceptual fields” (Ansell, 2009: 205). Physical education teachers and Active Schools Coordinators (ASCs) are tasked with, and have accepted the role of, delivering and

teaching the discipline of physical activity—and its related embodied constitutions, for example, health, well-being, strength and skill. PE teachers and ASCs are also embodied individuals with limited and varying experiences, knowledge and desires. Mr. Kimball (PT PE Sunnyside) has been teaching “PE for 15 years” and has “built up all my own ideas, so I want to bring my ideas to the table as a leader”. To some extent teachers may have limited control over various decisions which impact on both the delivery of PE and their ability to engage pupils in the act of doing PE. However, they—particularly those who have been teaching for a long time—have spent a great deal of time interacting with, observing and teaching their pupils and therefore it is important to include their reflections and experiences in my study in order to begin a productive dialogue between teachers and female pupils.

While Ansell, (2009: 206) agrees with Marston et al. (2005) that it may be useful to abandon the ontological hierarchy of scale but from the perspective of embodied subjectivity, she is critical of severing ties “between relations of near and far”. She argues that “children encounter near and distant places in multiple conscious and unconscious ways...their most intense interactions may be with proximate spaces” as Carla (S3 Pleasant Hill) shared with me, “we get all muddy when we have to go out and play rugby and football in the mud and rain.” However “the world they encounter is produced through diverse interactions and they constantly engage with things that connect with distant places—books, school curricula, fruit or clothes produced elsewhere” (Ansell, 2009: 201). Accordingly, “[S]pace” such as the gym hall of physical education “which may appear neutral and contained...is actually shaped by interrelations that extend beyond any immediate interaction between the child and what s/he perceives” (Ansell, 2009: 200). It is therefore important to inquire beyond girls’ immediate embodied experiences and encounters in the ‘local’ space of (PE) to uncover “relations” between girls’ experiences and “unobserved places”, places where for example, health and educational policies are written (Ansell & van Blerk,

2005 in Ansell, 2009: 193). Enquiring how government recommendations on physical activity and Curriculum for Excellence are enacted and interpreted allows us to see beyond 'the local' and to make connections between such frameworks and girls' experiences of PE.

#### **4.3 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES AND CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE**

Two primary frameworks guide and inform the teaching and delivery of PE in Scotland: the Scottish Government's pledge that all school-aged children receive two curricular hours of PE per week and the restructuring of physical education into a 'Health and Wellbeing' framework through the Curriculum for Excellence introduced from 2010. The Scottish Government's recommendations on PE were stated by the Scottish National Party (SNP) government in 2007 and have been revised and re-emphasized based on new physical activity guidelines established by the four UK Chief Medical Officers in July 2011. As discussed in Chapter 1, the four UK Chief Medical Officers established new physical activity guidelines for early years (under fives), five to eighteen year olds, adults (19-64) and older people (65+) in July 2011. The guidelines state that children and young people (5-18 year olds) should engage in "moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity for at least 60 minutes and up to several hours every day" (Department of Health, 2011: 1). These are UK guidelines for physical activity which the Scottish Government supports.

The Scottish Government recognises that the majority of children aged 5-18 are enrolled in full time education and, therefore, that the school site is a place where the majority of Scottish children spend most of their weekly time. Accordingly, school is seen as a place where opportunities for physical activity can be made possible through mandatory curricula or 'core' PE classes. The Scottish Government recommends all children and young people (aged 5-18), including those with disabilities to take part in at least two hours of *physical education* classes a

week (The Scottish Government, 2003b). Following research into the number of Scottish secondary schools already reaching this target, BBC News Scotland (2010) confirmed the disparity in time allocated to physical education classes in secondary schools, stating that “only 23% of secondary schools have reached the target” (BBC Scotland, 2010: 1).

Scottish government’s recommendations for physical education are tied to notions of citizenship, embodied through the healthy body of present and future children: “The government is strongly committed to children and young people throughout Scotland developing the habit of physical fitness, as it is vital not only for the children of the present, but also for the future health of our nation” (The Scottish Government 2010). As discussed in Chapter 2, the recommendations are also closely aligned with partners such as **sportscotland** who are working towards a National Strategy for Sport where world-class performances by Scottish athletes are achieved and sustained. Recent and upcoming global and international sporting events based in the UK, namely the London 2012 Olympics and the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games provide the Scottish Government and schools with a geographical ‘nearness’ to elite demonstrations and celebrations of sport. At Sunnyside and Pleasant Hill, the London 2012 Olympics were advertised with posters on school walls. The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games established a ‘Get Set’ educational programme which is supported through Education Scotland. The programme is a reward and recognition scheme for UK schools and colleges. The emphasis is on sustaining participation and creating a legacy for pupils to find sports and physical activities that they can really engage in, encouraging them to maintain activities throughout their lives (G. Holt, 2012)

Ansell (2009: 199) reminds us that “subjects are constituted relationally through embodied being, rather than cognitive consciousness”. By utilising UK-based world-class sporting events such as the London 2012 Games and the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games, school based programmes of sport encouraged pupils to get involved in the sporting aspects of nation



building by participating in sport or physical activity. This constitution is highlighted through Gagen's (2004) work which explains how the American playground and physical education movement sought to nation-build through cultivating the physicality of the young middle-class and immigrant population. Gagen (2004: 438) shows how the musculature of children's bodies was trained and cultivated through programmes of physical activity in the belief that "national characteristics would be embedded in the bodies of America's youth". Through patriotic displays of children in celebration of Olympic athletes or American Independence (Fourth of July celebrations), children's bodies were "put on display" fulfilling "a double function. It proved national character while at the same time making it."

Scottish Government recommendations for provision of two hours of physical education classes per week were (at the time of researching) suggestions rather than legal requirements. To assist in implementing this recommendation formally throughout all Scottish schools, "Curriculum for Excellence is currently being introduced into all of our schools and will embed at least 2 hours quality PE in the curriculum for every child every week in addition to physical activity and sport" (Robison 2010: 1). Curriculum for Excellence is attempting to create a "transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum from 3 to 18" (Education Scotland, 2011).

"The Minister has asked that the Curriculum for Excellence Programme ensures that there is sufficient flexibility in the curriculum to allow schools to accommodate the provision of least 2 hours of good quality physical education for each child every week. The starting point for the Programme's work on this has been to establish a small group to look at existing guidance for physical education, health and well-being."

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) began implementation in Scottish schools in August 2010, correlating with the start of my fieldwork<sup>9</sup>. At the beginning of the fieldwork, the recommendation of two hours of quality PE per week, stood as a goal for schools to achieve rather than a requirement. At Pleasant Hill, where (at the time of researching) CfE had not yet been enacted to embed the recommended two hours per week of PE, the recommendation frustrated Mr. Witherspoon who was in favor of government mandated policies on PE time.

“The government have once again suggested—but it is always suggestions, it’s always just recommendations—that children in Scotland should do two hours; every child from the ages of five to eighteen should do two hours of quality physical education every week! That’s a fantastic statement! If, they should just make it mandatory and say they *will* do two hours every week. What a difference that would make to us as a nation” (Mr. Witherspoon, Pleasant Hill).

Drawing a connection between the time spent being physical active through PE class in schools and national health, Mr. Witherspoon (Pleasant Hill) subscribed to the belief that more sport = more health (Evans et al., 2007), at the scale of both the individual pupil body and the national Scottish population. At Willow High where I conducted my fieldwork much later in the year, and where changes to PE through CfE had embedded two curricular hours of PE per week for each child, the PT of PE informed me that “physical education is compulsory in Scottish education for

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<sup>9</sup> New UK Chief Medical Officers Guidelines on physical activity for children and young people (aged 5-18) were established in July 2011. While these are the most recent recommendations on physical activity, they did not correspond with the majority of the fieldwork and therefore did not have immediate impact on my findings.

two hours of PE; every child is *entitled* to 2 hrs of physical education a week” (Mr. Mackenzie, emphasis added).

As Chapter 6 discusses in further detail, the two hours of quality physical education may not necessarily be scheduled within PE class; the main aim of CfE is a ‘flexible’ structure which allows for ‘reaching’ across the curriculum and encourages relationships between subjects with the aim of creating a more holistic learning experience for pupils. CfE also recognizes that experiences are not limited to specific disciplines or subjects and thus encourages cross-curricular links. This is reflected in the structure. ‘Experiences’ as understood by CfE, are supposed to create ‘outcomes’ for pupils. Curriculum for Excellence is structured and organized accordingly to achieve the main aim, which is discussed in the following section. While the frameworks through CfE inform the structure and ethos of PE in Scotland, the finer details of delivery are site specific, and as further chapters reveal, the daily ‘event’ of PE at each school is “contingent, fragmented and changeable” (Marston et al., 2005: 427). The overall curriculum is to be restructured into eight curriculum areas: Expressive arts, Health and wellbeing, Languages, Mathematics, Religious and moral education, Sciences, Social studies and Technologies. I discuss the Health and wellbeing area in depth in the following section.

#### *4.3.1 HEALTH AND WELLBEING THROUGH CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE*

The emphasis of the curriculum is on ‘experiences’ and ‘outcomes’; CfE recognizes the contributions of all individuals involved in a child or young person’s education—including families and communities—as contributing toward experiences. What this transformation means for physical education is a restructuring of the former individual subject of PE into the ‘Health and Wellbeing Area’. The Health and Wellbeing Area also includes ‘former subjects’ such as Home

Economics and Social Education. “The Health and wellbeing area will focus on children and young people’s knowledge and understanding, skills and attributes in relation to physical education, food and health, substance misuse, relationships, sexual health and parenthood, and their social and life skills” (The Scottish Government, 2011: 76).

The complex and seemingly ordered system developed through Curriculum for Excellence has put into place both a systematic ordering of education as well as the opening up of space for creative events (Marston et al., 2005). While CfE has built in two hours of PE time and restructured PE to fit in the Health and Wellbeing Outcome (systematic ordering), it has allowed for and even insists on pedagogical flexibility arguing that the teachers are best placed to make decisions on curricular content. The practical, day to day teaching is the decision of teaching staff, many of whom (at the time of researching) were still attempting to learn how to deliver CfE. Chapter 7 discusses in detail, the ways in which Curriculum for Excellence allowed for particular teachings about health in relation to food and physical activity in the fieldwork schools. Some of the PE teachers whom I interviewed were unclear about “what’s going to happen” in the day to day teaching of PE through Curriculum for Excellence. At Pleasant Hill, where my research was conducted prior to the full enactment of CfE, Ms. Brown described what she thought might change as a result of the new curriculum:

“the curriculum for excellence which is...probably more not just the practical skill side of things but experiencing it; possibly you know, not analyzing what they’re doing , what others are doing, so it’s becoming a much broader ...thing now that may appeal to more people..It’s the emphasis is not so much on the pure skill”.

As Ms. Brown noted, the emphasis shifts from evaluating and analysing pupils to achieving a goal-the outcome. Mr. Witherspoon, the head of the PE department was more explicit about some of the immediate ways in which CfE has allowed for an opening of creative events.

“Now the big things is Curriculum for Excellence; we’ve tried to increase the lengths of the blocks again to allow teachers to be a wee bit more flexible and creative; I think you witnessed it when we did the rugby; and we have next door [gym hall] to go in and look at the video, I’d hope it would work, the idea behind it was sound, but the longer blocks that hour and a half...If you’re really going to look at children’s movement competencies, their ability to work together, to compete against each other in a fair way and to analyze performance, you at least giving yourself a chance if you’ve got the time, not in a half hour! But you can in one and a half hours, create varied things that they can do...”

Curriculum for Excellence has allowed PE staff to increase the period length which, as Mr. Witherspoon noted, allows for more flexibility and the opportunity to achieve a wider variety of creative and interesting experiences during one timetabled period. I observed the rugby example that he is referring to during my fieldwork phase at Pleasant Hill. Mr. Witherspoon used a camcorder to record the passes and movements of first year pupils during a rugby lesson. His plan was to use the indoor gym space during a future lesson, to feedback to the pupils through analysing their movements on video. Mr. Witherspoon was knowledgeable about what CfE might ‘look like’ on a day to day basis, and he had been involved in planning some experiences for pupils, aligned with CfE aim and principles. However, other PE teachers remained ignorant of or unclear about what they would encounter in a PE class under the new curricular framework. The uncertainty, for many teachers, lies in not fully comprehending “how that works” for teachers and

pupils who are accustomed to traditional models of learning and assessment (Ms. Brown, Pleasant Hill).

“I don’t know we’ll see how that works over the next few years...it just started...I mean that will start in first year level this year, and will then go through. At the moment we don’t actually don’t know what’s going to happen at senior school level because they’ve not actually come out and told us for definite what’s going to happen, so we think we know what might happen, but we don’t actually know...it’s more a case of watch this space and see if anything makes a difference [to girls’ participation] or not” (Ms. Brown, Pleasant Hill).

Ms. Brown acknowledged that CfE was just beginning to change the way PE classes were structured and delivered. She reflected on the aim of CfE—of creating a more flexible, enriched curriculum, in consideration of increasing girls’ participation in physical activity. She was uncertain and unconvinced however, of the impact of CfE on girls’ participation.

Through work by the Physical Activity Task Force, the Scottish Government published recognition that “putting these recommendations into practice needs high enough staffing levels and staff training” (The Scottish Government, 2003b: 43). The Scottish Government then offers that “Teaching Profession for the 21st Century (also known as McCrone Time) gives us the chance to deal with some of these issues” (The Scottish Government, 2003b: 43). Individual schools have particular staffing difficulties, staff training needs and turnover; this creates a difficulty for timetablers determining curricular scheduling. Through the duration of my fieldwork, a number of staffing issues arose: the PT of PE at Sunnyside High left his post; the Active Schools Coordinator of Sunnyside and Pleasant Hill left his post and was replaced after a two month interim. The Active

Schools network at Willow High was restructured resulting in redundancy for the High School Coordinator.

It is clear that the recently established UK guidelines on physical activity are informing Scottish Government recommendations for physical education for all school aged children. The restructuring of PE into the Health and Wellbeing Outcome through the Curriculum for Excellence Framework was completed to make it possible for schools to provision two hours of quality physical education for each pupil per week. Many schools are still in the process of timetabling two hours of PE, and as Chapter 5 goes on to demonstrate, the everyday happenings within the event-space of PE means that the timetabling of a subject does not translate to actual playing or physically active time. CfE is a complex system wherein PE has been reorganized and teachers and pupils are expected to engage with the principles outlined in the experiences and outcomes, at the same time as the educational policy encourages flexibility and creativity. However, the difficulty and tension for teachers lies in the transition between familiar and traditional methods of teaching and assessment to the creative yet unknown workings and expectations of the new Scottish Education Curriculum. While all (state funded) PE departments are now expected to deliver physical education through the Health and Wellbeing Area as outlined in CfE, there are, within each school, different structures and ways in which PE is delivered. These structures, as I discuss in the following section, additionally inform girls' embodied geographies through PE.

#### **4.4 STRUCTURING PE THROUGH THE RESEARCH SCHOOLS**

While Curriculum for Excellence is restructuring the way in which PE in all state funded secondary schools is organized and delivered to satisfy experiences and outcomes in accordance with the Health and wellbeing Area, particular structures, unique to each research school also impacted on and informed girls' experiences. This section maps the ways in which PE is structured

in each of the fieldwork secondary schools and builds a base for further chapters which discuss the relevant structures within the themes identified in the remaining empirical chapters.

Physical Education in the case study primary schools was not structured in a formal way as it is in the secondary schools, as I discuss further in Chapter 8. PE classes in the case study primary schools and throughout feeder primaries for the secondary schools are not formalised, nor delivered on a daily basis. Girls arrive at secondary school, carrying with them, a variety of experiences of PE in primary school. While I was unable to observe any PE classes taught in the primary schools, through focus groups, primary school girls shared with me their present experiences of PE, while secondary school girls reflected on their primary school experiences of PE. Some of girls in the the secondary schools involved in my research previously attended one of the two primary schools where I conducted research.

In all three of the research secondary schools, core PE is timetabled for first through fourth years, though as I will explain, the amount of time allocated for core PE is site-specific. In the Scottish Education system, students from third year onwards may in addition, select to study towards certificated qualifications in PE by choosing Standard Grade (SG) and later on, Intermediate and Higher classes in physical education. The girls who select into Standard Grade, Intermediate or Higher PE classes are generally those who are interested in pursuing a career in physical activity or PE. Third year girls who are enrolled in both core and Standard Grade PE at Willow High present their understanding of core PE:

Adrienne: “Core is just we muck about really and whereas Standard Grade is when you actually learn how to do skills and you learn about sports; you get homework and stuff like that. It’s much different.”



Sarah: “Core PE is more that you just to do it, just do it but you don’t get taught how to do it as much like maybe just a bit of the basics like in badminton you got kind of basic rules but there’s not much details it’s more like just do it rather than learn how to do it.”

(S3 Focus Group Willow High)

While all of the research secondary schools had provisions for core PE for first through fourth year pupils, they each had a unique way of structuring PE classes and variations existed in the sex composition, fitness level composition and timetabling of classes. **Table 4.1** presents the multiple differences in the way PE is structured between each research school.

**Table 4.1: Timetabled, Sex and Ability Structures for PE**

School Name	Compulsory PE year groups	Period Timetabled/ per week	Fitness Level Composition	Sex Composition
<i>Pleasant Hill</i>	S1-S2	1 double period	Mixed	Mixed
	S3-S4	1, 55-minute period: 'activities'	Mixed	Pupils select mixed or single
		1, 55-minute period: 'health, fitness & exercise'	Foundation	Mixed
			Middle	
High				
<i>Sunnyside High</i>	S1	1 double period	Mixed <sup>10</sup>	Single-sex
	S2-S3	2 single periods		Single-sex
	S4-S5	1 double period		Mixed-sex
<i>Willow High</i>	S1-S6	2 single periods	Mixed	Mixed-sex or single-sex

The different ways in which PE operated in each of my study schools depended on the structures of double or single periods, ability grouping and mixed or single sex classes. I mention these structures here, but discuss the ways in which they related to and informed girls' experiences in later chapters.

At Pleasant Hill core PE was only compulsory for S1-S4, whereas, S5 pupils at Sunnyside were also required to enroll in core PE. Willow High is the only research school where school management have made core PE compulsory for first through sixth year pupils. Mr. Mackenzie was under the understanding that "physical education is *compulsory* in Scottish education for two

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<sup>10</sup> Over the duration of the fieldwork at Sunnyside High, there was a change in the fitness level composition of pupils for PE classes. In 2010/2011, through decision of the head of PE, classes were grouped into three fitness bandings. At the end of the 2011 school year, the head of PE left the position and for the 2011/2012 school year, PE classes returned to mixed fitness level compositions. I conducted focus groups with girls in the 2011/2012 academic year, therefore the mixed composition is reflective of their current PE experience, although memories of and reflections on grouping by fitness level are recalled by some participants.

hours of PE". He followed that statement with "every child is *entitled* to two hours of physical education a week" (emphasis added). At the time of research, Mr. Mackenzie was heavily involved in the beginning stages of implementing Curriculum for Excellence. This may explain his slight confusion over compulsory versus entitlement as CfE is currently being put in place to "ensure that there is sufficient flexibility in the curriculum to allow schools to accommodate the provision of least 2 hours of good quality physical education for each child every week" (The Scottish Executive, 2006: 2).

Grouping by fitness ability was only observed at Pleasant Hill. At Pleasant Hill, the single periods for S3 and S4 pupils were dedicated to one 'activities' period and one 'health, fitness and exercise' period—henceforth known as 'fitness' period. The 'fitness' period was added to the PE curriculum about six years ago; Mr. Witherspoon explained why staff made the decision to split the previously double period of third and fourth year core PE into one 'fitness' period and one 'activity' period.

"...We introduced the fitness and the sport activity into two different periods and we introduced that about 6 years ago...the complaint before, we had just two periods of PE which tended to be activity based and what we were finding was that children were quite simply not engaging in the sport. There was almost a degree of standing around during a game of football or basketball, not much enthusiasm and we thought that they're maybe not fit enough to actually do the sport! So we thought if we can have a positive effect from doing a fitness period keeping that going and if that carries over to allow them to feel more energized during their sport period, that would be a bonus and you can't talk for every single child but we did notice that it changed after a few months, we did notice a change in that the activity periods were becoming more enjoyable because they were just

a wee bit more engaged as a result of maybe doing that fitness work.”

Fitness period curriculum may include aerobics, body combat, circuit training, speed walking, weight training, skipping or fitness through games-related activities. Standardised fitness testing to determine placement in next year’s fitness group, was also done during the fitness period. I discuss the impacts of grouping by fitness ability in Chapter 7.

During the ‘activities’ period, the pupils make “a free choice when it comes to their sporting preferences; they get to choose between being involved in a team sport, individual sport, more health and exercise activities [in addition to their fitness period] or general sport” (Mr. Witherspoon). From staff observations, pupils tended to choose ‘activities’ based on friendship groups.

“...if they’re smart they kind of go to see who else is going in the [friendship] group and say ‘well we really don’t want to be with that group’ and they go somewhere else...Yeah because I have a fourth year girls health and exercise group and initially it was a very very big group but when some of the girls—and it was all girls—saw who was in the group, they decided, ‘no we don’t want to be with them all year’ and they moved into a different group” (Ms. Brown).

The sex composition of PE was distinct in each research school and I attend to important debates regarding single or mixed-sex provisioning in Chapter 6. At the time of researching at Pleasant Hill, core PE was designed and delivered to be mixed-sex for all year groups. About eight years ago, the PE department at Pleasant Hill distributed surveys to all pupils to find out if there was a strong preference for either single or mixed sex PE. “...It came back as very mixed; there

wasn't really—we couldn't say that girls preferred same-sex classes and we couldn't say that girls preferred being taught by a female teacher because it varied from girl to girl as it did from boy to boy" (Ms. Brown). However because of the structure of the third and fourth year PE curriculum at Pleasant Hill, third year and fourth year PE classes were allocated two periods of PE a week. As previously discussed, one of the periods was a fitness period where pupils were grouped according to fitness level; the other period was an activity period where pupils self-selected an activity. Therefore, the case happened that it might be all girls who chose one activity and all boys who chose another activity. So, the pupils could and did self-select at times into single-sex PE classes, but only for their 'activity' period.

At Sunnyside, first year pupils were divided into single-sex classes for one double period of PE per week. Second year PE was again made up of single sex classes but the periods were two single 55- minute periods. Mr. Kimball drew on the Curriculum for Excellence which had allowed the PE department to offer second year pupils more 'choice':

"In the second part of the second year under Curriculum for Excellence, we offer a wee bit more choice; for example I'll say, "ok we have two teachers on, one is taking netball, once is taking dance, so go off to your chosen sport, one's taking football, one's taking rugby, so off to your chosen sport". So there's a wee bit more choice, and that runs for three weeks, so there's a wee bit more choice."

When pupils reached fourth year at Sunnyside High, PE moved to mixed-sex classes with two, back-to-back (double) 55-minute periods per week. The range of activities broadened as a result of Mr. Kimball facilitating opportunities for pupils to use town/community sports facilities. Additionally, the structure relaxed such that pupils were allowed to choose, on a weekly basis, the

activity or sport that they wished to participate in for PE class.

“For fourth, fifth and sixth year, what I’ve done is I’ve said, again we have the same issues of children not bringing their kit, and I said right, weekly, you can choose, so I put seven members of staff on and I say “right, one is doing netball, cycling tennis, football, whatever” and I try and use the facilities around the town” (Mr. Kimball).

A further layer of complexity for fourth through sixth year pupils at Sunnyside High was that the school was a split site where first through third year pupils were on one site (the junior school) and fourth through sixth year pupils were on another site (the senior school). PE facilities and playing fields were only on site at the junior school. This means that fourth through sixth year pupils spent a range of timetabled PE time, depending on their mode of transport, walking or riding the bus from the senior to the junior school. The structure of mixed or single sex classes and the impact of this structure on girls’ experiences within schools, is discussed further in Chapter 6.

At Willow High, first and second year pupils are given a common course of activities and are in mixed-sex composition classes. While pupils are fitness tested, they were not grouped into fitness or ability bands. As I will expand on in Chapter 6, third and fourth year pupils at Willow High could be put into single or mixed sex classes, depending on timetable allowances or teacher observations of the nature of the relationship between boys and girls in the previous year.

This section presented the framework for how physical education was delivered in each of the case study schools, through various structures which were site-specific. Girls’ experiences of PE are not limited to encounters which occur in the ‘local’ space of the PE class or gym hall, but are additionally informed by encounters with multiple and various spaces—which include objects,

bodies, and processes—both near and far. Maintaining embodiment and embodied encounters as the focus of further discussions lends itself to the understanding that girls' relations with spaces near and far are qualitatively distinct (Ansell, 2009). Embodied experiences cannot be divorced from relational processes or viewed from above (only by Educational and political impacts) or below (only by day to day encounters) as the thesis demonstrates in further chapters. Rather girls' experiences of PE—which is made up of objects, bodies, spaces and pedagogical structures and processes—are part of the process of multiple and differential relations and local and non-local events which comprise the geographies of physical education.

#### **4.5 CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter sketched the political and institutional framework that informs and connects to girls' embodied experiences of PE. I discussed the ways in which the political structures and government health policy on physical activity informs and guides educational structures of PE through the new Curriculum for Excellence. While the PE curriculum has been restructured CfE maintains that the everyday teaching of PE should be flexible, open to cross-curricular links and draw on the creative abilities and knowledge of the teaching staff. This presents teaching staff with a challenge as they are encouraged to break free of their familiar ways of working through a strictly assessment and skill based system. Ansell's (2009: 202) work suggests that girls encounters with things like government and educational policies, while not immediately near, or intimate, do through porous discursive boundaries, act upon children from a distance much more than children may be "able to act (deliberately) on others (people or institutions) at a distance". While it may be true that children would find it very difficult to challenge curricular structure or content, a closer examination of the experiences and practices of mixed and single sex PE (through Chapter 6) and

grouping by ability (through Chapter 7) reveal that embodied acts of resistance may operate in the everyday localised space of PE and present a real challenge to physical educators.

As I alluded to in my discussion of the structure of PE at each school, the 'finer' details of PE, the structures such as 'setting' for fitness ability and sex compositions of classes are site-specific and not controlled or governed by UK or Scottish guidelines on physical activity or through Curriculum for Excellence. In subsequent chapters I return to discuss how such frameworks are practiced, negotiated, received and challenged to varying degrees by teachers and pupils. I discuss in subsequent chapters how daily encounters, events and relations in PE classes in each of the research schools were part of the process of inciting pupils to work hard but were also the spaces where embodied relations exist, change, move and stop or resist. Girls' embodied relations and encounters with gym halls, changing rooms, pedagogical structures and practices and with their own and other girls' and boys' bodies are produced by the event-space of PE.

I cannot point to one embodied experience which is common of all girls in PE or through doing physical activity. I do however identify how girls' embodied encounters with space, gender, health and age/temporality contribute to a deeper understanding of girls' experiences of physical activity more broadly and PE more specifically. These four themes form the basis of the following four chapters with an emphasis on girls' relational and embodied encounters with physical activity. Girls have near and immediate embodied encounters with other actors occupying the space of PE—such as other girls, boys and PE teachers—all of whom have multiple and varying abilities, experiences, embodiments and understandings. Girls additionally have near and immediate embodied encounters with the spaces of PE—including objects inside these spaces. These are direct encounters within and with playing fields, changing rooms and sports equipment. Such encounters are immediate but also informed by wider discourses of health and education of such spaces. Following Marston et al. (2005: 424), throughout the remainder of the thesis, I give



attention to the “relations between bodies, objects, orders and spaces” which account for socio-spatiality consisting of “localized and non-localized event-relations productive of event-spaces”. Localised event-relations such as those which occur within various sex compositions or fitness level compositions of pupils in PE class are relational to non-localised event-relations such as those which occur where curriculum and physical activity guidelines are established. I now move much closer to the field by looking at the intimate spaces and spacings of PE in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5

### *SPACES/SPACINGS AND EVERYDAY PRACTICES OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION*

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

“Think about the space you are in. What is it like? What can be said about it?”<sup>11</sup>

“Think...about something that you do everyday. Think about what it involves; what is it like; how it matters.”<sup>12</sup>

Chapter 4 looked at the relationships between political and institutional changes to the Scottish PE curriculum and site-specific structure and design of PE in each secondary school. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the everydayness of the spaces—and “spacings”—wherein physical education is enacted (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 85). I utilise the term spacings to highlight the interactive, ongoing and moving qualities of PE spaces. I understand these spaces to be dynamic, relational and “settings for interaction” (Philo, 2000: 245). Walking into and between the spacings of changing rooms, gym halls and playing fields of secondary school PE, this chapter answers—in part—Horton and Kraftl’s (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 69) question of “What Else?” matters in thinking and doing children’s geographies, the question which I presented in Chapter 1 to be a core part of my study. Researching the everydayness of children’s geographies, (Valentine, 2003; Thompson & Philo, 2004; Gallacher, 2005), reveals that “much of *what happens*” and what

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<sup>11</sup> Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 84.

<sup>12</sup> Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 71.

matters in and between spacings, “goes un-noticed” (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 71, emphasis in original).

Everydayness—“...that which matters, that which is done and that which happens everyday” includes ideas, practices, relationships and things—material and embodied—going on, in the spacings of our lives (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a). This chapter attends to the everydayness of and in PE by focusing on three specific spacings with the caveat that the connections, interactions and flows between them are also of importance. Wellard (2007b: 1) highlights that research into girls and physical activity “has tended to explore the negative aspects of exclusion from what is considered a male arena of sport (Scruton, 1992; Birrel & Cole, 1994)...without taking into consideration other social factors such as age, the body, geography...(Bale, 1993; Shilling, 1993)”. This chapter considers the everydayness of the geography—the spatiality—of PE to reveal what mattered in the changing rooms (Section 5.2), gym halls and playing fields (indoor and outdoor sport spaces) on school grounds (Section 5.3) and community facilities used by schools for PE classes (Section 5.4).

## **5.2 CHANGING ROOMS**

Geographic research on experiences of school sport tends to focus on ‘active’ spaces of sport—the playground, playing fields, gymnasiums and games halls (Thompson, 2005; Evans, 2006a; Hemming, 2007). While the social event of playing or doing a sport in a games hall or on a playing field may be central to the experience of physical activity, it is important not to overlook the everydayness of other spaces generative of the overall experience of physical education such as the changing/locker room. The changing room is not a space where ‘sport’ is practised; it is, however, an important extension of the sporting space and sporting body—a transition space that

is most often used to make oneself ready before and clean up after doing sport (Fusco, 2006). The focus of this section is on the everydayness of changing rooms whereas in Chapter 6 I illustrate gendered constructions and performances in changing room materialities, temporalities and practices.

Changing rooms of school PE as a space of social research have received less attention than the locker rooms of adult fitness clubs and University sports centres (Fusco, 2006; Goldman, 2006; Short, 2011). Research on school changing/locker rooms reveals that they are “locations for ritual...where sexism, racism and homophobia are transmitted” (Howard & England Kennedy, 2006: 347), spaces of risk for lesbian PE teachers in supervising changing and shower areas (Clarke, 2002) and of bullying of gay and lesbian pupils in school changing rooms (Rivers, 2004).

Qualitative research on changing rooms is often generated by participants’ present or retrospective accounts rather than researcher observations (although for exception see Goldman’s, (2006: xiv) “ethnography of the ladies’ locker room”). This may be due, in the first instance, to ethical requirements of Research Ethics Committees. Particularly where the research concerns populations deemed to be vulnerable—such as children—observing and researching inside changing or locker rooms where young participants are dressing and undressing, raises a question of research ethics. As a researcher, I never myself asked to enter the changing rooms in any fieldwork school; however as further discussion will reveal, the spatial layout of one school necessitated me to pass through the changing rooms to access gym halls and in two of the schools, PE staff requested that I enter changing rooms on various occasions for a number of reasons.

Upon reflection of their overall experience of PE, changing rooms—and material things and practices which characterise them—were a focus of discussion for many girls in my study. This section therefore opens the chapter on everyday practices in PE spaces by focusing on what

mattered for girls in their experiences of the changing room space. I take as my starting point PE kit—a material thing—and the practice and politics of changing.

### 5.2.1 MATERIAL THINGS: TRACKIES, HOODIES AND OTHER PE KIT

“...material things are fundamental to everyday human geographies” (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 73).

Claire: “You have to wear white; it has to be dark bottoms and white t-shirt. They’re very strict on the white t-shirt, no logos, *white*, plain white t-shirt...not sure why it’s so focused on the plain white t-shirt but you have to have that” (S3 Willow High).

Most secondary schools in Scotland require that pupils wear ‘PE kit’ for the duration of PE, changing back into uniform following class. Exact clothing requirements and degree of flexibility in teacher’s requirements for girls’ PE kit, such as removing jewellery and tying hair up varied between schools and often depended on the activity. Mr. Mackenzie (Willow High) indicated “we’re not overly strict with what we ask them to wear...as long as their t-shirt’s white, they can choose” which bottoms to wear.

Other schools and staff exercised more relaxed kit requirements. “They can wear whatever they want” Mr. Kimball (Sunnyside) indicated. “The vast majority of children just wear their own PE kit” as opposed to purchasing embroidered logo kit from the school. “...So girls that want to wear leggings great; girls that want to wear trackies great...hipsters, whatever...” (Mr.

Kimball, Sunnyside). “Our model is as long as things are colour a, b or c, which are the school colours, we’re normally happy with that” (Ms. Brown, Pleasant Hill).

The requirements of a specific PE kit—namely the wearing of shorts or traditional hockey skirts and white t-shirts—for girls) has changed in recent years in attempts to improve girls’ participation. “Aspects of physical education lessons which were initially regarded as lesser concerns for school governing bodies such as specific uniforms for lessons...were found to be significant in girls’ lived experience of school sports” (Wellard, 2007a: 2). Following publication of results from 27 Fit for Girls (FfG) pilot case study schools, rigid PE kit requirements were identified as barriers to some girls’ participation. “Relaxation of PE kit rules has led to an improvement in curricular PE” in several FfG case study schools (Lindohf et al., 2009:10).

“Many years ago in Scotland there was [a standardized PE uniform kit]...but society’s moved on” (Mr. Kimball). Ms. Brown (Pleasant Hill) reflected on the changes to PE kit over the duration of her teaching career. “When I started here it was very traditional; it was shorts and t-shirt. Everybody had to wear shorts and t-shirt no matter what the weather was or whatever, that was what you wore...Now we are a lot more easy-going”.

Claire and Jenna (S4 Willow High) were the only focus group participants that expressed a strong dislike of the PE kit. Claire emphasised that her PE teachers are particularly ‘strict’ on the colour of the t-shirt being white, however as Mr. Mackenzie (Willow High) indicated, staff do not “make them wear shorts, if they want to wear joggies, they wear joggies.” Jenna (S4, Willow High), a classmate of Claire’s, expressed a strong dislike for the way she looked wearing the PE kit.

Jenna: “I do like PE; I love it. I just hate the way we look though.”

Claire: “You don’t like the PE kit right?”

Jenna: “Yeah I hate the PE kit.”

(S4 Focus Group, Willow High)

Jenna did not explain the reason for her hatred of PE kit, however because the bottom half of the uniform is pupils' choice—they can choose to wear shorts, tracksuit bottoms or 'joggies'—this may indicate that the requisite *white* shirt is problematic for Jenna. Consultations with girls from other schools which are making changes to PE kit requirements for girls have shown that white t-shirts—because of their transparency—are loathed by girls. Rebecca O'Rourke, a 14-year old pupil who is part of organizing a campaign led by the Norwich Union Girls Active programme concluded that the “old-style kit of a white Aertex top was really revealing and see-through” (Asthana, 2008:1). Drawing on Probyn (2000), Wellard (2007b: 2) indicates that some PE uniforms “can be revealing” when doing sport where the body “is on display” providing “potential for the individual to be exposed to negative emotional experiences”.

Some teachers believed that changing the PE kit requirements from the “old-style kit of a white Aertex top with 'tiny' black shorts” to allowing girls to wear tracksuit bottoms and hoodies was having an impact on increasing girls' participation (Asthana, 2008: 1). “They're comfortable in it and it helps participation” (Mr. Kimball, Sunnyside). Ms. Brown observed that changes to PE kit may not have improved participation as much as they have improved how girls feel about themselves when participating.

“I think they're just generally happier, I think the shorts used to be a major issue.

Especially for your bigger girls who really didn't want to be coming in short shorts, but I think that did help, that we let them wear tracksuit trousers” (Mrs. Brown, Pleasant Hill).

While some schools have seen improvements in girls' participation and willingness to engage following modernization of PE kit, pupils continued to challenge and negotiate authority by refusing to bring or wear the modernized PE kit, or by wearing clothing advertising alcohol or tobacco. "I say no alcohol or tobacco adverts; so for example you have the Rangers and Celtic shirts with Tenents logos and I say 'off'" (Mr. Kimball, Sunnyside).

Staff also indicated that some girls chose to wear low-cut tops or short skirts which staff deemed unacceptable and impractical for doing physical activity. "Sometimes we have an issue with girls wearing extremely low cut tops; I mean if they would actually do a hand-stand in them they would actually fall out of their tops!" (Ms. Brown, Pleasant Hill). Mr. Kimball concurred: "obviously [no] low-cut tops...or short skirts [are permitted]". Interestingly, girls' choice of short skirts signifies a return to part of the 'old style' PE uniform which was once mandatory. Ms. Brown indicated that for some girls, there was a clear defiance against teacher authority, in the act of wearing a short skirt or low-cut top and for other girls the decision is less deliberate: "I mean some of them don't realise, whereas others I mean it is deliberate" (Ms. Brown, Pleasant Hill). Ms. Brown believed that now that "short shorts are back in" congruent with popular fashion trends, girls were choosing to wear them for PE.

In addition, as short shorts or hockey skirts no longer comprised mandatory PE kit, and in fact had become undesirable or unacceptable by PE teachers, girls may be choosing to wear them as a form of "resistance to the localized hegemony of the PE culture" (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002: 659). "The highly prescribed uniform for physical education which is retained by many schools...not only differs but conflicts with recreational and exercise wear which values individual choice and which promotes such wear as part of the contemporary fashion scene" (Williams & Bedward, 2003: 148). While PE kit requirements for girls varied between and within schools depending on the activity, resistance to bringing or wearing PE kit continued. Bale (2000: 148)



explains that banal forms of resistance and “disobedience often do matter.” Such forms of resistance as refusing to bring or wear PE kit were effective in demonstrating to the teachers that these female pupils were not going to or did not want to participate. These everyday, banal forms of resistance displayed by some female pupils allowed them to assert their own power over the space of PE, and aside from distributing punishments or exclusionary practices, there was little that teaching staff could do to incite girls to bring and wear PE kit. At Willow High and Sunnyside, failure to wear PE kit resulted in exclusion from PE; this was the very result which some female pupils are seeking through resisting the wearing of kit. At Pleasant Hill however, failure to bring PE kit was not a barrier to participation. Schools and individual teachers had devised a variety of tactics of negotiation, punishment and reward to motivate and encourage girls to bring and wear requisite PE kit.

### *5.2.2: POWER RELATIONS AND POLITICS OF PE KIT*

Mrs. Phillips: “There are issues over girls who straighten their hair don’t want to tie it up, take off jewellery, and those become battles.”

Morgan: “So how do you negotiate those battles?”

Mrs. Phillips: “Well some of them are non-negotiable.”

(PE Teacher Willow High).

Despite changes to kit requirements—allowing girls to wear tracksuit bottoms and hoodies—some girls continued to resist participation in PE in multiple ways: girls may “emphasize their feminine appearance by refusing wear kit or remove jewellery” or may wear clothing deemed inappropriate by staff (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002: 659). Gendered behaviours such as

these are often the most successful in enacting resistance to participating in the masculinised culture of physical education (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002). When confronted with pupils who refused to change, remove jewelry or obey kit requirements, teachers devised a variety of disciplinary tactics, bringing female pupils and teachers into ongoing power struggles.

“...If a teacher could control a child in a deterministic way, there would be no need for that teacher to try to find ways of persuading the child into certain kinds of behaviour. The child would simply behave as the teacher wished, without argument, debate or interaction” Gallagher (2009: 91-92).

If a teacher was in full control all girls would bring and wear the teacher-approved PE kit. Instead, because power between teachers and pupils is nested and “acting upon actions will not always produce the desired effects” some girls continue to refuse to bring or wear PE kit resulting in a response, action by teachers—issuing detentions or punishment exercises. “It is precisely because children do not always behave as teachers wish that a whole series of power tactics become necessary; coaxing cajoling, shouting, punishment exercises...” (Gallagher, 2009: 92).

At Sunnyside and Willow High forgetting to bring or refusing to wear PE kit first resulted in pupils being excluded from participating in the PE lesson; repeated refusal to wear kit resulted in a variety of other disciplinary tactics by staff. Similar to Hemming's (2007: 365) findings, “acts of corporeal resistance” such as refusing to change into uniformed PE kit, first resulted in withdrawal of “fun and enjoyable sports and active play”. However here is where my findings deviate from Hemming (2007) whose work was based solely with 9-10 year olds in an English mixed-sex junior school: In Hemming's (2007: 366) study,

“The enjoyment of sport, exercise and active play became a kind of currency, used to barter for children’s co-operation and good behaviour by the school. For the part of the children, their currency was their co-operation and good behaviour, which if given in plentiful enough supply (or so they believed), would lead to pleasure and enjoyment, often in the form of sport, exercise or active play”.

The children in Hemming's (2007) study expressed enjoyment of sport and active play. “Knowing that sport...and active play were valued so highly by most children...these activities were used as motivating factors” by teachers to encourage pupils to conform to additional school requirements such as working hard during other school lessons or wearing PE kit. Similarly girls in my study did recall memories of primary school where rewards—in the form of ‘house points’ to the pupils ready first—were employed by teachers to encourage children to change faster.

Lola: “We used to get chucked out for being too long...oh it was just horrible.”

Kiera: “Then they started the thing where if you got changed quick enough you’d get like house points.”

(S4 Focus Group Sunnyside)

My respondents indicated that the reward system proved effective until pupils “start[ed] coming in with their shirts and shorts half on”. The primary school’s attempt at a reward of house points for changing quickly turned into a competition between pupils to see who could change the quickest, resulting in pupils entering the classroom half-dressed or using the spaces of the school stairways for changing. “Children’s corporeal practices” of changing outside of bathrooms and

changing rooms (spaces deemed appropriate for changing) “subverted” the teachers’ intended meaning of encouraging pupils to be ready for PE more quickly (Hemming, 2007: 365).

Sophie: “I used to get changed like as I was going down the stairs.”

Kiera: “Yeah we would get changed as we were going down the stairs and we’d be changed by the time we were there.”

Lola: “We must have really wanted those house points.”

(S2 Focus Group Sunnyside)

It appeared as if staff in my research secondary schools, were no longer able to rely on female pupils placing such a high value on or enjoyment in doing sport and exercise or on doing PE; therefore punishment for forgetting kit, through exclusion from participation may no longer be effective. “Some people don’t see it as a big deal if they forget their kit; if you don’t want to do PE and you’ve decided not to do it, they don’t really mind having a punishment exercise” (Georgina S3 Sunnyside).

Heather (S4, Sunnyside) informed me that “if you forget your kit twice you get a punishment exercise.” The punishment exercise involves writing “some lines or something and get your parents to sign it and bring it back” (Kerry). Heather also noted that “they give detentions out too...but it’s only break detentions so it’s only 15 minutes.” Teachers at Willow High offered pupils alternatives such as borrowing clothes from the ‘lost property bin’ before giving detentions. “They make you wear the lost property or the like spare stuff which is kinda disgusting because you don’t know who it’s been on” (Claire S3, Willow High). Wearing clothes from the lost property bin creates feelings of abjection or disgust for some girls; others such as Sienna, expressed that they would rather wear lost property than incur a detention. “If you don’t

want to wear it (kit from the lost property bin) they'll give you detentions and I don't want a detention".

Disciplinary tactics of wearing kit from the lost property bin, writing lines and requiring a parental signature or detentions were effective for some—namely pupils who were not repeat offenders; as Kerry (S4 Sunnyside) noted: "Everyone can forget their kit once in awhile...or like you leave it on the bus in the morning sometimes". However, Kerry (S4 Sunnyside) explained that the threat or reality of writing "some lines and get[ting] your parents to sign it" was not effective in encouraging other girls to bring or wear PE kit.

"...even if you don't want to tell your parents...cause it is like a big deal to some people, they just sort of sign it themselves because again like they (teachers) don't have like signatures of parents to compare it to; it's kind of easy to fake as well so it's kind of not really much of a punishment that you'd actually care about...so *some people just don't mind getting it (punished) if they don't have to do PE*" (Kerry, S4 Sunnyside, emphasis added).

Kerry drew a connection which PE teachers may not have seen fully. For some, the punishment of writing lines or serving a 15-minute detention is not effective in convincing pupils to bring their PE kit. As Kerry explained, these pupils would rather serve a punishment than participate in PE. For some girls, it is the activity or the event of changing or doing PE that they were resisting rather than bringing and wearing specific clothing.

At Pleasant Hill, "failure to have PE kit is no longer a barrier to participation" (Mr. Witherspoon). Pupils are still encouraged and in fact *required* to participate even if they forget or refuse to bring their kit, however the wearing of PE kit was a component in the overall course

mark so pupils who repeatedly forgot or refused to bring PE kit received lower marks. Staff members at Pleasant Hill believe that allowing pupils who have forgotten their kit to participate in PE, rather than punishing them through exclusion, teaches pupils that there were “no excuses” to participation. As Mr. Witherspoon explained,

“The other week, I was out and...I couldn’t believe what I was watching, there was a girl in one of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year groups running her heart out for the 12-minute run and she had just below-the-knee length boots on...she had forgotten her PE kit that day but she was willing to take part...but she wasn’t just unwillingly taking part or just walking, she was long strides out; she was going for it! And I was thinking, how many more schools would you get that kind attitude to, “oh well, I’ve not got my PE kit but I can still do this”...it was a terrific moment”.

Pupils at Pleasant Hill therefore could not easily evade participation through forgetting or failing to bring kit. Staff at other schools believed that requiring pupils to bring and wear kit was necessary in adhering to the social ethic of the school. “I don’t let anyone take part PE if they don’t have their kit, I think it’s an ethos thing and to do your best you’ve got to have your kit” (Mr. Kimball). Ideal education discourses of “good citizenship practices...such as participation, involvement, and good sportsmanship” are “inscribed onto children’s bodies” through the requirement of appropriate clothing for participation in PE (Hemming, 2007: 359).

Staff indicated that total refusal of pupils to bring and wear PE kit presented them with certain challenges; teachers also noted that deviations from what the school deemed to be appropriate PE kit—specifically for girls—presented staff with additional challenges. In most schools and for most activities, girls were required to remove jewelry, tie long hair back and not

wear low-cut tops or short skirts/shorts. The removal of jewelry and tying back of long hair were seen as necessary procedures to keep pupils “safe first and foremost” (Mrs. Phillips Willow High). When doing activities such as trampolining or gymnastics, staff perceived a high risk of injury due to long hair or earrings catching in the mechanisms of equipment. Other times, such as during activities like badminton Ms. Phillips relaxed her policies on jewelry removal emphasizing her willingness to negotiate with female pupils. “If I was doing an activity like badminton I might say right you can keep your studs in there’s no harm in that; you do try to come and go”.

Detentions, writing exercises and exclusion by staff were successful in encouraging some girls to bring their kit. However some teachers expressed frustration with the effectiveness of the disciplinary system.

“If you get massive numbers without their kit it’s very difficult to discipline them within school, what do you do? Do you give them punishments? Yes, but what do you do next? Do you give detentions and more detentions and so on and soon eventually the punishments start running out” (Mr. Kimball Sunnyside).

As the “punishments start running out” and no longer prove effective in enacting change in girls’ attitudes and actions of bringing PE kit, Mr. Kimball has decided to “diversify” PE by offering a wider variety of activities and use of community facilities. I discuss the experiences of these changes further in Section 5.4.

Female pupils and staff negotiated practices of resistance and discipline respectively over the bringing and wearing of appropriate PE kit and removal of jewelry. Schools across the UK have made significant changes to PE kit—particularly relaxing strict requirements of white t-shirts and hockey skirts or short shorts for girls. Some schools have seen changes and improvements in girls’

participation however some female pupils continue to resist participation by adopting the strategy of not changing into PE kit. The answer to the question of ‘what else?’ matters, in considering why some girls may not bring or wear PE kit may be found both in the kit itself— “material aspects [and] textures”—and in the everyday, embodied event of changing into and out of PE kit (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 73) as the next section explores.

### 5.2.3 PRACTICES OF CHANGING

“Practices are fundamental to everyday human geographies” (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 74).

(Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 73) remind us that attention to material things may direct us towards “the thoroughly complex and contingent materialities which contextualise individual things, and us, in practice” Attention to material things like PE kit makes us consider...“complex, personal and not-always-sayable memories, meanings and emotions habitually attached to such ‘bits and pieces’”. There is meaning and emotion attached not just to the PE kit itself—the actual clothing, but to that which is done with the clothing—the practice or event (Marston et al., 2005) of changing into and out of PE kit. While only a select few girls expressed dislike in wearing the clothing mandated by PE kit, many others girls expressed frustrations with the *practice* of changing and embodied emotions attached of the *experience* of changing. The event of getting changed may be “dismissed as trivial” (Siegworth, 2000: 239); changing into and out of clothes is something that all of us do, often repeatedly, everyday. However Horton & Kraftl (2006a: 74) urge children’s geographers to pay attention to practices and in so doing argue that we will be able to “consider just how much is going on and just how much is being done, in any particular moment”.



Further to school regulations about PE kit discussed above, staff have established additional rules about changing back into school uniform after every PE lesson, including when the PE period “is at the end of the day and all you’re gonna do is get on the bus and go home, or walk down the street to your house!” (Sarah S3 Pleasant Hill). A number of girls viewed the event of changing back into their school uniform as “stupid” and “a hassle” if PE is the last timetabled period of the day. Sarah (S3, Pleasant Hill) indicated that “it’s stupid that we have to get changed after PE if we’re just going home”. “Today we have PE at the end, at 6<sup>th</sup> period; at the end she (PE teacher) makes us get changed again afterwards and even like we’re just getting on the bus and going home...” (Angela S2 Sunnyside).

The school uniform—a materiality which students contest already in various ways—identifies a pupil with the school he/she attends. This identity already carries with it a marker of class. The school uniform is visible to the public eye when pupils leave the school; for some schools, “as a part of a wider discourse around health” it is important that the public views ‘their’ pupils as a good citizen of the school (Rawlins, 2009: 1087). Requiring pupils to change back into school uniforms so that the public views them as such, outside of the school boundaries, but confined within the discursive border of the school week, allows for the representation of the school to materialise through the uniformed child body rather than the sweaty, muddy and wrinkled appearance which a child wearing PE kit, fresh from doing sport may display.

For some teachers, requiring pupils to change back into school uniform aligns with earlier expectations of ‘appropriate’ PE kit: “It’s an ethos thing...we’re trying to create a healthy environment” (Mr. Kimball). Girls expressed an understanding of the rationale for changing back into school uniform when it was necessary to pass the school Rector. However they did not understand the rationale for changing if their next journey was immediately on the bus as Hannah

(S3 Pleasant Hill) explained: “Yeah, some of us don’t even have to walk through the school and we don’t even see Mr. Burberry (The Rector); we’re just getting on the bus to go home”.

Some girls indicated that the reason one teacher gave for requiring them to change back into school uniform before boarding the school bus was so that “they” (bus drivers) “can identify you” (Eilidh S2 Sunnyside). Ring (S2 Sunnyside) questioned this logic, noting that all students must show passes to be allowed on their designated bus: “But you’ve got your bus pass to get on your bus”. As Ring pointed out, the wearing of a school uniform does not grant students immediate access to board any bus—the bus pass is the only guarantor of the right to board. However, some students seemed ignorant to this, taking the PE teacher’s threat that they would be unable to board the bus without wearing their school uniform as truth.

From girls’ observations, there are some pupils who chose to deviate from this rule and are still allowed to board busses. “But some people don’t” change back into their uniform after PE at the end of the day “because they get on our bus and they’re in their PE clothes” (Carrie S2 Sunnyside). Angela (S2 Sunnyside) remarked on her observations of older pupils such as her brother and her classmates who do not adhere to the rule of changing back into school uniform at the end of the day. This may be because older pupils have realised that they will not be denied access to their bus if they are wearing PE kit; it may also be because older pupils are allowed more flexibility within the school as Mrs. Phillips (Willow High) indicated with respect to relaxing some of the rules with her fourth year class.

“I think possibly we get more relaxed about it, they’re fourth year; PE becomes a bit more recreational...maybe a little bit more of a relaxed atmosphere because you tend not to have the behavioural issues that you have further down so maybe you don’t have to come

in and get them to toe the line as much”.

It appears that older pupils are granted more freedom within curricular PE time and flexibility with respect to adhering to school rules such as timetables and changing requirements. Pupils were additionally required to change back into school uniform at the end of the day regardless of any involvement they may have in an after school sports activity. Sophie (S2 Sunnyside) explained: “Even if you’ve got something after school like if you’ve got hockey or something”

In addition to frustrations expressed by the girls about changing back into school uniform when PE period fell at the end of the day, girls recounted the often repeated task of changing—sometimes three or four times—if they were timetabled to have more than one PE class per day.

Ring: “We’ve got PE and then we’ve got two classes without PE and then we’ve got PE again.”

Angela: “...it’s just that it’s PE 5<sup>th</sup> period and then we’ve got class 6<sup>th</sup> period and then you have to go back and change again...”

Morgan: “So you have to get changed three times a day?”

Angela: “Yeah like we’ve got to get changed into our school uniform and then we change into our PE kit and back into our school uniform and then back into our PE kit and then back into our school uniform then into your PE stuff.”

(S2 Focus Group Sunnyside)

Alison (S2 Sunnyside) indicated that continuous changing into and out of her PE kit and school uniform “doesn’t bother” her, rather “it’s just getting changed and then going back to the

next class like you have to sit there all like sweaty, you don't like get to get washed properly..." Whereas showers were present in the swimming pool changing rooms at Sunnyside they were not a feature of the changing rooms pupils used for general PE; Eilidh (S2 Sunnyside) indicated that "you're not allowed to use the showers in the changing rooms" unless you are swimming.

Changing rooms are regularly used after exercise to rid our bodies of the sweat and dirt acquired while doing physical activity. Requiring pupils to use the changing rooms and change out of PE kit after every PE lesson is affiliated with institutional practices of 'healthism' (Crawford, 1980; Fusco, 2006). (Crawford, 1980) indicates that 'healthism' relies on good health as being representative of a personal choice; Fusco (2006: 66) extends this concept in consideration of the spatiality of the locker room to argue that "healthified space is the result of institutional commitments and individual responsibility to the imperative of hygienism". Drawing on Mosse (1985) and Stallybrass & White (1986), Fusco (2006) argues that the gym—and we can add PE class—signifies the space where healthy embodied citizens are created and maintained through calorie burning and muscle sculpting which in turn create abject bodily presences such as sweat and odour. Accordingly, the changing room is a necessary extension of the creation and maintenance of a healthy civilised body "because practices of modesty and personal hygiene were essential to the reproduction of civilized bourgeoisie subjects" (Fusco, 2006: 68). The requisite practice of changing, while contested by some of my female pupil participants, affords and—in some cases—encourages girls the time and space to resume the normative feminine body required by the gender order operating throughout the rest of the school space. I continue this discussion in Chapter 6.

The practice of changing mattered for many girls in my study, particularly when it involved adhering to institutional rules requiring pupils to resume the embodied state of a civilized subject (Fusco, 2006). Paying attention to the practices of changing demonstrates how practices which

are assumed to be unimportant and therefore, undeeded, can have great meaning in participants' lives.. The frustrations expressed by girls about constant changing into and out of PE kit may be compounded by additional social, temporal and material micro-geographies within the changing rooms. The—often repeated—everyday practice of changing, and school policies requiring pupils to change at the end of every PE period, formed the focus of many girls' accounts of PE. Girls placed additional emphasis on their embodied experiences of changing within the institutionalised social and temporal space of the changing rooms themselves.

#### 5.2.4 EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES OF CHANGING: MATERIALITY

“...much of what *happens* goes un-noticed” (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 71).

Peony, Brandy, Hilary and Poppy (S2 Sunnyside) provide a vivid account of “what *happens*” everyday in the changing rooms. Much of these happenings remain ignored or un-noticed by teachers, and policy makers concerned with girls' participation:

Peony: “There's like 6 different rows of pegs where you can hang your bags.”

Brandi: “And then there's like benches.”

Peony: “But there's not enough room or time to change.”

Hilary: “No there's not...you're all like trying to get changed and people are getting changed in the middle of the room.”

Poppy: “And like people are just like putting stuff on top of your stuff and you're like ‘where's my t-shirt?’”

Hilary: “And then the PE teachers are walking through the middle and we’re trying to get changed in this cramped area...”

(S2 Focus Group Sunnyside)

The pupils’ description of the event-space of changing pays attention to their everyday experiences of *materiality*—“rows of pegs” (Peony), “benches” (Brandi) and “cramped” (Hilary), and *regulatory frameworks*—“not enough...time to change” (Peony) and “PE teachers are walking through the middle” (Hilary).

Horton & Kraftl (2006a: 73) argue that “material things—“even, or especially, the smallest, *daftest*, most mundane, most throwaway, most humdrum, *everyday* taken-for-granted things—matter profoundly, are inherently interesting and are worthy of much more consideration, study and engagement”. Aesthetic design and architecture of the changing rooms varied between research schools however material aspects featured strongly as girls described to me the spaces of their changing rooms. Similar to memories and emotions attached to wearing and changing into PE kit, ‘bits and pieces’ like pegs, discarded clothing and dirt which make up the fabric of the changing room, evoked strong emotions.

The changing rooms in all of research schools were open-plan without cubicles, although Kerry (S2 Sunnyside) indicated sometimes “people change in the toilets”. “They’re pretty see-through like there’s not anything between the bars, so you’re like right back-to-back with someone else who’s also changing. And like there’s really cramped space so you’re facing someone and behind someone and it’s pretty awkward...when you’re changing” (Kerry S2 Sunnyside).

The open spaces “between the bars” at Sunnyside meant that everyone could see everyone else—pupils are visible to and can see other pupils and staff can see pupils while they

are getting changed. I discuss this visibility and what it means for girls' experiences of changing in Section 5.2.5, but highlight it now because the lack of large enough and partitioned space combined with large numbers of girls changing simultaneously, creates feelings of being cramped while changing as Angela (S2 Sunnyside) noted: "There's not enough room."

Kerry implied that there was a very real 'closeness' of girls' bodies— "you're...right back-to-back"— as they are changing. Because often several classes are timetabled to change simultaneously, girls expressed feeling a "mad rush" to change in a "cramped" space, which resulted in frantic searches for personal clothing and frustration over items discarded by others.

Red: "And like people are just like putting stuff on top of your stuff and you're like where's my t-shirt" (S2 Sunnyside)?

(Attfield, 2000: xv) urges us to consider how much we have to learn from things which are generally considered not to be of value, things like "rubbish, detritus and discarded things". Broken things also created an everyday experience for some girls. Becca reflected on broken light bulbs and how the lack of light mattered for her as she tried to negotiate her way out of the changing rooms: "One of the lights is always out and you can't see!! You're like walking around in the dark bumping into people and everything" (Becca, S3 Pleasant Hill). Girls paid careful attention to these "discarded" things as they detailed their encounters in and with the changing rooms and such things had a real impact on girls' everyday negotiation with the practices of changing and presence inside changing room spaces. The lack of lockers in the changing rooms at Sunnyside means that "you just kind of have to leave your clothes just sitting there". Clothes piled up on the benches and around the changing room quickly became tangled as bodies, in a rush to make it to the next class, sifted through in search of personal items of clothing. As clothing falls on

the floor it may become mixed with the odours and particles of sport creating feelings of abjection.

Sophie (S2 Sunnyside) indicated that sand “from the astro turf collects on your shoes” and is deposited in the changing rooms when girls come inside making the area “just a bit mucky” (Red S2 Sunnyside). Other girls expressed disgust with the toilets within changing rooms:

Alice: “They’re awful.”

Umea: “Or there’s no toilet roll left.”

Sicily: “Or there’s no toilet seat.”

Alice: “They smell they smell really bad.”

(S4 Focus Group Sunnyside).

Fusco (2006) demonstrates how public health discourses of risk and hygiene inside locker rooms lead to an expectation that locker rooms will be policed by users and the institution. A number of the participants in Fusco's (2006: 74) study expressed disgust at the presence of bodily traces such as hair, blood and urine. Avoiding encounters with these presences was paramount for Natasha in Fusco's (2006: 74) study, because the changing rooms are “an area where you are exposing yourself...so you don’t get sick in such in an intimate area”. Emotions resulting from encounters with abject objects were not limited to the space of the changing rooms; girls discussed encounters with tampons in the swimming pool and mud on the playing fields. I discuss these further in Section 5.3.

The aesthetic and hygienic qualities of community changing or locker rooms are the product of different discourses than school changing rooms. Locker rooms in private gyms, community sports centres or health clubs often have female locker rooms outfitted with luxury



amenities—“disposable razors, lotion and mouthwash”, hair dryers and curlers; they are often large spaces with plenty of cubicles available for ‘private’ changing if one wishes and showers with curtains (Goldman, 2006: xiv). Community facilities require paying customers whose membership fees contribute towards cleaning staff salaries. Individuals are employed to clean up after members at community facilities whereas in school changing rooms, while janitors may maintain and repair damaged items, responsibility for cleanliness falls to the pupils. Everyday encounters with object materiality were given much attention through focus group discussions. As girls considered further the material and personal items that they took into the changing rooms with them everyday, discussions often turned towards valuable items like ipods, phones and wallets, and the practices of collecting and redistributing such items by teachers, giving forth to new and different power struggles than those existing through battles over PE kit.

#### *5.2.5 EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES OF CHANGING: REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS*

Collecting valuables (ipods, wallets and so forth) was an everyday procedure carried out by staff at Pleasant Hill and Sunnyside. Pupils did not have access to their main lockers throughout the day and therefore had to carry with them personally valuable items. Inside the changing rooms “we just have pegs” (Sarah S2 Sunnyside).

Eilidh: “I wish we had lockers.”

Brandi: “Cause then we wouldn’t need a valuables tray.”

(S2 Focus Group Sunnyside)

Pupils are given the option of handing valuable items over to staff members for the duration of PE. At Willow High, the changing rooms were outfitted with enough lockers for each pupil to keep her/his personal valuables locked for the duration of PE. At Pleasant Hill, valuables were collected by the PE teacher at the beginning of each class and stored in a large multi-purpose box that the teacher carried with them throughout the period. At Sunnyside teachers enter the changing rooms to collect valuables in a plastic tray, storing the tray in a locked room for the duration of PE and distributing them—again entering the changing rooms—at the end of the period. This was the first task I was asked to do when I arrived at Sunnyside for my first day of fieldwork.

(An extract from the research diary):

*Mr. McCue gave me some keys and a bin and asked me to go into the girls' changing rooms and ask for valuables...this was without any of them knowing who I was! I didn't want to go in and interrupt them, so I opened the door and waited outside; I called in 'if anyone has any valuables I can lock them up and I am here helping out with PE today'. Two of the girls came to me and placed valuables—a wallet and an ipod—in the tray; I went and locked them up in the PE base and gave the keys back to Mr. McCue.*

As the girls' stories of the valuables tray unfolded, it was clear that the procedure invoked emotions of anxiety about time, personal property and privacy while changing.

A number of girls were reluctant to place their valuable items in the valuables tray for fear of not recovering their items at the end of the period. The valuables tray existed because it was presumed to be the 'safest' place to store expensive personal belongings for the duration of PE. The changing rooms could not be relied on as a safe place to keep belongings as they were not

always locked and pupils could sometimes access them at various points during the period. Despite the assumption that the “valuables tray is the safest place” (Big S3 Sunnyside), pupils shared knowledge of stolen valuables.

Big: “Yea my brother’s ipod got nicked last week.”

Morgan: “...so it’s not always the best place?”

Red: “Yeah, Shari got her necklace stolen from the valuables tray...one piece of jewellery went missing and she put it in the valuables tray and she couldn’t find it, and I think she’s got it back now...but...”

(S2 Focus Group Sunnyside)

While there were several instances where pupils’ indicated valuables were truly stolen from the valuables tray, it was more often the case that “you can get your stuff mixed up” (Emma S2 Sunnyside). Girls recounted experiences of valuables being taken mistakenly “like if people have the same thing they sometimes take yours” (Alison S3 Sunnyside).

Corinna: “And sometimes people have like the same phone.”

Anna: “And then they get mixed up.”

(S2 Focus Group Sunnyside)

A mix-up of personal valuables creates tensions and concerns over time and results in an additional nesting of power negotiations between PE teachers, pupils and teachers of other subjects—where the pupils are timetabled to be after PE. Emma and Sophie explained what happened after the phone ‘mix-up’ occurred:

“And they didn’t let anyone go until everyone had the right phone” (Emma S2 Sunnyside)! The time taken to determine the rightful owners of each phone meant that all of the girls were held up from making it ‘on-time’ to their next class. Pupils are placed in the middle of a temporal struggle between teachers at the end of one period and teachers of other subjects at the beginning of the next period. Lauren (S3 Pleasant Hill) explained how she felt, caught between maths class where “Mrs. X held me back for a chat” and PE where “Mr. Witherspoon said that’s not an excuse”.

Lauren: “‘Do you have a note’ he said and I said, ‘no Mrs. X wouldn’t give me a note, do you want me to go back and get a note?’ And Mr Witherspoon said, ‘no that’ll just cut into your PE time’ and so I said, ‘well why are you giving me a row then?!’ Geeze!”

The “blending and blurring of one space into another is, in part, a result of the movement of bodies between spaces, since the body is “always located within multiple psychoanalytic, discursive and material spaces” (Longhurst, 2005b: 249 in Rawlins, 2009: 1091). As pupils move in the spacings between PE class and other subjects, the social interactions and power relations between pupils and various teachers go beyond the assumed bounded space of each curricular subject (Massey, 1992).

Some girls expressed additional reluctance to place their valuables in the tray because they felt temporal pressure at the beginning of the PE period, to rush (through changing) so they could hand in their valuables. At Sunnyside PE teachers decide the best ‘time’ to collect and distribute valuables. As Angela indicates, teachers may come in at the beginning of the period to request valuables while girls are changing: “They walk in when you’re getting changed and it’s

really annoying" (Angela S2 Sunnyside).

Angela: "One time I'd just come through (into the changing room) and I was like getting changed and they were taking the valuables tray away and I hadn't even put mine in."

Morgan: "They were just walking away from you?"

Angela: "Yeah."

This procedure was particularly frustrating to some girls who felt pressure to change quickly or hand over their valuables half-dressed as Caren, Anna and Sophie (S2 Sunnyside) explained:

Caren: "Like you're getting changed and you've got like one trouser leg through and you have to go over and give your valuables."

Anna: "And they say 'last call for valuables'."

Sophie: "And I'm like 'no wait! I only have one shoe on.'"

Aside from unique instances where valuables became mixed up requiring pupils to stay until everyone's items were returned to their rightful owner, girls expressed more everyday instances of "waiting forever" for valuables to be distributed at the end of the period (Anna S2 Sunnyside).

Anna: "It's quite annoying because you get changed then you have to wait for the valuables to come, so you could be like waiting forever."

Corinna: “Yeah like before we had like PE before lunch and then they’d take ages to give us the valuables back and it’d take ages to get your purse.”

Angela: “Cause when they do the valuables I remember like before lunch time and it’s like the bell’s going to go in a minute and they still won’t let you go.”

Anna: “Yeah and then you just have to stay through break or you can go after lunch or whatever...but you might need them for lunch because it might be like your purse.”

(S2 Focus Group Sunnyside)

Anxiety resulted on a number of occasions as a result of temporal uncertainty; pupils may be late for their next class creating tension between them and their next subject teacher or pupils may be unable to enjoy their full 15 minute break or hour lunch period—personal time valued highly by some girls. Some girls were concerned in particular about being late for their next class or missing their full allocation of break-time or lunch-time while others were much more concerned about “never having enough time to get changed” (Sarah S3 Willow High). Time—to change clothes and engage in other activities such as apply makeup, dry hair or spray perfume—was a highly contested and negotiated element in changing room spaces. My discussion of temporality continues in Chapter 6 in respect to the ‘remaking of the feminine body’ following physical activity.

### 5.2.6 EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES OF CHANGING: VISIBLE BODIES

Material as well as a lack of material things—curtains, cubicles or doors— characterised the spaces of PE changing rooms.

Ring: “Yeah it’s not like changing rooms; it’s just like changing *area*”.

Brandi: “It’s like a block thing.”

Ring: “Yeah like a big room with loads of pegs.”

(S2 Focus Group Sunnyside, emphasis added)

The built spatiality of the changing room —lack of doors or curtains and large open spaces—meant that “everyone can see you” (Eilidh S2 Sunnyside). “Everyone” includes teachers, girls’ immediate friends and classmates as well as girls of other year groups who were timetabled for PE at the same time. “There might be like 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> years changing as well” (Sophie S2 Sunnyside). Timetabling of multiple year groups creates a space in which girls at varying stages of bodily change are visible to each other in their semi-nude state as they change from school uniform into and out of PE kit. Mr. Witherspoon (Pleasant Hill) commented on his observations of the changes girls are going through between the ages of 10-14. “There’s a lot of changes going on there as their body shapes are changing, their hips are getting a wee bit wider, obviously the development of the breasts, they’re getting taller, things are changing!” While none of the girls commented on feelings about their bodies or changes related to adolescence during the focus groups, perhaps because of the semi-public spaces where focus groups were conducted, (as I discussed in Chapter 3), while doing participant observations one fourth year girl at Sunnyside shared with me her specific reason for refusing to bring kit and participate in PE.

(An extract from the research diary):

*She was listening to her iplayer (a banned item) and sitting on the side of the gym hall when Mr. Kimball pointed her out to me and disciplined her verbally by citing the 'health related' risks of not taking part. I sat down with her after Mr. Kimball left and asked her why she did not take part in PE. "It's because of the changing rooms" she told me, "because they're all open plan and you can see everyone and everyone can see you getting changed and there is no privacy!"*

At Sunnyside, where there were additional changing rooms in the swimming pool area Georgina expressed frustration with lack of privacy resulting from the lack of doors: "It's like when you're wanting to get changed, basically there's only like curtains...no like doors you can shut or anything". Georgina expressed a wish for "doors you can shut" to be free from the gaze of anyone while she changed into and out of her swimming costume. Wellard (2007a: 2) states that "communal showers can be the source of unwanted displays of the naked body, particularly at a time when girls are becoming more acutely aware of the social female body."

While some girls did allude to feelings of discomfort in respect to changing into and out of PE kit within the gaze of *peers*, their expressions centred primarily on frustrations about lack of personal space to change in rather than on lack of privacy or insecurity about their bodies. However, as I discuss below, some teachers relayed comments and experiences shared with them by girls when changing in the presence of peers. In addition, as I discuss later, girls did share feelings of discomfort when changing in the presence of teachers.

While none of the girls shared direct instances of feeling threatened or insecure while changing among other girls, staff at Willow High indicated that "some of the girls do not like the



changing rooms...because they don't like getting changed in front of one another" (Mrs. Phillips). One of the Active Schools Coordinators commented on her observations of one group of girls' experiences inside changing rooms.

"There's a lot of changing room issues ...you know girls can be quite cruel with each other in the changing room...one of the groups that I work with in School B are girls chosen specifically by the support for learning department who have body image problems. They hate going in changing rooms with the others because well maybe, you know you get maybe somebody that is a bit smelly, you've got somebody that's spotty, have periods and they're very shy about body odour etc. Yes changing room issues are a big thing I think" (Mrs. Lynne Willow High ASC).

As Mrs. Lynne indicated, she works closely with a group of girls who are identified by the support for learning department as having 'body image problems'. Mrs. Lynne's reflection highlighted what she felt were girls' concerns about their body odour or presence of menstrual blood, visible or—in the case of body odour—noticeable in the company of other girls. She indicated that "girls can be quite cruel with each other in the changing room" indicating that girls had experiences incidences of teasing or harassment in respect to body odour. She also indicated that these girls comprise a group who specifically have "body image problems" and the act of changing which results in a naked or semi-naked embodied state between wearing school uniform and PE kit, requires the girls to expose the flesh of their bodies to other girls. Goldman, (2006: xv) highlights, with particular reference to women, that the locker room is the space where our selves are exposed—and we in turn expose others—through nakedness; "[w]hen we are naked, we are at our most vulnerable—physically and emotionally." Through cultural inscriptions of nudity—the

body as a site of sexuality—we are exposed within the spaces of changing rooms and we expose others' emotional and physical vulnerability. Nude or partial nude exposure of themselves to their peers seemed less a concern to my participants than exposure to PE teachers. Reflecting on fieldwork observations and listening to girls recount experiences where they felt that they were not given enough privacy to change, allowed a consideration of further embodied power relations between pupils and teachers.

As a result of the spatial design of the changing room at Sunnyside, the gym hall could not be accessed without passing through the changing room. Therefore the spatiality of the changing rooms necessitated staff—and anyone else wanting to enter the gym hall including myself—to pass through them. The relational spatiality of the changing rooms to the gym halls at Sunnyside had an important impact on the relationships and encounters between pupils and PE teachers in the changing rooms. Throughout my fieldwork, I observed the passing of male and female teachers through the girls' changing rooms.

At Willow High the two female changing rooms are adjacent to the PE staff base and directly across the hall from the large games halls. While staff do not need to pass through the changing rooms to access the gym halls, I observed male and female staff entering and exiting the changing rooms at various times to encourage pupils to 'hurry-up' or to make an announcement.

(An extract from the research diary):

*On my first day of fieldwork at Sunnyside, Mr. McCue stuck his head into the girls changing room before class as he was going to make his way to the gym hall, while they were still getting changed... After Mr. McCue opened the door to the changing rooms, I heard one girl call out, "hey, what if we're not dressed yet!?"*

At Willow High and Sunnyside male and female staff also spent time in the changing rooms carrying out routine procedures—taking register/attendance, collecting or distributing valuables and regulatory or disciplinary procedures—searching for pupils who had left during a PE class or making sure “no one mucks about” (Mr. McCue). At Pleasant Hill, staff never entered the changing rooms either for routine or supervisory procedures. These—seemingly everyday—procedures mattered to girls as they recounted their experiences of PE and as Horton & Kraftl (2006a: 71) remind us, “*more* work is needed to take these neglected, underestimated, or effaced parts of the worlds seriously, and into account.”

My own encounters with PE changing rooms were most frequent at Sunnyside where I was asked by PE teachers to enter the changing rooms and carry out tasks such as collecting and distributing valuables and ‘find’ girls who had left PE class and were hiding out in the changing rooms. At Sunnyside also I spent time in the changing rooms as a ‘user’, when I participated in an evening sports coaching training session. I was also given a tour of the changing rooms by a PE teacher at Sunnyside. At Willow High, I entered into the changing rooms on one occasion when I was encouraged by a PE teacher to go in to the girls’ changing room to verbally advertise my Keep Active club. As stated in earlier in Section 5.2.5, Mr. McCue asked me to enter the changing rooms and collect valuables from girls when I arrived for my first day of fieldwork at Sunnyside.

Reflecting on this practice and my own experiences of changing for PE in high school, I found it strange that staff entered the changing rooms and carried out both routine and disciplinary procedures. My experiences and beliefs of being allowed privacy while changing before/after PE led me to feel uncomfortable when asked to enter the changing rooms at Willow High and Sunnyside.

(An extract from the research diary):

*At Willow High on Tuesday and Mr. Mackenzie told me that the best way to promote the Girls' Keep Active Club was to go into the girls' changing rooms and verbally advertise; I didn't think that was a good idea and I told him; I thought: "they will still be changing!!" But he was really pushy and said I needed to do that and just go in, they were finished changing anyway (I'd just arrived at the end of the period). So I popped my head around the corner and started to say "just remember girls, the club is on" when I noticed that they were **not** changed; one girl was wearing only her bra and skirt and she immediately grabbed for her shirt to cover her chest. I felt **awful!!** "I'm sorry" I said, and left, letting the door slam behind me!! How awful; I feel awful at myself for not being more adamant at Mr. Mackenzie that I would **not** go into the changing rooms!! Stupid me!!*

I felt a similar unease at Sunnyside that I felt when asked by staff to enter the changing rooms at Willow High. As discussed in Chapter 3, my role as a researcher at Sunnyside was interpreted and received by staff in different ways than it was at Willow High and Pleasant Hill. At Sunnyside I was expected and requested to assist in routine procedures such as setting out sports equipment and collecting valuables. I was also expected—by one staff member in particular—to engage in disciplinary procedures of searching the changing rooms for pupils who had skipped PE class or supervising the changing rooms "to make sure no one mucks about" (Mr. McCue).

(An extract from the research diary):

*...then Mr. McCue had asked me to go stand in the girls changing rooms and make sure no one 'mucks about'...there was no way I was going to go stand INSIDE the girls changing rooms! So I stood outside, hoping he wouldn't come around and yell at me...I felt like a student!*

Sections 5.2.4, 5.2.5 and 5.2.6, demonstrated how everyday experiences and practices of changing and encounters within the spacings of changing rooms formed a significant part of the overall experience PE for the girls in my study. For some girls, changing—and material and social aspects that accompanied the act of changing—were a ‘big-deal’ and even a justification for opting out of PE. For others it was ‘no big deal’ and as Sarah (S4, Sunnyside) commented, “when you’re content with the sport or PE activity that you are doing, you’re not going to make a big deal about other things that might not be so great”—like the fact that you have to change in a large group of other girls or that there may be sand or lost property on the floor, “but when you’re not happy with yourself or the current sport you’re doing or whatever else, you’re going to notice the flaws more intensely”. The importance of girls’ encounters in and with the material, social and temporal space of the changing rooms to their overall experience of PE was not a ‘hunch’ I had going into the research. It became clear however, that the experiences of the spaces of and within the changing rooms *mattered* and contributed to a significant part of the overall PE experience for some girls.

The everydayness of changing rooms—made up of material things like sand and discarded clothing, practices of procedure and discipline—were “encountered through embodiment” (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 85). As Section 5.2 has demonstrated, encounters with and in the changing rooms were “by their very nature, unique, personal, and (potentially) very different and by highlighting these encounters I acknowledged the “complexities” of girls’ “experiences...with/in this space” of fieldwork (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 85). Encounters with everydayness of gym halls, sports pitches and other ‘traditional’ spaces of sport additionally contributed to girls’ overall experiences of PE. I discuss these school sport spaces in Section 5.3.

### 5.3 SCHOOL SPORT SPACES

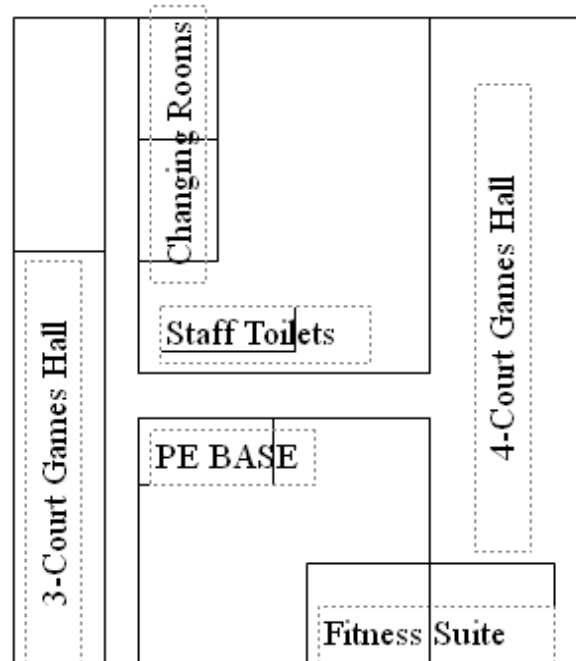
While all three secondary schools were equipped with indoor and outdoor spaces for ‘doing’ PE, the variety, size and number of spaces were site-specific. Several studies have addressed the provisioning of school sports facilities in relation to children’s participation in physical activity (Sallis et al., 2000; Cradock et al., 2007; Fernandes & Sturm, 2011). Kirby et al. (2012: 111) discuss facility provision with specific respect to girls’ participation in school physical activity; they determine that “there was no association between having more school sports facilities and increased moderate-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) levels”. Similarly, Coalter & Dowers (2006) conclude that current levels and density of sports facility provision in Scotland does not have a measureable impact on participation in physical activity among adults. Kirby et al.’s (2012) findings indicate that it is instead increased availability and provision of clubs and extra-curricular sports which indicates higher levels of girls’ participation, however their study did not account for the microgeographies, materialities and everydayness of school sports facilities. Section 5.3 discusses what mattered to the delivery and experience of PE, by focusing on the materiality and some of the everyday practices of these spaces. I do not focus on the everyday experiences of the *structures* of PE (sex and ability composition) as these are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 respectively.

I introduce the indoor (Section 5.3.1) and outdoor (Section 5.3.2) spaces of PE on each school site, discussing aspects of spaces that mattered to the overall teaching and learning experience. Section 5.3.2 provides the background for and linkage to Chapter 6 where I consider the inscription and performance of gender in PE spaces. In certain schools, out of necessity, and at other schools, in attempts to provide a wider variety of sporting opportunities—particularly for

girls—teachers have provisioned for the use of community sports facilities. I discuss these spaces in Section 5.4.

### 5.3.1 INDOOR SPACES

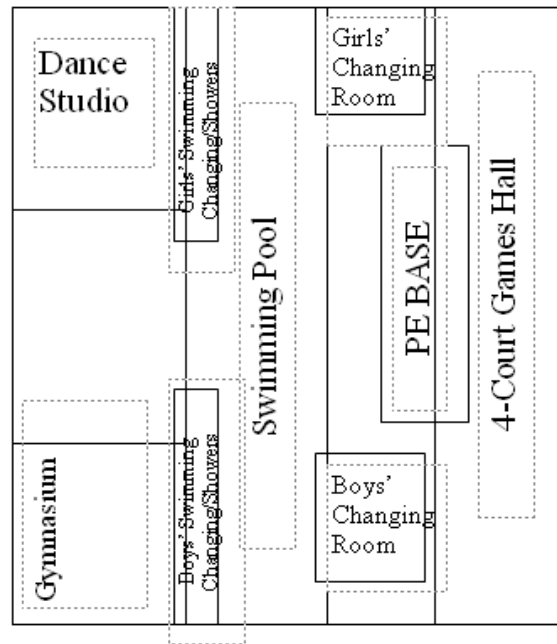
The physical spaces of PE mattered and were reflected on by participants. **Figures 5.1, 5.2** and **5.3** display the indoor PE facilities at Pleasant Hill, Sunnyside and Willow High respectively. These models are limited because they have been reconstructed from my memory of my time spent at each school; while they are accurate in the type of spaces depicted, they assume that the area of each school space is the same and is square. Furthermore, they do not display the aesthetic qualities—such as lack of light, peeling paint, or sports equipment—in each space, which, as I discuss in Section 5.3.1, impacted the overall experience. While I provide individual pictorial models to show the spaces on each site, and briefly describe the PE facilities in each school, my discussion is organised by that which mattered in *indoor spaces* overall, rather than separated into a discussion of each school.

**Figure 5.1: Indoor PE Facilities at Pleasant Hill High School**

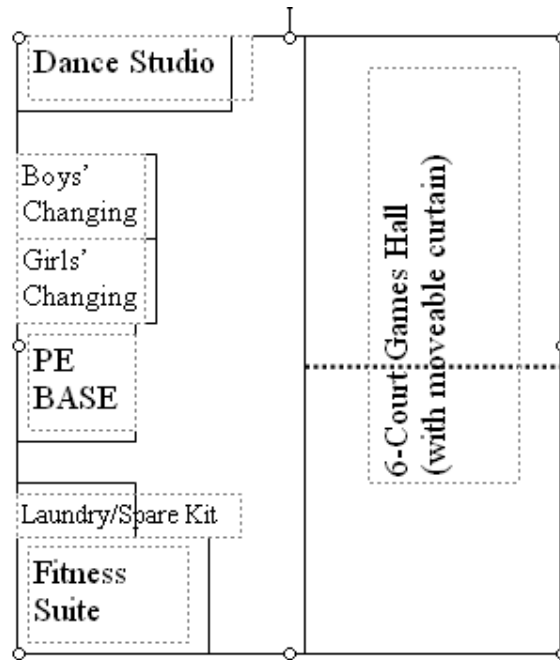
On site at Pleasant Hill, indoor facilities included one 3-court games hall, one 4-court games hall and a fitness suite which sits partially above the 4-court games hall as shown in Figure 5.1 above. As Mr. Witherspoon (Pleasant Hill) described, the fitness suite was “originally going to be a kitchen for community use during the night” so it contains a sink and kitchen area. It was “then used for table tennis and two classrooms”. When the PE department acquired additional classrooms, staff changed the former classroom spaces into the “cardiovascular bit” of the fitness suite and “lost the table tennis” to accommodate free weights and strength equipment. The success of the fitness suite was the result of “a big fundraising event; we raised in the PE department just over 8,000 pounds and the Rector at that time tripled it and we outfitted it with second hand stuff (equipment) but the priority was to fill it” (Mr. Witherspoon, Pleasant Hill).



**Figure 5.2: Indoor PE Facilities at Sunnyside High School**



Inside for PE at Sunnyside, as depicted in Figure 5.2, there was a swimming pool and a 4-court games hall with a moveable curtain “and that is a big space” (Heather S3 Sunnyside). “We have a gym too but it’s not very big and you have ropes that go like this (Heather used hand motions to indicate ropes hanging from the ceiling) and people are swinging on them” (Red S2 Sunnyside). The gymnasium has “horse things that you’ve got to jump over”. There is also a small room that is used as a dance studio and the school assembly hall (not shown above) is also used “for certain” PE activities “because there’s not enough room in the games hall” to accommodate all pupils timetabled for PE (Brandi S2 Sunnyside).

**Figure 5.3: Indoor PE Facilities at Willow High**

As Willow High, a new school opened in 2011, all girls at Willow High whom I interviewed, except for those in S1, recalled experiences of PE in their former school. The facilities in the ‘former’ Willow High consisted of one “one—for the whole school—old...gym hall with wall bars, the size of the dance studio” in the present school (Mrs. Lynne ASC Willow High). In contrast, the new school’s indoor facilities (depicted above) consist of a 6-court games hall with a moveable curtain, a purpose built dance studio outfitted with permanent mirrors and a fitness suite which contains both cardiovascular and strength equipment.

Size and visual aesthetics of available indoor PE spaces provided the biggest challenges to staff in providing a positive PE experience. The pupil numbers at all schools (excluding the ‘new’ Willow High) in relation to the number of indoor PE spaces available meant that some classes had to be conducted outside or off school grounds—in community sports and leisure centres. At Pleasant Hill “you’re a bit restricted cause of your indoor space, so at least one class per period has

to be outdoors for PE” (Mr. Witherspoon). At Sunnyside, as some pupils commented, the gym or games hall is small, necessitating the use of other spaces in the school for PE not originally intended for PE usage.

Brandi: “It’s small.”

Red: “Yeah they’re [the gym halls are] quite small.”

Brandi: “We have to go in the assembly hall for certain things instead of the games hall, because there’s not enough room in the games hall.”

(Focus Group Sunnyside S2)

Mr. Mackenzie explained the situation at the old building of Willow High:

“...we had a small games hall, quite a depressing kind of state, it was quite hard...With the facilities we had it was at times very hard, you know where we had travel time to and from (sports centre), on-court time you’re talking 12-15 minutes, I mean that’s not quality physical education.”

Mr. Mackenzie explained how the small space—of one small games hall—necessitated travel to a local sports centre for nearly all of the PE classes. Due to the time involved in bus transport, pupils were only able to experience—at most—fifteen minutes of curricular, active, PE time. For Mr. Mackenzie the constrictions of space and time did not provide a “quality physical education” experience.

The small size and number of spaces provided a challenge in provisioning curricular physical activity; the aesthetics of PE spaces was also considered a challenge to providing a

positive experience. As discussed in Section 5.2, the visual appearance of the changing rooms—burned out light bulbs, traces of sand and clothing scatted and piled—generated feelings of frustration and disgust and contributed to the overall experience of being in the space of the changing rooms. Staff and pupils also reflected on the visual appearance of gyms and games halls and feelings generated by encounters with these abject materialities.

Heather: “The gymnasium really smells; it just smells like mould; it’s just like it would be better to get it done up like sooner than when the new school will be getting done up.”

Heather (S3 Sunnyside) explained that the gymnasium is particularly odorous and suggests that it would provide a better experience if the gymnasium was renovated prior to waiting for the overall school renovation which is proposed for 2014.

Other feelings of disgust resulted as girls reflected on bodily fluids present in the swimming pool such as “wee” and menstrual blood.

Kate: “They [the gym halls] smell really bad and then the swimming pool is always full of plasters.”

Marianne: “One time I went swimming and there was a tampon! There was a used tampon in the pool.”

Sicily: “The pool—it’s like all these mothers and it’s like public community use.

Kate: “And there’s like babies and there’s wee in there.”

Marianne: “It’s really horrible...”

(S4 Focus Group Sunnyside)

Because the school is a 'community use' site (as I discuss further in Section 5.4), members of the public also use the swimming pool and gym halls for fitness activities. Whether or not the presence of urine from babies and toddlers is perceived or 'real' is uncertain, however girls expressed feelings of abjection upon viewing used plasters, and a tampon in the swimming pool, contributing to their overall experience of using the pool. The presence of bodily fluids—blood and urine—carries with it risk of infection and disease. Fusco (2006: 70) considers how risk operates and relates to "cultural practices and subjectivity" in "the discourses of the new public health". While Fusco (2006) demonstrates that the locker room is a micro-space which carries risk due to the presence of "the by-products of exercise" namely blood, urine and excrement, by-products of exercise were additionally present in sport spaces such as the swimming pool. In Fusco's (2006) study, public health discourses of risk map onto people's self-regulatory practices of hygiene (showering, removing sweaty clothes, wiping the toilet seat) or risk-avoidance behaviours. In my study, girls expressed disgust and desire to avoid encounters with abject objects, but they did not express refusal to participate in swimming due to the presence of tampons or plasters. Children's swimming lessons and adult held at Sunnyside, made the pool and gym into porous spaces whereby objects, bodies, and activities not related to the school or schooling practices were present after school hours, leaving traces—both material and discursive—to linger upon the return of the pupils.

Further reflections on the aesthetics of indoor sport space were offered by staff members in consideration and desire for lighter, cleaner, newer and more modern spaces. "Rather than having closed spaces, we want to have light open windows for dance studios for fitness suites, for games halls so that people can feel they've got light in the dark days" (Mr. Kimball Sunnyside).

The lack of windows in the games hall at Sunnyside means that it is a dark space to do PE inside—also contributing to further challenges such as damp and mould (as expressed by Heather S3 above). Mr. Kimball (Sunnyside) indicated that the dark space has an impact not only on pupil's experience but on the mental health of PE teachers who spend the majority of their work day inside these spaces.

“I can come to work at eight o' clock in the morning and it's dark; I'll work all day and it's gloomy inside here; if I'm away at four o'clock and it's dark; you know I do certainly believe in SAAD syndrome.”

For many teachers, new, modern and purpose-built facilities offered the possibilities of improving the overall experience and participation levels of all pupils. “People, far less girls, people want to be taking part in good facilities...” (Mr. Kimball Sunnyside). Reflecting on the present condition and availability of indoor sport spaces, many staff waxed lyrical about the potential of new sport facilities to enact significant change in pupils' desire to participate in and enthusiasm for physical education. Mr. Kimball recalled his experiences and observations at Stanford University—an Ivy League University in the United States.

“At Stanford they had...ten swimming pools, diving boards; who wouldn't want to participate at their own level? I mean only a jogger to jog around their facilities, if you're only a walker, whatever, right up to the highest level, the nicer the facilities are, the more people take part in them.”

Reflective of the lack of larger and modern spaces to do PE at Pleasant Hill, Mr. Witherspoon believes that “the space is limiting in terms of what variety you can offer”. Purpose-built spaces, particularly for dance, gymnastics and indoor (spin) cycling would improve the overall teaching and learning experience of these activities.

“Wouldn’t it be wonderful if you had a tailor made gymnasium, space that you don’t have to spend all your time putting out and taking away equipment...Or if you’ve got a dance studio and it’s mirrored and you don’t have to think about how you can use mirrors but then they have to be tucked away so they’re not going to be broken when they play a ball game! Tailor made, purpose built spaces...So I would think gymnastics, dance, spring to mind immediately that would benefit in terms of having purpose built stuff...Spin (cycle) class, having the bikes there” (Mr. Witherspoon Pleasant Hill).

In consideration of the modern and purpose-built indoor facilities at the ‘new’ Willow High, staff differed in their beliefs about whether or not the presence of new facilities generated increased participation in and enthusiasm for PE. For Mrs. Phillips, it was the transition from primary to secondary school which prompted initial enthusiasm for PE. “We didn’t have good facilities at [the old Willow High] and my experience was still that they were very enthusiastic; I mean they come in here and they say ‘wow’, compared to what they’ve had access to in the primaries so I wouldn’t say there’s been a significant change just because we’re here”. Because the primary school experience of PE is very different from the secondary school experience, Mrs. Phillips believes that regardless of facilities, pupils in their first and second year of high school will always be more enthusiastic about doing PE because the experience is new. Mr. Witherspoon (Pleasant Hill) supported this observation stating that “the experiences that a lot of these girls are

getting at the primary schools can be quite varied..." So they have

"180 girls coming in with varied experiences and I think they're excited about coming up; they're excited about secondary school or they're excited about the sports facilities...because things are changing rapidly every four to five weeks it's another activity another facility a new place to go and do PE...it's also an opportunity where they now find out things can go on after school as well."

One of Mrs. Phillips' fourth year pupils describes her experiences of PE in primary school as different from those in secondary school at Willow High, supporting the observation that new experiences of secondary school may prompt initial excitement about PE:

Sienna (S4): "It was more group activities...I just think it was like games for like younger people like playing like tig and stuff...up here, everything was brand new, like badminton and basketball and getting to go to the gym and like netball and going to (the sports centre) to do trampolining..."

I discuss changing experiences of physical activity in relation to aging and enjoyment in detail in Chapter 8 but reference it here to demonstrate how new and modern facilities may not be completely productive of increases in participation. For Mrs. Phillips, enthusiasm for PE does not result totally from the availability of contemporary indoor facilities whereas Mr. Mackenzie (Willow High) indicated a notable improvement in participation levels amongst his third and fourth year pupils (who experienced two or three years of PE in 'the old' Willow High).



“If we’re looking now at our current third and fourth year girls in this new school in comparison to what it was in the old school there’s been a massive change; I think that the facilities have just helped so much, like having the fitness suite has just been an incredibly massive boost to us you know even your most disengaged girls, disinterested girls, girls that have got no interest in being physically active whatsoever etc. we’ll still get them doing something in the fitness suite, you know walking jogging for 20 minutes, 30 minutes...”

Mr. Mackenzie attributes the improvement in third and fourth year girls’ participation levels to the presence of a particular indoor space—the fitness suite—a space not previously available to the school during PE time and a space that “we didn’t have in primary school” (Gemma S2, Pleasant Hill).

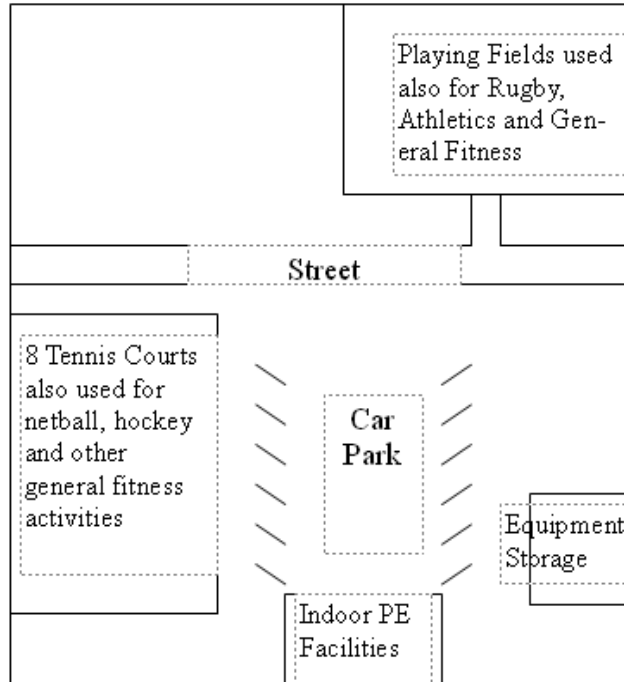
The fitness suite was one particular space that a number of girls in my study expressed a preference for using. Cara, an S3 pupil shared that she “likes the dancing and when we’re in the fitness suite” and Shona (S2, Pleasant Hill) quite “likes the fitness suite!”

While Cara and Shona expressed a strong enjoyment of using the fitness suite, Helen (S2 Pleasant Hill) explained that “it’s fun because you can do silly running stuff on the running machines”. I witnessed Helen and her friend Sarah during one period, using the treadmills in the fitness suite, jogging for a few minutes, then jumping off, then jogging, then swinging on the supportive side bars. Sarah (S2 Pleasant Hill) informed me that the fitness suite is “more enjoyable because you can muck around but work at the same time”. It appears to be one space where both staff and pupils adopt a ‘relaxed’ approach in contrast to a traditional and more structured PE lesson such as I observed during a unit in rugby or basketball. Pupils work “at their own level” and design their own programme to suit their ability. The fitness suite may also be a space where

“boys and girls can both do it [physical activity] and enjoy it at the same time” (Karen S2 Pleasant Hill). As further analysis reveals, the fitness suite is not a traditional sport space and for many schools it is a new addition to PE facilities. I provide further discussion of this in Chapter 6 with respect to the constitution of “traditionally sexed bodies” through “‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ gym spaces” (Johnston, 1996: 229).

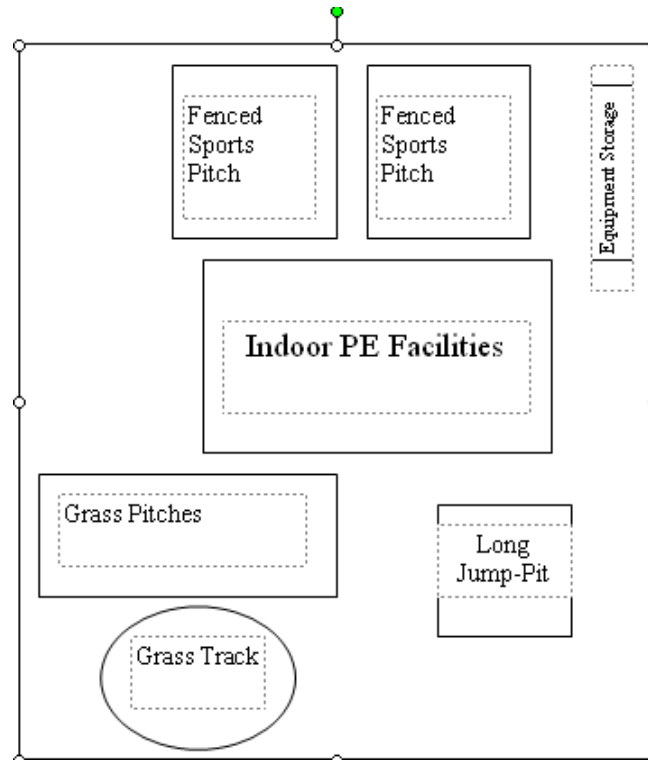
### *5.3.2 EXPERIENCING OUTDOOR SPACES*

All three secondary schools used on-site outdoor settings for PE. “The availability of” outdoor “green, natural settings for physical activity” has received attention by scholars interested in school-based interventions to “address the physical activity problem associated with rising overweight and obesity levels” (Dyment et al., 2009: 262). Most of the outdoor settings for PE in all three research secondary schools would be considered ‘traditonal’ and ‘built’ rather than ‘natural’ however some schools utilized “footpaths” for classes. **Figures 6.4** and **6.5** display the outdoor PE facilities at Pleasant Hill and Sunnyside respectively. Willow High’s outdoor facilities consisted of a single large outdoor grass space shared with a neighbouring high school and so is not depicted in a figure. Section 5.3.2 discusses the experience of and feelings attached to doing PE outdoors.

**Figure 5.4: Outdoor PE Facilities at Pleasant Hill**

Mr. Witherspoon indicated the spaces available outdoors for doing PE at Pleasant Hill: “I’ve now got 8 tennis courts...” and the rugby pitch and playing fields are “ours...so we make good use of that kind of space.” The tennis courts are additionally used for netball and field hockey matches and I observed a 12-minute run fitness testing period being conducted within the tennis courts. The rugby fields are additionally used for outdoor athletics and general fitness activities. I observed one class taught by Mr. Witherspoon where he used the entire field to teach a fitness lesson on raising heart rate through speed walking. A storage trailer for large equipment was also on school grounds adjacent to the PE base.

**Figure 5.5: Outdoor PE Facilities at Sunnyside**



At Sunnyside outdoor PE facilities include a large grass pitch which I observed was used for a variety of activities including football and general fitness, a long jump sand pit, a grass athletics track and two sports pitches—one 40 metre square astro turf and one other fenced pitch used for netball. A large storage trailer was situated on site to house bulky sports equipment.

As discussed in Section 5.3.1, indoor spatial limitations at Pleasant Hill required at least one PE class per period to be outdoors. While some girls felt that it was *staff* that made them go outside even in rain and cold—“they make you go outside even if it’s raining” (Jenni, S3)—staff emphasised that the real reason necessitating—at least one—PE class to be outside was the limitations of the indoor space to accommodate all pupils. Other girls expressed that their PE teachers held classes outside only when “it’s better weather” (Karen, S2).

Morgan: “Do you go outside a lot?”

Karen: "We go out like when it's like summer."

Umea: "And after like April time."

Morgan: "But not when it's freezing?"

Girls Together: "Mmmm no."

Morgan: "Do you ever go outdoors?"

Karen: "Yeah but when it's like better weather."

(S2 Focus Group, Pleasant Hill).

Another group of second year girls echoed Karen and Umea's response that pupils are not required to do PE outdoors when the weather is "really bad" (Sunny S2).

Morgan: "So they [PE teachers] don't make you go out when it's like this (it was very cold the day I conducted this focus group)?"

Sunny: "No"

Kiera: "And like for football and rugby and hockey we go outside; we don't have to but we usually do."

Morgan: "You don't *have* to?"

Kiera: "Well they don't make us go out in like bad weather."

Sunny: "Yeah cause remember when we were doing rugby and like it was really bad weather and we got to stay inside and do that rounders game?"

Morgan: "So they let you stay inside if it's really bad out?"

Girls Together: "Yeah."

Teachers make decisions on whether or not to hold PE outdoors based on a number of factors including space limitations, perceptions of pupils' willingness to engage when outdoors and weather conditions. Being outdoors, staff and pupils encounter the Scottish climate—sometimes characterised by cold and wet. The climate—and related weather such as extreme cold, wet or hot—while a seemingly mundane and everyday part of daily life—may have a strong influence on peoples' levels and experience of physical activity (Tucker & Gilliland, 2007). Experiences of doing physical activity in cold, wet and extreme heat conditions have not received thorough consideration (for exceptions see Hemming, (2007) and Williams et al., (2000)). Girls highlighted their encounters with cold and wet weather through their experiences of PE outdoors; as I discuss in Chapter 6, girls also highlighted encounters with the sport being played—most often rugby or football—while outdoors, and encounters with the boys in the class.

Ms. Brown thinks that the necessity of being outside (due to indoor space restrictions) is the reason why some pupils—boys and girls alike “are maybe not taking part [in PE]”. On particular reflection of girls' emotions in respect to doing PE outside, Ms. Brown mentioned that “you know if the weather is bad they [girls] are getting turned off because they don't want to go out because it's cold and wet”. Kara supported Ms. Brown's opinion that girls are turned off by doing PE outdoors due to cold and wet weather by stating the discomfort they felt when encountering cold and wet.

Kara: “When it's raining and you go outside and it's cold and raining and then you get soaking wet and you have to carry around your wet PE kit all day it's gross! And if you have PE first period, everything's wet all day”

(S3,Pleasant Hill).

Kara expressed both the immediate feeling of being cold and wet and the extended unpleasant experience of carrying her wet PE kit with for the remainder of the day. The feeling of being cold and wet did not contribute to an enjoyable or fun experience of being outside for PE for Kara. Williams et al. (2000: 9) investigated girls' experiences of certain aspects of the PE curriculum against initiatives for inclusivity in the new national curriculum. Several girls in their study emphasised unpleasant experiences of playing in the cold—"We have to have it outside and it's cold' (Tracey, Year 9 white student) and 'I don't like it in the cold because I hate the cold' (Natalie, Year 9 white student)". Through a focus on the emotional discourses privileged by children when citing reasons for participating in sport or physical activity, Hemming (2007) reveals that pleasure, fun or enjoyment are at the forefront of children's emotions and children will not chose to do an activity if they do not enjoy the experience.

It is necessary to push the belief that girls may be "turned off" of PE "because they don't want to go out because it's cold and wet" (Ms. Brown). It may not just be that girls are averse to the cold and wet conditions, but that once wet, they will be unable to resume their embodied state of emphasised femininity—dirt-free body, dry clothes, dry or straight hair and make-up, due to the lack of shower facilities or lack of time to change. Therefore, some girls resist participating or participate only to the extent that they do not sweat or mess up their hair. (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002: 659) argue, that "by resisting PE, many girls are actually attempting to conform to the dominant expectations held of them in the gender order at large." In the space between the traditionally masculine PE class—where girls are required to tie up hair up and remove jewelry, and the English classroom or dinner hall—where popular cultural ideologies of embodied

femininity dominate—girls may find themselves caught in attempts to satisfy polarised identity expectations.

Interestingly, while the feelings of being cold and wet were expressed and attached to experiences of doing PE outdoors, none of my participants reflected negatively on the experience of being ‘dirty’ or ‘muddy’. Some of the participants in Hemming's (2007: 360) study expressed a “dislike of certain activities such as going onto the field to do outdoor PE when it was muddy”. In contrast, the girls that I observed doing PE outdoors genuinely appeared to enjoy encounters with dirt and mud.

(An extract from the research diary):

*Two girls had come attired in full football regalia from the football shirts to the shin guards and cleats...apparently they play for the community... They were really getting into their game and didn't seem to notice that their legs and arms were covered in mud; other girls who were watching them were making comments like “look at her knees, she's all dirty”...when they were set up to play matches, one group was comprised of three really skilled girls and other girls who seemed to be able to keep up/compete with them... so there was some major competition going on....Jade was pretty muddy by now and other girls were smirking and commenting on “how dirty she was”. Jade ignored them and genuinely seemed to enjoy the experience.*

I continue my observations of Jade and desires offered by other girls at Sunnyside to do more outdoor PE in Chapter 6 through the thread of gender in relation to outdoor experiences.

Ms. Brown considered the necessity of classes being held outside due to space restrictions to be a “turn off” for some pupils because of the cold and wet, while other staff believed that it



was necessary to conduct PE outdoors to achieve the true experience when the sport being taught was one that is traditionally played outside such as rugby or cross country. On the last day of a unit on rugby, Mr. Witherspoon made a decision to take the class outdoors so that pupils would experience 'real' rugby, out of doors, regardless of the cold. This decision allowed me to observe girls' interactions behaviours and glean their experiences of being outdoors. Rugby and football are traditionally played outdoors on purpose-built rugby or football pitches; in an attempt to give children the authentic or traditional experience and learn about the mechanics and spatial rules and features of the game—such as the placement and terminology of the boundary, kick and penalty lines—teachers prefer to teach the unit outdoors.

(An extract from the research diary):

*Because the first year pupils were on their last day of their rugby unit, Mr. Witherspoon was taking them outside; he wanted them to have at least one 'real' experiences of outdoor rugby...it was a bit cold though and the grass was wet. Upon hearing from Mr. Witherspoon that the class would be outside for the double period, moans and groans were elicited—mostly from the girls who explicitly stated that they did not want to go outside. Five of the girls brought parent/carer excuse notes explaining that they could not participate today...they asked if they still had to go outside even though they were not participating and Mr. Witherspoon said "yes you still have to go outside". As the period wore on—it was two hours because it was a double period—the girls who brought notes and could not or refused to participate, became colder. Casey grew increasingly disturbed and agitated. She verbalised multiple times to Mr. Witherspoon her desire to go back indoors because the grommets which were inserted in her ears were extremely sensitive to cold temperatures. Lauren kept hopping around and at one point showed me her thin canvass shoes which were*

*soaked with icy water from the rain soaked pitch. Because Mr. Witherspoon asked me to stand and watch today, rather than participate, I kept doing standing calf raises to keep warm!*

It was clear that Mr. Witherspoon wanted to give pupils at least one ‘true’ experience of rugby for the last day of their rugby unit; all previous classes during the rugby unit were held indoors because “it was too cold and the ground was just too frozen; the class experience would be awful if they had to go outside...” Mr. Witherspoon made previous decisions to hold the class indoors when the weather was particularly cold or wet, predicting that the experience for—at least some of—the pupils would not be enjoyable. In the first year class, it was only girls who gave excuse notes to Mr. Witherspoon and while they were required to accompany the class outside, they were not required to participate that day. Standing still in the cold was an unpleasant experience, both for myself conducting observations, and for some of the girls who were also not wearing weather-proof clothing or footwear.

While Mr. Witherspoon made the decision over the term to keep the class indoors due to the cold weather, he offered a contradictory viewpoint on his observations of pupils’ willingness to engage in PE outside, during our interview. First, he asserted that pupils are accepting of the ‘tradition’ of going outside for PE at Pleasant Hill. When interviewed Mr. Witherspoon informed me that because indoor space has always been limited at Pleasant Hill, “children...accept and understand that this is what happens here...That’s the way things go at Pleasant Hill...and they just accept that as the norm, we have to go out; at Pleasant Hill we go out!”.

(An extract from the research diary):

*Mr. Witherspoon said they were going to be outside today but the ground was just too frozen and the class experience would be awful if they had to go outside...he said "kids used to go outside no problem, but nowadays you'd have kids saying 'no' they're just plain not going out and not going to do it. You wouldn't have that ten years ago".*

Mr. Witherspoon believes that children's resilience and ability to accept that some PE classes will be held outside, simply due to indoor space restrictions has waned over time. Mr. Witherspoon believes that the change in pupils' attitude from an acceptance that they will go outside and participate in PE towards an "I can't be bothered" or an "I won't do it" attitude is a reflection of changing societal expectations of children over time.

"There's a change in society, a change in which children view what is supposed to be 'compulsory' and how they deal with it...you know...is it compulsory or did they just say it's compulsory? So there's a wee bit of that going on... 'How far can I push without having to do', or 'how far can I go without being made to do it?'" (Mr. Witherspoon)

While some girls resisted doing PE outside (by bringing excuse notes) or did not express enjoyment of being wet or cold, observations showed that some girls were happy to be outside and still others informed me that they would like to do more PE outside but are not often given the chance.

Red: "The girls always get like they're always doing [PE] inside whereas the boys always have to go outside."

Ring: “Yeah and I’d like to go be outside for PE; I know it’s colder and stuff but...”

(S2 Focus Group Sunnyside)

At Sunnyside, as I discuss further in Chapter 6, girls expressed that they were not often offered the experience of doing PE outside (and particularly not when “it’s raining and all the boys go outside to do rugby and all the girls stay inside to do gymnastics” (Anna S2 Sunnyside). In consideration of the mental health and wellbeing of staff however, Mr. Kimball felt it was necessary for *staff* to be outdoors during the day to deliver PE. Mr. Kimball explained to me “when I make the timetable I try and get the staff outside at least once a day” (Sunnyside). Through her ethnographic research on a yoga retreat in Southern Spain, Lea (2008: 91) shows how “simply being in nature can have a direct therapeutic effect”. Because the indoor PE spaces at Pleasant Hill lack natural light and other aesthetically pleasing qualities, and Scotland’s longitudinal location results in short dark winter days, I reaffirm that Mr. Kimball stressed how important it was that staff had the chance to be outside for their work.

From my observations of PE outdoors and discussions with staff and pupils, it is clear that being muddy and wet and cold both in the immediate period of PE and throughout the day as girls carried around wet kit, mattered to some girls, whereas other girls expressed enjoyment of and appeared to genuinely enjoy being outside, feeling the mud on their knees as they played football. Teachers appeared to consider how being outside ‘mattered’ to pupils’ experiences; staff had to make decisions on provisioning classes based on both the feelings of their pupils, wellbeing of staff and the necessity of delivering a curriculum within the limitations of space and the Scottish climate, in attempt to create an overall learning experience for their pupils. Additional learning experiences were created by taking pupils outside of the school boundary into community sport spaces.

#### 5.4 COMMUNITY SPACES

PE was not confined to the spaces available indoors and outdoors on school grounds. Outside the boundaries of the school, community sport spaces were also utilized for a wide variety of reasons: indoor PE space limitations ('former' Willow High, Pleasant Hill), attempts to provide access to newer and cleaner changing room and sport facilities (Sunnyside) opportunities for a wider variety of sports (Sunnyside and Pleasant Hill), attempts to incorporate aspects of the new Curriculum for Excellence (Willow High and Pleasant Hill) and knowledge of and access to community facilities for older pupils so they may feel confident to use these facilities upon leaving school ('former' Willow High). Within my discussion here of the use of community facilities for PE, I discuss staff reflections on how and why community spaces were used in attempts to create a positive experience of physical activity for girls.

One of the main reasons for using community facilities for all of the fieldwork schools was because the school itself (or previously in the case of Willow High) had either limited (Pleasant Hill) or small and archaic facilities (Sunnyside). At Sunnyside, not only were the games halls and sports pitches deteriorating, the changing rooms were small, and smelly—as discussed in Section 5.2. Particularly for Sunnyside, due to the antiquated characteristics of PE facilities, the use of community facilities provided girls the opportunity, as Mr. Kimball expressed, to experience “better facilities, better changing rooms because in this...building we don't have good changing facilities, so they're out there and they're using the town facilities.”

In addition, using town facilities was seen as one way of engaging more girls who were refusing to take part in PE due to the lack of sports and physical activities available on site. Mr. Kimball explained that detentions can only go so far in punishing pupils for not participating; Mr. Kimball was searching for a more sustainable and encouraging rather than disciplinary solution to

large groups of girls who chose to disengage or refrain fully from participating:

“What do you do? Do you give them punishments yes, but what do you do next, do you give them detentions and detentions and so on and soon eventually the punishments start running out, so longer term, you need to diversify the number of ways... so we’re trying to diversify it...cycling, orienteering, kite flying, ultimate Frisbee...”(Mr. Kimball).

By using outdoor and indoor community spaces, staff members were not limited to the traditional sporting spaces of physical education. “I want to try and use as much of my environs as possible, so I take the children out to the beach for example, I take them up to the hills when we’re cycling” (Mr. Kimball). In contrast to Willow High where travelling to the local sports centre was a negative experience for both staff and pupils due to time restraints, at Sunnyside, staff believed that using community facilities had improved the enjoyment of and participation in PE for many female pupils.

“So I put seven members of staff on and I say right, one is doing netball, cycling, tennis, football, whatever and I try and use the facilities around the town, Rocket Tennis Courts for example, they have great courts, and Stargazers centre for full court volleyball, etc, and Homewood park and so on, what I’ve tried to do is to then get them [pupils] to better facilities better changing rooms and so on because in this site building we don’t have good changing facilities, so they’re out there and they’re using the town facilities”.

While staff at Sunnyside High school recently made the decision to use local facilities for PE classes—mainly as a result of ideas by the newly appointed Mr. Kimball—staff at Pleasant Hill

have been using town facilities for a number of years. The use of town facilities was, in the past, an enhancement for the PE experience at Pleasant Hill; however, over time, price increases made by the community facility and the acquisition of their own fitness suite at Pleasant Hill lead to an uneasy relationship between PE staff and community facility employees. Mr. Witherspoon explained:

“We do go down to the local sports centre; we have in the past used it extensively before we had a fitness suite. And they used to charge us £1 per child for the fitness suite at the sports centre. Then they said that it was going to have to go to £2. Just at the point where we got our own fitness suite so it was very easy to say ‘thanks but no thanks’. And they lost about £4,000 pounds per year. And I told them I said ‘be really really careful. At the moment you’re getting x. You want to increase that to x plus y; you know what you’re going to end up with? x – x. You’re going to end up with nothing!’ and they lost £4,000 pounds...we’ve recently renegotiated a .50 pence per head to let us use the swimming pool. So now we can go over, we’re over again, swimming pool, squash course and games hall if it’s available, but again that’s a payment...that’s for the ‘activities’ period, individual activities for the swimming, squash and badminton, and that kind of thing. Third and fourth years for their activities period, other than that, the [single] period length does not allow us to use that kind of facility too often, but we do ‘children’s choice’ whether they want to go over there. And it is a cost which is restrictive because the school does not fund that and they [the facility] will not allow us to use it for nothing. It’s a town council sports centre and it’s empty! It’s empty! So I’m glad that we’ve got at least down to the .50 pence rate; fifty pence is not extortionate now, I think that’s cope-able for an 8 week or 6

week block, they can cope with that but yes...we do use that space" (Mr. Witherspoon).

Ms. Brown also mentioned that the cost of the sessions were also prohibitive to some pupils and that at the previous rate—full price—it was not worth the pupils' while to pay when they were restricted by the timing of the PE period. She told me, "they have to pay to do it...at least it's negotiated this year, it's a flat 50 pence rate per session because no matter what you're doing you have to pay 50 pence, because it used to be if you swam you had to pay the full rate, which is quite expensive and when we can't swim for as long as we'd like.."

Ms. Brown also uses the sports centre for some of her activities classes, although she notes that the spaces in the centre are not always available for her class to do certain activities such as badminton because the centre is being used by other groups or clubs.

"...occasionally the sports centre over there, I've had a fourth year group over there for the last couple of weeks who are doing, they've opted to do individual activities and it's a mixture of boys and girls, there are actually more girls than there are boys and they have opted to do , like swimming and squash are the two options, I'd like them to get badminton as well but the games hall is not available, they've taken that; there are a couple of clubs that come in the morning so we can't use that, so we're kind of restricted which has not been ideal because a lot of them want to learn to play squash but because of the numbers they probably haven't had the chance to be on the courts, because there can only be 6 people to a court and they don't get that much time because a period is not that long...I mean some of them have taken the chance to go swimming and they you know a leisure swim" (Ms. Brown).



I was unable to determine whether or not the use of town facilities enhanced the current PE experience for female pupils at Pleasant Hill or Sunnyside, as this was not something that was often mentioned in these focus group discussions. For older girls (S3-S4) at Willow High who had experienced PE in the old school, reflection upon travelling to the local sports centre for PE, while frustrating due to limitations of time, revealed an overall positive experience. Caren (S4 Willow High) shared that for her, coming to high school and having the chance to use the local sports facility was exciting as “everything was new...like badminton and basketball and getting to go to the Yellow centre to do trampolining”.

Staff at both Pleasant Hill and Sunnyside High school emphasised that it was important to give pupils, “a journey in this health and wellbeing experience” Mr. Kimball (Sunnyside). Mr. Kimball acknowledged that he provided the present opportunities for girls to learn about and use local facilities, but the future responsibility to make use of sports centres, rested solely with the individual.

“We’ll give you opportunities, but eventually you’ve got to be able to choose and you’ve got to buy into the fact that you’ve got to make the best choice and you’ve got to get to the facility yourself, you’ve got to put yourself out a little bit more and so on...”

The physical education teachers in my study desired pupils to have the knowledge about what local sport and exercise facilities existed so that they would feel confident using these spaces once they left high school. Within these discourses, teachers emphasized the futurity of their pupils, arguing that present knowledge would allow them and encourage them future participation, a necessary component of lifelong health. I discuss the theme of aging in depth in

Chapter 8 by considering what age and changes in age mean for girls' experiences of and engagement with physical activity over time.

While PE classes at Willow High in the old school were almost always held in the sports centre and this created difficulties for staff and pupils at the time, the Active Schools Coordinator also set up a Friday afternoon activity period for fifth and sixth year pupils with the intention of introducing them to other community facilities available to them.

“The idea behind it was to broaden the children’s horizons so that they came away from the traditional team sports that are played within the school so that when they left school they understood how to access, they understood where provided what and it’s all very well saying ‘I love body combat, let’s put a body combat class on, you’ll love body combat Morgan, you’ll love it’ and you’re like ‘I don’t have a clue what it is, how’d you know I’ll love it or not?’ So the only way to find out whether or not you love something is to try it! Do they try things off their own back? No, so you have to force them in what was, is core PE, but we call it leisure time, to actually go and try these different physical activities and then word of mouth got out as to ‘oh that was actually really good’, then somebody said, ‘oh well I’ll opt for that next term’ then ‘oh I quite fancy doing that next term’, so peer group spread the word, but we pushed them there in the first place” (Mrs. Lynne).

Even though the relationship between Pleasant Hill PE staff and community sports centre employees was soured by the sports centre’s decision to increase prices for pupils a number of years ago, PE staff remain positive about the importance of introducing pupils to community sports and exercise facilities. Links continue to be made between the school and the centre as the Fit for Girls (FfG) money at Pleasant Hill was used to run a Fit for Girls after school club in the local

sports centre, delivered by centre staff. One centre staff member who was involved in delivering FfG commented on the positive impact on the centre of having female pupils using the facilities during FfG.

“I think, from my company’s point of view, it’s always good if we can get like girls, well most centres should have a within their company a general class between ages of 12-16 some centres don’t have that, the class here is not overly busy but you’re getting between 5-10 a week although it can come in spells but a lot of other centres don’t have that. We try to boost numbers and it can only help the school and the centre” (Kevin).

Staff in all of the schools believed that it was important that pupils had the knowledge of local sports and fitness facilities so that they could feel comfortable using them once they left school. While the decision or necessity (in the case of the old school at Willow High) to use community facilities was driven by a variety of factors, staff most often reflected on the lack of available and modern spaces in schools for creating an enjoyable experience of PE.

## **5.5 CONCLUSIONS**

With a focus on space/spacings, this chapter attended to the everyday ‘event’ of PE which involved interactions in and between the spaces of the changing rooms, gym halls, playing fields and community sport spaces of PE, between embodied individuals, and objects. I drew out everyday happenings, materialities and experiences that mattered in and between the spaces of physical education. Happenings, encounters and practices within the changing rooms formed a

core focus for this chapter (Section 5.2), highlighting that much of what mattered to the overall PE experience went beyond (and between) encounters with and within traditional sporting spaces.

Indoor and outdoor spaces were distinct in each research school and teachers' and girls' discussions and researcher observations of interactions within these spaces formed the core of Section 5.3. In particular, aesthetics and presence of abject objects, limitations of indoor space, and lack of modern and purpose-built equipment and facilities contributed to the experience of indoor PE spaces. Clear tensions existed between girls' experiences of doing PE outside wherein for some the experience was enjoyable while for others, the experience resulted in further disengagement from PE. Teachers reflected that doing PE outdoor was necessary to create an authentic experience and due to lack of indoor spaces (Mr. Witherspoon) and from a therapeutic perspective for both staff and pupils who are confined to indoor spaces for much of the school day (Mr. Kimball). Many schools are now utilizing spaces outwith school grounds for PE as a result of space restrictions within their own school to provide access to improved facilities and a wider variety of non-traditional activities, in hopes of attracting more pupils to participate. These spaces are important to both teachers and girls and are able to provide girls with a wider variety of sporting opportunities and knowledge of fitness and exercise spaces within the community that girls may use outwith school hours or upon leaving school. While this chapter attended to the details of everyday happenings in the spaces of PE, I also touched on the theme of gender when highlighting girls' reflections on the lack of time allowed for changing. Chapter 6 brings the theme of gender to the forefront of the analysis by considering how gendered assumptions about sport and embodiment and experiences of gendered embodiment were present through physical education.

## Chapter 6

### ***GENDERED EMBODIMENT, SPORT AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION***

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter focuses on practices, discourses and experiences related to understandings of gendered embodiment through sport—including within physical education. Sociologists, anthropologists and feminist scholars draw connections between gendered understandings of embodiment and pedagogical practices of sport (Markula & Pringle, 2006 and Penney, 2007). Experiences of sport and physical activity are shaped, in part, by and contribute further to practices and discourses rooted in gendered understandings of embodiment. When situated in the context of the culturally constructed masculine field of sport, gendered conceptualisations may “deny...commonalities” and “ignore the diversity in characteristics and experiences of women and men” and prohibit challenges to the status-quo (Evans & Penney, 2002: 14).

Dworkin (2003: 134) reminds us that “the body is central to research on women and sport...” However, there is limited knowledge available of everyday embodied experiences of women in fitness settings as researched by Dworkin (2003) and Johnston (1996) and, starting at an earlier age within the school setting of girls’ everyday embodied experiences of PE (for exceptions see Cockburn & Clarke (2002), Williams & Bedward (2003), Evans (2006a), Hills (2007). With a focus on conceptualisations of gender, this chapter addresses this knowledge gap and weaves in the context from which girls experience sport by addressing teachers’ expectations of girls’ embodied abilities in sport. Knowledge and understanding of girls’ experiences should be at the

forefront of policy makers', practitioners' and academics' concerns about improving girls' participation in and enjoyment of sport.

While the chapter motif is embodiment, I maintain two key themes throughout. First, I maintain a theme of 'dialogue' by threading teachers' pedagogical observations, beliefs and practices through girls' reflections and embodied experiences in an attempt to build a productive conversation between PE teachers and female pupils. Both pupils and teachers contribute to gendered understandings and experiences of embodiment and we must "pay attention" to how "institutional and cultural assumptions of difference have already made a difference in students embodied capacities" (Wright & Burrows, 2006: 17). While pupils "arrive at secondary school with eleven years of socialisation into dominant gendered practices behind them", teachers shape pupils' access to opportunities (Lines & Stidder, 2003: 73). Second, I return, throughout the chapter to reflections—by both staff and pupils—and observations on single and mixed-sex PE. Mixing or separating boys and girls for PE remains a contemporary "critical pedagogical debate" amongst PE teachers and academics (Lines & Stidder, 2003: 65) necessitating a clearer understanding of rationale for delivery, and teachers' and girls' experiences within respective sex-groupings.

This chapter takes inspiration from Penney's (2007: 13) work which highlights that gendered embodiment, "whether I am a girl or a boy...matter[s]" and that embodiment frames expectations on and experiences of girls in physical education. Accordingly, the chapter is structured into three sections. In Section 6.2 I provide a historical account of decisions made in British physical education pedagogy on assumptions of binary embodied masculinities and femininities which may inform contemporary discourses and structures of PE. Section 6.3 begins a dialogue between female pupils and sport deliverers highlighting how embodiment 'matters' to expectations of girls' abilities in PE. Section 6.4 discusses how assumptions and expectations of

embodied abilities inform the activities that practitioners envisage girls will be interested in (Penney, 2007). This section includes a closer look at the provisioning of single-sex PE. Section 6.5 demonstrates how embodiment informs social dynamics—how others relate to girls, and how girls relate to others—in participation situations including through an examination of embodied encounters through mixed-sex PE.

## **6.2 SHAPING CONTEMPORARY STRUCTURES AND ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT GENDERED EMBODIMENT IN PE: A GENDERED HISTORY OF PE AND TEACHER TRAINING**

Kirk (2002) demonstrates how contemporary practices of PE in Scotland reflect the legacies of historic binaries of embodied masculinity and femininity which adhere to stereotypical understandings of boys' and girls' behaviours, abilities and interest in activities. Teachers' professional practices, expectations and beliefs about gendered embodiment and abilities through physical activity are informed in part by the training they received to be physical education teachers and by their own schooling experiences of PE. As practitioner-academics, (Lines & Stidder, 2003: 66) acknowledge that their own educational experiences of single-sex PE where they

“participated in ‘acceptable’ forms of physical activity...and were never taught by teachers of [the] opposite sex...rarely fostered understanding of sports participation and co-operation with [the] opposite sex and, it could be argued, reinforced the gendered construction of PE in the schools that we attended.”

The majority of the teachers I interviewed were educated over fifteen years ago (Mr. Kimball (15), Mrs. Phillips (18), Ms. Brown (20) and Mr. Witherspoon (25)) while Mr. Mackenzie is the most recently qualified and received his degree in 2003. To this extent, most of the teachers in my study received their qualification to be teachers of PE in the early to mid-1990s. All of them studied at British institutions at a time when Flintoff (1995) demonstrates that traditional gendered power relations operated and were reproduced and taught in physical education teacher training.

Training for PE teachers in Scotland at this time was still informed by a decision made by the Munn Committee on behalf of the Scottish Education Department (SED) in the 1970s regarding the future of secondary school physical education as a core or elective subject. Kirk (2002) details how the female-only Dunfermline College of Physical Education supported the Scottish Central Committee on Physical Education (SCCPE) submission that PE should be offered as a core cognitive and movement-based *practical subject* arguing that the “pupil should” be taught to attain “a reasonably sophisticated body concept...a concept of aesthetic demands (and) a concept of the competitive nature of certain activities” (SCCPE 1975: 7 in Kirk, 2002: 34, emphasis added). This was known as the ‘female-view’ and prioritised body-awareness, security, independence and emotional stability (Kirk, 2002). The practical focus would also result in smaller class sizes. The ‘male-view’ on the other hand argued for the development of strength, endurance, flexibility and skills for competition. The male-only Scottish School of Physical Education did not endorse the submission by the SCCPE arguing against the cognitive model in favour of the “development of perceptual-motor skills through games and sports” (Kirk, 2002: 34). With a focus on games and sports, attention was paid to the need for class sizes to reflect the traditional number of players needed to form rugby teams and this is the model which the Munn Committee granted physical education at the time, embedding two core periods per week of PE in the secondary school



curriculum. Mr. Witherspoon (Pleasant Hill) laments this decision arguing that “physical education lost out on a fantastic opportunity” and explains the lasting impact on his ability to “gain a real handle on individual children” in a class of 30 as opposed to 20.

“Just over 30 years ago, there was an opportunity for physical education to be considered a practical subject; that would have meant was that we would have gone to class sizes of 20 as opposed to 30. But it was pushed to the side because some educators were traditionalists and said that in classes of 20 we wouldn’t have enough to play rugby! We need 30 for rugby! How short sighted is that?”

While the ‘male-view’ limited teachers’ capabilities of engaging more personally with pupils due to the larger class size it also placed an emphasis on the teaching of traditional British sports in a manner which adhered to strict feminine-masculine binaries of sport.

Historic roots of sport pedagogy and gendered assumptions about pupil embodiment, established in Scottish PE curriculum through the dominance of the ‘male-view’ from the mid-1970s onwards may therefore still inform contemporary PE teachers’ (and senior management) decisions on the structures of PE. One of the main structures governing PE is the sex-composition of classes. For a long period in history PE was taught in single-sex classes to boys by male teachers and to girls by female teachers. In the 1980s and 1990s, (Lines & Stidder, 2003: 68) show how influence from the United States Title IX shifted many British PE departments towards mixing the sexes as the solution to equity issues. Title IX states that “No person in the United States, shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance” (Labor, 1972) . Title IX, which continues to be widely debated in terms of its success in creating

equal opportunities for girls in sport (Abney & Richey, 1992; Women's Sports Foundation, 2011), was hailed as a success for improving the number of girls doing some form of sport or physical activity. The debate over mixed or single-sex PE has recently reignited in the UK, in respect to attempts to improve girls' participation in PE with a return to single-sex PE for some schools. Sex composition of PE classes in each of my research schools was determined by a number of factors.

Recalling from Chapter 4, core PE at Pleasant Hill was designed to be mixed-sex for all year groups but on occasion—due to pupil choice within the 'activities' period—some classes may be single-sex. At Willow High, core PE was primarily mixed-sex. Surveys distributed—to girls only—at Willow High, through the Fit for Girls Programme asked female pupils about their preference for single or mixed sex PE classes. Feedback from these surveys described by Mrs. Lynne, the Active Schools Coordinator, showed ambivalence similar to that at Pleasant Hill. "When we do the Fit for Girls surveys it comes back that girls are not bothered about whether there's girls or boys there" (Mrs. Lynne). Ms. Phillips explained that while the PE department has had the opportunity to "experiment with different models" the decision to mix or separate the sexes "depends on the [school] timetables".

"If they're timetabled where they all come together, you could potentially have single-sex and we've done that in the past, but if they're not blocked to come together you can't do that, you have to keep them as a mixed set..." (Mrs. Phillips).

If the timetabling allows for separating boys and girls into distinct PE classes, teachers often make a decision to separate or mix boys and girls based on last year's observations of pupil behaviour, and interactions between sexes.

“...Depending on how the timetable works if we are fortunate enough to get all third year classes down at once...then that means we can offer them choices...sometimes if we think it’s a particularly challenging year group or a *particularly challenging cohort of girls* which is what I’m thinking of our current, fourth years; they were a very challenging cohort of girls and we actually did decide to keep them single-sex cause we didn’t think they’d integrate very well with the boys and they might affect the boys’ performance...so from that point of view we kept them as single-sex and actually just worked with them and it actually worked quite well...” (Mr. Mackenzie, Willow High, emphasis added).

At Sunnyside High, as a result of observations by a new Principal Teacher of PE, who was in favour of single-sex classes, the structure of core PE for first through fourth years had recently moved from being mixed-sex to single-sex. The structure of PE in terms of separating or mixing boys and girls for class, varied from school to school and was governed by overall school timetabling, staff opinions and observations of pupil behaviour and engagement and to some extent (at Pleasant Hill) pupil choice.

Lines & Stidder (2003: 68) note how a “move” towards mixed-sex PE is often made from the perception that it will solve issues of sporting equity but “lacks clear rationales, justifications, strategies and evidence for...success”. Mixed-sex PE may allow and support stereotypical behaviour whereby “girls stand on the side like they’re at a coffee morning” (Mr. Witherspoon) or “the boys all choose to go together when we’re playing rugby so it’s boys against girls and they’ll tackle you really hard and it hurts your chest , or they say ‘get down! I’ve tackled you!’” (Cara S3, Pleasant Hill).

Similarly, adhering to a sex-differentiated games-based model, without clear rationale, may restrict access to the activities that girls (and boys) are able to experience. Sophie (S2 Sunnyside) explained, “the PE groups are basically each half of the year and then they each split it up into boys and girls...and then the boys do rugby and football and we don’t and they [boys] do badminton and netball like we do but then they don’t do netball”. Accordingly, the legacy of the ‘male-view’ model may also continue to limit access to either indoor or outdoor spaces where these activities are traditionally practiced/played as Anna (S2 Sunnyside) explained: “If it’s raining the boys go outside to do rugby and if it’s like you’re scheduled to be doing hockey outside, they (PE teachers) say, ‘no you can go inside and do gymnastics.’ It’s quite sexist”.

Adhering to either mixed-sex or single-sex structures without addressing teachers’ beliefs in relation to pupils’ embodied abilities will hinder the possibility for PE to move forward in “providing opportunities for [girls] to have more positive, empowering experiences of physicality and physical activity” (Hills, 2006: 554). Therefore, while I return to the debate concerning mixed and single-sex PE in Sections 6.4 and 6.5, it is important to start from an understanding of how teachers’ conceptualisations of pupils’ embodied abilities inform pedagogical practices and girls’ beliefs about their own abilities within PE (Penney, 2007).

### **6.3 THE ‘MATTER’ OF EMBODIMENT TO EXPECTATIONS OF GIRLS’ ABILITIES IN PE**

“I’ll wind them up about girl power and I’ll say the only thing that a girl can not do that a boy can do is pee over the high wall...because when I look, I don’t see ‘boy’, ‘girl’; I see head, arms, body, legs. It’s a body” (Mr. Witherspoon, Pleasant Hill)!

Reflecting on the embodied capabilities of the girls in his classes, Mr. Witherspoon (Pleasant Hill) indicated that girls and boys are no different in their embodied capabilities of doing any sport; girls are “capable of doing anything they want; it’s whether or not they actually want to go there!” Kirk (2002) argued that some teachers assert that contemporary physical education is gender-neutral, or assert, as Mr. Witherspoon did, that female and male pupils are no different in their capabilities. In contrast, this section looks at the details of the dialogue between pedagogical discourses and practices relating to understandings of embodied ability and embodied experiences of girls, calling the gender-neutral assertion into question. The focus of this section is on links between gendered embodiment and conceptions of ability. In Chapter 7 I continue a discussion of ability in relation understandings of fat and thin bodies through discourses of fitness and health.

It is important to diverge briefly here to note the linguistic differences between capability and ability. Capability is a feature of being capable—practical ability, and is most often used in reference to future potential. Ability is the present possession of the means to do something—whether cognitive or physical. Ability is sometimes used interchangeably with ‘skill’ or ‘talent’ or ‘competence’. When capability is used to describe a person, it is most often done in reference to an individual’s limitations (Bandura, 1986). Within physical education ability is conceived of as an attribute which is measurable and can be used to stream or divide pupils into “groups based on similar abilities” (Wright & Burrows, 2006: 7). I discuss impacts and experiences of grouping by fitness ability within my research schools in further detail in Chapter 7 with regards to the ways in which ability may be caught up in contemporary discourses of health whereby the ‘able’ body is also the ‘thin’ body. Penney (2007: 13) argues that:

“as a young person in physical education, whether I am a girl or a boy most certainly *does matter*...[T]hat aspect of my identity can be expected to frame...” a number of related

gendered embodied expectations, experiences and futures including “how well I will *be able* to engage in physical activity and sport and in what ways” and “what sort of body and bodily competences I am” (emphasis added).

Remaining strong in his belief above that girls are capable of “doing anything they want”—that is, they have the features which are *capable* of developing to complete a future task— Mr. Witherspoon then moved to discuss his observations of the *abilities* and skills of girls when doing gymnastics:

“Girls give us the best quality; they’re more refined. They’re more likely to be able to take the weight on their hands. They’re willing to be tidier...it just looks so much more in control. The boys are chucking themselves upside down on the floor...it’s about being macho.”

Understandings of embodiment inside physical education are predominantly situated within and informed by traditional cultural constructions of men’s and women’s sports. Therefore the different bodily usages encouraged by secondary school physical education both permit and support the development of particular masculinities and femininities” (Wellard, 2007b: 3).

Within masculinised discourses of sport, a traditional conceptualisation of gender may therefore reduce intricate socio-biological processes to singular masculine or feminine traits—such as quality, tidiness or control, as Mr. Witherspoon indicated (Evans & Penney, 2003). While boys’ and girls’ bodies may be theoretically capable of doing any activity, girls are expected *to be able* to skilfully demonstrate ‘feminine traits’ when doing activities such as gymnastics whereas boys are expected to have and to demonstrate ‘masculine traits’ in strength and games based activities

such as football, basketball and rugby. With regard to the ways in which teachers believe or observe that girls and boys may be able to “pull each other up” in a mixed-sex class, depending on the activity, Mrs. Phillips indicated “sometimes if you’re doing...gymnastics, if you’ve got some really good girls in there they can pull the boys up in terms of tidiness” and the “boys will maybe draw the girls in during games situations like basketball and badminton”.

It is not only through the division of specific sports where gendered understandings of embodied ability frame teachers’ practices, observations and girls’ experiences of PE. Reflections on mixed-sex PE led some female pupils and staff members to consider boys as the gauge of success in PE. Boys—as a general collective—and their achievements through PE were cited as the benchmark which girls could work towards. Ms. Brown (Pleasant Hill) observed that higher achieving girls will work harder if in the presence of boys and “bring their level down” if in the presence of lower achieving girls.

“I mean if we were talking about the high flyer girls, it’s the same thing with the lower level girls as well, because if you actually get a group of them they will quite often not work off against each other and they and there’s nobody (boys) to push them, they tend not to push themselves.”

For some girls such as Katie (S1 Pleasant Hill), who demonstrated skills in sports such as football and rugby, the presence of male classmates sparked in her a desire to work hard during examination events such as fitness testing.

Katie: “I liked beating the boys in the fitness test in August.”

Morgan: “What did you beat them in?”

Katie: "I beat them in sit ups and press ups."

Katie indicated that "beating the boys" during fitness testing of activities which require strength and cardiovascular endurance made her feel good. In reference to sporting activities she also indicated that "It makes you feel better about yourself if you're better than they are at the activities". For Katie, the presence of boys in the PE class gives her a goal to work towards and perhaps serves as extra motivation to work hard and challenge what others might think or assume about her physical capabilities or limitations as a girl. While the presence of some boys provided Katie with a boost to her self-confidence and for Linny (S2), "more competition; [the presence of boys] makes me more determined", I caution that masculine discourses of sport which operate through PE produce "social expectations of ability in relation to gender" (Wright & Burrows, 2006: 15). PE teachers' reflections on girls' engagement with mixed-sex PE focused on girls' willingness to "step up" and work harder when "pushed" by boys, supporting the embodied ideal of the masculine as the 'norm'.

Girls may be capable—that is their bodies have the capacity to do, in the future, an activity which is traditionally conceived as masculine such as those which are strength or games based and teachers such as Mr. Witherspoon agreed that girls are no different in their embodied capabilities from boys. However, as Penney (2007:15) argues, "judgements about" present "'ability'" in relation to "what are deemed to be 'natural' activities... will be framed in relation to...conceptions" about "gender, culture and class dynamics." Judgements inform the details of pedagogical practices.

While girls may not be discouraged by peers or teachers from attempting a physical activity which requires traditional masculine qualities such as strength, they may also not be actively encouraged, as the following example suggests:



(An extract from the research diary):

*One day during S1 PE when we were outdoors for rugby, Mr. Witherspoon said "if you're not moving about during the warm-up, you have to get down and do ten push ups"...initially one boy wasn't moving enough so Mr. Witherspoon said, "Ok, Connor get down and give me ten"... Mr. Witherspoon encouraged Connor to make it through to complete ten push ups even though Connor was beginning to struggle at about seven or eight...then when one of the girls wasn't moving enough Mr. Witherspoon said "Ok, Katie, down and give me ten"... Katie was visibly struggling after four or five push ups...her arms were shaking. Mr. Witherspoon said, "Ok, Katie that's enough".*

While Mr. Witherspoon initially distributed the same physical disciplinary exercise to Katie as he did to Connor, when Connor began to struggle after reaching seven push ups, Mr. Witherspoon gave Connor verbal encouragement. When Katie showed signs of struggle after five push ups Mr. Witherspoon did not express the same expectation and encouragement to complete the full ten. As an able-bodied young person, Katie arguably possesses the same capabilities as Connor to complete ten push ups; with time, practice, development and instruction Katie may come to possess what is necessary to be able to complete ten push ups. However, support for the development and improvement of her current abilities is necessary for future completion of the task.

Discourses and practices relating to polarised expectations of boys' and girls' present embodied abilities are received and interpreted by girls themselves and may hinder girls' development of capabilities. Gendered embodied expectations of ability by teachers (and others) may become internalised and can result in girls supporting or perpetuating gender stereotypes of

sporting activities. Megan (P7 Cherry Tree Primary) told me that “boys are better at doing football and basketball and girls are probably better at doing gymnastics and um...you know...netball”. She followed her understanding of embodied ability with the argument that “girls shouldn’t do football; they shouldn’t do ‘boys’ things”.

Within the intimate geographical space of the body, gendered assumptions about present abilities may result in girls deciding “beforehand that [a] task is beyond” them “and thus give it less than” their “full effort” as Young (1990: 147) argued. While observing a fourth year mixed-sex Higher PE class at Sunnyside, I noted that:

(An extract from the research diary):

*The girls and guys seemed to have a good friendly relationship going between them in this class although at times the girls seemed reluctant to try a ‘move’ or a vault over the horse when the guys were watching her. One girl (Marla) kept running up to the horse time after time after time, only to stop short or jump to the side instead of over.*

In the space of a fourth year focus group with girls in single-sex PE, a conversation about freerunning—which one girl enjoys—prompted some girls to indicate fears of physical tasks:

Shelley: “I’d be terrified”

Alana: “Yeah, I’d be scared because I can’t even do a forward roll”

(S4 Focus Group Sunnyside)

These comments opened up room for discussion about some girls' perceptions that they were not capable of doing things like "running up walls, jumping and flips" sparking Kara (S4, Sunnyside) to reflect on her perceived capabilities of vaulting a horse in gymnastics.

Kara: "It took me a whole term of gymnastics; it took me longer than that; it took me like 20 weeks just to be able to do a whole floor and apparatus circuit in PE and that's because that's just how *unconfident I was*. Like *I know I can vault a horse*, but then you're looking at it and you're like "*maybe I've shrunk*" and "*maybe the horse has grown*"...and you're like... "*ohhh I can't do it*" (emphasis added).

To understand my observations of Marla's stalled attempts at vaulting the horse and Kara's imaginations that "the horse has grown" and she might not be capable of completing the vault, I return to Iris Marion Young's, (1990) theorisation of inhibited intentionality, established in Chapter 1. "Our attention" to complete a task "is often divided between the aim to be realized in motion and the body that must accomplish it, while at the same time saving itself from harm...We have more of a tendency than men do to greatly underestimate our bodily capacity" (Young, 1990: 145-147, emphasis added).

I argue that we can interpret Kara's embodied existence—through her lack of confidence—to be, in part, an inhibited intentionality. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty (1962) Young (1990) describes how the intention to complete a task is located in bodily motility and that an individual's possibilities depend on perceptions of the bodily 'I can'. As Kara (S4) indicated, "I know I can vault a horse". However, feminine bodily existence, Young, (1990: 148) argues, does not approach tasks with a confident 'I can'; instead, much of "feminine bodily existence is an

*inhibited intentionality*, which simultaneously reaches toward a projected end with an ‘I can’ and withholds its full bodily commitment to that end in a self-imposed ‘I cannot’” resulting in physical tasks being completed, but in a fractured, circuitous, awkward or wasted manner (emphasis in original). As Kara moved towards the horse, she imagined that she had “shrunk” or the horse had “grown”, creating a barrier for full bodily commitment. As Kara concluded, tasks may also be completed—in the end—*with* full bodily commitment, but that may take a very long time.

Young (1990) is concerned with the ways in which the feminine body goes about completing a task, with inhibited intentionality, not making full use of the unified range of motion of our bodies, but still completing the task. As Kara and Marla demonstrated, while the task was fractured or awkward, they tried and eventually completed the task of vaulting a gymnastics horse. Young's (1990) analysis, however, fails to explain an observation of and conversation with another one of my participants.

(An extract from the research diary):

*I was observing the class in the fitness suite after I finished a focus group with some S4 girls; a boy was upside-down on a pull up bar, doing upside down pull ups. Upon observing the boy, Natasha (S4 Pleasant Hill) recalled her earlier comments from the focus group when she indicated that while she is happy with “mixed-sex” PE now” because the class is in the fitness suite, she “hated doing gymnastics in front of the boys”. Pointing to the boy doing upside down pull ups she said:*

*Natasha (S4): “See that, that’s just off putting!”*

*Morgan: “Why?”*

*Natasha: “Because girls can’t do that!”*

Natasha indicated that the boy's actions—demonstrating and calling attention to his strength overtly by doing upside down pull ups—put her off; her first perception was that the embodiment of girls is such that they do not possess the skills or strength necessary—are not and will never be able—to do upside down pull ups. Whereas Kara (S4 Sunnyside) believes that she is able to vault a horse, her capability is compromised through her lack of confidence and fear of getting hurt, which allows her imagination to construct barriers. When I pushed Natasha further by asking her, “would you even *try* to do that?” she responded with a resounding “no way!” I recall Mr. Witherspoon's assertion that girls' bodies are no different from boys' bodies in their capabilities of completing an activity, “it's whether or not they actually *want* to go there”.

While girls may want to complete a physical task, their prior experiences of reactions—by peers or teachers—to feminine displays of strength or other masculine traits may lead them to a ‘fear of masculinisation’ resulting in failure to attempt an activity. Drawing on Hargreaves (1994) and Johnston (1996), Evans (2006a: 551) describes how “‘fear of masculinisation’ refers to both the masculine (active) performance necessary when participating in sport, and the effect which sport may have on” physicality—the development of a muscular physique. If Natasha did attempt a particularly public display of strength in front of her classmates of boys and girls, she may be teased. As Beth (P6, Rosefield Primary) had experienced, “boys can make fun of you sometimes”. Natasha may also be accused of “transgressing stereotypes of femininity and heterosexuality” (Gorley et al., 2003: 432). Even though Natasha was in the highest ability fitness class, her beliefs about her own embodiment, framed from past relational experiences including “doing gymnastics in front of the boys” prevent her from trying a physical task.

I return to my discussion in Chapter 5, of Jade, getting very muddy during the event of a football game on a football pitch at Sunnyside, to demonstrate how my perception that a girl may

be ridiculed for transgressing heteronormative femininities by fully engaging in sport and all the effects that come with it—dirt, sweat, muscles—is a lived reality for some girls.

(An extract from the research diary):

*Jade and Susi were really getting into their game and didn't seem to notice that their legs and arms were covered in mud; other girls who were watching them were making comments like "look at her knees, she's all dirty"...Jade was pretty muddy by now and other girls were smirking and commenting on "how dirty she was". Jade ignored them and genuinely seemed to enjoy the experience.*

Katie (S1 Pleasant Hill) who enjoys "beating the boys in fitness tests" and always engages to her full capacity was also the target of comments from other girls in her PE class.

(An extract from the research diary):

*Katie always participates, enthusiastically in whatever activity they are doing in PE; sometimes she brings specialist sports gear such as cleats to wear when the class had a unit on rugby. Katie has long blond hair but she doesn't style her hair or wear makeup. One day as I was walking at the back of the class with three girls who do not often take part in PE, out onto the rugby field, one of the girls said "see, Katie, don't you think she'll get mistaken for a boy all the time"?*

Katie and Jade's lack of 'feminine' markings such as jewellery and/or makeup differentiated them from other female members of their classes. Katie failed to adopt the attitude and behaviour of some of the other girls in her class who would often sit on the sidelines, make excuses for not participating, laugh and giggle about the actions of male classmates.

Their overt displays of enthusiasm for and enjoyment of doing traditionally masculine sports such as rugby and football and the ways in which they engaged with these sports—with intentionality, strength, skill and disregard for dirt—meant that they transgressed the boundaries of what some of their female peers deemed ‘acceptable’ feminine behaviour in sport. Katie’s friendships with some of the boys and willingness to engage in full bodily commitment through PE may have ‘cost’ her the friendship of some of the girls; this may have implications for her engagement in sport and physical activity later in life and her friendships with girls outside of PE class. By resisting and transgressing heteronormative boundaries Jade and Katie became the subject of ridicule by their peers. Cockburn & Clarke (2002: 657) point to the experience of one of their research participants, Jo, who was told by her peers that because she was skilled at playing a boys’ sport (football) she “must be a boy!” Cockburn & Clarke (2002: 657) demonstrated that “girls who resist” gendered expectations “by ‘getting on with’ PE...have a constant struggle to maintain their...behaviour” and true identity “because the influence of the dominant forces that shape emphasized femininity are so powerful, compelling, and menacing”.

From my observations, both Katie and Jade were able to ignore the teasing and harassment from their classmates or put it aside because they are skilled in their sports and take genuine enjoyment in doing them. Unlike Natasha (S4 Pleasant Hill) who, despite her physical skills as evidenced by her position in the highest ability PE class, was not willing to ‘try’ to do upside down pull ups, Katie (S1 Sunnyside) and Jade (S1 Sunnyside) threw themselves with full bodily momentum into any physical task demanded of physical education. Natasha, three years older than Katie and Jade, was further into the period of adolescence and identity formation where “definitions of ‘male’ and ‘female’ become more salient...and girls are expected to grow out of any ‘tomboy’ tendencies” (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002: 656). I continue this thread of experiences and expectations of girls—as they age—in sport in Chapter 8.

This section demonstrated that pedagogical discourses and practices of girls' abilities and girls' perceptions of their own present *abilities* or skills in physical activities were framed in relation to gendered conceptions of embodiment (Penney, 2007). Most teachers gave some indication that they believed that girls are capable of doing any type of sport whether it was basketball, football or gymnastics. However, in reflection of the particular skills necessary, to complete an activity, the observation and repetition of the belief that girls give better quality in activities such as gymnastics framed teachers' practices and girls' embodied experiences. Gendered expectations of embodied ability may hinder the potential for girls to try different activities or move unbounded with full bodily commitment through certain physical tasks. This way of thinking maintains the coding of activities such as dance and gymnastics as feminine activities, and the discourse "induces girls to engage only in those sports where heterosexual femininity can be appropriately displayed" though there are clearly exceptions to how individual girls respond to this (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002: 660). Gendered expectations of embodied abilities practiced and expressed by PE staff and female pupils serve as the foundation for the experiences of sport and for the physical activities provisioned through PE and school sport which the next section examines.

#### **6.4 EMBODIMENT AND GIRLS' ENGAGEMENT IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT**

Gendered embodiment—being a girl or a boy in PE—continues to matter as it frames what it is assumed young people's interests in various physical activities and sports will and will not be and how young people will relate to each other in participation situations (Penney, 2007). As the UK Government, some schools and organisations such as the Youth Sport Trust and Women Sport and Fitness Foundation (WSFF) search for solutions to 'the problem' of girls' non-participation in



sport (including PE), attention is increasingly given to provisioning activities which sporting providers envision “girls” –as a collective group—are interested in. Mr. Mackenzie (Willow High) noted that he thinks

“... the majority of girls are good at and I think they enjoy some form of aesthetic activity, i.e. your trampolining, gymnastics, etc...some element of using the fitness suite cause they can work at their own level of ability...but... you will get some girls that will quite happily go and play football...or a bit of badminton.”

In some cases, perceptions of girls’ abilities in activities which are feminised influence teachers’ assumptions that girls’ enjoy these activities more than masculinised activities, or the assumption that girls do not enjoy activities such as rugby or football.

This section examines some of the activities provisioned for girls including those provided through Fit for Girls, certificated PE, core PE and extra-curricular sport. I build on the discussion from Section 6.3 to argue how gendered beliefs about embodied abilities frame provisioning of physical activities for girls. Throughout the discussion, I provide an analysis of girls’ reflections of the activities which they were (or were not) offered in relation to activities that they enjoy—or perceive they would enjoy—the most. This section also returns to the mixed and single-sex PE debate by drawing on girls’ reflections of single-sex PE from one of my fieldwork schools.

#### 6.4.1 GENDERED EMBODIMENT THROUGH FIT FOR GIRLS

**Figure 6.1: Fit for Girls Logo, Fit for Girls Case Studies Pack (Lindohf et al., 2009)**



Programmes such as Girls on the Move and Fit for Girls (**Figure 6.1**) provided funding towards improving the numbers of girls participating in physical activity. Fit for Girls, which was present in all three schools in this study, adopted a ‘bottom-up’ approach wherein the National Project Manager encouraged all schools and PE staff to determine the most effective way to use FFG funding to improve girls’ participation in physical activity only *after* consulting with girls, through surveys, on what they are truly interested in doing.

At Pleasant Hill, Fit for Girls money was used to pay fitness and Zumba instructors for an eight week block of after-school activities at the local sports centre. The flyer advertising FfG activities at Pleasant Hill is displayed in **Figure 6.2** below:

**Figure 6.2: Fit for Girls Flyer for Pleasant Hill**



Contrary to the intentions of programme, (as stated in Chapter 1) the Active Schools Coordinator did not solicit input or feedback from female pupils about what activities they would like to participate in prior to organising and arranging FfG sessions. One of the girls whom I interviewed stated that “the things we got were pretty good”, but “it would have been good to pick some of the things that we were going to do” (Rachel S3 Pleasant Hill).

In contrast, at Sunnyside, before spending Fit for Girls monies, Mr. Kimball explained his consultation with girls through a FfG survey questionnaire:

“I did a [Fit for Girls] questionnaire when I first came here and the big thing that came out of why girls were not participating was the fact that changing rooms were poor...”

As demonstrated in Chapter 5, girls confirmed that the poor aesthetics of the changing rooms contributed to their overall experience of PE. Girls suggested in Chapter 5 that they would

improve the changing rooms by making them larger or through the addition of cubicles for changing privacy. Mr. Kimball notes however that he interpreted survey responses “that the changing rooms were poor” to mean that they could be improved through a fresh coat of paint. After determining costing for paint, it was deemed “too expensive”. However, the addition of new wiring for sockets and the provision of hair dryers and hair straighteners “was within the budget”. Being a ‘girl’ frames not only “[w]hat it is envisaged what my interests in physical activity and sport will (and will not) be” but what it is envisaged that is necessary to retain my interest or encourage me to be interested in physical activity (Penney, 2007: 13). Mr. Kimball interpreted girls’ responses—that the ‘poor’ state of the changing rooms were a main reason why many did not participate in PE—to mean that improving them through the addition of feminine beauty tools may result in improved participation. While many of the girls did admit to being thrilled at the opportunity to use hair dryers, others did not make use of them or desire to make use of them at all “I just wear a swimming cap, so I don’t need to dry my hair” (Ring S2, Sunnyside). Other girls never had a chance to make use of them as Ring (S2 Sunnyside) said to me, “you can only use them when you do swimming that’s it”. Accordingly, it was very difficult to determine whether or not the addition of hairdryers and electric sockets had a real and lasting impact on encouraging girls to take part in PE. While hairdryers and electric sockets were installed to incentivize girls to participate, so that they would be able to dry and straighten hair after sweating or swimming during PE, such tools also encouraged girls to conform to and resume appropriate femininity for after leaving the space of PE.

Incentives for girls’ participation in physical activity were also distributed at Willow High; the incentive came in the form of beauty vouchers instead of hairdryers however, and I was directly involved in the programme for which the vouchers were used to incentivise participation. The club was run over lunchtime for one term and it became increasingly difficult to attract girls to

attend, perhaps because I was not a PE teacher and was therefore unfamiliar to the pupils, or because many pupils valued their lunchtimes as the only unstructured period in their school day. While a core group of 5-6 girls attended each week, and I provisioned a variety of activities from yoga and circuits training to badminton, ultimate Frisbee and basketball, Mr. Mackenzie suggested that the FfG monies be used to encourage more girls to attend on a regular basis. Drawing on conversations with PE staff in the neighbouring school, who had used beauty vouchers to incentivise participation, Mr. Mackenzie suggested that we do the same. I was unsettled with this suggestion as a researcher committed to disrupting gender norms, and so I suggested a trip to the local climbing gym—an activity I felt to be ‘gender neutral’. At the same time, I was also sensitive to the need to consult with the girls themselves to find out what they would enjoy as an incentive, so I suggested to Mr. Mackenzie that I consult with them before purchasing the vouchers. All of the girls expressed that they would like to have the beauty vouchers *and* the trip to the climbing gym and neither incentive was given preference. To this extent, as the budget would only cover one incentive, I negotiated with the climbing gym to allow the girls one free session and the monies were used to purchase the beauty vouchers. Similar rewards—for participation and wearing PE kit, were given in the form of beauty treatments by local beauticians for one FfG pilot school programme (Lindohf et al., 2009).

#### *6.4.2 ADDING AESTHETIC OPTIONS TO CERTIFICATED PE*

Certificated PE is another area where some schools are trying to increase girls’ participation. The low number of girls—compared to boys—enrolling in certificated PE, in some schools in Scotland is a concern for some PE departments. One high school in Stirling experienced low numbers of girls enrolling in Standard Grade PE and decided to offer girls an aesthetics-based

course. Through the Girls in Sport and Physical Activity initiative, the pilot for Fit for Girls, the school approached *a particular* group of girls who “were very interested in dance and gymnastics” but who did not select Standard Grade PE “due to the presence of boys”. The school indicated that the current course “did not suit *the large majority* of girls as the” activities “were games-based including basketball, football, badminton, swimming and canoeing” (Lindohf et al., 2009: 8) emphasis added. The new course which included gymnastics, dance, trampolining, netball and volleyball, “activities deemed ‘acceptable’ for girls to be good at...and seen as feminine” was introduced in 2007 (Lindohf et al., 2009: 8). The high school in Stirling targeted *a particular* group of girls who indicated an interest in dance/gymnastics while maintaining that the current games-based Standard Grade PE course did not suit *most* girls in the school.

One of my fieldwork schools was also adding an aesthetics option to certificated PE at the time of research. Ms. Brown explained that the PE department at Pleasant Hill was “getting quite a lot of pressure now from senior management to put on ‘girl’s’ Higher classes; they [senior management] want us to put on dance and gymnastics for the girls”. Pressure from senior management had resulted in the head of PE “taking a step forward this year...to try and get more people through the door by adding an aesthetic column” to the certificated PE curriculum (Mr. Witherspoon, Pleasant Hill). Mr. Witherspoon highlighted that the population of males to females participating in PE in first through fourth year is well balanced. When pupils move to fifth year and are able to select certificated course choices, the gender gap between girls and boys selecting higher PE widens significantly. At Pleasant Hill this year, eight girls and 62 boys selected higher PE, making the ratio 4:31. While Mr. Witherspoon was keen to attract more girls to choose higher PE, he remained cautious about the success of improving female pupil enrolment through the introduction of aesthetics activities:

“Don’t assume that because the aesthetic column goes in that they’re going to flock to that; many girls will go ‘not on your life! That’s my one over there, hockey, basketball, that’s what I want’” (Mr. Witherspoon).

Mr. Witherspoon’s scepticism of the perceived success of the aesthetics course stems from his observations that many of the girls in his PE classes *do* enjoy games-based activities and some girls “like activities other than gymnastics or dance much much more” Mr. Witherspoon (Pleasant Hill).

“In my second year class, two or three of the girls really took to volleyball; others put up with it...when we went into the fitness suite, some love it, others put it up with it...different ones! Hockey! Football! Yet, we still think that all girls like dance...not all girls like dance. They’ll fight you tooth and nail to go and play football or to do rugby, before they would do dance” (Mr. Witherspoon, Pleasant Hill).

Rather than a seeing barrier within the activities offered through certificated PE, Mr. Witherspoon believes that there may be parental or course counselling “pressure on” girls “to do ‘girl’ things” as they move from fourth to fifth year. Similarly looking towards their future and career prospects, Mr. Witherspoon believes that there may be parental pressure on girls to look towards more academically ‘credible’ subjects such as Maths or English Ms. Brown also cautioned that the introduction of an aesthetic column continues to support the gender binary so inherent in sport.

“...are you assuming that that’s what the girls only want to do and are you then

pigeonholing them saying 'these are the activities that you like because you are a girl, so you will do that course'. Because the ones [girls] who are doing the course that we have just now are perfectly happy with it; yes there are others who would do dance and gymnastics, but there are boys who would do that as well! I often wonder if we...pigeonhole people into the sports which are sex-specific, appropriate for girls or boys. I mean there are some boys who absolutely hate football" (Ms. Brown, Pleasant Hill).

Ms. Brown is unsettled with the pressure she feels from senior management to offer aesthetics-based Higher classes for girls; Ms. Brown believes that senior management decisions may be based on assumptions that "there is a lot of interest in dance" because of observations that many of the girls attend the "really big dance school in town". From her everyday observations and relationships with her female pupils—first hand experience which senior management does not have access to—Ms. Brown notes that "a lot of the dancers are also involved in the hockey club...or they will do other sports." She believes that the creation of an aesthetics-based Higher course will serve to perpetuate gender binaries in physical activity. Thus, despite some teachers' intentions of gender equity and beliefs which challenge gender norms, teachers may experience forms of "double bind or entrapment that forces them into positions complicit with dominant masculine norms" (Brown & Rich, 2002: 86). Some PE departments experience the bind from senior management as expressed by Ms. Brown above, or by heads of PE on new teachers (Brown & Rich, 2002). Unlike the high school in Stirling, at Pleasant Hill, at the time of researching, teachers could not yet gauge the 'success' of the addition of an aesthetics column in improving the number of female pupils enrolling in Higher PE. However, Ms. Brown's



concern and Mr. Witherspoon's scepticism may be justified when considering girls' reflections on some the activities provisioned, or lacking provision in core PE and extra-curricular sport.

#### *6.4.3 GENDERED ACTIVITIES THROUGH CORE PE*

Some teachers are attempting to break from "tradition, tradition" by learning and teaching "boxercise, skipping lessons, lacrosse, cricket and softball too" (Mr. Witherspoon, Pleasant Hill); however, as discussed in Section 6.2, the games-based 'male-model' still permeates much of British core physical education. This section presents my observations and girls' reflections on the activities provisioned for them in core PE. While much of the discussion is focused on activities differentiated by sex through single-sex PE classes, as my observations demonstrate, even when PE is single-sex, sex-differentiated patterns of provision operate within the microgeographies of the sporting space.

"Games remains an area of physical education frequently associated with sex-differentiated patterns of provision, with sports stereotypically regarded as exclusively 'men's' or 'women's' being provided for boys and girls respectively" (Penney, 2002: 113). As Heather (S3 Sunnyside) informed me, in her core PE class: "It's more like the rugby and the football for the guys and the hockey and the netball for the girls."

Rugby, like football, is traditionally conceptualised as a boy's sport in western sporting cultures; in some schools when PE is single-sex, rugby is only offered to boys' PE classes or taught by male teachers. At Sunnyside, there was a clear pedagogical division with only male teachers' teaching masculinised sports such as rugby and football, whereas at Pleasant Hill, Mr. Witherspoon straddled the gendered pedagogy of sport; at Willow High, Mrs. Phillips did not teach traditionally feminine activities such as dance, stating that "dance is not really my thing".

Penney (2007: 13) notes that when PE is single-sex, boys and girls PE classes are “typically...staffed by male and female teachers respectively”. Sophie and Anna explain the extent to which this model is present at Sunnyside and influences the types of sports taught in PE.

Anna: “...mostly we do gymnastics and netball.”

Sophie: “Well but it depends on the teacher.”

Anna: “Yeah, it’s mostly just Mr. Yelling that does football and rugby because Mrs. Orion and Ms. Nether they are more kind of like hockey and netball and badminton...so you can only really do rugby and football if you’re in Mr Yelling’s class.”

(S2 focus group, Sunnyside)

Despite mixed-sex provisioning in some schools where all “children receive a common course” (Mr. Witherspoon, Pleasant Hill), sex-differentiated patterns of provision operate within sporting spaces. As Cara indicated in Section 6.2, if given the teacher’s permission, sometimes it is the boys who bond into single-sex groups to play against the girls when the activity is a sport like rugby. At other times, the teacher may separate boys and girls on reflection of the activity currently being taught or the sport space currently being occupied. The fitness suite at Pleasant Hill was one space where teacher’s decisions to split the class on the ‘difference’ of sex resulted in provisioning of gendered activities such as using the treadmill or stationary bikes for girls and lifting weights for boys.

(An extract from the research diary):

*I was observing Mr. Niall's second year mixed-sex core PE class in the fitness suite. Mr. Niall said that they'd be doing much the same this week as last week and he proceeded to split the class into boys and girls. He never gave them a choice and said that the girls should go to the cardiovascular room and the boys into the weights room and then later on they could switch if they wanted.*

Adhering, even unintentionally to such practices as assigning girls to use the cardiovascular room and boys to use the weights room, creates a sense of otherness, such that if a girl resisted the teacher's assignment and chose instead to use the weights room, she may be othered in the process. Drawing on the gendered spacings within a private gym Johnston (1996: 328) shows how "sexual difference creates masculine and feminine spaces and these sexed spaces help create feminine and masculine bodies". Women are encouraged—through discourses and practices of the gym and its users, and visual advertising displays—to do aerobics and use the cardiovascular room and discouraged from using "the masculine sexed space of the potentially violent 'Black and Blue Room' free weights training room" (Johnston, 1996: 328). At Pleasant Hill and Willow High, girls were often observed using the fitness suite or gym and within each gym usage of different sports equipment—treadmills and stationary bikes by girls and free weights and weight machines by boys—was apparent.

Teachers' skills, interests and beliefs inform their pedagogical practice within PE. It was apparent through my observations that when PE is single-sex, male teachers do sometimes instruct all-female PE classes; accordingly, some girls are able to experience football and rugby. It was also clear, however, that activities for female pupils are informed—in part—by the gendered assumptions about what girls—as a homogenous category—like or do not like.

Jessica (S3 Sunnyside) believes that her teachers assume that girls do not want to play rugby, because it is perceived to be a boys' sport and have therefore made the decision not to teach it to girls—or not to teach it to the same extent as it is taught to boys.

Jessica: "Yeah we got to do rugby for one week...I would have quite liked to do rugby more often and they seem to think that only guys want to do it and I would find it quite fun; same with football I think we only got like one week on those each and something like that and yeah we spend quite a lot of time doing like gymnastics and stuff like that which you know I don't really like very much...We spend more time of that than football and rugby put together just because they're boys' sports I think..."

While Jessica would like the chance to learn or play more rugby during curricular PE time, she also reinforces the position of rugby as a "predominantly male activity" viewing her "exclusion as acceptable and expected within the field of physical education" (Hills, 2006: 546).

Supporting Jessica's preference for doing rugby over gymnastics, other girls, who had the opportunity to enjoy rugby, in single-sex classes indicated that they liked it "because you can be feisty" (Red S2 Sunnyside). Brandi (S2 Sunnyside) liked rugby because "you get to run about more" and Alison (S3 Sunnyside) enjoyed it because "it's more physical, more challenging". Rugby, as girls in single-sex classes above indicated, allowed some girls the opportunity to break free from traditional embodied expectations of girls' abilities which inform what it is perceived their interests will be in physical activity.

#### 6.4.4 GENDERED ACTIVITIES THROUGH EXTRA-CURRICULAR SCHOOL SPORT

Teachers' sporting interests, skills and understandings of gendered embodiment additionally informed practices and provisioning of competitive extra-curricular sport. This section looks at girls' reflections on teachers' practices and attitudes relating to extra-curricular sport. Competitive practices often align with wider cultural models which polarise men's and women's sport (Lines & Stidder, 2003). Laura (S4 Sunnyside) argued that the competitive attitudes of some teachers, which are "so much more competitive than us" "put so much pressure on you"; this attitude resulted in Laura participating in an inter-house sporting competition against her desires.

Laura: "You get your name put down for doing things...last week I got told I was doing the swimming gala and the cross country running. And I said "don't put me down for it" and she [the PE teacher] did ...but I didn't want to!!"

Pupils' success in sport may reflect on teacher's commitments and own sporting records and may influence teachers' competitive pressures on pupils to enter certain school sporting competitions and succeed in sex-specific sports. For some girls, pressure to succeed or win was doubled because they did not want to disappoint their teachers.

Kiera: "When there's an assembly they're like 'girls if you don't win, we'll be really disappointed in you'."

Sarah: "One of the new teachers introduced herself and she was like 'first thing you need to know is I'm a very competitive person and a sore loser and we're going to win this year...we will win this year'."

Kiera: "And you're like ooohhhh now...I don't want to loose."

(S4 Focus Group Sunnyside).

The competitive sporting traditions of the school, divided along gendered lines, may foster and encourage boys to play only such sports as rugby or football and girls to play only such sports as netball or hockey. Ring, Red and Pony (S2 Sunnyside) told me that their female teachers, who also coach the netball and hockey teams, "always remind you about netball and hockey being on" (Ring) "but for like rugby or football they only tell you about it the first week that it's on" (Red).

Ring: "Yeah like after PE the teachers are always like 'right you're going to come to hockey today and netball tomorrow?' and you say yeah 'ok'."

Sporting traditions may also afford more importance within the school to boys' sports. Speaking in a way which afforded the boys' rugby team a very important status within the school, Sierra (S2 Sunnyside) told me that "we have a really really good boys' rugby team". Lines & Stidder (2003: 72) argue that "provision of different team games for boys and girls reinforces ideologies that male physical skill and activities are not only more important but have more status and credibility". While many schools may now be delivering the same sports for boys as girls during curricular PE time, thinking in terms of equal opportunities for extra-curricular sports provisions may be furthered hindered by the current status and successes of already existing extra-curricular sports for boys.

None of the teachers whom I spoke with explicitly stated that girls do not enjoy rugby; however the provisioning of extra-curricular sport in all three research schools was split into distinct boys' and girls' activities. Ring (S2, Sunnyside explained): "I think it's kind of like really

like ‘girls should do this and then boys can do that’...” In reflection on the opportunities available to her after school at Pleasant Hill, Natasha (S4) indicated that “there are things for the guys but not for us...yeah the guys have rugby and football but we don’t have enough opportunities”.

At Sunnyside one female pupil took the initiative to disrupt sporting traditions by starting a girls’ rugby team. Katie explained to me, “I tried to start up girls’ rugby but I couldn’t make the night” that the PE teacher was able to coach because she was involved in netball. “Everyone put their names down (on the sign up list for girls’ rugby) and he (PE teacher) was like ‘we’ll do it on Wednesday night’ and I was like ‘that’s netball’...” A similar clash occurred when “girls’ football” was offered: “It’s on the same day that we’ve got hockey training” (Ring S2 Sunnyside). Because the night offered for girls’ rugby or football by the teachers—perhaps the only night they were free to coach—clashed with netball or hockey practice, “not many people came, so I think they assumed that girls didn’t want to do it, so they stopped it...” (Jessica, S3 Sunnyside). Instead of considering the clash with other sports, teachers may have perceived the lack of attendance at after-school girls’ rugby and girls’ football as an indication that girls were not interested in these sports. Teachers may have also offered rugby on the same night as netball under the assumption that girls who played netball would not be interested in playing rugby...that is an understanding that the are “certain types of girls” who would be interested in or play rugby and those types of girls are different from the ones who would be interested in or play netball.

Teachers’ personal interests and competitive attitudes, coupled with discourses and practices which perceive levels “of competency” in various sports to be “differentiated by assumptions about gender” allows a belief that girls are interested in certain sports and not others (Wright & Burrows, 2006: 17). It is important to recognize that most PE teachers are not paid for the time they devote to extracurricular sport and that many of them are already “spread too thin...with 80% of their time taken up by children who are sitting examinable PE subjects” making

it challenging for teachers to deliver after school activities, even if they do have a willingness and interest in provisioning football or rugby for girls. However, the polarised provision of extra-curricular sport may also point towards a failure to acknowledge that some girls do enjoy the event-space (Marston et al., 2005) of rugby—and particularly the embodied aspects of “being aggressive” or running around (Red S2 Sunnyside). As indicated in Section 6.4.3, several girls in my study would readily engage with the sport if offered the opportunity. Assumptions that girls are not interested in rugby which may then result in a failure to provide extra-curricular rugby for girls, fails to address and acknowledge some of the more intimate reasons why some girls do not enjoy and/or have stopped participating in rugby.

As Sophie (S2 Sunnyside) alluded to above, and as other girls in my study indicated, many girls are interested in rugby and may have enjoyed playing it within the local community in the past. As a result of lack of continuation, some girls are no longer provided the opportunity to play in an organised fashion. Katie (S4) had to give up playing rugby for her local club “because you’re not allowed to play with guys past 11 years old, and there was no girls’ rugby team”. Other girls have made the decision to quit as a result of sexist behaviour on behalf of male teammates. Sophie (S2) “used to play” rugby “with the boys when [she] was in P2, P3 and P4 but then they were all like really sexist so [she] quit”. Children and young people themselves contribute to stereotypical beliefs that boys as a result of their biology are ‘better’ at football and girls are ‘better’ at gymnastics leading some boys to exclude girls from participation in male-dominated sports (Hills, 2006). Isla (P7 Cherry Tree Primary) explained: “...football isn’t just a boys sport. Boys say that so that the girls will think the boys are better than them, because the boys think they’re better than the girls.” Gendered understandings of embodied abilities translate into provisioning of polarised activities for boys and girls particularly through provisioning of single-sex PE classes and girls-only and boys-only school sports teams; in turn many young people read and



perpetuate understandings of gendered embodiment. Recognising that some girls do enjoy gymnastics or dance much more than football or rugby, I argue that failing to provide rugby for girls, under the assumption that they do not enjoy it, overlooks some of the more accurate and personal reasons why some girls do not enjoy rugby. To access some of these reasons, we have to look at the details of girls' experiences of doing various physical activities and sports within PE. To this extent I provide an analysis of girls' reflections on embodied encounters with boys through sport and physical activity.

### **6.5 DOING PE WITH THE BOYS: EMBODIED ENCOUNTERS**

This section analyses girls' accounts of and teachers' reflections on embodied encounters (and lack thereof) within PE. Through events such as playing basketball and rugby, and doing Standard Grade PE in a mixed sex class composition, embodied encounters with boys formed a substantial part of many girls' accounts of their experiences of PE. Also of importance to girls was a *lack of* encounters with boys, particularly in mixed-sex PE during rugby or football match situations. I maintain that girls' reflections on lack of encounters are of importance within this discussion and I therefore begin this section by considering this lack of encounters. This section continues to be motivated by practitioners' and academics' attempts to grapple with the question of girls' engagement with PE in relation to the variable of mixed-sex or single-sex classes. It is very difficult for many teachers to grapple with the single-sex versus mixed-sex argument in provisioning PE and sometimes teachers find themselves caught in the middle of disputes between girls over their preference for mixed-or single sex PE as Mr. Mackenzie (Willow High) explained: "I mean you ask a girl, 'come on girls we'll go do this' ....and they'll say, 'well no I want to go with the

boys, that's not fair, you're being sexist'...and some girls will say 'well actually I want to go away from the boys', so it's just a real mixture."

Physical education teachers held varying opinions on the extent to which sex-composition mattered to the overall PE experience and to girls, as a collective and individual experience of and engagement with PE. While teachers spoke about girls' willingness to participate and engage in various activities depending on the presence of boys, girls emphasised the everyday encounters that they had with male classmates—sometimes non-existent, other times rough and still other times, friendly.

#### 6.5.1 *"THEY DON'T PASS THE BALL TO YOU": A LACK OF EMBODIED ENCOUNTERS*

Several girls expressed that many boys generally held an "overly competitive" attitude towards the PE activity (Sarah, S3 Willow High). This attitude combined with assumptions about their female classmates' presumed lack of skills often resulted in a boy not passing the ball to the girls during a ball-related match or "taking a rage" at a girl if she dropped the ball during a game (Adrienne, S3 Willow High).

Bethany and Sarah (S3 Willow High) expressed frustration with not being able to share in the game as boys rarely passed the ball to girls. In reference to her experiences of "playing rugby and football with the guys" Bethany shared "they don't pass the ball to you". Sarah indicated similar experiences: "...The boys so often, they're like 'must keep the ball to myself' and they just hog it and hog it or they just pass to the other boys but they never pass to a girl." Sarah also considered the "importance" placed by "some guys" on the individual moment of success or winning during a single basketball game in PE class. "Some guys in basketball think it's like the world championships or something like that; they act as if it's like really important". While Sarah

does not “do many sports out of school”, she describes herself as “competitive...competitive in everything; yeah I do like winning; that’s a good feeling”. However, Sarah felt that the competitiveness of boys excluded her from the game situation and was “soooooo frustrating”. On reflection of the beliefs of some boys, Ms. Brown noted that there may be

“...some boys that some of the girls are not particularly comfortable with working with in PE, you know boys who may be, like we were talking about earlier<sup>13</sup>, who are sexist and don’t believe that girls are any good at PE and the girls don’t want to compete with them, whereas there are other boys who simply come and take part with them and it’s not an issue” (Ms. Brown).

Hills (2006: 547) demonstrates how boys may actively police sporting spaces of football, “maintaining it as a masculine domain.” This is done not only through exclusionary practices such as refusing to pass the ball to girls when required to play in mixed-sex PE, but also by excluding girls from discussions about football (Nelson, 1994; Hills, 2006). By excluding girls from discussions

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<sup>13</sup> What we were talking about earlier was the conversation leaked to the media earlier that week, between Sky Sports presenters Richard Keys and Andy Gray “mocking official Sian Massey during Liverpool’s victory against Wolves, despite the female assistant referee displaying a perfect understanding of the offside rule” (Telegraph 2011). The conversation was as follows:

Keys: Well somebody better get down there and explain offside to her

Gray: Yeah I know that can you believe that a female linesman; that’s exactly what I was saying women don’t know the offside rule!

Keys: I can guarantee you there’ll be a big one today and Kenny will go potty

Gray: Potty!

Keys: This is not the first time is it? Didn’t we have one before?

Gray: Yeah

Keys: Wendy Toms?

Gray: Wendy Toms or something like that

Keys: Ugh!

Keys: No, no it’s got to be done; it’s good! The game’s gone mad. See the charming Karen Brady this morning complaining about sexism? Do me a favour love.

about football or refusal to pass the ball during games situations, some boys work actively to 'other' girls from spaces of physical activity, preventing girls the opportunity and time necessary for learning and practicing skills such as catching and throwing.

Whereas Sarah was frustrated for not being able to participate in a sport that she enjoyed, Bethany (S3 Willow High) expressed frustration with both the behaviour of the boys—who refused to pass to the girls—and the actions of PE staff who placed the blame on the girls for “not joining in”.

“Then you get shouted at [by the PE teacher] for not joining in and you say ‘yeah but they’re not passing the ball to me’! So it’s you that gets in trouble, but you can’t join in even if you wanted to because the guys take the ball and won’t pass it!”

In particular, Bethany referred to her experiences of playing football or rugby; Bethany expressed that, as a girl, “even if you wanted to [participate]” you cannot because you will not be given a chance playing in a football or rugby game during a mixed-sex competitive PE situation. While some girls may not want to participate, and actively disengage, others do genuinely enjoy the activities and may be disadvantaged by exclusionary practices. Bethany expressed additional concern about the pedagogical practices of teachers who failed to address sexist behaviour in respect to mixed-sex situations where the ball was not being passed to girls. From Bethany’s experience, she was disciplined for not participating in a situation where she was unable to participate due to the actions of boys rather than her own lack of interest.

With a further consideration of the ‘assessment’ qualities featuring in Standard Grade PE, Fiona (S4 Willow High) considers what she thinks is her teachers’ rationale for separating boys and

girls in certificated PE.

Fiona: “I know why they did it [single-sex PE] in Standard Grade, because we’re getting assessed so and sometimes the boys if we’re like, they won’t pass to you because they think that you’re not good enough, but in core when it’s just a bit of fun, I don’t know why they separated us because it’s quite fun with the boys sometimes” (S4, Willow High).

Fiona believed that there was justification for separating the sexes within Standard Grade PE where her course mark was of importance to her academic record. Similar to the third year girls at Willow High who expressed concern about staff who “shouted at [girls] for not joining in” when the boys refused to pass the ball, these fourth year girls were concerned that they would be graded unfairly, not as a result of their own disengagement but as a result of boys’ behaviour. A lack of encounters with boys during a game situation or other PE experience, resulted in frustration by girls who were genuinely interested in participation and who were fully engaged, and a concern for the perpetuation of unjust gender relationships through sport, often dismissed or unacknowledged by staff. While many girls reflected on a lack of opportunities to encounter the ball or join in with boys, attention later turned towards the times when girls did encounter both boys and balls in games situations.

#### *6.5.2 PAINFUL AND VIOLENT ENCOUNTERS*

When and if girls do have a chance to encounter and join in with boys, with opportunities to receive and pass the ball, what the girl does with the ball—by passing, shooting or dropping it—

may result in a painful or violent bodily encounter with a boy. Adrienne, who was in the same (S3) PE class as Sarah and Bethany at Willow High, recalled one encounter with a boy after she dropped the ball. “I accidently dropped the ball and they’re like ‘*why did you do that*’ [Adrienne is screaming at this point]?! It’s that kinda thing.” Being screamed at was an unenjoyable experience for Adrienne (S3, Willow High) and made her feel “unconfident and stupid”.

Keren and Cara were third year female pupils in a mixed-sex and foundation (lowest) ability fitness class for core PE at Pleasant Hill. Recalling an ‘activities’ period, the girls highlighted particular encounters—and embodied sensations resulting from encounters—with boys in PE while playing rugby. As previously indicated in [Section 6.2](#), pupils sometimes self-select into single-sex teams. Many of the boys at Pleasant Hill played for the community rugby team and had the opportunity to spend years learning, practicing and perfecting their rugby skills. Playing against all boys in her class, Cara (S3 Pleasant Hill) reflected on the pain of particular body areas such as the chest, when “tackle(d) really hard” by a boy. Keren (S3 Pleasant Hill) argued that “they (boys) care about their sensitive bits, but they don’t care about yours.” The feeling of pain as the chest is constricted or hit hard against the ground or another body, results from the flesh—fat and skin—organs, muscles and bones encountering a blow or forceful pressure. Within this event (Marston et al, 2005), the body—and bodily matter—is acted upon, rather than active (Colls, 2007), resulting in disengagement with the encounter, the activity, the boy(s), in avoidance of further/repeated bodily pain.

While Cara and Keren (S3 Pleasant Hill) experienced violent or painful bodily encounters with boys during competitive game situations such as rugby and football—which as traditional sports, require bodily encounters to progress the ball forwards—other girls mentioned aggressive behaviour by boys which was not necessitated by the ‘rules’ of the game. Adrienne (S3 Willow High) reflected on her experience of playing basketball with the boys and recalled how a boy

threw a basketball at her and it bent her finger. Widening the experience outside the space of PE, Adrienne claims that “boys in our school are really dangerous and violent”. As an explanation for their behaviour, and attempts to link violence and sport with the performance of heterosexuality, Sarah (S3 Willow High) told me “it’s cause they all want to be egoish kinda thing, be big headed for the girls, kinda of show off kinda thing” (Sarah, S3 Willow High). Wellard (2007a) noted that the popular construction of the professional sportsman includes strength, athleticism and attractiveness—an embodied form for men and boys to aspire to, and women and girls to find sexually attractive. Mr. Witherspoon observed that “a lot of girls take up sports to be a part of the ‘sporty’ group with an eye on some of the guys who are playing in the fifth year rugby team or the guys who are playing for the football team...”

I draw attention to the contrast between girls experiences offered in Section 6.5 and my discussion of girls’ enjoyment of single-sex rugby in Sections 6.4.3 and 6.4.4, with particular emphasis on enjoying embodied encounters with girls as Emma (S2 Sunnyside) did: “I just really enjoy running about tackling everyone, like tackling Sophie”. In Section 6.5 girls shared distinctly different embodied encounters—painful and violent—and exclusionary practices, with boys on the rugby pitch in mixed-sex PE. It is the differences in these experiences that I argue we must recognise and address, rather than provisioning activities which are assumed girls will enjoy. When we pull out the details of some of the girls’ experiences of such events as rugby, basketball, and mixed sex Standard Grade PE, we see that teaching traditional sports within mixed-sex provisioning of PE does not always allow for ‘equal opportunities’ in the classroom or on the playing field. Additionally, we see that single-sex PE and provisioning traditionally masculine sports to males and feminine sports or activities to females maintains stereotypical foundations of sport and fails to recognize that girls do enjoy such sports as rugby and football.

## 6.6 CONCLUSIONS

Penney's (2007: 13) final argument is that "whether I am a girl or a boy matters" as it frames "the extent to which and ways in which participation in physical education, physical activity and/or sport will prove to be personally fulfilling and/or empowering." Recognising that teachers bring with them their own sporting interests, skills and gendered practices to the space of PE, it remains a "site in which conventional femininities and masculinities are reproduced" (Gorley et al., 2003: 430). Teachers need to work actively, in consultation with pupils, to challenge traditional beliefs of gendered embodiment, linking skill and ability in a particular sport to a particular body. If gendered ideologies of embodiment within sporting/PE culture continue to be maintained, pupils whose skills and interests cross the boundaries of traditional sporting masculinities and femininities will find it increasingly difficult to find enjoyment and personal fulfillment through physical activity.

This chapter demonstrates how discourses, practices and provisions within physical education, which inform girls' embodied experiences in my fieldwork schools, continue to be rooted in gendered understandings of embodiment. While many teachers recognised that both boys and girls expressed preferences for and enjoyment of non-stereotypical activities and it was clear that addressing and improving girls' participation was at the forefront of concerns expressed by many of the teachers I spoke with, gendered understandings of embodied ability continued to frame teachers' expectations of male and female pupils' skills, within the whole of PE as a subject and through different sporting activities. "Teachers' decisions about physical education often rely heavily on stereotypical understandings of gender and culture that may not accurately reflect girls' experiences, concerns, or desires" (Hills, 2006: 540).



It is not only teachers, however, who are implicated in maintaining or challenging gendered discourses. In contrast, as this chapter reveals, “gender discourses are embedded, embodied and enacted in the everyday lives of everyone involved in learning and participation communities; physical education teachers, teacher educators, coaches, parents, young people” Penney (2007: 21). Accordingly many of the practices and structures of PE were influenced by senior management and outside the control of PE teachers themselves. Such management practices were underpinned by gendered discourses of female and male embodied abilities within sport. Girls themselves were actively involved in conforming to, challenging and negotiating gendered expectations of embodiment through sport. While many girls in my study actively challenged embodied expectations of ability through sport, and challenged traditional understandings of and enjoyment of stereotypical activities, others complied with and contributed to maintaining gendered practices and discourses of embodiment.

Through the ongoing debate over provisioning of single or mixed-sex PE—when framed within boundaries which solidify under hegemonic assumptions of gendered embodiment through ability—neither teachers nor female pupils will be able to realise gender equity. While a move towards co-educational physical education is viewed by some as a marker of equality between the sexes in sport and PE, legacies of the “gendered history of physical education” remain and have “serious consequences for children’s experiences of and opportunities in physical education and sport” (Kirk, 2002: 25).

While much research reveals that traditional gendered pedagogies and practices, which continue to underpin PE, make the experience—for many girls—an unpleasant one, girls themselves continue to be identified “as a ‘problem’” by some policy makers and educators “for not engaging positively in PE” (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001 in Rich, 2004: 234). Instead of addressing gendered and sexist behaviours or critically questioning the rationale for mixed-sex or single-sex

provision, educators may increasingly be reliant on two strategies for inciting girls' participation. First, in attempts to attract more girls to participate in sport, physical activity and physical education, this chapter demonstrates how programmes are targeting girls as a homogenous group, and 'particularly inactive' groups of girls and provisioning primarily aesthetics-based activities. "Interventions" such as Fit for Girls, or certificated PE programmes "that seek to target 'girls' or 'boys' as homogenous categories are bound to fail", first because they close off opportunities for alternative understandings of masculinity and femininity through sport and second because "not all girls and boys are equally able and disposed to lead a physically active life...The content of the programmes...needs to have a capacity to challenge and change aspects of physical culture that are oppressive for particular groups" (Gorley et al., 2003: 442).

Second as detentions and other punishments—which many PE teachers in my study relied upon to encourage participation—may prove ineffective in inciting girls' participation, teachers find themselves searching for alternative approaches. Within this search, socio-cultural 'health' messages that fat  $\neq$  fit (Rice, 2007) and exercise = slenderness = health (Kirk, 2006) may increasingly be relied on to encourage, motivate or threaten girls into doing physical activity or PE. Flintoff (2008) asserts that there is now a large body of literature exploring the topic of gender through investigations of girls' experiences of physical education and school sport with much less available on boys' experiences (for exceptions see Bramham 2003; Gard 2006; Wellard, 2007a; Woodward 2007), yet the gender gap between boys' and girls' participation remains, necessitating a push beyond gender as the sole lens of analysis. While maintaining, but pushing further than gender as a theme for analysis, I restate my rationale within a feminist commitment to move beyond viewing girls as a 'problem' and approach Chapter 7 to focus on health and embodiment.

## Chapter 7

### ***(UN)HEALTHY PEDAGOGIES, PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES THROUGH SPORT AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION***

#### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter moves from a focus on gendered embodiment (Chapter 6) with respect to bodies, spaces and activities to engage with intra-actions between embodied conceptualisations and fleshy experiences and practices of health in relation to the body. Through the chapter, I maintain however, that such relations are often additionally tied to gender. Flintoff (2008) reminds us that much is now known about girls' experiences of embodiment in relation to gender; much less is known about girls' experiences of embodiment in relation to health. This chapter draws on the current socio-political health discourse and mattering of the body, as outlined in Chapter 1 and critical debates surrounding the impact of these discourses and the intra-action of fleshy bodies and experience for children and young people as outlined in the literature in Chapter 2. While the chapter privileges girls' emotional embodied experiences, I highlight the importance in linking discourses and practices of teachers' conceptualisations of health and the body with girls' feelings about bodily matter and practices of health and the body. As mentioned in Chapter 3, I adopt a reflexive approach when analysing teachers' and pupils' reflections on health and the body through a consideration of my positionality in allowing or denying me participant knowledge. This chapter is inspired by work which argues for recognition of health as a personal and complex embodied experience with multiple influences (Hall, 2000 and Wann, 2009) rather than understood in a dualistic embodied conception wherein fat/thin signify ill health/health. Theoretically this chapter engages with both conceptualisations and representations of gendered

bodily health and the intra-active capacities of bodily matter (Barad, 2003; Colls, 2007) as experienced and felt through girls' accounts of encountering kinetic spaces. I continue the dialogue which I began in Chapter 6 between female pupils and PE teachers.

Gard & Wright (2001: 535) argue that contemporary teaching practices and assessments of health through PE, which may include fitness testing and height and weight measurements, remain unchallenged with respect to their effects on children (Burns 1993), "or for the messages they suggest about bodies, weight and normality". There is limited literature available to understand if and how messages such as these are conveyed through daily pedagogical practices and discourses of teachers and interpreted by pupils inside spaces of PE where the teaching and learning of embodiment, health and physical activity collide. See Gard & Wright (2001); Kirk (2006); Rice (2007); Windram-Geddes (2012) for exceptions.

The ways in which girls engage with, understand and give meaning/mattering to this discourse through embodied experiences of physicality has also received limited academic attention. See Rice (2007) and Evans et al. (2005) for exceptions. This chapter, in part, addresses this gap in knowledge by presenting girls' understandings, practices and fleshy experiences in relation to health and embodiment in doing physical activity. While much of the emphasis and concern through fat studies literature is the negative impact of anti-fat attitudes and fat-stigma on fat children, particularly in spaces which contain overtones of health, such as PE. This chapter takes a closer look at how such attitudes may be negatively impacting participation, and the health and well-being of young girls on all points along the body size/weight spectrum. Furthermore, as Colls (2007) points out, much engagement with fat and body matter theorises matter as acted-upon, through representative accounts. While I attend to representations and conceptualisations of health and bodies, I also give space to girls' engagements with their own bodily matter as they move through kinetic spaces of physical activity—running, swimming and so forth.

The chapter consists of three sections and a conclusion. Section 7.2 maps the current pedagogies of health within schools by discussing several ways in which health is conceptualised and taught by PE teachers. Section 7.3 provides teachers' understandings and practices of health in relation to food and fitness. Drawing from both teachers' and girls' responses and researcher observations of female pupils, Section 7.4 analyses the historic structure of grouping by ability in PE through framings of the exercise = slenderness = health triplex (Kirk, 2006) and the fat ≠ fit equation (Rice, 2007). Here I continue the discussion of ability which I began in Chapter 6, but this time with a focus on framings of ability in relation to the "*physicality* of the body—size, shape and form" (Evans et al., 2007: 63, emphasis in original). Section 7.5 discusses girls' understandings of health through the body, practices of 'health' in relation to exercise and eating.

## **7.2 TEACHING 'HEALTH' THROUGH SCHOOL SPORT AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

In Chapter 6 I highlighted how the discipline of physical education found itself arguing for a legitimate and core place in the Scottish secondary school curriculum in the 1970s; the resulting decision to include PE as a core and practical subject retained historic gendered understandings of sport and embodiment. Kirk (2006) argues that the reproduction of gendered, social and cultural values of sport was the central goal of the discipline of PE in the 1970s, whereas health benefits were seen as a desirable but not purposeful result. However, Gard & Wright (2001: 535) maintain that the improvement of 'health' has always been a feature of PE "since its inception as part of the school curriculum in the English speaking world" but the ways in which health has been conceptualised has changed over time.

From the mid-1980s onwards (Kirk, 2006) argues that a particular form of health, namely exercise = slenderness = health, has become the central focus of, and the basis for PE. Rice (2007)

and Kirk & Colquhoun (1989) argue however that schools were not the original creators of the discourse; media and government health messages televising thin bodies and exercising bodies were the initial originators of the message and key vectors through which the message was communicated to educators. Kirk (2006) builds an argument to show how the visual figure of an obese child taps into an “emotive stream of consciousness”. Through simplistic understandings of the caloric balance equation (maintaining a static weight by balancing the number of calories consumed with the number of calories expended through bodily movement or physical activity), physical education within the school—the space where children spend a large proportion of their time—becomes positioned as a possible solution to the obesity problem and the place whereby thin and therefore healthy bodies can be created. Accordingly, “the appearance of the body is assumed to be an indicator not only of good health but on work done on the body...The value of such ability” within discourses of health and fitness however “seems to have less to do with what the body can do than with what the body *looks* like it can do” (Wright & Burrows, 2006: 278, emphasis added). Here I establish the argument to show how discourses of health which argue for the connection between thinness and ability, with PE classes which were streamed for ability, may inform girls’ understandings and experiences of their own and others abilities (Section 7.4). As introduced in Chapter 1, the exercise = slenderness = health triplex (Kirk, 2006) will be a central theme analysed in this chapter.

As introduced in Chapter 2, Rice (2007) reveals how much of socio-political health discourse subscribe to a model of health which states that fat is a ‘condition’ that is neither fit nor feminine. Rice (2007) argues that media messages of fat ≠ fit directly informed programmes of physical activity (such as ‘Canada Fitness’ through PE) which began in Canada in the late 1960s. Within this framing through schools many of Rice’s study participants recalled these programmes and reflected on how the experiences of the discourse of fat ≠ fit through ‘Canada Fitness’ led

participants to develop 'unfit' identities as children. These unfit identities were carried into adulthood. An understanding of how this positioning operates and is interpreted within my research schools is—like the exercise = slenderness = health equation (Kirk, 2006)—again a central part of this chapter's analysis.

The idea of 'health' through achieving slenderness by doing physical activity subscribes to an argument that inactivity and excess fat creates ill health and that the risk factors of a sedentary lifestyle and poor and excess calorie consumption must be avoided in order to create health. Gard & Wright (2001) argued that links between cardiovascular disease and sedentary lifestyles, identified by the medical and scientific community in the 1950s, continue to provide the subject of PE with legitimacy and justification. For PE teachers this means a responsibility to both teach about the risks to health to and create health among pupils. In some schools, this message was used to encourage girls to participate in PE.

Morgan: "What encourages you to do fitness or exercise?"

Jemma: "Well when Mr. Witherspoon talks about death...yeah like my grandfather died because of health related issues and I kinda understand what he (Mr. Witherspoon) is talking about... because of cancer and stuff."

Morgan: "So does he talk about health and disease?"

Corinna: "Yeah and cancers."

(S3 focus group, foundation level, Pleasant Hill).

As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, there are a variety of reasons why some girls opt-out of PE, some of which relate to feelings about changing into and out of PE kit when under the gaze of other pupils or teachers, or discriminatory experiences of doing particular sports. Some teachers

feel that it is a constant “battle” to cajole girls into bringing appropriate PE kit or take part in activities; accordingly, some teachers are increasingly relaying public health messages related to “obesity and certain associated conditions (e.g. diabetes)” in the hope that knowledge of certain risk factors will incite a willingness to participate out of fear (Evans et al., 2007: 58). Threats of cancer, heart-attacks and other forms of illness were employed as scare tactics by some PE teachers to encourage girls to work harder or participate in PE. Media construction of obesity as a ‘time bomb’ (Department of Health, 2002) and ‘the terror within’ (Gray, 2012) have served as scare tactics. Evans (2009: 1011) reminds us that “these doomsday predictions are not just the stuff of shock journalism but they also pervade policy reports on obesity and shape policy action.” The obesity epidemic, as it is so called, has become a mechanism through which government, academic and public health initiatives are legitimated, drawing schools inevitably into the vortex (Gard, 2004; Kirk, 2006). As Jemma noted in the extract above, she had personal, emotional connection to a loved one who died as a result of “health related issues” and may be more inclined to do physical activity and heed her teacher’s warnings as she herself does not wish to die at a young age from a “health related issue”. Evans et al. (2007) show how health messages which place responsibility on the individual to monitor their body through eating and exercising carry educational overtones and are difficult to resist. “Young people, teachers and their guardians are implicitly held personally responsible and accountable for their own health...by knowing and avoiding relevant ‘risk’ factors” (Evans et al., 2007: 58). Jack McConnell, first Minister in 2004, reflecting on some of the goals for the Active Schools network, argued for an individual and collective approach to Scotland’s health stating that “the health of our nation depends on us all taking individual responsibility for ourselves - and each other. I want everyone in Scotland to encourage children to get off the couch and get moving” (The Scottish Government, 2004). Herein this understanding of responsibility, established and addressed in Chapter 2 in relation to



responsibility as a quality and as an action, places trust and expectation in teachers' abilities to both teach and create healthy pupils.

While Jemma and Corinna (S3, Pleasant Hill) did not mention any connections made by their teacher between cancer or other diseases and fatness, a research encounter at Sunnyside demonstrated how medical understandings of the connections between fat and heart attacks were employed to encourage a thin girl to participate in PE. Mr. Kimball highlighted the thinness of one of his pupils who was not taking part, indicating that her current physique did not guarantee her future 'health'.

(An extract from the research diary):

*"Look Morgan", Mr. Kimball said to me "look at this girl"; then he said to her, "see you're skinny and thin and you look good now, but sitting there and not taking part in PE you're just building up a layer of fat around your heart and your arteries and you're just clogging yourself up by sitting there and not taking part"...Sunnyside, March 2011.*

Interestingly, Mr. Kimball contradicted the slenderness = health argument by indicating that the girl's current thinness could not protect her from future health disasters such as heart attacks and that she must participate in physical activity, and particularly physical education in order to prevent ill health. Mr. Kimball drew attention to the inner workings of the girl's body, arguing that fat was actively building up inside her and around her heart, while her body remained motionless. In this way fat was engaged as acting upon her body, in a way that she could not yet see, with direct attention towards future ill health. Mr. Kimball's main aim, by drawing on health

discourses of inactivity and illhealth, was to motivate the girl to participate. Mr. Kimball argues that concern for her future health should be her reason for participating in PE now.

His attempt at encouraging the thin girl to participate in PE is thwarted for two reasons. First, as discussed in Chapter 5, I sat down and had a conversation with this girl after Mr. Kimball left; she told me that the reason she did not participate in PE was because she felt that there was no privacy while changing in the open plan changing rooms. Threats of future health risks by Mr. Kimball did not override the discomfort she felt while changing. Second, teachings and beliefs of the slenderness = health equation operate within this school—and were paradoxically subscribed to by Mr. Kimball himself, as I go on to demonstrate—and may have had the undesirable and unintentional effect of allowing thin(ner) girls to believe that they do not need to be physically active because they are already thin and accordingly, “they believe that they are already really healthy” (Marla S4, Pleasant Hill).

Mr. Kimball later demonstrated his belief in the slenderness = health triplex (Kirk, 2006) in contrast to his argument above that slimness does not guarantee present or future health. Mr. Kimball was concerned about rising obesity rates in his school: “There are a lot of...diet issues, fat, there is obesity in 1<sup>st</sup> year 2<sup>nd</sup> year 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 5<sup>th</sup> year 6 year what percentage is...I have no figures for that, but we’re talking 10% of children are obese” (Mr. Kimball, Sunnyside).

To address this concern, Mr. Kimball was committed to tackling obesity through both wider and direct commitments. Working towards recognition as a “gold standard health school”, Mr. Kimball shared that he adhered to “minimum PE times, and working with home economics and canteen staff on healthy meals”. More directly, he expressed commitment by praising children for weight loss and using fat as a threat to incite participation. Again contradicting the basis for the

purpose of his earlier argument in critiquing the relationship between slimness and health—Mr. Kimball (Sunnyside) explained to me how he might ‘encourage’ a child to continue participating or exercising hard in PE class, through praise for weight loss:

“We don’t weigh the children or anything like that but you may say to a child, you wouldn’t do this in front of other children, but “John or Claire” say, “could I make a point for example that you were big; let’s face it you were quite big in first year and well done you’ve now improved. You’ve lost quite a bit of weight” and that’s the kind of encouragement that you’d want to use” (Mr. Kimball, Sunnyside High).

Here Mr. Kimball clearly subscribes to the model that exercise = slenderness = health, praising the child for ‘healthy’ behaviours of exercising to lose body weight. Interestingly, Mr. Kimball does not limit his reflection on a pupil’s weight loss to girls; he refers to ‘children’ and uses both a feminine name (Claire) and a masculine name (John) in his description. Mr. Kimball did this often throughout the interview. Mr. Kimball indicated that he would not comment on a pupil’s weight loss in the presence of other children, acknowledging that doing so would embarrass the child in front of their peers, and demonstrating his awareness of fat stigma and discrimination. Despite this, Mr. Kimball expressed concern over the issues of obesity among pupils in his school and believed that it was his responsibility to acknowledge and praise a child for weight loss, with the belief that in so doing, the child would continue to work hard, participate and maintain a thin(ner) and healthier form.

Another teacher at Sunnyside (Mrs. Pat), “got on the case” of one “rather large” female pupil for not participating in PE. Mrs. Pat spoke to me about the reasons why she addressed the non-participation this girl.

(An extract from the research diary):

*I was speaking with one PE teacher as I was about to leave for the afternoon and she said to me, "did you see that girl, the rather large one down doing volleyball this morning? She started not bringing her kit and sitting out and she's not in my class<sup>14</sup>, but I wasn't going to let her get away with that, I mean she's not doing herself any favours and she's not helping herself by sitting there and getting bigger...So I got on her case and got her starting to bring her kit again". Sunnyside, March 2011.*

Mrs. Pat did not elaborate on what she meant by "I got on her case and got her starting to bring her kit again". I cannot speculate on what methods the teacher used to 'encourage' the female pupil to bring her kit and participate. What I can argue is based on reading Mrs. Pat's comments alongside my observations of the other girls who were not taking part in PE that day—the girls with thinner bodies. Mrs. Pat was only concerned about the non-participation of the girl above, because of her larger body size. This concern was voiced with the understanding that by sitting out of PE, her body size was growing larger, placing blame directly on the girl for "not [doing something to] help herself".

Without the use of a scale, Mrs. Pat presented a moral measuring and reading of this pupil and determined that her body size deemed her in need of physical activity. Evans, (2006b: 261) argues that dualistic discourses of health which drive many school-based health programmes, are contributing to "moral readings of (fat) bodies". In other words, through everyday relations with others, within spaces which carry overtones of or are underpinned by health policy, such as PE,

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<sup>14</sup> Because of the limited spaces available for PE and size of gym halls, PE classes are often taught adjacent to one another, with a cloth curtain dividing up the hall. Additionally, four or five classes will frequently take register as a whole group before splitting into smaller class sizes.

one does not need a scale and metre stick to make measurement of and visible judgement on a person's health. I draw on work by (Evans & Colls, 2009b) and (Wann, 2009) to illustrate this point further.

Evans & Colls (2009b) argue that such moral readings of certain (particularly fat and obese) bodies as either 'at risk' or more 'risky' than other (non-fat or non-obese) bodies, are tied to and are held as justification for various discriminatory, stigmatizing and demoralizing practices of those individuals who do not conform to a very specific (socially accepted, thinner) body type. Medicalizing body weight through a correlation of a measure of BMI with underweight, normal/healthy, overweight or obese, (Wann, 2009: xiii) argues, "fuels anti-fat prejudice and discrimination in all areas of society. People think if fat people need to be cured, there must be something wrong with them. Cures should work; if they do not, it is the fat person's fault". This thinking "give[s] permission on a daily basis for ridicule and harassment and the right to publicly monitor the body shape of others" Gard & Wright (2001: 546). Such cultural and political moral readings and polarized discussions of bodies as either healthy or unhealthy have been attributed to such—primarily female—conditions as anorexia and bulimia and poor body image (Bordo, 1993, Rothblum, 1994 and Rice & Larkin, 2005).

Mrs. Pat's reflection on her action to incite participation is similar to comments of a school nurse involved in the TAF programme, critiqued by Isono et al. (2009). During a weigh-in, the school "nurse, communicated to one girl that she was 'doing nothing to help herself'...In the year following this incident, this girl lost so much weight, she was barely recognizable" (Isono et al., 2009: 132). The authors argue that comments expressed by the nurse in front of the girl, similar to those made by Mrs. Pat regarding her female pupil, may have a devastating effect on the child. While Mrs. Pat's comments were a reflection on her pupil, rather than a comment made directly at the pupil and observed over the course of the research, her comments solidified a subscription

to the one-dimensional belief about health and body weight/size. Evans et al. (2007) showed how health messages which place responsibility on the individual to monitor our bodies through eating and exercising carry educational overtones and are difficult to resist. “Young people, teachers and their guardians are implicitly held personally responsible and accountable for their own health...by knowing and avoiding relevant ‘risk’ factors” (Evans et al., 2007: 58). While Mrs. Pat’s comments were a reflection on her pupil, rather than a comment made directly at the pupil and observed over the course of the research, her comments pointed to her belief about health and body weight/size, supporting the dualism of thin/fat = healthy/unhealthy.

Kirk (2006) stated that the claims made by scientists about the obesity crisis lack foundation; he argued that this has resulted in the manufacture of a crisis taking two paths. On the one hand, explanations for obesity argue that increases in technology and finance have resulted in more sedentary—less physically active lifestyles; on the other hand, the ‘foodscape’ argument—that fast, junk food is available everywhere, all the time is used to explain the growing girths of particular populations (Guthman, 2009). Guthman (2009) shows how explanations for obesity which are grounded in arguments regarding US food and environmental policy regulation are still problematic for three reasons: first the argument assumes that increased food availability equals increased consumption. Second it assumes that “food consumption and exercise are related to body size in a linear, regularised, and predictable way” an argument which has been refuted by Gaesser (2002) and Gard and Wright (2005) (Guthman 2009: 189); third, the argument maintains responsibility on the individual to make ‘healthier’ choices, eat less (Nestle 2006) or as Pollan (2009: 1) scribed “Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants”.

Understood in the above way, Kirk (2006) and Guthman (2009) argue that the obesity crisis is socially produced (and economically productive) rather than based on scientific evidence. Guthman (2009: 187) builds a strong argument for understanding how the obesity epidemic is a

manufactured product of neoliberal capitalism whereby “material contradictions...are not only resolved in the sphere of surplus distribution, but also in bodies, such that the double fix of eating and dieting produces a political economy of bulimia, as it were, but has differential effects on individuals”. Whether or not one accepts the argument that the crisis is being built through a socially produced, rather than scientifically sound form of knowledge, it is clear that it is often taken as ‘truth’ by PE educators and currently supports the careers of those with vested interests in the ‘obesity’ industry (diet and exercise companies, food industries, medical experts, scientists and politicians).

Burugard, (2009: 42) argues that the “pursuit of thinness is an unquestioned prescription for health” in our society and the obesity crisis may be placing those in positions of school health education (PE and home economics teachers and Active Schools Coordinators) in a precarious position. On the one hand their jobs depend on the reproduction of government health messages regarding obesity and health and physical activity; on the other hand it may be a nearly impossible task for PE teachers and Active Schools Coordinators to create present and future healthy citizens in their pupils given the limited contact time, large class sizes, and importantly for my argument, critical evidence against the exercise = slenderness = health triplex. The remainder of this chapter addresses this paradox and its implications for teachers wanting to challenge contemporary understandings of health and the body through pedagogies of PE and girls’ embodied experiences.

Educational policies have created new positions, such as ‘Sports Coordinators’ (in England) and ‘Active Schools Coordinators’ In Scotland, funded by the council which reach into schools (Evans et al., 2007). The Active Schools Network is a team of individuals appointed from 2004 onwards; Active Schools staff members are also involved in the ways in which sport and physical activity are coordinated and delivered through schools.

Active Schools Coordinators are identified in the National Health Service (NHS) 'Healthy Weight Strategy' (HWS) as key individuals who may be able to fill 'gaps' in areas where obesity is not currently considered in schools. The HWS states that "[s]omething needs to be done in [Brown County] to address obesity and an [anti-]obesity strategy was considered to be a sensible start".

"Active Schools in [Brown County] offer a wide range of services including linking with breakfast clubs, after school clubs and many external agencies. For the issue of obesity and how to address it there appear to be some gaps which ASC can help tackle: ASC's need to develop further joint working within the schools for food and physical activity to assist in getting the correct health messages to all young people. This will, however, probably be addressed with the implementation of health promoting schools" (NHS Scotland 2006: 71).

It was clear that Kenny, the Active Schools Coordinator who covered Pleasant Hill and Sunnyside high school, supported and understood the "Healthy Weight Strategy" and his position in relaying anti-obesity messages to pupils.

(An extract from the research diary):

*One morning in February 2012 I was asked to assist Kenny (the ASC) in running a 'health' workshop for a small group of mixed-sex pupils in one of the schools where I also conducted PhD research. The workshop first involved Kenny introducing himself (as he was new to his job). Kenny told the pupils that it was his job remit to "get more kids more active more often" and then asked the students why they thought he needed to do this. Pupils' responses varied from "because Scotland's*



*getting too fat” or “Scotland’s getting obese”, demonstrating an understanding of the notion that exercise = weight loss or slenderness = Scotland’s health. The next step in the workshop asked the students to work in smaller groups and draw pictures or words to show what they thought ‘health’ or ‘being healthy’ meant. Many of the pupils wrote the names of fruit and vegetables and drew pictures of people doing sport.*

*Following the workshop, over coffee in the school staff room, Kenny asked me more about my research and also about my own sporting background. I told him that I was from the United States and I started to talk about how I think the structure of school sport is different in the USA; access to opportunities and the structure for sport means that more kids have more opportunities to do more sports more often because of the school sport structure. Kenny turned to me and said “yeah but, well I know Scotland’s got a huge obesity problem, but surely America’s got a huge child obesity problem”.*

For me, Kenny’s reflection on the similar “child obesity problem” within the UK and the US but cultural differences between the USA and the UK structures of sport, invoked “unproblematically the equation more sport = more health” (Evans et al., 2007: 57).

*Extract from Research Diary:*

*I met with the Kenny again a few months later when he had asked me to assist him in developing another ‘health’ related workshop for the same school. He began by saying he was going to start the workshop by giving them a presentation on ‘obesity’ and he was particularly enthused after recently attending a conference on ‘obesity’ where the opening conference presentation showed a screenshot of an England vs. Scotland football match from 40 years ago. “The photo showed all*

*the fans swarming the field and hanging from goalposts after the win and you could clearly see their rib cages! You wouldn't see that nowadays! You'd see a bunch of fatties, with beer bellies" (Kenny, ASC Pleasant Hill and Sunnyside).*

For me, Kenny's comment on the change—and increase in bodies/body mass of football spectators over 40 years, a transition from thinness and visible “rib cages” to “fatties with beer bellies”—was an indication not necessarily that rib cages signified ‘health’ but that “fatties with beer bellies” signified ill health and presented a problem which he was actively involved in tackling.

While Active Schools Coordinators are not always directly involved in teaching pupils, they are tasked with pupil engagement to “get more kids more active more of the time” (John, ASC Sunnyside Feeder Primaries) and through this they interact with pupils to gauge interest in various sporting programmes so they can establish further opportunities for young people to be active. At other times, such as the case with Kenny, Active Schools Coordinators may be asked to deliver ‘health’ workshops to pupils and through these workshops, anti-obesity messages are passed on. I explore the extent to which relationships developed between further teachings of health in relation to practices of eating and fitness through Section 7.3.

### **7.3 ‘FIT TO EAT’: TEACHING FOOD, FITNESS AND HEALTH**

As discussed in Chapter 4, the structure of Physical Education in state-funded secondary schools in Scotland has recently changed to reflect the Scottish Government's Curriculum for Excellence. Interdisciplinary learning is one of the guiding principles for CfE whereby “[t]he curriculum should include space for learning beyond subject boundaries, so that children and

young people can make connections between different areas of learning” (Education Scotland, Interdisciplinary Learning 2011).

Many of the teaching staff whom I interviewed were (at time of researching in winter 2010/2011) still attempting to learn how to best deliver Curriculum for Excellence and did not express confidence with the practical day to day delivery or assessment of PE through CfE. Mrs. Phillips (Willow High) indicated that for her, Curriculum for Excellence is “still quite vague” and has a very different structure from what teachers are familiar with in terms of assessment. Despite teachers’ uncertainty about what is expected of them as assessors and curriculum content deliverers in PE through CfE, most teachers indicated that within their everyday practices of teaching PE, “there’s always some element of healthy living, why we’re healthy, I think there’s always some kind of teaching and learning about that” (Mr. Mackenzie, Willow High). I go onto explore teacher’s ways of teaching about “healthy living [and] why we’re healthy” through this section.

At Willow High School, fieldwork was completed later, in June 2011; accordingly, CfE had been in place for a longer time and teachers were able to discuss a new programme that was implemented as a result of CfE. For Willow High, the home economics and physical education departments were restructured to fall under the ‘Health and Wellbeing’ Area allowing Willow High to design and deliver a collaborative programme for pupils. Mrs. Phillips explained how the restructuring has impacted the PE department and led to the development of a cross-curricular programme called ‘Fit to Eat’.

“ Curriculum for Excellence is quite good for that in terms of its links, I mean one of the outcomes we are under is ‘health and well-being’ and there’s a cross curricular programme that goes on in May and June and it’s called ‘Fit to Eat’. So...it (CfE) is about

making education more holistic, more ‘fit together’ rather than separate subjects; well it’s like those three (home economics, physical education and the technical department) *just naturally* fit together to allow the programme (‘Fit to Eat’) to run” (Mrs. Phillips, Willow High School, emphasis added).

The ‘Fit to Eat’ programme was developed between home economics, physical education and the “technical department”. Each department has a responsibility in the programme such that “the technical department make up packed lunch boxes...and they label them. They do nutrition in home economics and we do *physical activity and health and how the three all link together*” (Mrs. Phillips, Willow High School, emphasis added). At the conclusion of the school year the first year pupils have a “‘Fit to Eat’ picnic down on the [grass field] where they all walk down and have their healthy picnic and they play games...and we do a jump rope for heart and it’s the British Heart Foundation and they raise a bit of money for that” (Mrs. Phillips, Willow High School).

The *Jump Rope for Heart* programme that the PE teacher is referring to is a sponsored event to raise money for the British Heart Foundation “so they can pay for projects that reduce heart disease and save lives” (Jump Rope for Heart, 2011). The school and the ‘Health and Wellbeing’ area created by Curriculum for Excellence initiate and support the *Jump Rope for Heart* project for the British Heart Foundation. Evans et al. (2007) note that in England, health messages by corporate voices (both for profit organisations and non-profit charities such as the British Heart Foundation) in the UK, enter schools indirectly through television or press coverage; my study however, demonstrates that such agencies are directly involved in providing educators with teaching materials and content matter to teach messages of exercise, health and citizenship directly to pupils through such programmes as Jump Rope for Heart.

Curriculum for Excellence is changing the way that PE teachers deliver and assess formally under the 'health and wellbeing' area and allowing teachers to instruct in areas outside of their expertise. As Mrs. Phillips indicated, through teaching on the 'Fit to Eat' programme she is involved in teaching how nutrition, health and physical activity link together. As CfE emphasises pedagogical flexibility, the practical, day-to-day teaching through this outcome is the decision of teaching staff; this may be problematic as PE teachers, most of whom do not have knowledge or professional experience in the wider areas of health in relation to food and diet, shared with me that they are actively involved in teaching about these topics.

Upon observation and conversations with other PE teachers, teaching relating to diet and food was common everyday practice throughout the school day. When I asked Mr. Mackenzie, "Do you teach about health?" His response was:

..."Maybe it's just something we do like throughout with everybody without realising it. I think it's an everyday thing you know...like if a kid walks down the corridor eating something rubbish you're automatically saying to him 'why are you eating that? That's not good for you' kind of thing; it's just a kinda thing that you don't think about, you just do it..." (Mr. Mackenzie, PT of PE, Willow High).

Day-to-day communication of health messages, some of which crossed the boundaries of the PE classroom or gym hall as Mr. Mackenzie demonstrated, often made connections between physical activity/exercise, food/diet and health. Development of cross-curricular links between home economics and physical education under the Health and Wellbeing Outcome through Curriculum for Excellence may be leading staff at Willow High to feel a freedom to 'teach' about 'health' in respect to food and exercise with little attention to any of the gendered social or

cultural reasons why a student may be “eating something rubbish” in the first place. Evans et al. (2007: 59) argue that P/policy initiatives reach into schools and inform ‘formal’ curriculum and legitimise the actions of teachers within the informal environment of the school such as during “lunch breaks and in corridors” in UK schools. The authors referred to P/policy with upper case ‘P’ Policy being state or government sanctioned policies such as Curriculum for Excellence and lower case ‘p’ policy being:

“state- or government-sanctioned *but non legislated* initiatives taken by schools themselves (for example, around the sale of certain foodstuffs from vending machines, or the content of school dinners) reflecting frameworks of expectations prescribing how young people and teachers...should behave, especially toward issues of ‘the body’ and health” (Evans et al., 2007: 53).

Returning to the discussion I began in Chapter 4 through an understanding of flat ontology, Ansell (2009) insisted that researchers must consider the action-space of children’s lives—in which children act and are acted upon. Drawing on Prout (2005), Ansell, (2009: 202) notes that “porous boundaries may allow in the ingress of” curricular policies, pedagogical tools and other guidelines “into schools, for instance” whereas “children cannot readily send missives in the other direction”. State or government sanctioned policies such as CfE and non legislated initiatives such as teaching health through questioning or reprimanding pupils for “eating something rubbish” are allowed readily into schools, whereas pupils may find it very difficult to challenge such policies and pedagogical tools. Furthermore, some schools such as Willow High and Sunnyside were designated ‘community use’ schools whereby activities are held within the school for members of the general public; accordingly, this openness of school space to wider community use, allows also

for the ingress of wider cultural and social beliefs and structures. While I discussed how girls felt about being in the swimming pool after children's swimming lessons (and the perceived or real abject presence of children's "wee"), in Chapter 5, the presence of advertisements for activities for the wider public taking place within the school physical activities was also noticed during my research. At Sunnyside, in the reception area, I viewed on the school bulletin board an advertisement for 'Scottish Slimmers' which meets every Wednesday for a 'Weigh and Stay Class'. By promoting and allowing weigh loss programmes to operate within the school building, the school is silently promoting its support of the health through weight loss discourse.

In another class at a different school, I observed a PE teacher's attempt to communicate a message about healthy eating and eating for physical fitness:

(An extract from the research diary):

*After watching 2<sup>nd</sup> year girls' netball for a while I went back into the swimming pool...they (2<sup>nd</sup> year girls' class) were doing lengths and laps...then all of a sudden Mr. Nunes asked them to get out and sit at the side of the pool...he then asked them, how many of them had breakfast this morning?...About six or seven of them replied 'yes' and the rest said 'no'...using me, he said "I bet this girl, who's a marathon runner had breakfast this morning"...and then he asked me if I had breakfast; I said yes I did— I just answered honestly. And he said "see, she ate breakfast and she's a professional athlete! There's no way you girls can go from 5 or 6pm last night until 11am this morning and have enough energy to do swimming. So those of you who haven't had breakfast have to sit the next few laps out!" Sunnyside, March 2011.*

Mr. Nunes distributed a punishment of taking away physical activity by making the girls who indicated that they had not eaten breakfast sit on the side of the pool, while girls who had eaten breakfast swam several laps. Mr. Nunes was not concerned with any of the various reasons why some of the girls had not eaten breakfast that morning. Rather his understanding and teachings of eating for physical fitness were relayed in a simplistic manner such that he believed the girls should have eaten breakfast that morning in preparation for having the right amount and quality of energy required to participate in their swimming lesson. Isono et al. (2009) highlighted how teachers “who do not necessarily have the expertise or prior training in health behaviour” were actively involved in delivering a government-sponsored school-based weight loss programme in Singapore.

I reflect on the knowledge and opinions shared with me, in particular by Mr. Kimball, Mrs. Pat, Mr. Nunes and Kenny in Section 7.2 and 7.3, regarding the ways in which teachers shared with me their knowledge of and beliefs about health fitness and body size/weight. Upon reflection, I argue that in the same way that teachers presented me with moral readings of their pupils’ fat(ter) bodies, I believe that they allowed me such knowledge because of my positioning and staff moral readings of my thin(ner) body. I reflect on Mr. Kimball’s praise for weight loss and Mrs. Pat’s engagement with the big(ger) female pupil who would not participate; I believe that these two staff members felt comfortable expressing uncensored beliefs about fatness, fitness and health both because of my emotionally open and sensitive personality (Moser 2008) and because they read my body as ‘thin’ and therefore ‘healthy’ body and were eager to share their knowledge of health and demonstrate their abilities to encourage health and physical activity among female pupils. Knowing the focus of my research (girls and sport and exercise), making visual assumptions about my thin body and an eagerness to demonstrate the ways in which they work towards inciting girls’ participation, staff members were openly frank with me about their beliefs of fatness



and they ways in which they are actively tackling obesity and inactivity. I argue that my thin body—and the cultural signifiers that accompany a thin body in respect to health—played a major part in allowing me to glean candid beliefs of PE staff about girls' health and physical activity.

My thin body was additionally employed directly as an example for one PE teacher. At Sunnyside High, by drawing on my thin and assumed professional athletic body in, Mr. Nunes used my body as a 'healthy' example for a lesson in eating before swimming (as discussed above). I admitted my passion for running to PE staff, but I never claimed to be a professional athlete. Assumptions about my body as thin and healthy informed further assumptions, that as an athlete I would have 'healthy' eating practices. This reading of my body differs from Mr. Kimball and Mrs. Pat in this reading, Mr. Nunes drew on my body directly as a teaching tool, to illustrate connections between weight, fitness, eating and ultimately health. For Mr. Nunes, the moment of my body's visibility—and its association with sport and diet—was central to the understanding (and teaching) of health. Being positioned as a 'healthy' body, through readings of my size combined with knowledge of my research project, and allowing for such readings, beliefs, responses and tactics regarding female pupils to unfold were in many ways crucial to the process of producing the kind of knowledge that my study reveals (Rose 1997; Moser 2008). Many staff members willingly allowed me knowledge of anti-fat beliefs and practices and I acknowledge that I allowed such comments and practices to flow; I did not attempt to judge or confront these comments or practices and while I must accept that my response may reproduce or legitimise discrimination (Longhurst 2003), I argue that such attempts to confront, challenge or rebut staff responses may have closed off further research encounters and access to knowledge.

The PE educators in my study were primarily teaching about fitness, health, physical activity and eating in a rather loose and one-dimensional way, often supporting the understanding that fat  $\neq$  fit (Rice, 2007) and that exercise = slenderness = health (Kirk, 2006). It was clear that

staff and curricular messages supported individualist discourses of responsibility, taking the links between food, physical activity and obesity prevention for granted and placing responsibility for health directly with the pupil (Gard & Wright, 2001). As discussed in Chapter 4, the CfE Health and wellbeing, 'Experiences and Outcomes' document explains the content which pupils should be learning about through the links between physical activity and health; such learning included an emphasis on investigating the relationship between diet and physical activity and pupils' own role in the prevention of obesity (The Scottish Government, 2011b). It also places responsibility for teaching health directly with the teachers. It is also clear that CfE supports obesity discourses and encourages teachers to establish links between physical activity, health, food/diet and fatness or obesity. These links are taught through development of practical and formal programmes within the Health and Wellbeing Outcomes and also maintained by teachings of 'health' throughout everyday pedagogical practices. In this way, there is often a limited understanding of critical engagement with health and a lack of wider specialist knowledge. When and if teachers do express or hold views that challenge one-dimensional understandings of health, the structures of p/Policy may make it difficult for them to enact such views through their classroom pedagogies. Furthermore, additional structures operated in two of the research schools where S3-S4 pupils were grouped according to fitness ability. The ways in which fitness, ability, health and body size/weight were framed intra-acted with girls' experiences, and teacher's pedagogies, contributing additionally to dualistic understandings of the fit body. Section 7.4 follows by exploring how understandings of health and fitness frame perceptions of ability through PE.

#### 7.4 EMBODYING HEALTH THROUGH ABILITY

Within the analysis in Chapter 6 on gendered conceptualizations of embodied ability, I discussed how ability is understood as the possession of a skill, talent or competence most often associated with mental or physical means. This section discusses framings of fitness ability in relation to both the performance of health and the corporeality of embodiment—and practices related to teachers' understandings and girls' experiences of such framing. Within PE, ability is conceived of as an attribute which is measurable and often used to divide pupils into groups of similar abilities (Wright & Burrows, 2006). Within two of my research schools, Pleasant Hill and Sunnyside, 'ability', is measured through fitness testing. Results of these tests—12 minute run, push ups, sit ups and the 'bleep-test' or shuttle run are utilised formally to separate and stream pupils for some of their third and fourth year PE classes.

As previously indicated in Chapter 3 at Pleasant Hill, for the 'health, fitness and exercise' period, pupils are grouped according to ability, based on results from the first and second year fitness testing. For teachers, ability was measured in crude numbers during fitness testing events (Marston et al., 2005), and children displayed ability by running fast and far, and performing a set number of sit ups and press ups. At Pleasant Hill, there are three 'bandings' of fitness ability: Foundation Fitness, Average Fitness and High Fitness. Mr. Witherspoon's rationale for separating pupils by ability is "so that the teacher can move or progress the class forward at a pace that's appropriate to the group". At Sunnyside, some PE classes were also grouped according to ability. Discussions with staff members regarding fitness testing and streaming focused on wider educational discourses of equity to justify the decision to stream children by ability in PE (Evans et al., 2007).

“Just like in English or geography or history, the better ability kids are all together, the average type kids are altogether and the lowest achievers are all together, so that’s very competitive but they do it in English and in maths, you wouldn’t have someone in maths who couldn’t do calculus in with the calculus group and it’s the same thing for physical literacy, that is what we call it; if someone who does triathlons is in with someone who can’t run 100 metres then they’re going to be embarrassed and they’re not going to enjoy, they’re going to be exposed, so let’s put the lower achievers together and also have movement between the sections obviously, but you do it at your level you’re taking on yourself” (Mr. Kimball, Sunnyside).

Wright & Burrows (2006) and Fitz et al. (2006) argue that despite some teachers’ intentions of providing all pupils with what Mr. Kimball called a “similar journey in this health and wellbeing experience”, “sorting and streaming [practices] produce different experiences of schooling” (Wright & Burrows, 2006: 6). Sorting practices were addressed by girls grouped in the ‘lowest ability’ class, as they reflected on their experiences of doing PE in first and second year “when you were in with all abilities and you had like really sporty girls in with you” and in third year “with everyone of the same ability” (Carla, S3 Pleasant Hill). Sorting practices were also reflected on by one teacher who expressed a concern that the lowest ability grouping was actively labeled the “fat-camp” by pupils in higher ability fitness classes (Mr. Witherspoon).

Similarly, within Singapore’s Trim and Fit programme, analysed by (Isono et al., 2009) children (for whom the programme was compulsory based on Singaporean ministries of education health height and weight charts) indicated that it was known as fat club by those who were not required to participate. “Think about it, TAF is the backwards of FAT.” (Isono et al., 2009: 133). For some of the girls for whom TAF was required, “there was a stigma” associated with attending

the club. This stigma appeared to operate amongst pupils at Pleasant Hill whereby Mr. Witherspoon observed that:

“The biggest forfeit would be the broadness of the fitness bandings because if you only have three classes you can only have three bandings so there is definitely that feeling...the third group...You know some of the higher ability children have referred to it as ‘fat-camp’ and that’s not what we’re trying to portray at all. That’s not the image” (Mr. Witherspoon).

Girls in the highest ability fitness group, such as Sienna (S4, Pleasant Hill) who expressed that she “hate[s] fat people” are reinforcing the understanding of fat ≠ fit and allowing this understanding to be reproduced and define who is fit and who is not fit.

Therefore, my critique lies not in the separation or grouping of pupils in a way that allows the teacher to “progress the class forward at a pace that’s appropriate to the pupils” (Mr. Witherspoon); instead, I argue that contemporary discourses of embodied ‘ability’, through PE may be directly linked to body size by pupils within contemporary constructions of health through thin embodiment. This understanding may perpetuate and support anti-fat attitudes and practices, through events such as streaming by ‘ability’, further inhibiting a range of body types and sizes from being at ease with themselves and enjoying bodily movement through physical activity, and/or participating in physical activity and PE.

Some teachers rationalised separating pupils by ability “on the basis of equity” (Wright & Burrows, 2006: 7); within such an understanding, on the surface, ability is then conceived only as an attribute—a physical skill that the body either does or does not have; however, by understanding the socially constructed nature and value of embodied ability we can better

understand how this sorting practice—when read alongside embodied constructions of the healthy thin body—can lead to the valuing of certain (thinner) bodies, over other (fatter) bodies. (Evans et al., 2007: 61) argued that “wider social understandings” of ability—as having the body that looks like it can do sport and physical activity—“connect strongly with...new health imperatives, where ‘ability’ is read by both teachers and pupils not simply via the skilled ‘performance’ of the body” but via the body’s weight and shape. This emerged in discussions with some girls in my study:

Carla: “Yeah like when we were in first and second year and you had really sporty girls like (Katja) and she would be really good at something and I wouldn’t”.

Emma: “The sporty girls stare at you; like the sporty girls who are thin and muscular and good at PE and I’m insecure about my body when I’m with people who are really good at PE.”

(S3 Focus Group Pleasant Hill)

Emma made direct connections between the thin but muscular structure of some girls’ bodies and their sporting ability. Here, much like in Evans et al.’s (2006: 63) study, “girls who were seen to be ‘able’ were ‘thin’, and, therefore, seen as ‘healthy’” within contemporary understandings of health, firmly establishing the binary of thin/fat with healthy/unhealthy. Emma’s reflection that the girls who were thin and good at PE were also muscular supports Bordo (1993) and Grogan’s (2010) argument that both thinness and muscle tone are important in the contemporary feminine ideal body. As thin(ner) girls were defined as the ones who were able, and healthy, their presence reinforced the construction of Emma and Carla’s (S3, Pleasant Hill) own

sporting identities as 'not able'.

Carla: "PE is better now in third year than it was in first and second year because then you were in with all abilities and you had girls standing there and boys too *staring* at you when you couldn't do something if you're not as sporty as them, like if you can't do press ups and I can't do press ups at all!! And it's really *really* embarrassing" (S3, Pleasant Hill, emphasis in original).

Inside these simplistic constructions of body weight/size, ability and health, within a mixed ability class, both Carla and Emma felt insecure and less able and their feelings translated into inhibitions about participating in the activity. Wherein I drew on understandings of Young's (1990) theories of feminine bodily existence in relation to inhibited intentionality in Chapter 6, through girls engagement with starting or accomplishing physical tasks, Carla experienced inhibited intentionality in that she wanted to participate and indeed enjoyed doing sport, but was inhibited through *feeling* her body 'unable' in a space shared by other bodies which were read as thinner and therefore more able. Now, as they are in third year, where they are grouped by ability, Carla expressed that "PE is much better now". Carla and Emma (S3 Pleasant Hill) provided an interesting counter argument to Mr. Witherspoon's observation that the streaming practice had produced an image of the lowest ability group as 'fat camp'. Interestingly, Carla and Emma provided a different experience of being in the foundation fitness ability class. Carla and Emma both felt better about themselves after being fitness tested into a class with girls of similar abilities and now being removed from the gaze of boys and girls who were identified as being sportier than them. Carla and Emma did not *feel* sporty or able to complete tasks required by PE within the framework of sportiness embodied through thinness. However, they also reinforced the argument

that the sporty girls were the thin girls and they also find themselves labeled as ‘lower ability’ causing a further negative cycle which devalues the abilities they do have.

While some girls proclaimed being comfortable with their grouping in the lowest ability fitness class, the ‘threat’ of being placed in the lowest ability fitness class was used by a teacher to encourage a second year pupil to complete the 12 minute run fitness test. Upon being fitness tested, Sarah—who was a particularly sporty second year pupil—expressed resistance to her teacher’s threat that she would be placed in the lowest ability fitness class if she did not complete the fitness test.

(An extract from the research diary):

*Sarah (S2 Pleasant Hill), whom I watched at the beginning of several classes practicing intricate gymnastics routines, indicated to me during the focus groups that she enjoyed sport and particularly dance and gymnastics very much. However, as we were walking outside one day for the class 12 minute run fitness test, Sarah said “I’m not going to run for the 12-minute run; I’m just going to walk”. Mr. James replied “well then you’ll just get put in the low fitness group”. Sarah retorted, “well then if that happens, I just won’t go to it (PE class)!”*

Sarah (S2 Pleasant Hill) appeared to be skilled and enjoy many aspects of physical activity and PE; she had particular flexibility and strength as demonstrated by the gymnastics routines she performed organically as the class filed in slowly each week for PE. However, she did not want to “run” for the 12 minute run fitness test—the result of which would help determine her place in next year’s fitness group. By limiting ‘ability’ to a narrowly defined set of measurements (as defined by how far you can run in 12 minutes, how many push ups, sit ups and shuttle runs you



can complete) only those bodies who could complete these tasks to the benchmarks of success would be able to achieve a place in the highest ‘ability’ fitness class. This narrowly defined conception of ability left Sarah—who was arguably a skilled gymnast with other embodied physical abilities—in a precarious position. She did not want to be placed in the lowest ability fitness class—and she may have been well aware of the stigma of “fat-camp” assigned to this class, however she also may also have felt that as a gymnast her body did not possess the ability to run for 12 minutes, and therefore she did not enjoy running for 12 minutes and did not want to do it.

A select number of girls engaged with understandings and feelings about relationships between body weight/size/type and health which I discuss in Section 7.5 and body weight/size and bodily matter, and sporting/fitness ‘abilities’ as I discuss below. In reflection of other girl bodies, and bodily matter, girls argued that fatness and bigness was an advantage, a strength with the capacity “to *be* rather than *be acted upon*” (Colls, 2007: 362, emphasis in original). Girls accounted for bodily matter through both a positive and negative accounts, in relation to themselves, and upon observations of other girls at sporting competitions. Reflecting on both the relationships between ability and body size/weight and what it feels like for bodily matter (fat, sweat) to be encountered when touching water (swimming) or sweating (during or after running), girls engaged with observations and feelings of embodied ability.

Umea: “Yeah I mean like one of the biggest girls in that swimming competition; she was quite big but she was so strong and fast.”

Lauren: “Yeah there must have been like three overweight girls at netball and cause like in netball it’s more like the better the team you are the less you run cause all you have to do is stand and pass.”

(S4 Focus Group Sunnyside)

Umea and Lauren argued that the most skilled girls in these sports (swimming and netball) were the larger/fatter/bigger girls. Recognizing differences in body types, girls argued that thinness does not *result in, guarantee, or represent* fitness, an argument I consider further in Section 7.5. These engagements with bigger bodies were positive, observing and supportive of bigger girls bodies who were strong and fast in swimming competitions and netball matches.

When reflecting on her own embodied abilities through various sports however, Jane (S4 Sunnyside) argued that “it depends on kind of what sport it is...cause like I wouldn’t, like I couldn’t like run around but I could do dancing for hours”. Umea (S4 Sunnyside) made a similar argument: “I could go for an hour run; like I went on an hour run and I was fine, but if I went swimming with India I could only do half a length”. Here Jane and Umea engaged with their own bodies in a limiting and negative manner, confirming the belief that the matter of their own bodies was incapable of running (Jane) and swimming (Umea). Likewise in the primary schools, Lucy (P6, Rosefield Primary) did not believe that her body was “made for” running and so she expressed an extreme dislike for the activity: “I hate running; I’m not made for it”; these girls subscribed to a “pre-existing belief that they were not ‘cut out’ to” run (Jane and Lucy) or swim (Umea) (Wang and Liu 2007: 146).

The dislike of an activity was often tied to how girls’ felt the movement of their bodies through the sport or activity. Lucy (P6, Rosefield Primary) described feeling sweat, “just wet stuff, sweat dripping down myself, ick” when running around doing physical activity, an embodied sensation of the residue and embodied response of physical activity on her body. Whereas Lucy’s dislike with sweat—the effect of physical movement, Umea and Lauren (S4, Sunnyside) described to me their different experiences of being bodies, touching and experiencing physical movement

of moving the body through water during swimming. Lauren (S4, Sunnyside) described to me how she feels “quite elegant when I’m actually in the water” whereas Umea’s (S4, Sunnyside) reflection on being in the water evoked the response, “I don’t! Nah; I just feel like a fat whale”. The ways in which these girls felt their bodily movement through the water led to pleasure, elegance and enjoyment of her body for Lauren and disgust and displeasure for Umea. Umea and Lucy did not enjoy feelings and the embodied effects (swimming for Umea and running for Lucy), and are not likely to engage with these activities.

What it feels like to be a body, encountering sweat or experiencing fatness through the water, inform girls framings of ability. Colls (2007) engages with positive ways in which women feel and experience their bodily matter by engaging with Bovey’s (1999) short story—‘A Life in a Day’. “Her hips are wide and soft made for swaying and for dancing, for love and for childbirth...She circles [her belly] with her arms, lifting it, enjoying its fluid movement. Her breasts are a law unto themselves...They follow the laws of gravity” (Bovey 1999: 47 in (Colls, 2007: 361) Beliefs about embodied ability—or lack of ability to do an activity—may lead girls to feel that they do not enjoy the activity and therefore they shy away from doing it. In relation to others’ bodies, girls engaged positively with bodily fat as significant of strength and fitness, whereas in relation to their own bodies, fatness was felt in a positive manner, especially in relation to being able to do certain physical activities.

Drawing on Dwek (1999), Dweck and Leggett (1988) and Hong et al., (1995) Wang and Liu (2007: 146) argue that ‘ability’ is understood in two ways, as a fixed entity or as an “acquirable skill that can be increased through practice and effort”. For the girls above, in relation to their own embodiments, ability is seen as a “capacity or fixed entity, and they cannot do very much to change that inherent aptitude”. The authors argue that people who view ability as such “tend to adopt a performance or ego goal, and they strive to establish how much ability they have

compared with others. In doing so, they prefer tasks that demonstrate their superiority and avoid tasks that show up their inadequacy” (Wang and Liu 2007: 146). Additionally, embodied effects of doing certain physical activities—sweat, breathlessness, feeling like a fat whale, play a part in the creation of how a girl may construct her ability through the body. Thus if a girl believes, like Lucy, that she is not “made for” running or swimming or any other activity, and for her the experience is increasingly associated with very strong sensations of sweat or other effects, she may very likely to drop out of participating or fail to try a similar activity.

Teachers themselves tried to disrupt the idea of ability as a fixed entity indicating that “there can be movement” between ability groups, “it’s not totally in tablets or stone” (Mr. Witherspoon, Pleasant Hill) “...If you’re achieving really well...you can move up to a higher set and if...you’re not working, you’ve forgotten your kit...you go down a set” (Mr. Kimball, Sunnyside). However, this practice did not seem to be terribly common, as Mr. Witherspoon noted that it was only one boy whom “we moved this year...he started the year so well that he moved away from what was the low group and we swapped someone who was having difficulties in the group above and he came and worked with us, so there can be movement”. Furthermore, while teachers may move pupils between ability groups and argue for an understanding of ability as acquired through practice and effort, the PE curriculum itself subscribes to the understanding of ability as a fixed entity through the measurements (number of pull ups, sit ups, distance run in 12 minutes, etc.) used to delineate ‘fitness’ groups. Such measuring tools, “instruments with fixed parts” (stop watches and click counters) can only measure end products, quantities produced—as in the number of pull ups a body can complete, thereby excluding “other concepts such as ‘momentum’ from having meaning” (Barad 1998: 95).

Pressure to embody ‘ability’ through success within narrowly and ‘neatly’ defined fixed measurements (through fitness testing) leaves little space for girls who may be skilled and sporty in other physical arenas to achieve success through PE as they will be unable to achieve the measurements necessary to grant them a place in the highest ability fitness group. Girls like Sarah (S2, Pleasant Hill) who do not want to run for 12 minutes or believe themselves unable to run for 12 minutes may be rather good at a sport like gymnastics—which cannot be measured through instruments with fixed parts. In this way, Sarah is unable to test into the highest fitness class, thereby relegating her to a ‘lower’ level, despite her high achievements in other areas of fitness work. Furthermore, streaming practices may result in a further pressure to embody ‘ability’ through thinness; this may not be a direct intention of teachers but a result of pupils’ awareness of socio-political support for the fat ≠ fit argument (Section 7.2). Pressures to embody and perform ability through thinness intra-acts with girls’ (of all sizes) accounts of and encounters with their bodies and bodily effects. Measuring and classing fitness ability through fixed measurements and narrow categories may negatively impact on participation in and experience of physical education for girls’ on all points on the body size spectrum. Within these understandings, the “roots of PE for life, engagement, enjoyment and getting children active” (Mr. Witherspoon) are lost. Furthermore, as I discuss in the following section, pressure to embody and perform ability—as it is related to bodily thinness, may be informing girls’ own practices (within or outside of school) of health in relation to physical activity and eating.

## **7.5 CONSTRUCTING AND PRACTICING HEALTH**

This section addresses girls’ constructions of their own understandings of health and practices or critiques of health messages relayed by educators (Sections 7.2 and 7.3). Within this

section I also address the thin/fat binary in relation to health. Schools are not the only spaces involved in passing on health messages. Parental messages were also present to a limited extent, as some of the girls recounted the sources of their knowledge. Rachel (S3 Pleasant Hill) indicated that “my mum’s quite big on the whole healthy eating stuff” while Anna (S1 Sunnyside) told me “my mum always moans at me and says that I’m really unfit, because like my mum and dad do quite a lot of running so they say that I have to keep fit”. However, messages about eating and exercise by teachers played a significant role in girls’ source knowledge on ‘health’. Rachel told me where she learned about health.

Rachel (S3): “We did a lot of it in first year home economics like what to eat and run around...that kind of thing.”

As discussed, staff employed a variety of tactics from speaking about cancer and heart-attacks (Section 7.2) to questioning pupils about “eating something rubbish” (Section 7.3) in attempts to ‘improve’ pupils’ health or encourage girls to take part in and take responsibility for their health through doing PE. Some staff also noted that they praised and encouraged larger pupils for what is believed to be ‘healthy’ behavior (namely weight loss), while other staff members were particularly interested in coaxing larger girls to do more physical activity. Before discussing girls’ practices of health, it is important to look first at girls’ framings of and conceptions of the healthy feminine body and then address the extent to which these understandings and other influences intra-acted with girls’ practices of physical activity and eating.

As the topic in my focus groups turned towards motivations for or girls’ opinions on the importance of doing exercise, girls engaged in dialogue which demonstrated both their understandings of what constituted a ‘healthy’ body and their personal practices of exercise and

eating. Many girls built a picture of 'health' through thin or not fat, embodiment.

Lexie (S3): "Health is about weight and podgy and fat."

Carla (S3): "I think about skinny and skinny models and Special K; that's health."

(S3 focus group, Pleasant Hill)

Carla's 'picture' of health was influenced, in part, by the media and advertising industry where in she mentioned fashion models and Special K cereal whose slimming advertising campaign was well known amongst many girls. Other girls focused on particular parts of the body such as "glowing skin" and "fit muscular legs" (Sarah S3, Pleasant Hill) or "a good heart and lungs" (Sienna S4) as signifying health. Some girls included components of fitness or exercise and eating as contributing towards the maintenance or construction of what they believed to be a healthy body.

Sienna (S4, Pleasant Hill): "Healthy eating means not getting fat".

Many girls subscribed to the belief that fat ≠ fit, and as noted in Section 7.4, Sienna who is in the highest ability fitness class even offered an outright hatred of fat people, "Sorry I just can't stand...I hate fat people" after expressing that "it's important to keep healthy and fit and don't get fat" (Sienna, S4 Pleasant Hill). Another girl however, was more critical of the associations between slenderness and health.

Lexie: "A healthy girl is a fit girl."

Sarah: "Yeah really skinny."

Lexie: “No, not really skinny, like not anorexic.”

Sarah: “Well just fit, muscular legs.”

(S3 Focus Group foundation level Pleasant Hill)

Here, a debate ensued between Lexie and Sarah about what degree of thinness constitutes health. Sarah proposes that a healthy girl is really skinny while Lexie argues that extreme thinness (through her knowledge of the condition of anorexia) is not at all healthy.

While the debate between Lexie and Sarah at Pleasant Hill centred on the association between slenderness and ill health, girls in another focus group at Sunnyside contemplated the association further. These girls examined the extent to which thinness, when equated with health, is problematic and not a good indicator of a person’s fitness, based both on personal experiences, “I used to be incredibly skinny but I couldn’t do hardly any sports” (Karen S4) and observations of peers that “some of the biggest girls at the swimming competition are quite big but they are so strong and fast” (Marla S4). For these girls, ‘fitness’ is a greater measure of health than thinness or body size and “if you’re really skinny you’re not necessarily fit” (Umea S4). These beliefs echo arguments by Mr. Witherspoon’s (Pleasant Hill) and John (ASC Cherry Tree Primary) about the association between thinness and fitness.

“We should stop using the word obese and talk about children being fit or unfit; just because you’re a body shape like that (stretching arms indicating wide) doesn’t mean you’re not a fit person and just because you’re like that (narrowing arms to indicate thin) doesn’t mean you’re a fit person, so let’s get away from thinking obese and similar words and just think *fit* and *not fit* or not as fit ...” (Mr. Witherspoon, Pleasant Hill).



Mr. Witherspoon was particularly concerned about the usage of the word obese as he does not believe it to be a useful way of determining a child's fitness. Correlations between fitness and health in relation to body size may be lost in the language used to build an image of the healthy body. Fitness—as measured through tests, works to define who is fit and who is not, and translating, those bodies who do not reach set fitness 'standards' are defined as not fit. Within these bodily understandings, the fat body is worked on as one which is not fit and in need of both exercise and diet reduction in order to create thinness and therefore health (Evans et al., 2005; Evans et al., 2007; Rice, 2007). In respect to particular BMI measurement programmes in primary schools, John reflected on the inability of BMI to capture and measure fitness levels. John said that as part of his job, he participates in the child health programme which has been developed by the Information Services Division (ISD) of the National Health Services (NHS) Scotland. The programme states that:

“...children are offered routine reviews at various stages of their life. Height and weight measurements are collected at the Primary 1 review and the majority of Boards record results on the child health school system (CHSP School). The measurements recorded on CHSP School can be used to derive estimates of the prevalence of overweight and underweight children in Primary 1 in Scotland” (ISD Scotland 2010).

John noted that he is critical of the programme, arguing that height and weight and the resulting calculation of BMI measurements “have nothing to do with fitness levels”. Body Mass Index measurement programmes may fail to capture the fleshy experience of what it feels like to be the body being measured and classed along a continuum of risk for further fatness and related conditions of ill health, (Evans & Colls, 2009b); they may also fail, as John has observed and

argued, to be able to determine a child's fitness. Wherein BMI programmes are not used, but it is widely understood that health is embodied through slenderness or the non-fat body, Mr. Witherspoon argued that such conceptions of fatness have little to nothing to do with embodied fitness. Whereas Mr. Witherspoon and a small number of girls subscribed to the belief that health was not embodied through thinness and that just because a person is fat does not mean that that person is not fit, the majority of girls adhered to the notion that fat  $\neq$  fit, engaging with fatness in various ways in support of a dualistic understanding of thin/fat in association with healthy/unhealthy.

The desire to avoid "becoming fat" (Isla, P7) was expressed by both primary and secondary school participants although primary school girls were more likely to say that they also do sport or physical activity "for fun" or "because it's fun", supporting research by Hemming (2007) on younger children's emotional geographies of physical activity.

Isla (P7) and Arty Farty (P6) were at the point of transitioning to secondary school and shared with me their motivations for doing sport or fitness.

Isla (P7): I would do sport because it's really fun for you and your friends to play together and exercise and fitness is more helping you stay skinny, so that you don't become fat, which is every girl's nightmare if I'm honest. Becoming fat, it's scary.

Morgan: Why is it every girl's nightmare? Why is it so scary?

Isla: Because it's really scary because then you get fat.

Arty Farty (P6): My reasons for doing sport is it's to take away fatness because it's every girl's dream to be not that skinny but quite skinny, yeah not fat...

(P6-P7 Focus Group, Cherry Tree Primary).

While Isla also indicated that she did sport because it was fun and she enjoyed playing with friends, she highlighted her knowledge of health discourses of fitness and exercise, wherein exercise is not only an enjoyable activity, but a means of preventing fat. The threat of both becoming and being fat is expressed as a 'nightmare' demonstrating Isla's awareness of the negative construction of fat and 'obesity' both by teachers and through media, or as an older girl, Janelle (S2, Pleasant Hill) told me, "if you don't do PE, you'll get fat!"

While Isla and other primary school girls expressed some element of enjoyment in sport, many secondary school girls emphasized weight loss or at least weight stability as their main motivation for doing physical activity or taking part in PE. Several of the girls in my study were motivated to do physical activity only by a desire to stay skinny or to avoid becoming fat. For these girls, being physically active or 'doing sport' was not offered as 'enjoyable' or 'fun'; it was only a means to stay or become skinny.

Vikki: "Yeah and it's also the same about what I said earlier, about being skinny, like everything else, I think that's what motivates me."

Morgan: "That's probably what motivates you to do exercise?"

Vikki: "Yeah."

(S3 Pleasant Hill)

In a review of published and unpublished literature (from 1994-2004) on participation in sport and physical activity in the UK among children and adults, (Allender et al., 2006: 830) gleaned that “[c]oncerns about body shape and weight management” were given as the main motivating reasons for girls to participate in sport and physical activity. While (Allender et al., 2006) did not publish the age or age ranges of girls who cited concerns weight management as the main motivation for doing sport, questionnaires from the FFG Programme looked at the responses from S2 girls. As part of the Fit for Girls Programme, all S2 girls across Scotland were administered a questionnaire in 2009. From those S2 girls who answered the questionnaire (n = 17,853), “Almost half of girls (48%) said they do physical activity to feel better about themselves or to lose weight” (Inchley et al 2010: 4).

However, similar to younger primary school girls, there were in fact other girls in the secondary schools like Sara (S2 Pleasant Hill) who exclaimed “I love my hockey!” There was an element of enjoyment in and pleasure derived from being involved in sport and many of these girls were involved in competitive sports such as netball, hockey and gymnastics and played for their school or local club. However, these girls also expressed knowledge of and engagement with practices of exercise, not as a direct method of achieving or maintaining thinness but as a tool to offset excess calorie or “junk food” (bad foods) consumption in order to achieve or maintain thinness.

Morgan: “Ok, so why is it [exercise and fitness] important to you?”

Sara: “So I can eat what I want and not get fat!”

Morgan: “So what does ‘what you want’ mean? Does that mean lots of junk or not?”

Sasho: “No, just bigger portions than what I should have.”

Sara: “Yeah just a bunch of junk for me to be honest.”

(S2 Focus Group Pleasant Hill)

I recall the earlier discussion where Marla, Umea and Karen (S4 Sunnyside) expressed a critical understanding of the links between body weight/size and fitness. This cohort of girls expressed thorough enjoyment in physical activity and sport—and many of them played for school or community clubs and teams—but they also indicated that they engaged in ‘binge’ and ‘purge’ practices of “eating loads of chocolate” (Freena, S1 Willow High) and then “doing a mega day of exercise” (Corinna, S4 Sunnyside).

For the respondents above, the desire or motivation to do physical activity was to offset practices of eating which they clearly understood to be unhealthy. Sara (S2 Pleasant Hill), who noted above that exercise and fitness was important to her “so I can eat what I want and not get fat” was the same girl who was very good at gymnastics but who stated (in Section 7.4) her refusal to attend PE if she was placed into the low fitness group based on her 12-minute mile result. Sara clearly understood and agreed with the message that fat is unhealthy, unfit and undesirable; she engaged with physical activity both because she enjoyed it and as a means to maintain her thin physique so that she could consume food that she enjoyed in excess quantities. For these girls, consuming ‘junk’ in the form of high quantity and low quality kilocalories, was enjoyable and because the girls participate in physical activity they can maintain a thin or ‘normal’ body shape/size while eating—in large quantities or low nutrient dense—food which they love. Freena (S1 Willow High) shared with me that “[PE] like keeps you fit and you can eat loads of like chocolate and it’s not going to like exactly make you go fat.” For Freena above, eating unhealthily or “loads of chocolate” was acceptable as long as she did PE, so that she could remain fit and/or

thin. As Jenna (S4, Sunnyside) so critically summarised, “it’s like a get out of jail free card because you can eat rubbish if you do a lot of sport”.

Other girls shared with me that eating chocolate was necessary after you participated in excessive exercise, setting up a relationship between food as a reward for success or participation in exercise. For Umea (S4 Sunnyside) and Jenna (S4, Sunnyside), eating chocolate was “like a ritual...You’ve got like a tournament and like we have loads of chocolate at our netball tournaments.” In this respect chocolate was brought along by teammates and coaches to the tournaments and consumed during and after the matches as both energy for doing the sport and a reward for working hard or winning.

Jenna, Sarah and Umea (S4 Sunnyside) also discussed their eating practices during exam time when they felt particularly stressed and did not feel they had time to go out and do exercise. For Jenna who “stress eats during exams”, Cadbury chocolate roses were used as a reward. “It helps you study; I’ll do an hour and then I’ll get a chocolate.” Sarah shared that she “always get(s) fat during exams” while Umea indicated that if she “started to eat” during exam time she would be “really upset”.

“I eat more after exams...I don’t eat during exams because it would make me more stressed if I was eating I’d be like ‘oh my god I’m going to get fat and I don’t have any time to go out and do any exercise and oh my gosh’ and I was already stressed and oh god it would make it worse” (Umea S4 Sunnyside).

The association with food as reward may create feelings of anxiety and does little “to challenge the ways in which [individuals] experience their bodies and bodily process as ‘unworthy’ with regard to any ‘pleasureable’ relationship with foods (Evans et al 2004: 135). Many of the girls

expressed a love of both food (“I quite like eating”) or certain types of food which was deemed unhealthy and a love of exercise or sport; however, these girls also possessed the knowledge that excess food and limited exercise can cause fatness or weight gain—a socially undesirable state of embodiment. For these girls, the pressure to embody thinness and “perform ‘ability’” both in their respective sports and in the visual appearance of their bodies may “result in unhealthy drives towards corporeal perfection” (Evans et al., 2007: 65).

Girls have also been taught that foods fit into distinct categories of ‘good’ or ‘healthy’ and ‘bad’ or ‘unhealthy’, as examined in the literature in Chapter 2. Three respondents who were at various stages of illness and recovery from severe eating disorders in Evans et al.’s (2005 : 133) study, relayed that they learned in Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) class that “some things are good for you and some things are bad and should be avoided. You don’t learn that there are other things in ‘bad’ foods that are also good for you like protein and carbohydrates”. One of my respondents recounted an exercise where she learned about portion sizes of ‘healthy’ and ‘unhealthy’ foods.

Dan (S1): “Yeah we had to draw a big plate and say how much we should be eating of certain foods a day like we had two really big bits on the plate for healthy stuff and then smaller sections for sugary stuff” (Pleasant Hill).

“The message these young women are hearing is that *they* are to *take control* of their health by making healthy choices, particularly in relation to diet” and exercise where schools are teaching them what is ‘good’ (i.e. exercise, fruit and vegetables) and ‘bad’ (i.e. television watching and other sedentary activities, sugar and fat) (Evans et al., 2005: 135).

These girls were acutely aware that in order to satisfy cultural, political and educational expectations of feminine health, that are embodied through thinness, they must “do a lot of sport” if they are not going to “eat healthily” (Carli S3 Willow High). Therefore, by doing PE, sport or physical activity, my respondents were acutely aware that they could maintain or achieve a thin ‘healthy’ body through a balance of healthy practices (physical activity) with unhealthy ones (eating junk).

Many of these girls’ bodies may be visually ‘measured’ as ‘healthy’ by their peers, parents/carers and teachers because they are thin, or not fat and they participate regularly in sport or physical activity. None of the teachers in my study indicated that they were concerned about the ‘health’ of their pupils who were also athletes playing either for the school and/or community. The ways in which health is understood through the thin or not fat body leaves no room for bodies which lie *in between* extremes of thinness or fatness, nor does it allow for deeper questioning of the everyday activities (such as eating and exercise) in which a person participates. When examining such everyday practices of consuming lots of junk or excess calories followed by exercise, a questioning of these girls’ overall health is justified. None of the girls in my study expressed concern over their behaviours of eating and exercise, although they clearly acknowledged that the food they were consuming (in both quantity and quality) was ‘unhealthy’. Because many of my respondents, teachers and pupils alike unequivocally believe that “exercise is healthy” (Sasha S4 Pleasant Hill), and being thin or slender, or at least not fat, is read as being the occupant of a healthy body, the practices shared above would not necessarily be noticed by educators.

Recalling Guthman’s (2009) engagement with understanding neoliberal discourses of capitalism situated within obesity discourses, the girls in my study who achieved both eating and thinness (or not fatness) “even if having it both ways entail(ed) eating non-foods...or throwing up



the food...(the literal bulimic) or exercising to offset calories”, were able to achieve the perfect subject-citizen. Creation and maintenance of the perfect subject citizen is a practice embodied through schools as they teach pupils to take responsibility for the health of the nation through their own bodily choices and practices. If practices of consuming large quantities of food followed by doing “a mega 13k run...like once every one or two months...then I’m dead for two weeks but I feel so much better about myself” (Corinna S4, Sunnyside) are viewed in respect to moralistic teachings about food as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ and exercise and slenderness as ‘healthy’, we must question the extent to which the girls’ relationships to food and exercise are in fact ‘healthy’.

Reading girls’ practices of eating and exercise in the above manner, may indicate disordered eating practices according to diagnostic characteristics offered by eating disorder clinics. Because the girls in my study who mentioned these practices also engaged in either aesthetic sports (gymnastics) or competed at the county level in team sport, their practices may also be questioned in respect to anorexia athletic or the female athlete triad. The female athlete triad is a condition among some female athletes involving disordered eating, low bone mass and amenorrhea and is a more recently identified and complex condition than anorexia nervosa or bulimia nervosa. My study did not attempt to investigate the links between physical activity or PE and eating disorders; my own expertise and qualification in eating disorders is limited, and I did not target girls who were suffering or recovering from clinically diagnosed eating disorders in my participant group. However, it is clear from the girls’ responses that they understood their practices of eating to be ‘unhealthy’ and while most of them claimed to genuinely enjoy sport they also cited that sport was used often to offset ‘unhealthy’ eating practices. Although the girls who indicated that they participated in unhealthy practices may not “experience severe health threats...they may nonetheless experience psychological distress, body dissatisfaction and

problematic relationships” with their bodies and be exposed to future health risks (Beals 2000 in Evans et al., (2007: 66).

## **7.6 CONCLUSIONS**

Messages about health are taught within schools by a variety of practitioners including PE teachers and Active Schools staff. Messages are also taught through a variety of mechanisms including formally through structural changes made by Curriculum for Excellence and informally through everyday pedagogical practices. PE teachers do not limit their teachings to correlations between physical activity and health or fitness and health and health messages crossed the boundaries of classrooms and gym halls. Teachers expressed, and fieldwork observations confirmed that PE teachers incorporate lessons and disciplinary pedagogies of food and diet often using present and future risks of fat and inactivity to incite participation.

The development of cross-curricular links between home economics and physical education under the Health and Wellbeing Outcome through Curriculum for Excellence may be leading PE and Active Schools staff to feel a freedom to ‘teach’ about ‘health’ in respect to food and ‘healthy eating’ with little to no formal training themselves in this area. While conceptualisations of and messages about health in respect to fitness, food and body size/weight were relayed in a variety of ways by teachers, it was clear that pupils were expected to take responsibility for their own and the nation’s present and future health by participating in physical activity and healthy eating. The creation of a healthy body through doing physical activity was a main focus of PE teachers’ discourse. When individuals’ jobs depend on the reproduction of a certain understanding of health and “as the obesity discourse gains momentum”, this leaves little room for the development of alternative understandings and possibilities of health and fitness and

critiques of anti-obesity messages (Kirk, 2006: 127). On only two occasions a teacher—Mr. Witherspoon (Pleasant Hill) and an Active Schools Coordinator—John offered me insight into an alternative conceptualisation of thinness and fitness by highlighting the ways in which this seemingly unchallenged correlation can inhibit a clearer understanding of what it truly means for a pupil to be ‘fit’. Mr. Witherspoon and John were the only staff who indicated a critical assessment of obesity discourses and expressed deep concern in the validity and truth of such discourses. Despite their critical accounts however, these educators work within schools where anti-obesity discourses and practices run strong among other teachers and even pupils themselves. They also work within PE departments where children are fitness tested; the results from fitness tests at Pleasant Hill determine the pupil’s placing or streaming into fitness ‘abilities’ for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year fitness PE periods.

Conceptualisations of health through thin embodiment and perpetuation of the fat ≠ fit equation inform and intra-act with girls’ experiences of PE when classes are grouped according to fitness ‘ability’. When ability is understood both by what the body can do, and what the body looks like it can do, within contemporary dualistic constructions of the thin/fat healthy/unhealthy body, pressure to embody ability may push girls who do not currently occupy a thin—and as such ‘able’ and ‘healthy’ body—further away from both doing and enjoying sport and physical activity. Furthermore, because of the rather narrow definition of ability—as that measured through four specific fitness tests—girls who may possess other sporting abilities (flexibility, etc.) will be unable to achieve placement in a high ability class unless they can succeed within the measures of ability defined by the tests.

With the exclusion of Mr. Witherspoon’s and John’s beliefs, the discursive spaces of fitness and physical activity in my research schools—through informal and formal teachings within PE and through CfE—are marked by a majority understanding that health is embodied through thin (or)

not fat physicality. The result is a paradox whereby spaces of fitness are known as places where body weights can be reduced or controlled at the same time that such places may serve as sites of “oppressi[on], embarrassment, and exclusion” to those who do not embody current health ideals, namely slenderness (Ellison, 2009: 313). While some pupils challenged this notion of a healthy body, many pupils may read PE staff ‘health’ messages in relation to their own embodiment and knowledge of contemporary discourses of obesity. This chapter addressed part of research question 2 by attending to the ways in which health was understood by school-based sports providers and the ways in which such understandings were felt on the bodies of girls when doing physical activity. Girls’ experiences of physical education and other school-based sport and exercise programmes intra-acted with PE staff messages about fitness and health. Girls’ discussions of their own understandings and practices of ‘health’ in relation to diet and exercise and revealed a number of embedded ‘unhealthy’ practices, particularly in relation to food. For those who are already thin or ‘normal’ weight (and therefore read as ‘sporty’ and ‘able’), they may be privileged, but they may also feel pressure to maintain their body shape resulting in unhealthy practices of eating and/or exercise, thereby developing an unhealthy relationship between girls and their bodies. Importantly such practices were found among girls who participated at and enjoyed a higher level in sport as well as among girls who participated or enjoyed sport less.

Wann (2009) argued that the concept of health becomes problematic when it is linked with weight. As Mr. Witherspoon (PT PE Pleasant Hill) and a small number of S4 girls at Sunnyside demonstrated, links between weight and fitness ability are also problematic and may serve to the detriment of individuals who occupy either side of the very limited range of ‘normal weight’ on the BMI scale. Through their work with recovering anorexic and bulimic girls, Evans et al. (2007: 64) argued that these “(re)constructions of ‘ability’ may be particularly damaging for young women”. Such reconstructions may be damaging for girls and young women on all weights/sizes of the

bodily continuum. Because of the belief that fat  $\neq$  fit, girls who are identified as or self-identify as fat do not feel welcome and are not made to feel welcome in spaces of fitness. On the other side of the body weight spectrum, girls who are identified as thin or who self-identify as thin may not see a necessity or reason to exercise, as they are already the occupant of a healthy body. Those who do exercise may see this as a way to compensate for other unhealthy practices especially in relation to food. “No longer is physical activity and associated ‘ability’ a means of discovering the pleasure of movement but, rather, a mechanism for fulfilling the requirements of health imperatives” (Evans et al., 2007: 63). When health is linked with weight and when fitness refuses to allow space for fatness, the enjoyment of moving ones’ body, whatever your size—creatively, freely, without feeling a moral responsibility to perform or embody health through thinness—is lost. In light of research which reveals that “women whose main motivation” for physical activity is “enjoyment rather than their weight, are far less likely to feel self-conscious about taking park and are more likely to participate if the activity emphasizes fun” (Women Sport and Fitness Foundation 2007: 11), girl’s understandings, experiences and everyday practices of ‘health’ matter greatly. More explicit attention to and engagement with enjoyment and fun through physical activity is carried forwards to debates about growing up through the analysis which emerges in Chapter 8.

## Chapter 8

### ***BEEN, BEING AND BECOMING THROUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION***

#### **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

“Ballet...it’s just like a little girls’ thing and I stopped doing it” (Talianna S4, Willow High).

Through paying attention to everyday geographies of health, Chapter 7 demonstrated how teachings, practices and conceptualizations of health through embodiment operate in discursive spaces of physical activity, intra-acting with girls’ experiences and their own bodily engagement with exercise. One might also argue that much of the political and practitioner concern over children’s health is framed in reference to the future ‘child cum citizen’ and educational practices and pedagogies reflect this framing wherein children are taught to assume responsibility for their present health as it will impact on their individual and collective (national) future lives (Evans et al., 2007). Pulling out the thread of temporality, this chapter returns to the dualism of being and becoming, an unresolved tension in childhood literature (Uprichard, 2008) as introduced in Chapter 2, with attention to the “emotional geographies of pleasure and enjoyment” (Hemming, 2007: 353) and how these may change over time.

Until now the thesis has focused heavily on empirical data collected within the secondary schools. This chapter includes more of the data from the primary schools as well as contributions from secondary school participants—including reflections on their own primary school experiences. “Telling stories about one’s life experiences immediately invokes the participant’s sense of time as they use narrative to construct their past, present and future” (Worth, 2009: 3).

Much of the recent work in children's and youth geographies on temporality has attended to experiences of transitions, with empirical data mapping longitudinally the participants' views and experiences and paying attention to changes over time. While I am interested in the period of transition from primary to secondary school as this is the age identified in the Scottish Health Survey (2003) and much of the literature as the age/time at which girls' participation in physical activity begins to decline, this was not the main focus of the thesis. Furthermore, my choice of methods did not allow for repeat encounters with participants over time—which would have allowed me to capture participants' views and experiences over time. Therefore, instead of focusing solely on the period of transition from primary to secondary school, this chapter argues that much more can be learned about girls' participation in PE and sport by paying attention to *change* over time in respect to girls' reflections on and researcher observations of *fun* and *enjoyment* through material and discursive spaces of sport/PA/PE, activities, and embodiment. Maintaining the thread of 'what matters' (Horton & Kraftl 2006b: 260), this chapter attends to theories of childhood being and becoming by learning "from things that go on and on and on" as well as things that change. Additionally, by being open to and appreciative of the emotional and embodied, I question both academic and socio-cultural "taken for granted understandings about 'Growing-Up'".

One theme which is threaded throughout this chapter is girls' experiences of Scottish Country Dancing, or "SCD" as Megan (P6 Cherry Tree Primary) so often referred to it. Scottish Country Dancing is one physical activity where enjoyment of the experience appears to cross generational, gender, class and fitness ability boundaries. However as the chapter reveals, girls' experiences of SCD varied between the age groups. Hopkins & Pain, (2007: 289) argue that the concept of intergenerationality is one useful way of building relational geographies of age, by

looking at the ways in which:

“what it is to be a child is affected by people of other age groups...that identities are produced *through* interactions with other age/generational groups and are in a constant state of flux...children...interact with others in family and community settings and so are *more than* children alone”.

Horton and Kraftl (2007) critique the concept of intergenerationality arguing that the analytical power of generations may be limited out with the family and be obscured by relations which matter more than generational differences. I agree that the power of using intergenerationality as an analytical tool may be limited; however, the activity of Scottish Country Dancing, which is also a marker of cultural identity and has curricular continuity as it is taught continually from the nursery age upwards until pupils leave secondary school, provides a useful focus for understanding one physical activity during PE which appears to provide girls with a fun experience and provides them with skills which are maintained and used as they grow older and participate in social dances both within and outside the school. While the dynamics and experiences of Scottish Country Dancing within the school itself and between primary and secondary school were often dependent upon gender relationships within the class, it was one activity that almost all of my participants reflected on when recalling the total experience of PE.

Because Scottish country dancing is a particularly ‘Scottish’ experience and one which has a connection to cultural events and ceremonies such as weddings, birthday parties and holiday celebrations, which are very much a part of Scottish life, it is worthy of discussion in that it links to life beyond school both temporally and spatially. Because my fieldwork was conducted in the three secondary schools over a total period of seven months, encompassing October through



April, I was introduced to Scottish country dancing in the month of December when it was taught in PE to prepare pupils for their winter dance. I was able to observe one S1, S3 and S4 classes of SCD for two weeks at Pleasant Hill and one S3 and S4 class for one week of SCD at Willow High. My analysis included observations of these classes as well as findings from focus group discussions with primary and secondary school pupils on their experiences of Scottish country dancing. This chapter is structured into two sections which look at fun and enjoyment through observations of, girls' embodied emotions and reflections on 'being' (8.2) and 'becoming' (8.3) through physical activity.

## **8.2 FUN IN BEING**

I began a theoretical discussion of approaches to understanding children as beings and/or becomings in Chapter 2 with specific reference to Uprichard's (2008) work. Her work argues that conceptions of the becoming child (the primary perspective of educators, policy makers and parents) are problematic from a temporal and ethical perspective; at the same time conceptions of the being child (the perspective adopted by many childhood researchers) are problematic because of children's understandings of their own being and becoming in the world relative to the spaces—and changes to the spaces, people, things and so forth—around them. From this point, Uprichard (2008: 304) argues that blending our conceptions of children as beings and becomings will allow us to recognize the “everyday realities of being a child” while at the same time acknowledging that children have a right to plan for their own futures—and I would argue, grow and change as they age. While Uprichard's (2008) work uses time as the analytical tool of explanation, in keeping with the main theoretical framework of the thesis—that is gendered

embodiment—I explore being and becoming in reference to embodied experiences associated with pleasure and enjoyment in doing physical activity.

Until now, much of the thesis has highlighted many of the unpleasurable experiences girls encountered in doing physical activity or PE (being hit by a ball, feeling unable to complete a physical task like vaulting a pommel horse or participate due to embodied feelings of the non-thin body inside discursively thin spaces of sport). This final chapter attempts to disrupt the somewhat cynical and pessimistic tone of the thesis by arguing for the possibilities of transforming girls' experiences and improving participation by paying attention to immediate, and present embodied experiences and feelings of enjoyment. Listening to teachers' reflections on change, secondary school girls' stories and experiences of primary school, observing different age groups through one specific physical activity—Scottish Country Dancing, and paying attention to the different ways in which girls of various ages negotiated and perceived enjoyment and their embodiment through being physically active in present moments, all allowed me to attend to questions of being and becoming.

As discussed in Chapter 7, and affirmed by the Scottish Government, the discipline of physical education in Scotland “is an investment for the future—for individuals and for Scotland” (Scottish Executive 2004: 15). Teaching skills of physical activity, and the health related benefits and necessity of physical activity in maintaining health and reducing the risk of certain diseases in the future, forms a major part of the new Curriculum for Excellence as well as everyday pedagogies of PE (Chapter 7). The emphasis through the curriculum is on teaching children to develop habits which they will—ideally—carry into adulthood (Scottish Executive 2004). This discourse was present at Sunnyside where Mr. Kimball described the aim of his department:

“I want to give them a journey in this Health and Wellbeing experience, of saying right, that we’ll give you opportunities, but eventually you’ve got to be able to choose and you’ve got to buy into the fact that you’ve got to make the best choice and you’ve got to get to the facility yourself, you’ve got to put yourself out a little bit more and so on” (Mr. Kimball, Sunnyside).

Within this discourse, pupils are taught to assume responsibility for their own health as well as to represent their school and nation as actively responsible citizens and demonstrate ability through both the body and bodily performance. However, through this discourse the primary emphasis is on the future, the future which is presented as a “choice” between health—by choosing to go to the sports facility once you leave school, or disease/sickness—“if you don’t make the choices to stay involved in activities, you will get heart disease, you will get cancers you will get all those dreadful diseases, so choice, give them options and set them up to make choices” (Mr. Kimball, Sunnyside). This discourse is explicitly concerned with future child and national health, and sees it inevitable that young people who do not participate in physical activity will *become* ill and unhealthy.

Many teachers were observed and admitted to using health scare tactics to cajole the girls who were not currently involved in physical activity, or did not participate in PE class (see Chapter 7). Instead of probing deeper into the reasons why girls were opting out of PE or disengaging to various degrees, teachers drew on discourses of risk. This tactic was successful in encouraging some girls (such as Jemma (S3 Pleasant Hill) whose grandfather died of a ‘health related’ disease) to do PE; for others however, one or more than one aspect of doing PE, kit, changing, (Chapter 5) or embodied encounters—with boys, cold, mud or other bodies, (Chapter 6) was/were so unpleasant that no threat of future health condition was enough to convince the girl to take part.

Threats of future health risks, with the intention of creating healthy bodies and inciting participation also seemed to be doing the opposite of the aim, wherein girls were engaging in very unhealthy activities, developing unhealthy relationships with their bodies in attempt to satisfy cultural and political imaginings.

The assumption that the discourses of the future child-becoming-healthy-adult make, is that children and young people will not choose to do physical activity if given a choice, or at least if not given a strong additional reason. Hemming (2007) demonstrates that this is a gross and untrue assumption and that (primary school) children's choice to do an activity (whether or not it is deemed healthy or unhealthy by adults) is driven by feelings of enjoyment or pleasure. In respect to policy relevance, Hemming (2007: 367) then argues that children must be encouraged to take part in physical activities that they enjoy "rather than doing them for health reasons". As Chapter 7 revealed, motivational discourses, attaching health risks or fatness to physical inactivity may—at times—be successful in inciting girls to do exercise; however awareness of health 'risks' both now and in the future, among older girls does not always lead to participation and may also work in reverse to create unhealthy practices having an unintended effect of supporting unhealthy practices of eating and exercise. Hemming's findings suggest that if enjoyment is taken more seriously in policy and educational rhetoric, "schools are more likely to help children to find activities that they can continue to enjoy once they have left education". Attending to and allowing for a return to enjoyment may also relieve girls of strong pressures to perform and embody socio-political conceptualisations of feminine 'health'.

If we take a closer look at girls' past experiences of physical activity and changes over time, as well as focus on the times and spaces wherein girls were observed having fun and expressed feelings of enjoyment and fun, we can learn more about the tensions between understandings of being and becoming through physical activity. When reflecting back on their

own primary school experience, secondary school girls noted that there were clear differences between the activities provisioned for PE in primary school and secondary school.

Carla: “It [PE in primary school] was more group activities...I just think it was like *games for like younger people like playing like ‘tig’* and stuff like that” (S4 Willow High, emphasis added).

Sarah: “...In primary school we did like rounders and things for PE; like we didn’t do particular sports it was just kinda laid back like *play*” (S2, Pleasant Hill, emphasis added).

Julia: “PE [in secondary school] is better than primary school. It’s more structured. It’s more fun to do more activities with different and new people” (S1, Pleasant Hill).

Rachel: “There’s a lot more you get to do in PE now cause in core we have like, before, when I was in primary school we didn’t get a selection...we didn’t get swimming...we didn’t get to do much really” (S2, Pleasant Hill).

Girls like Julia (S1) and Rachel (S2) (Pleasant Hill) expressed more enjoyment of secondary school PE due to a wider variety of activities and the opportunity to meet new people; however, other secondary school girls reflected on primary school experiences of PE as “more fun” than secondary school (Caren, S2 Sunnyside), often noting one event or one activity as Carrie, Sophie and Caren

recall:

Carrrie: "We did like...We did parachutes".

Sophie: "Oh yeah parachutes!!"

Caren: "Those were fun?"

Many girls reflected back on their experiences of primary school physical activity positively, recalling how they played games and did silly things with the teacher as Sophie and Anna (S2 Sunnyside) explained:

Anna: "Yeah cause like someone locked all of us in the gym hall and he had to climb out a window! And let us out."

All: "Hahaha" (laughter)

Sophie: "He used to like draw on the walls and stuff like."

Morgan: "Really?"

Helen: "Yeah he used to always draw like chalk on the mats, like lie here..."

Sophie: "Yeah he like drew stick men like stick people with tongues."

These were the things and events that mattered as girls recounted their experiences of primary school PE—the events where the PE teacher had to climb out the window because someone locked the class inside the gym hall and drawing stick people with chalk on the mats. These "silly, ephemeral (and not-so-silly) little things that happened" structured what mattered to girls as they recounted their stories of primary school PE (Horton & Kraftl, 2006b: 271-272).

Much can be learned from these silly things that happened as well as from the 'silly' ways in which girls chose to be physically active—moving their bodies at any point in their day that was unstructured by a school timetable or adult request/expectation. To illustrate my point, I draw on observations of an S1 PE class at Willow High and from observations of the Girls Keep Active Clubs at Rosefield Primary and Cherry Tree Primary.

(Extract from Research Diary):

*After I spoke to the S1 class of girls at Willow High about my research, there was about 20 minutes left in the PE period. The PE teacher told the girls, "there is no point in changing and doing PE for 20 minutes, so you can just chat; are you ok with that?" They all said "yes"...At first they just stayed in the groups they were in and sat chatted and gradually some girls, mostly in pairs some in threes, started to get up and swing each other around by their hands and feet...and one would swing another in a circle while yet another girl jumped over the swinging girl's feet as she went round and round...like this little picture I sketched...(See Figure 8.1).*

**Figure 8.1: Field sketch of S1 girls playing during free time in PE at Willow High**



*It was really interesting to watch how, even though they didn't have any equipment available to them, or any formal instruction to move about or do a specific task/sport/physical activity, they made use of their own bodies to move and make movement. Some of them did this for quite a while, while others were content to chat. The ones who were moving around were laughing and smiling and seemed to be enjoying their own movement as well as the shared movement with their peers.*

The girls at Willow High needed no instruction or structured curriculum as motivation to move themselves around—be physical active, and they clearly enjoyed themselves as they initiated and directed the movement of their own and their friends' bodies, with no attention to how skilled, able, good or bad they were at any particular activity, or what they were or were not doing in respect to anyone else in the class. Similar to the S1 girls at Willow High, the P6 and P7 girls in my Keep Active Club at the primary schools were always already in motion when they arrived for the start of the club after school and they needed no prompting or motivation to exercise their bodies. In fact, I had to ask them often to stop moving around and to come sit down together as a group so we could discuss the day's 'planned' activities. These girls were just *being* themselves, enjoying the freedom they had between their day of primary school scheduled and structured by teachers and their afternoon of 'planned' Keep Active activities. There was no concern amongst these girls about the next moment, the future, the becoming. Rather their full attention was on the present moment, of enjoying the experience of whatever activity they were involved in from whacking tennis balls off the wall to carrying each other around the gym hall.



A final event-space (Marston et al., 2005) wherein girls having 'fun' was observed, experienced and emphasized was through an S3 class of Scottish Country Dancing (SCD) in PE. I discuss Scottish Country Dancing throughout this chapter and the changing emotions and expressions of enjoyment which girls of different ages shared with me. I also had the opportunity to observe S1 through S4 year groups doing SCD and this chapter attends also to these observations.

For the majority of the girls in the S3 class, sport and physical activity was not a particularly important or interesting or fun part of their lives; furthermore, these girls were in the lowest ability fitness class and many of them did not participate in physical activity outside of school. However near the end of the focus group, it was revealed that most of the girls were very excited about the upcoming block of SCD in PE leading up to their winter or Christmas dance. Sabrina shared, "It's funny that we get so excited about it". Heather (S3 Pleasant Hill) described her experience of ceilidh dancing in PE with me:

"You get a partner, they (PE teachers) put on Scottish music, say like the Gay Gordons, say like, you do a dance it's so good, it gives you a bit of a buzz, but it's only when you're with a boy that you like, like not like in that way, but like with a friend who's a boy."

Heather (S3 Pleasant Hill) shared that doing Scottish Country Dancing gave her "a buzz" a feeling of euphoria and enjoyment. Heather's reflections on the experience were confirmed through my observations of the class.

(An extract from the research diary):

*It was certainly apparent during my observations of this and other S3 and S4 classes during the*

*period of Scottish dancing that it was a unique opportunity to combine fun and enjoyment with teaching and practicing skills that will be useful for a lifetime. During the S3 and S4 classes which I observed, there was little time spent instructing on behalf of the teachers. One teacher shouted out a dance such as "Strip the Willow", put the music on and the class became organized chaos as everyone rushed to find a partner (they were allowed to self-select) and a space and confer with friends to confirm the correct sequences of steps for the specific dance. The teachers were very relaxed, chatting with each other, only stepping in when it appeared that the class was experiencing confusion in the steps.*

*It was a much more lively, fun and engaging atmosphere than the S1 class...also the teachers played not just traditional ceilidh music but also the 'Red Hot Chilli Pipers'. When I asked the girls if it was difficult to learn the dances, Sierra (S3, Pleasant Hill) replied "no not really because we've been learning it (SCD) for like nine years". There were smiles on many faces as the pupils did the dances enthusiastically and the teachers had to give the pupils a short break after each set/dance to let them catch their breaths! As the class warmed up and the sequences of the steps of each dance returned to pupils, the dances became more energetic. During some of the dances, where the class was in square sets (with four couples on the sides of a square) the boys were picking the girls up and swinging them around. Before one of the dances, Mr. Witherspoon told me that "they're going to do the 'Pleasant Hill-Eight'; it's their own dance that former school pupils have invented!" The 'Pleasant-Hill Eight' as I came to learn was a version of the traditional 'Cumberland Square Eight' and pupils were able to express their own creativity through developing a personalised dance unique to the school. The girls seemed to be genuinely enjoying this as they laughed, smiled and cried out in excitement. While I did not observe any girls sitting/opting out, I did observe several boys. Mr. Witherspoon addressed one boy who resisted participating by telling*

*him that he was being disrespectful to all of the female pupils in the class by refusing to dance with any of them. I left the S3 and S4 classes that day with the feeling that this was the one activity out of all of the activities that I had observed throughout the term where what mattered to the pupils and the staff in the class was the enjoyment of doing the activity and doing it with friends and refreshing their skills, rather than on scoring a goal, being the best at a sport or doing the most press ups. In the majority of the other classes/activities that I observed when pupils were doing rugby, gymnastics or badminton, what mattered was who else was doing what else and who else looked like what else.*

The girls in the S3 focus group (one of the groups I observed above) went on to describe how they had been learning Scottish dancing since they were in primary school and it was a useful and fun skill to know because then they would be going to school dances where there would be ceilidh dancing along with more contemporary (modern) dancing. “Yeah I think it’s really good because they put like modern music on and we get to dance to that and then they put on the Scottish music and we get to do ceilidh dancing!” Carla (S3, Pleasant Hill). In addition to participating in ceilidh dancing within the formal curriculum and at school dances, girls also enjoyed community cultural events such as weddings and holidays where ceilidh dancing was a main focus of the event.

Morgan: “And when you leave school will you go to ceilidh’s?”

Carla: “Yeah they have them in our village hall for like the New Year and stuff.”

Briony: “And for weddings.”

(S3 focus group Pleasant Hill).

Briony (S3, Pleasant Hill) noted that she did not attend the school dances, but “I still get the experience out of it because at my dad’s work they have ceilidh dances at Christmas parties for the staff and all their families”. Because Briony learned ceilidh dancing in PE, she knew the dances and had great fun and was able to participate in this socio-cultural part of her life as a Scottish young person.

It is apparent that this uniquely Scottish form of dancing—an event which has been adopted into the curriculum and absorbed as a responsibility for teaching by the physical education staff—was a notable, enjoyable and ‘useful’ part of many secondary school girls’ everyday experiences of doing PE. Interestingly, Scottish Country Dancing contradicts findings of girls’ participation declining with age, as Scottish country dancing (SCD) or ceilidh dancing seems to hold the interest of older pupils. It is an activity which is deeply engrained in the social and leisure culture of Scottish life and is neither traditionally masculine nor feminine, meaning that the negotiation of femininity deficit (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002) is not necessary. Because pupils are taught the simple dance steps in primary school and progress on to more complicated steps and dances in secondary school, they have the skills to enjoy themselves when participating at various events such as weddings, holidays, birthdays, and so forth. As girls grow older, and become assimilated into the grown-up world of social dancing and other forms of celebration which SCD is a part of, they possess a skill which allows them to participate. However, as I consider further on in the chapter, younger girls’ experience of SCD was different. The Scottish Inspectorate for Education (HMIe) carried out observations of several primary schools in 2006 and 2007 in light of the Scottish Executive’s (2003) report, *Let’s Make Scotland More Active (Physical Activity Task*

*Force*). One of the key strengths for physical education in Scotland based on these inspections was the “quality of performance in Scottish country dancing”.

What can be learned then, and what matters in the experience of the event of SCD, in particular from the focus group with the S3 girls at Pleasant Hill and the observations of S3 and S4 pupils during SCD unit of PE? The uninhibited manner in which girls moved freely throughout the dances, unconcerned by what others were doing or what others thought of them, meant that the focus was on the moment of the dance, the “buzz” (Heather, S3 Pleasant Hill) and enjoyment of the immediate act of moving around, laughing or being swung in the air by your partner. In this space, girls have the “feeling of *freedom*” that allows them “to throw (their) bodies through space and time with some amount of skill” acquired through learning the dances over many years both in PE and by participating in community and celebratory ceilidhs (Evans et al. 2006: 64). Within SCD there is no pressure to “perform ‘ability’” or feelings of being unable to complete a task out of inhibited intentionality; instead pupils were able to explore “creativity, diversity [and] exploration” through designing the ‘Pleasant Hill-Eight’ wherein the emphasis was on “discovering the pleasure of movement” (Evans et al 2006: 64). Such sharing of emotions of enjoyment and fun resulting from unmediated, impromptu and organised (SCD) encounters with physical activity allow for an understanding of the spaces which provided both the most pleasure and demonstrated that girls self-selected to be physically active on several occasions. While pleasure and enjoyment was experienced in the present moment of being physically active, girls also reflected on the enjoyment of leaving behind ‘child’ identities as they became older girls and young women, developing a sense for the activities that they now enjoyed and wanted to enjoy as they grew older. Such desires also intra-acted with learning and negotiating socio-cultural expectations of femininity which were increasingly more important as girls aged.

### 8.3 FUN IN BECOMING

As secondary school girls reflected on their experiences of PE in primary school at the beginning of Section 8.2, they recalled an informal play-based approach to sport and physical activity. While some of the secondary school girls reflected back on their enjoyment of the primary school PE experience, other girls considered it to be an enjoyable, but temporary time in which they looked forward to moving on, growing up, and out of child-like activities. A number of secondary school girls shared that:

“It was like *more laid back*, we played like rounders and one week we got like people skipping and that...Yea we had to play dodgeball and that with a soft ball” (Kirsten, S1 Pleasant Hill, emphasis added).

“[In primary school] it was just like kinda; *it wasn't like sports it was just like little playground games rather than proper sports*” (Sienna, S2 Pleasant Hill, emphasis added).

Many girls perceived PE in primary school to be child's play, rather than 'proper' structured sport: “It isn't really PE; it's just games” (Sarah S2, Pleasant Hill). This is an important finding in consideration of Niven et al.'s (2009) study on changes in Scottish girl's physical activity in the transition from primary to secondary school. Based on self-reported perceptions of physical activity in P7-S3, the authors found that “girls perceived that they spent more time being very active in PE in secondary school than in primary school”. Niven et al. (2009) question whether this self-reported increase is actual or “due to a change of perception of the level of activity”, noting that girls may perceive organized sports—such as those done in secondary school PE—to be more

'active' than the play and games characteristic of primary school PE. Notably this finding cannot be assessed against Scottish Health Survey findings as the 2003 survey did not include time spent doing curricular PE.

Most secondary girls however, on reflection of their primary school experiences, said that they enjoyed their current secondary school experience of PE more than primary school PE. For these girls, becoming secondary school pupils meant the opportunity to try new activities and meet more people and to leave behind child-like identities. For Carla (S4, Willow High) the secondary school experience of PE was enhanced by the new activities that she had never before had the opportunity to try: "Up here (in secondary school), everything was brand new, like badminton and basketball and getting to go to the gym and like netball and going to the sports centre to do trampolining." In many of the responses; it was apparent that the girls found PE to be more enjoyable in secondary school than it was in primary school for a number of reasons: the opportunities to meet new friends and mix with more people, the chance to do a wider variety of activities and sports and the opportunity to learn more formalised sports instead of 'just playing games'.

The transition from primary school to secondary school brought many changes for pupils as they moved from structurally smaller spaces to larger ones, from familiar, local peers and friends to unfamiliar faces, from one classroom teacher to specialist subject teachers, and from a looser timetable and more flexible curricular content to structured periods and examinable subjects. Thus, one might wonder why this period is also linked repeatedly to *reduced* levels of participation. Some girls reflected on these changes, with some sharing that they dropped out of sport and exercise at this age, while others indicated that they stopped doing certain activities in favor of other ones. One girl at Willow High noted how she used to be involved in ballet dancing

but stopped when she came to high school:

Tallianna (S4): "I used to do ballet dancing... I stopped when I came to high school I just thought it was embarrassing so I stopped doing it."

Morgan: "So was it embarrassing doing it with all the other girls?"

Talianna: "No I stopped; it's just like a little girls' thing, and I stopped doing it."

In a review of qualitative literature on participation in sport and physical activity among both children and adults, Allender et al. (2006) highlighted that (Coakley & White, 1992) found that for teenagers transitioning from childhood to adulthood stood as a notable time of drop-out from all physical activities. Teenagers did not wish to be associated with activities which they described as 'childish' and instead chose activities that were independent and conferred a more adult identity upon them (Coakley & White, 1992). While the transition to secondary school is often a time of change, excitement and awe, it is also a time when children are encouraged to 'grow up', and adopt more adult-like identities. Expectations that they have of themselves, and of their peers and expectations that adults have of teenagers, are changing. Research on peer group cultures has revealed that friendship and peer pressure is "crucial to young people's sense of identity, self-esteem, and security" and that "peer 'norms'...are highly embodied and are predicated upon adult notions of heterosexualised gender identities" (Valentine, 2003: 42). Accordingly, extracurricular activities that female pupils may have been involved in while in primary school such as ballet, gymnastics or just playing games with friends, are often put aside in order to make time for more 'grown up' sports or activities, or social activities such as hanging out with friends, responsibilities including caring for family members or domestic chores and academic responsibilities such as studying for exams. These newly acquired expectations and



responsibilities may result in girls ceasing to participate in particular activities (altogether or for certain periods of time) or trading participation in one (childhood) activity for another (more grown up) activity. It may also reinforce the discrepancy Niven et al. (2009) determine, between reported activity and other data.

However, peer pressure or growing up was not the only factor, revising or studying before and during exam time was given as a major contributing factor for why girls in my study stopped doing physical activity (at least temporarily). As the excerpt below from Ms. Brown (Pleasant Hill) reveals, PE staff and others who provision for after school or extracurricular sport notice 'tail offs' in participation/attendance at sports clubs when exam time comes.

"I don't know whether it's boys or exams; exams are a big thing here, because we quite often find that extracurricular hockey during the winter time you often find that senior girls come Christmas time there will be a bit of a dip after Christmas period, during prelim exam time and then they'll come back again and then there'll be a dip again before the Easter holiday which is exams time again, so I think I can say, yeah there's a lot of parental pressure which is put on them academically..."

Several of the girls in the focus groups highlighted the importance of exams and suggested it was a reason why they stopped doing a particular sporting activity at least for a short time.

Morgan: "Ok, do your friends do like sport and fitness?"

Iona: "Some of them do."

Polly: "But like we've got exams and that like coming up."

Iona: "So we've like cut back a bit."

Morgan: “So your exams take precedence over your physical activity time?”

Polly: “Yeah because you need to study and that.”

(S2 Focus Group Willow High)

As previously mentioned, as part of my fieldwork, I observed in an after school activity session set up with the funding from the Fit for Girls programme at Pleasant Hill. The activity session was held over an 8-week period. To gain a better understanding of the participants’ (girls’) enjoyment, likes, dislikes, suggestions and further feedback, I designed a questionnaire which was distributed by an Active Schools Coordinator and another member of school staff. One question on the questionnaire was ‘If you did not attend every session, what was your main reason for not attending every session’. Overwhelmingly, the most common reason (36% of girls in S4) did not attend every session was because of studying, homework or revising for preliminary examinations. The higher year groups (S4) were the most concerned with time to study and therefore, were more likely to miss a Fit for Girls session than were girls from the younger year group. In an era where the government is increasingly concerned with numeric targets for both participation in sport and physical activity and academic success, it appears that contemporary politics concerned with children’s and young people’s educational attainment is at odds with itself.

Following the transition to secondary school girls are socially positioned as adolescents in the fuzzy grey area between childhood and adulthood. Although it is defined as a sexual stage (which is actively negotiated by those who are defined as adolescents), we cannot deny that the body’s corporeal changes intra-act with *social* behaviour (Thorne, 1993). While I believe in recognizing the adolescent as one which is characterized by a period of bodily change (which influences and is influenced by social discourse), I believe that adolescents cannot be fully separated from the socially constructed categories of children or adults, regardless of how they

are separated through western practices of social exclusion. The primary contested social boundaries that exist to define young people and set them apart from the world of adults, are those of exclusion from such practices as voting, consuming alcohol, consenting to sexual intercourse and marriage, and so on until a certain age is reached (James, 1986 in Skelton and Valentine, 1998). To theoretically separate adolescents from children or adults would be to create further boundaries and binaries and emphasize a lack of something in adolescents (namely the qualities that children or adults possess, or are believed to possess) rather than a whole (Aitken, 2001). Thus while arguing for an 'identity' for the adolescent, placing the adolescent as belonging somewhere (namely in between-and recognizing that in between *is* some place) and being someone(s), I do not mean that links to socially constructed childhood and likewise with socially constructed adulthood need to be, nor could they be 'thrown out'. Sibley highlights the grey area in which adolescents are *situated* socially, by explaining that adolescents are "denied access to the adult world, but they attempt to distance themselves from the world of the child. At the same time they retain some links to childhood" (Sibley, 1995a; 34-35, emphasis added).

For one girl in the Fit for Girls programme, the opportunity to try Zumba which she was not allowed to in her community space—because of her social identity as a child—was received with much pleasure.

Dani: "I sort of liked the Zumba..."

Morgan: "Ok why did you like the Zumba?"

Dani: "Cause like there's one –Zumba class—where I live and that was only for adults and I was like that looks like fun I want to try it but then that's for adults so like and then when I found out about it at FFG I was like yeah I'm going to get to do it!!"

Morgan: "So the one where you live you can't go because it's only for adults?"

Dani: "Mmm hmm."

Dani was denied access to the Zumba classes within her local community; however by participating in Zumba through FFG she gained access to an activity which conferred on her a more 'grown-up' fitness identity. The primary contested social boundaries that exist to define young people and exclude them from the world of adults, at the same time focus on the child/young person *becoming* adult through educational and political practices and discourses. Young people are excluded from such practices as voting, consuming alcohol, consenting to sexual intercourse and marriage, and so on until a certain age is reached (James, 1986 in Skelton and Valentine, 1998); at the same time, within educational and political discourses of health, young people are expected to take responsibility for their individual and national health.

"Adolescence is an ambiguous zone within which the child/adult boundary can be variously located according to who is doing the categorising" (Sibley, 1995). I would also add that the boundary can be variously located according to *where—in what space*—the categorising is transpiring. Dani was allowed to do Zumba in the Fit for Girls activities, but her local community Zumba class excluded her. While adolescence remains at the site of this 'fuzzy boundary', it is also a period in time during which the body experiences many changes; thus, Skelton and Valentine (1998; 6) draw on the work by Frankenberg (1992) and James (1986) to highlight the aforementioned 'boundary' and situate the body of the adolescence and period of adolescence as believed to be without value and 'lost in between' the categories of child and adult. James (1986; 155) states, "Consequently, for those classified as 'adolescent' the very formlessness of the category which contains them is problematic: neither child nor adult the adolescent is *lost* in between, belonging *nowhere*, being *no one*" (emphasis added). Adolescents are arguably *located*

in between, but the greater problem lies in thinking that they are *lost* in between. Accordingly, we must reclaim the importance of and give meaning to adolescence, and re-identify the adolescent as *situated* in between, belonging *somewhere*, and being *someone(s)* with important knowledge and experience which can be used to understand how and why there is a significant drop off in girls' participation in physical activity as they transition from the socially defined child-to-adulthood.

Another girl (at Pleasant Hill) who was in second year and attended ballet classes discussed the possibility that she probably would not do ballet any more after a few years and she would probably do other 'sport' activities after leaving (high) school.

Sarah: "Yeah maybe [when I leave school] I might not stay with dancing but I'd do something else."

Morgan: "Yeah so what else might you do?"

Sarah: "Yeah like go to the gym and swimming perhaps, I don't know."

For Dani (S1) and Sarah (S2) (Pleasant Hill), fun lies in the opportunity to experience activities that were not accessible to them as young(er) girls. Whereas for Talianna (S4, Willow High), shedding her childlike activity of ballet is important for her as she moves to adopt a socially accepted feminine role, revealing clear tensions between pressures to negotiate feminine norms and desires to try adult activities.

A number of young women in the study by Coakley & White (1992) also expressed a belief or observation that 'adult' women did not participate in any physical activity or sport (Coakley & White, 1992 in Allender et al., 2006: 831). Print and televised media coverage of women in sport is rather rare with the 2007/2008 'Women in Sport' Audit revealing that only 2% of UK sports

media coverage is of women's elite sport. When Emma (P6 Cherry Tree) expressed her opinion that "football is for boys", Jessica argued that "girls can play as well". Emma followed by indicating the source of her knowledge: "yeah but you don't see girls kicking the ball around on the telly. I don't see girls on the telly!" Emma's exposure to—a lack of—UK media coverage of women's sports informs her belief that because women's football is not given the extensive coverage that men's football is, football is reserved for boys and men. As girls observe the presence (or absence) of women in televised or print sports media, at a time-age when they are learning both about what is expected of them as adults and how to forge a self-identity, moves to leave behind 'childish' or non-womanly activities like ballet may be inevitable.

While through Scottish Country Dancing, the older S3-S4 age groups shared with me present experiences of 'fun', most of the younger age groups (primary girls) looked forward to leaving behind primary school experiences of SCD which for the most part they found unenjoyable, unlike the fun they had in other games. Jessa (P6, Cherry Tree) shared with me that she doesn't like SCD "because my partner doesn't behave properly". Laura (P5 Rosefield Primary) told me, "We have to do Scottish country dancing, which I hate. Well it is ok if you're with a girl", revealing that her enjoyment of SCD was dependant upon the opportunity to partner with a girl.

While many of the primary school girls shared a lack of enjoyment in SCD due to frustrations with immature behaviour on behalf of boys, Zoe (P6 Rosefield Primary) expressed that "it is the most boring thing in the world and I hate it, I hate it, I hate it!" Only a small handful of girls indicated that they enjoyed SCD in primary school. Emma (P7 Rosefield Primary) indicated that she enjoyed SCD immensely and also participated in SCD as an extra curricular activity. Emma explained her reasons for enjoying SCD: "You're always on the go in Scottish Country Dancing, no person is left out and there's always a different step after the first one, so it's quite fast and fun". While Emma was still in primary school (at the time of researching) and so cannot compare her

experience to SCD in secondary school, Red, Alison and Ring (S2 Sunnyside) were the only three secondary school girls who shared that they preferred the primary school experience of SCD to the secondary school experience.

Red: "(SCD in primary school) was fine because that was alright."

Alison: "Yeah because you didn't really care."

Red: "In primary school you're so young and you've been with these people for so long and it's just such a small group of people that you've known like forever and you know them well enough so it's alright! And then here you're like with all these new people that you just don't know."

Ring: "When you have to do that dance where you like 'all go round in a circle' and then you've got different partners who you just like don't know..."

Red: "Cause like everybody's looking to see like who you've got like, who's got who's partner and who your partner is next and you're like oh no, I've got them next!!!"

S2 Focus Group Sunnyside)

Red, Alison and Ring reflected that the familiarity of their peers when doing SCD in primary school made the experience "alright" because they were acquainted with their classmates, whereas the experience in S1 and S2 was fraught with anticipation of what partner you might be paired with.

Concurrent with primary school girls' feelings of frustration about boy's behaviour and lack of enjoyment in SCD in primary school, my observations of one double period of SCD instruction for S1 revealed social dynamics between boys and girls which indicated elements of playing, fooling around and squeamishness, dynamics which differed from those within the older year groups (S3 and S4).

(An extract from the research diary):

*The pupils were grouped by the teachers and pupils were not allowed to choose their partner for the dances. The teachers took them through the steps very slowly at first without music and then latterly with music...there was a lot of 'fooling around' mostly by the boys I thought...pulling their sleeves down over their hands so they wouldn't have to make skin-skin contact with girls' hands, kicking each other's bottoms when they were going around in a circle in a group and various other bodily actions which deviated from the 'rules' of the dance. Generally though, all the kids, boys and girls, participated in learning and doing (to whatever extent) the dances and no one sat on the side. The music was all traditional ceilidh music and I really got the feeling that for many of the kids this was the first time they were properly learning Scottish dancing (although many had said they'd been to weddings or parties where they did ceilidh dancing before). There was a school Christmas dance that night and many of the girls were really excited about it.*

Despite that girls shared with me that they had been learning SCD since primary school, upon observation of the S1 class, it appeared that many of the pupils did not know the steps or sequences for the dances and the teachers utilised a very formal form of instruction. The boys acted in particular ways, using their bodies and clothing to actively resist holding hands or touching the girls through the dance. Interestingly, in other sporting activities, such as rugby and basketball, girls shared that boys were very willing to engage in embodied contact by tackling girls or throwing basketballs at them. SCD however is a social form of physical activity, of dancing where often, at community or family events, your 'partner' is your spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend. In the school based space of PE, this presents pupils with the challenge of negotiating what is



expected of them by teachers—to learn and perform the dances as they develop their sense of identity through the making of peer groups and learn to negotiate various expectations and self-assertions of sexuality.

While the S1 and S2 year groups at Pleasant Hill were very concerned with their assignment of partner and the dynamics in the class flowed around sexual tensions between boys and girls, S3 and S4 year groups appeared to have ‘matured’ past the stage of awkwardly negotiating peer group expectations and seemed to be more interested in enjoying themselves with little regard or concern for their actual choice or assignment of partner for each dance.

As girls move into secondary school they are increasingly encouraged in PE class to focus their attention towards and take responsibility for their ‘health’ as the rationale for doing sport/physical activity. As girls learned more and more about what is socially and culturally accepted as the healthy feminine body, pressures to perform and embody this expectation may result in a loss of enjoying the present moment of being, and for girls increasing disengagement with activities they may have previously enjoyed, and/or still enjoy but disengage from as they move towards fulfilling feminised roles. While female pupils expressed pleasure in becoming secondary school pupils gaining them access to a wider variety of sporting opportunities, the opportunity to meet new people and make more and new friends, many of them lose opportunity to be in and enjoy the moments of physical activity.

Constructions of children and childhood within socio-political health discourses of responsibility make assumptions that children will do not choose to do a physical activity if given a choice (Hemming, 2007). The answer offered by many in attempts to incite girls’ participation is to offer motivation, through either feminised activities and programmes or material things (hair dryers, beauty vouchers) (Chapter 6) or by threatening future health risks (Chapter 7). Feminising certain sports and physical activities for girls and women is making it more acceptable for some

girls to participate in or continue participation in sports. Sports or exercises activities such as jogging or running, going to the gym (to use cardiovascular machines rather than weight machines), or going to Zumba classes were often cited as activities that girls said they would do when they 'become' older, or activities that they would like to try because they perceived enjoyment in such activities and such activities conferred more adult identities. However, feminising activities merely serves to perpetuate binaries and exclusionary practices of girls' and boys' sport, thereby limiting enjoyment of gymnastics or dance only to those who conform to traditional notions of femininity. Employing health threats related to fatness and inactivity to incite participation within the dominant exercise = slenderness = health discourse ignores completely any of the evidence that suggests that sustained participation is closely tied to bodily feelings of enjoyment. Clearly, there are changing feelings and desires that girls themselves have of what activities are fun to them as they get older. Such desires intra-act with changing socio-cultural expectations of—and provisioning for—the activities deemed appropriate for girls and women as they grow older. Tensions between being and becoming through embodied sensations of pleasure associated with being physically active above reveal that growing up within contemporary framings of gender and health and institutional and cultural expectations of fitness, presents girls with multiple challenges as they attempt to negotiate and forge a relationship between their bodies and kinetic activities. Educational and political framings of the child *becoming* future healthy citizen, neglect girls' present states of enjoyment and pleasure and also fails to acknowledge that present states of enjoyment are likely to change as girls grow older.

## 8.4 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter prioritised and developed an understanding of fun and enjoyment employing the theoretical framework of being and becoming through the physically active space of the young girl into teenage adolescent body. Policies which are concerned with improving the number of girls doing sport and affording more girls the opportunity to participate in physical activity, must be aware of and prioritise enjoyment, not of the activity itself but of the individual within the activity. The Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation (2007) provides evidence that *enjoyment* is the most likely of indicators for sustained engagement in sport or physical activity among girls and women. My findings enhance this evidence indicating that girls' reflections on enjoyable encounters with physical activity through being young(er) and becoming old(er) must be prioritised.

Through attention towards embodied experiences, girls revealed enjoyable embodied experiences of doing sport and pleasurable sensations derived from moving the body uninhibited through space, touching other bodies and engaging with various and different physical activities. When we remain open to the opportunities that present themselves to us in the present—chance encounters which present themselves to us everyday—we see how girls choose to embrace or reject such opportunities based on whether or not they are pleasureable. The opportunity for 'free time' after I visited the S1 girls in PE Willow High—presented itself to the girls resulting in the choice—by a number of the girls to get up and move around, having fun with their friends. Free from the structured curriculum of physical education, and pressures to perform ability of femininity, these girls made the decision to be physically active. While not all girls made this decision—a similar number chose to sit and chat with friends—the rationale for the respective

decisions of both groups of girls (the movers and the chatters) was 'fun'. If we pay attention to the ways in which and spaces through which enjoyment is created and fulfilled, free from requirements to perform femininity or thinness and satisfy health imperatives, or , and fulfil testing and measurement standards, we can see that many girls can and do choose to be physically active. Accordingly, in relation to both primary and secondary school girls, my findings support Hemming's (2007: 367) conclusion, that when (primary school aged) children are free to make a choice—to do or not do an activity—they make it based on “emotional experiences of pleasure and enjoyment”.

This does not preclude the reality that children possess knowledge of government health discourses about physical activity (as the previous chapter demonstrated), but rather that many children and young people take part in physical activity of multiple kinds because they enjoy it, rather than for 'health' reasons. Indeed, both primary and secondary school girls in my study possessed and demonstrated a good understanding of the health messages that were being taught to them (as indicated in Chapter 7). However, as girls moved on to secondary school, they were increasingly expected to shed primary school days of games and play and adopt an adherence to government and school health programmes accept responsibility for their health through participation. Girl's experiences of PE in secondary school did retain elements of fun, but these experiences were had through the opportunity to do multiple, new and more 'grown-up' activities and by particular year groups during particular activities (S3 girls in Scottish Country Dancing).

Clearly it is a challenging task for educators in provisioning physical activity for girls. Educators must pay attention to how 'fun' and notions of 'fun' change with age as girls are given and requested to assume responsibilities (related to femininity, citizenship and health). At the

same time it is complicated because girls expressed both a desire for fun and for more 'grown-up' activities—as many girls themselves desired the opportunity—as they aged—to participate in (such as Zumba) from which they were previously excluded. Growing up and getting older, presents new challenges within the theoretical framework of being and becoming as girls must leave behind childhood activities and some also desire to leave them behind. The difficulty lies in grappling with the understanding of girls' ageing through sport by allowing and recognising that the body grows and changes (albeit at different individual rates) but desires to cling to childhood identities at the same time as forging new independent identities shift back and forth. Prioritising girls' embodied emotions of fun through the activities which they enjoyed starts to pave a way towards understanding girls' experiences of and participation in physical activity. Therefore, an theoretical understanding of ageing in relation to childhood studies informed by the view that we are always *in between* being and becoming, allows for an acceptance of holding on to (retaining) some elements of childhood while at the same time learning and developing further interests as new skills are acquired. Furthermore, this understanding—of always in between being and becoming—allows for slippage back and forth between childhood activities, events, experiences and adult futures, recognising that we are all always in a process of 'becoming' something or someone so that we may 'be'. At the same time we are always already being ourselves while we may be working towards becoming (shifting identities, adding new layers, new knowledge and new experiences to ourselves).

The structures, such as the institutions of the British state-funded school in which the girls in my study live their lives, forces an abrupt social, temporal and (most often) spatial move from child to adult in the transition between primary and secondary school. With lack of attention to how girls' perceive or experience these transitions, especially within the realm of the bodily

experience of doing physical activity, sport or PE, we are unable to support and provide for the changes (bodily and emotional) which will inevitably happen as girls age. Accordingly, attention to the transition period is paramount with much of the literature on girls' participation in sport, suggesting that this is a tumultuous time for many girls, wherein participation rates in sport and physical activity drop off significantly and perhaps more importantly, never recover (Scottish Health Survey, 2008). Prioritising girls' emotions of fun and enjoyment particularly at the time of transition between the structures of primary and secondary school with the understanding that they will always be *in between* being (the socially constructed category of) children and becoming (the socially constructed category of) adult is a necessity.

This chapter concludes the empirical body of the thesis by paying attention to how girls' enjoyment of various encounters, experiences and activities within PE and sport changed with age and 'growing up'. Enjoyment matters greatly in girls' experiences of PE and physical activity as girls reflected on and I observed the moments in which inhibitions and pressures to perform were removed from the space of physical activity. I paid attention to considerations of 'growing up, getting older 'going on' and change in spaces of sport and physical activity. Chapter 9 follows in concluding the thesis. Through Chapter 9, I revisit the thesis aim and research questions in connection with the literature and empirical findings to highlight the embodied geographies of physical activity and physical education by tying together the threads between the things that mattered to girls' experiences.

## Chapter 9

### *CONCLUSION AND FINAL SUMMATIONS*

#### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

Geographies go on and on and are “are embodied, although many geographies actually exceed single bodies (Thrift, 2004 in Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 273). Through an investigation of the everyday embodied geographies of gender and health this thesis revealed new and further knowledge of what matters to girls’ experiences of physical activity and physical education, substantiating and filling gaps left by, practitioners, educational or health policy and feminist and geographic accounts of girls’ experiences of physical activity. Making no attempt to present the conclusion as “too satisfied [with] all the edges rounded off” (Enloe, 2004: 177), this chapter returns to the research questions, offers several policy recommendations and asserts the limitations of my study signposting potential for future research. The chapter structure flows by first returning to and linking the research questions; accordingly, I revisit girls’ embodied experiences, intra-active with political and institutional structures, spaces, events, other bodies, materialities, gender, health and age providing a cohesive summary for the thesis. Second, I highlight the main contributions of the study. In closing I pull out the threads of gender and health, provide the limitations of the thesis and provide a final summation.

## 9.2 EVERYDAY EMBODIED EXPERIENCES

Attending to the first research question, the variety and diversity of the empirical chapters demonstrates that girls' everyday embodied experiences of physical activity and PE are multiple, relational and mosaic. Experiences folded, flowed and coagulated upon encounters within and between the event-spaces of physical activity (Marston et al., 2005). Allowing the fieldwork to unfold, and letting girls speak to and demonstrate what mattered to them as they experienced physical education, the chapters developed around relational themes of scale (Chapter 4), spaces/spacings (Chapter 5), gender (Chapter 6), health (Chapter 7) and aging (Chapter 8). In substantiating my argument of how I came to know that something/one matters, I acknowledge that as a researcher, I can never really 'know' if one thing mattered more than another in girls' accounts and my researcher observations. My positionality additionally inevitably limited my knowledge and my interpretations were always partial and subjective (Salzman, 2002). However, I argue that what 'mattered' to the girls was communicated verbally through an emphasis on feelings (sadness, pain, fear and happiness) upon reflection of an experience (event, encounter). That is, that which mattered—an action, event, space or person (or combination of these),—evoked either a physical result or an emotional feeling which were the catalysts for further action.

While disrupting ontological understandings of scale hierarchy (Marston et al., 2005), Chapter 4 maintained that girls' experiences are not limited to the local scale of the gym hall or playing field; at the same time, physicality and embodiment, poses a qualitative distinction between relations of near, (in the intimate space of the gym hall) and far, (in unobserved places where curricular structure and classroom pedagogies are drawn up) (Ansell, 2009). Attending to recent critiques within children's geographies concerned with the overwhelming emphasis on local and qualitative experiences (Philo, 2000; Halfacree, 2004; Ansell, 2009), I attended to the ways in



which government discourses of health flowed into and restructured Scottish PE, and the challenges that teachers had in learning and delivering new curricular frameworks, not least because of lack of training and knowledge. The 'male-view' developed by the Scottish School of Physical Education, favoring the teaching and cultivating of perceptual-motor skills through sports (Kirk, 2002) also continues to inform contemporary structures and practices (Chapter 6). Chapter 4 revealed that spaces such as the gym hall or playing fields of physical education are not neutral nor are they contained or bounded, as they are shaped by interrelations which extend beyond immediate classroom encounters (Ansell, 2009); however, much of what goes on inside and between the intimate, everyday spaces of physical education, revealed as girls reflected on memories of what mattered to them in their everyday engagements with PE, was framed by the intimate geographies of changing rooms, gym halls, playing fields and community sport spaces.

As Chapter 5 attended to, girls' experiences were framed by and intra-acted with everyday spaces and practices. Intimate geographies of changing rooms, gym halls, playing fields and community sport spaces, allowed for an understanding of how everydayness mattered to girls' embodied experiences. Material things like PE kit revealed girls' feelings about and relationships with the kit itself and the complex and relational materialities (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a) which resulted from practices and power relations attached to and involving PE kit. By paying attention to material things such as PE kit and following the connections which developed between girls' reflections on the kit itself as well as the practice/event of changing into and out of the kit which raised questions of privacy, discipline and schooling practices allowed me to affirm that complex and personal meanings and emotions are attached to material things (Attfield, 2000). At Willow High and Sunnyside where the wearing of PE kit was a requisite for participation, girls actively resisted doing PE by refusing to bring or change into PE kit.

Space limitations mattered to schools as staff attempted to deliver a varied, improved or 'comfortable' PE experience. PE at Pleasant Hill was often held outdoors for at least one of the classes scheduled in a period due to lack of indoor sport space. At Sunnyside, due to the archaic qualities of the sporting and changing spaces, teachers gave pupils the opportunity to access better facilities by using town sport spaces. At (the old) Willow High, PE space was limited to one tiny gymnasium and the majority of classes were held in the local sports centre which pupils were bussed to—presenting staff and pupils with very limited time to actually 'do PE'! Staff shared desires for newer, better, lighter, more contemporary and open spaces, filled with modern sporting equipment; in one school—the (new) Willow High, where PE spaces were only a year old, staff and pupils alike highlighted the improved experience of PE through the acquisition of newer PE spaces. What happened inside and between event-spaces were 'everyday' occurrences, "which [while they] may [or may] not have mattered when they happened" came to matter in the research space of doing focus group interviews or speaking with girls as they sat on the bench instead of participating in PE (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 272). These everyday things that mattered, structured who the girls "were, who they think they are and what they might become" (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 271). They structured and are relational to the girls "senses of growing" up as young females in Scotland, "of going on, of coping with life...of temporality, well-being, body image, attractiveness and more" (Horton & Kraftl, 2006a: 271-272).

Everyday experiences of activities such as rugby and football, which some girls enjoyed, were loathed by others. Such experiences, as I explored in chapter 6, were framed by teachers' dualistic expectations of gendered embodiment, girls' framings of their own, relational abilities and encounters with other girls and boys moving bodies in the physical activity space. Wider understandings of masculinity and femininity with respect to sport and physical activity which are enacted through cultural representations, understandings and privileges of masculine and

feminine bodies in sport, inform girls own feelings about themselves in the everyday event-space of PE. The interactions, encounters and discourses within the space of mixed-sex or single-sex PE varied depending on the sport or physical activity being played/taught, and the other relational bodies—teachers, boys and other girls—as a result of wider understandings of embodied femininities and masculinities in sport.

Health policies such as government guidelines for physical activity, recommendations on caloric intake and management of obesity through provisioning of school-based programmes of sport are enacted in the *everyday* event-space (Marston et al., 2005) of PE and are interpreted and taught by teachers, and received and interpreted by pupils. Contemporary obesity discourses, supporting dualistic understanding of the thin/fat, healthy/unhealthy body are used as everyday teaching tools, crossing classroom boundaries and teachers' own experiences in food, diet and nutrition. Girls' everyday engagements with their own bodies, doing everyday activities such as swimming or running, and feeling the effects of and bodily encounters with such activities allowed for an exploration of what it feels like to be a fat, thin, physically active or not, girl intra-acting with social and institutional structures (Colls, 2007) in PE (Chapter 7).

Everyday, banal, unstructured moments within PE, where girls were free from curricular content, performance (fitness ability) measures and pressures to satisfy health imperatives, through bodily practices, revealed the emotions of pleasure and enjoyment that many girls derive from engagements with physical activities which allow them to enjoy the movement of their bodies and participate in uninhibited and creative ways (Chapter 8). As girls age, they are increasingly under pressure to develop and perform heteronormative identities both inside and outside the space of PE. Such pressures present girls with a double bind as they work to negotiate expectations of engagement within PE, which run counter to the constitution of appropriate femininity in wider social and schooled life (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002).

There are clear challenges for educators and policy makers in provisioning activities for and engaging girls as they age. Attention to the everyday moments of enjoyment was discussed in the context of debates about the child *being* a social actor and/or becoming—an “adult in the making”, with a present lack of knowledge, responsibilities and skills necessary to actively participate in society (Uprichard, 2008: 304). By allowing girls’ emotions of pleasure to shed light on enjoyable experiences, and reflecting on my observations of fun events and activities, it is clear that girls exist *in between* being and becoming; girls were often in the process of awareness and attention to present emotions, needs and desires while at the same time actively negotiating, challenging, looking forward to the possibilities of future enjoyable encounters, opportunities and activities and reflecting back on past enjoyable experiences. While many secondary school girls emphasised the fun and games they had in primary school, in the same breath, they recognised that they were keen to trade childhood activities of ballet for ‘grown up’ activities of going to the gym or doing zumba. “Events, feelings and actions made and make...spaces more than mere containers for action” (Horton & Kraftl, 2006b).

The everydayness of our lives builds structures and creates the layers of our lives from which we build experiences and identities, and upon which we respond to and act upon at later dates/times. The everydayness of our childhoods matter to us as we make our way as older individuals in the world; as Horton & Kraftl (2006b) have, in a creatively academic way, shown us, when we reflect on what mattered to us as children, the everydayness of things, event-spaces (Marston et al., 2005) and embodiments comes to the forefront of our memories. Everyday embodied encounters, experiences, practices and performances contributed important knowledge of girls’ experiences of physical education and physical activity, revealing much more of what matters to girls’ experiences that is available in current feminist and practitioner literature on girls and sport.

### 9.3 CONTRIBUTING AND FURTHERING KNOWLEDGE

While I acknowledge the limitations of my study, this thesis makes important contributions to academic theory and research methodology, and has the potential to inform both the arenas of policy and practice in relation to girls' involvement in physical activity and sport. In this section I present my main contributions to knowledge, focusing first on the theoretical and conceptual, moving to discuss my methodological contributions and finally the potential for this research to inform both policy and practice.

Girls' participation in PE and school sport has been the focus of concern for feminist scholars (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002) sociologists (Rich 2007; Rich et al., 2010) geographers (Evans, 2006a) and researcher practitioners (Macdonald, 2003) who argue that despite changes to curriculum, facilities and kit, gendered trends of non-participation continue. Feminist research and theorising on girls' experiences has primarily focused on gender as the sole lens of analysis, understanding gendered frameworks of schools and how masculine understandings of sport filter into the institutional structure of Physical Education (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002). While this work is vital in establishing the foundations from which we understand gendered embodiment, other frameworks such as theorising health have been largely ignored. Through the thesis, I drew specifically on the embodied experiences of girls of all body shapes/sizes/weights, arguing that gendered constructions of feminine *health* through the body add an additional layer for girls to negotiate and experience. Where ideals of gender and health collide through the space of the body, it is imperative that we acknowledge, reveal and understand girls' embodied experiences of exercise and physical activity.

Much of the research within feminist theory into the socially constructed body has revealed that fleshy surfaces are marked, othered and built according to dominant and oftentimes

dualistic understandings of gender and health, framing individuals' negotiation in space (Johnston, 1996). Girls however, reflected on their experiences of being gendered and 'healthy' bodies inside gendered spaces, sometimes negotiating, sometimes challenging and other times conforming to embodied expectations, institutional codes and structures and practices. Such experiences and reflections revealed constant tensions between *performing* such expectations as gender, ability, health and *asserting* their own desires and emotions. To this extent, girls revealed that they are actively creating, challenging and intra-acting with the worlds in which they live, and are not merely passive, schooled and gendered bodies.

Arguing for the reclaiming and theorising of matter as intra-active within "social and cultural geography and for geographical accounts of fat bodies" Colls (2007: 353) demonstrates how fatness is felt on the body—how fatness has its own activity, and momentum and is not just acted-upon. Colls (2007: 358) demonstrates how social constructions of fat bodies and critical academic engagement with experiences of social constructions of fatness, evoke bodily matter only as passive, acted-upon, supporting the imposition of "particular discursive regimes upon fat bodies as lazy, incapable of self-control and irresponsible." Reclaiming and engaging with fat as "the bodily substance which...we can grab, squeeze, feel moving when we run and walk..." will allow for the reclamation of bodily matter (particularly fat) that "has its own capacities to act and be active" (Colls, 2007: 258). While recognising that this is not necessarily a more positive way of engaging with fatness, Colls (2007) argues that such engagement does open up space for fat bodies to surpass and change dominant conceptualisations. Sharing girls' stories of how the fleshy and socially constructed/marked body feels when doing kinetic activities like running or swimming—within spaces of fitness, and/or with other fleshy bodies, I was able to reveal and challenge dualistic accounts of the healthy and fit body; girls in my study additionally shared observations of fat girls' competencies, strengths and success in certain sports such as netball and

swimming disrupting dominant visual imaginings of the healthy and fit female/feminine body. However, girls' personal engagements with their own bodily matter, touching kinetic spaces of physical activity were often met with abjections (Longhurst, 2001).

Through a reframing of childhood theories of being and becoming (Uprichard, 2008) I developed an ongoing understanding of ageing whereby young people should be viewed as always 'in between' being and becoming, allowing for the emotions and experiences of fun and enjoyment to come to the forefront of theoretical understandings of young people's engagement with physical activity. This is especially visible wherein girls make the transition from primary to secondary school, and are often required to submit to fitness testing and streamed for 'ability'. When ability is linked to performative expectations of health through satisfying dualistic health imperatives where in fat  $\neq$  fit and thin/fat is understood as healthy/unhealthy, girls' freedom to enjoy and express themselves creatively through bodily movement, is lost. Once such enjoyment is lost, participation in activities is often abandoned or completed unenthusiastically. By allowing a theoretical slippage between being young/children and becoming old(er)/adults, while maintaining the emphasis on embodied/emotional enjoyment we can see the event-spaces (both close in to the body and further away through spaces of sport) where individuals can enjoy themselves the most.

Methodologically, my study contributes a new and unique way of conducting focus groups. The ways in which those doing research with children reveal the lives and worlds of these children are diverse; specific methods however, such as photography, drawing, multi-sensory methods (Bingley and Milligan 2009) and participatory methods (Gallagher 2009 and Kesby 2000) considered to be child-friendly or child-centered, are often used to engage with children through research. Attending to questions of children's competency in research practice and learning from embodied research practices such as yoga (Buckingham & Degen, 2010) and cycling (Petersen,

2010) allowed me to develop an innovative qualitative research method of kinetic focus groups with primary school girls. This method was particularly useful in engaging the girls and facilitating attention towards feelings and experiences immediately and directly related to running around enjoying the moment of the focus group. There is much scope for this work to be taken forwards; motivated by Buckingham & Degen (2010), I also see the potential for using yoga as a research tool to engage with girls and young women, helping those who have become disconnected from their bodies to learn to unite the breath, mind and body, allowing for the exploration of emotions and movement wherein trust and compassion for oneself can be regained. Following the PhD, through this method, I will be working in one school where I conducted research designing a yoga practice for a group of girls who refuse to participate in curricular PE.

In respect to policy contributions of the thesis, the decline in girls' participation in physical activity between the ages 11-13 is now of particular concern to UK policy makers and practitioners (PE teachers and other school sport deliverers). The concern is voiced within UK public health policy which is committed to preventing "overweight and obesity, both to contribute to achieving our purpose of sustainable economic growth, and also towards achieving a healthier Scotland" (The Scottish Government, 2010: v-vi). Within this commitment, provisioning of physical activity is widely believed to be an effective method for both improving health and reducing fatness. The National Health Service (2008) argues that physical activity is a vital policy area in an attempt to reverse current obesity trends by 2020. Accordingly, where children are concerned, physical education (PE) which is "valued and resourced because of the work it does in shaping" physical abilities and physical fitness and providing time and space in which to be physically active (Wright & Burrows, 2006: 278) is drawn inevitably into the obesity vortex (Gard, 2005; Kirk, 2006). Girl's experiential accounts are missing almost entirely from policy rhetoric while at the same time programmes and changes aimed specifically at improving girls' physical activity participation are



materialising throughout the UK. Increasingly, policy *is* concerned with children's bodies in respect to weight, fat and obesity, and to what children can and should do to decrease their body weights to satisfy health policy. Policy is not concerned with children's bodies or girls bodies when it relates to how girls' feel about their bodies when doing PE in front of other girls who are thinner and more sporty, or how it feels to be girls with gendered embodiments doing PE with boys in a mixed-sex class where the activity itself is already gendered. In other words, the emotional is written out of policy. Horton & Kraftl (2006b: 86) argue that things such as everydayness, bodies and spacings—which came to matter greatly to the young girls in my study—are important precisely because they “so often go ignored in such a diversity of contexts, with reference to multitudinous issues that really matter”. To inform policy makers of my study findings I have met with and disseminated this information to Green Party MSP Alison Johnstone and was asked to present at a ‘Cross Party Group for Children and Young People’ in Scotland in March 2013. Affecting policy may be difficult, however, and I feel a more urgent need to return to the schools in which I have conducted research; I now have the knowledge and commitment to revealing and fighting injustices which previously remained unchallenged during research encounters (see Chapter 3). Through practical work with girls and young women, and the application of the knowledge I have gained through research and analysis, I believe I will have a greater impact in imparting my research findings and enacting positive change.

In attempts to improve and increase girls' participation in Scotland a number of changes and additions are being made to physical education and other school-based sport. Research question 3 was answered in revealing that additions and changes within my study schools in attempts to improve girls' participation, including: aesthetic and tangible changes such as the addition of hair dryers or painting girls' changing rooms (Sunnyside); girl-only and girl-specific extracurricular activities, such as zumba and boxercise (Pleasant Hill); and, curricular changes, such

as the introduction of an aesthetic column to Standard Grade PE (Pleasant Hill). Additionally, the Fit for Girls (FfG) programme—a shared initiative between the Scottish Government, sportscotland and the Youth Sport Trust—is making changes to school sport in an attempt to improve girls' physical activity participation.

While any programme (such as Fit for Girls) or organisation (such as the WSFF) which seeks to provide new and a wider variety of opportunities for girls to be physically active is laudable, I remain cautious in my support. Such programmes continue to perpetuate “traditional understandings of male and female sports” (Wellard 2007: 3) as discussed in Chapter 6, whereby “[j]udgements about ‘ability’” in relation to “what are deemed to be ‘natural’ activities... [are] be framed in relation to...conceptions” about “gender, culture and class dynamics” (Penney 2007: 15). The UK government has failed to address gendered and sexist behaviours or critically question the rationale for mixed-sex or single-sex provision, which feminist scholars (Cockburn and Clarke, 2002; Hills, 2006 and Williams and Bedward, 2003) and researcher-practitioners (Wellard, 2007; Evans and Penney, 2002 and Macdonald, 2003) have shown may contribute to negative experiences, leading many girls to opt-out of PE. Instead, the UK government answer to non-participation among girls, has been to support programmes which add more feminine activities, provide rewards for participation in the form of beauty vouchers or provide girl-only (single-sex) activities. Such provisioning continues to support traditional heteronormative understandings of the girl and boy sporting body, allowing little space for the development of alternative sporting identities.

Contemporary dualistic understandings of health through thin or non-fat embodiment are heavily relied on and flow widely throughout PE; fatness and obesity have become teaching tools, often relied upon by staff members to incite participation. Wherein some girls challenge dualistic understandings of health, the majority of girls' readings of these messages, are resulting in

inherently unhealthy practices. Furthermore, such messages are having the opposite effect of their intention. Whereby fatness is framed as unfit, fat girls feel unwelcome in discursively thin and fit spaces of physical activity, thereby further disengaging. Whereby thinness is framed as healthy, thin girls see no need to do physical activity, because their current body size/weight satisfies health measures. 'Normal' weight girls also shared with me personal practices of binge eating and exercise to sustain or achieve thinness—such practices and the development of embodied relationships with oneself alienate people from their bodies, from listening to bodily needs and emotions, encouraging girls to see their bodies as objects for the school, the state and society, rather than a part of them (J. Evans et al., 2007). Challenging such normalised notions of the body and health is not easy, as Solovay and Rothblum (2009: 1) write, “isn't it odd that people deeply divided on almost every important topic can so easily and seemingly organically agree on the assertion [that] fat is bad”. Challenging an almost universal belief is not easy and must be done through a slow and sensitive approach, gently questioning the assumptions of those who share anti-fat attitudes and the experiences of those who encounter fatism. I am currently in the process of working with schools to share with them my findings through staff meetings and have provided each PE department with a publication of my findings and results.

In addition, I am beginning work with girls and young women in one of the research secondary schools to develop a yoga class for a group who regularly disengage from PE. I am approaching the work with these girls as a process, providing them with my skills and knowledge gained through yoga teacher training, but allowing them to guide the sessions, by telling me what they need. Yoga is an effective tool in improving one's relationship between the body and the mind, strengthening the emotional and physical body, and gaining confidence and trust in and love for oneself. These are the foundations from which self-confidence in all areas of life, but

particularly through masculinised spaces of sport, can be drawn on to challenge hetero-normative and bodily-normative understandings of girls in sport and physical activity.

#### **9.4 FINAL SUMMATIONS**

While the thesis was successful in revealing the multiple and dynamic ways in which girls engaged with and experienced physical activity and physical education, it was limited not least because of the choice of field site, theoretical focus on the body and deeply personal relationship between the researcher and the research. While the school site allowed for a thorough investigation of institutional understandings and pedagogies of health and girls' intra-actions with school-based messages about gender and health, it did not explore the possibilities that family or peer group relations may be just as important in girls' understandings and practices of gender and health. There is much scope for intergenerational (Hopkins & Pain, 2007) work on family engagements with sport and physical activity and relationships between girls and mothers in terms of participation. Furthermore, negotiation with gatekeepers, school timetables and the constraints of conducting secondary school focus groups in public areas within the school presented additional limitations. The theoretical focus on the body allowed for an intimate reflection on the geography closest in (Rich, 1984; Aitken, 2001) as well as the geography close(t) in (Longhurst, 2001). However, attention to the body may have ignored the possibilities and importance of other scales of analysis. While the research was motivated by personal experiences and the research process actively sought to develop spaces of betweenness (Katz, 1992) between researcher and participants, such intimacy was fraught with ethical and personal challenges and dilemmas. Reflecting on the knowledge offered to me by participants, I considered how my personality and positionality—both visual and social—allowed me to glean uncensored beliefs and

practices of fat discrimination. At the same time, personal experiences of fat-hatred may have remained closed off to my knowledge.

Despite these limitations, my study does make important conceptual, methodological and politically and practically relevant contributions to work on the body and young people. Kirk (2006: 127) argues that physical educators will find themselves increasingly implicated in and responsible for the “alleged decline in children’s fitness and their increasing fatness”. Little is known about the impact of this discourse on girls’ experiences of physical education (see Evans et al., 2007 for exception) and/or their engagement with wider practices of physical activity and exercise and even less is known about how girls themselves engage with discourses and feelings of fatness, embodiment and health. Knowledge of how it feels to be measured, to be fat or thin, to have fat on the body, to be physically active, and how it feels to be a girl, fat, thin, physically active or not, is imperative to understanding girls’ experiences of physical activity.

As children grow older and enter secondary school they increasingly learn how to ‘become’ adults. Through PE, they are encouraged to swap childlike behaviours and activities related to playing games, running wild and having unbounded fun, for more structure and adultist forms of physical activity which emphasise bodily control, measures fitness ability through specific tests, and teaches children that they must make the ‘correct’ choices and take full responsibility for health. Through secondary school health discourses, pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for both their own health and the health of their nation. Within health discourses, many activities which were previously enjoyed by girls (or continue to be enjoyed outside the school boundaries) become unenjoyable within the formalised structure of PE, the later of which sorts pupils by ability level and relays subtle yet effective dualistic messages about health, fitness and fat.

If we are to maintain girls' participation in sport, educators must first question one-dimensional socio-political understandings of health. Second, providers of sport and physical activity must maintain and retain girls' enthusiasm and enjoyment. "Practices should allow for multiple physical identities and multiple ways of being physical as well as challenging narrow and limiting conceptions of gender and the body" (Garrett, 2004: 236).

As the thesis reveals, girls' primary construction of the healthy female body is a form which is not fat, and creating health involves a process of avoiding fat on the whole and individual parts of the body, often through practices of eating and exercise. In particular, I demonstrated that the usage of fat and 'obesity', are employed throughout discourses of physical education as scare tactics to 'health' in attempt to motivate or incite participation among girls. Such threats, when positioned within socio-political representations which "malign the fat body" (Evans & Colls, 2009a: 1059), idealise feminine slimness and subscribe to the triplex exercise = slenderness = health (Kirk, 2006), can lead girls to develop an unhealthy relationship with their bodies and negatively impact girls'—of all shapes and sizes—participation in physical activity.

Girls' experiences are multiple and diverse. An activity which one girl enjoyed was loathed by another girl. Having to wear white t-shirts and black shorts for PE kit was hated by one girl but not given another thought by a different girl. Doing PE with the boys was reflected on positively by some girls and met with fear and anxiety by others. Encounters with boys were sometimes painful, frustrating or competitively friendly. Emotional, embodied feelings through such encounters were framed by the discursive construction of the sporting space and the physical activity itself. Long periods of time to change were particularly desired by some girls while others were more interested in having more time to do PE. It is, therefore, impossible to point to any one common experience which girls' have of physical activity and PE. Furthermore, the fieldsites were unique and characterized by differences between spaces, teachers' pedagogies, school rules and

access to activities, facilities and equipment and therefore girls' experiences were often unique to the school.

Such a diversity of experiences may lead one to believe that there is no way forward—no possibility to improve girls' enjoyment of and participation in sport and physical activity. I argue however, that this is not the case. By explicitly pulling out the research findings related to gender health and the body/embodiment, returning to research question 2, I have revealed the potential to change current participation trends, explicitly showing how my work is able to inform contemporary policy debates, a contribution which Smith (2004) argues is missing from a majority of work in children's geographies. I believe there is a way forward through focusing foremost on enjoyment rather than participation. I maintained a personal, professional and political commitment to this thesis through the project and I will carry the knowledge shared with me by my research participants into the event-spaces where policies are drawn up, curriculums are drafted and sports games are played.

## Appendix A: Letters to Schools Requesting Permission to Conduct Research

Principal Teacher of Physical Education

X School  
Homer Street  
Somewhere Scotland,  
ZZ7 8ZZ

Dear Principal Teacher of PE/School Rector

### Request for Sport and Exercise Research with First through Fourth Year (S1-S4) Girls

I am currently a PhD student in the School of Social and Environmental Sciences at the University of Dundee. The PhD proposal is to investigate girls' experiences of school-based.

While I am a PhD student, I am additionally a nationally ranked ultra-distance runner in the United States (my birth country) and locally involved in the local Athletics Club as a race director and race participant. In addition, I currently coach an After-School Athletics club at my local primary school for P5-P7 girls and boys.

This letter is being sent to request permission to conduct qualitative research at Sunnyside on secondary school girls' experiences of spaces of sport and exercise, as part of my PhD research. The letter explains my research aim and questions and research proposal (open to suggestion and negotiation) that I have designed in anticipation that you will be enthused by the idea and the usefulness and benefit of this research.

This research is timely as it coincides with The Scottish Government' recently funded the 'Fit for Girls' (FfG) programme for Scottish secondary school girls. As you may know, FfG, headed by **sportscotland** and the Youth Sport Trust, coincides with a number of government health findings on obesity, eating habits and physical activity in Scottish children and particularly girls following the transition from primary to secondary school. In addition, recent (22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2010) news published on glowscotland by Active Schools (AS) highlighted that AS "monitoring data shows that in 2008/2009, 81% of girls were active in Primary School, this however dropped to a staggering 14% in Secondary School, highlighting the detrimental effect transition has on a hugely active primary sector".

### Research Aim and Questions

The primary aim of the thesis is to identify girls' experiences of various spaces of sport and exercise. My research asks three specific questions to aid in addressing the thesis aim:

1. What matters to girls (aged 10-14) in their everyday embodied experiences of physical activity (including PE and other school-based sport)?
2. How do school sport deliverers (PE teachers and Active Schools staff) understand and utilise gender and health in everyday practices and pedagogies?



a. How do girls feel about and interpret teachers' everyday understandings of gender and health through physical activity and physical education?

3. What are the recent changes made to address girls' non-participation in physical activity within the school?

a. How have such changes materialised in each study school?

To address the above research questions, the proposed fieldwork involves both primary and secondary school girls in two different Scottish local authorities. I have selected Sunnyside as a potential study school because the fieldwork with primary school participants will be done in Sunnyside and Pleasant Hill feeder primary schools. Situating the fieldwork in both a primary and secondary school in the same catchment area will maximise the representativeness of the study. In addition, interviews are planned with key providers of sport and exercise for school pupils.

#### **Detailed outline of research to be conducted**

The research proposed for Sunnyside, takes a mixed-method approach. I propose to employ a qualitative mixed-method approach to research with S1 and S4 school girls in by first drawing on ethnographic methods of participating in and observing one PE class (each for S1s and S4s) and one or two Fit for Girls programme related activities per week and second, conducting focus group interviews with S1 and S4 girls.

I would like to involve 10-15 S1 girls and 10-15 S4 girls in both the observation phase and the focus group phase. I would like to begin the research in September 2010 and negotiate with yourself, PE staff, Active Schools Coordinators and relevant participants as to the appropriate length of time—weekly and on a term to term basis—to conduct the research. I am available to conduct the research from September 2010 until June 2011 although I am aware of the school holidays and exam schedules and will not conduct any research during those times.

I will employ an ethical 'opt-in' approach to assure that girls are able to choose to participate or refrain from participating in the research. A further discussion of ethics is provided below in the next headed section.

#### **Discussion of Ethics**

In addition to this letter requesting the permission from yourself as head teacher, permission (informed consent) will be sought from PE staff, Sunnyside Active Schools Coordinator, girls who choose to participate in the research and the parents or carers of these girls. This letter is also being sent to key PE staff and the head Active Schools Coordinator at Sunnyside.

Additionally, before any research is to be carried out, an Enhanced Disclosure check from Disclosure Scotland has been submitted on my behalf (on 19.02.2010) by the School of Social Sciences at the University of Dundee and a clear check was returned to me on 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2010. The disclosure number is: 120100083946861. The results were also sent to Ms. Leonie Poor ([l.m.poor@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:l.m.poor@dundee.ac.uk)) in Human Resources at Dundee, who can be contacted for verification.

I additionally have an obligation from the University of Dundee, to meet the approval from the University Research Ethics Committee. A complete participant information sheet will be given to all participants (and their parents/carers) and Research Ethics requires that I obtain informed

consent in the form of a signature from parents of all pupils who wish to participate. All participants' names will be anonymous and if quotes or statements from research participants appear in my research, no identifying markers will be included.

**Who will benefit from my research?**

This research is independent of any research being carried out by the Scottish Government or the Fit for Girls programme itself. However, Michelle Livingston, head of the FfG programme has expressed interest in the results and conclusions of my PhD thesis and thus FfG may benefit from the knowledge gained through small-scale qualitative research about girls' experiences, especially following the transition to secondary school. In addition, this research has direct policy relevance as the Scottish government continues to seek changes to current obesity trends, and the variables related to these trends (eating practices and physical activity). Furthermore, the results and conclusions will be made available to you as the head teacher, and all PE staff and relevant teachers and the girls involved in my research. This may be useful to the PE staff and teachers as they work continuously towards implementing change which will encourage more girls to participate in sport and physical activity.

Thank you for considering this request to do qualitative research with secondary school girls at Z School. If you have any further questions, please contact me at 01382 542960 or 07914 290057, email: [M.WindramGeddes@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:M.WindramGeddes@dundee.ac.uk). I look forward to hearing from you.  
Sincerely,

Morgan Windram-Geddes

## Appendix B: Girls Keep Active Club Flyer and Participant Consent Form

### Girls 'Keep Active Club' as a part of Student Research at The University of Dundee

**Wednesdays, After-School  
3:15-4:15pm, Term Time**

Hello, my name is Morgan and I am a PhD student at the University of Dundee. I am interested in finding out more about what girls think about sport, fitness and exercise. I am also a competitive distance runner and have won national and international races. I am inviting you to be a part of the 'Girls Keep Active Club' which is a club aimed at all abilities. The Club will involve different fitness activities to suit your interests; at the end of the term, I am interested in finding out your thoughts and ideas about girls in sport and fitness and your own experiences of the club as part of my PhD study.

**You don't have to take part in the project..** It's your choice. If you don't want to take part after reading this leaflet, that's fine. You do not have to say 'yes' and you do not have to give a reason if you say 'no'. Before deciding, you need to have time to think about the club and the project and decide if it's worth your time and energy.

**If you DO want to take part in the project:**

Then please share this leaflet with your parents/guardians and fill in the enclosed slip with your parent/guardian and return it to school. The first meeting for the project will be on...**WEDNESDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> SEPTEMBER...** at...**3:15pm**. Don't hesitate to contact me before the meeting if you have any questions! All of my contact information is below. This leaflet is for you to keep.

**My Contact Details:**

Address: School of Social and Environmental Sciences, University of Dundee, Tower Building, Perth Road, Dundee, DD1 4HN  
Email: [M.WindramGeddes@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:M.WindramGeddes@dundee.ac.uk)  
Phone: 01382 384286



*Girls*

*Keep Active Club*



**Morgan Windram-Geddes**

**Volunteer Coach and PhD Student,  
University of Dundee, School of  
Social and Environmental Sciences**



### What activities will we do as part of the club?

This will be YOUR club, so you should decide what activities you would like to participate in as part of a 'keep fit and active club'! Morgan has experience with the activities listed below but if there is some 'fit or active' activity that you like to do and you don't see it below, tell me and we can discuss the possibilities! In the first session, we will make a timetable plan with the chosen activities.

- Running (cross country and track and field), throwing (javelin, shot put), jumping (hurdles/long/triple).
- Yoga and breathing exercises
- Jazz or hip hop dance

### What activities will we do as part of the research?

During the last two weeks of the Club I will ask to interview you in a group of 4-8, while we are doing a movement activity—such as a slow jog, game or stretching activity. So, besides keeping fit and active, this club could also help prepare you for S1 skills such as communication, listening or information gathering. The interviews will be tape recorded so that I can have something to refer to when I'm writing about my study. The tapes will be kept locked and only I will listen to them. They will be destroyed after I am finished writing up my study.



The questions you will be asked are what you think about school sport and exercise. What you like about and how you feel about different sports and exercise that you do inside and outside of school. What you think about the words health, sport, exercise and fitness. What have been your experiences of the Keep Fit and Active Club?

### Anything you say will be kept private:

When I write my report, I will use the stories that you and others have told me in the interviews. But no-one will know that it's your story, because no real names will be used in the report—not even your schools' name—you can choose a fake name or 'pseudonym' to use.

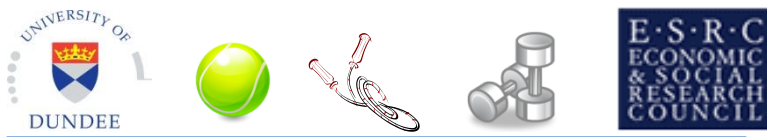
### Why am I interested in what you think about sport?

Because I am interested in what you and other girls in your age group think about sport and exercise. Because I am interested in finding out how sport and exercise can be made into a fun part of school, rather than a 'chore' or something that's not fun for girls to do. Because I am interested in SPACES and what makes a space, a fun, safe, interesting, exciting place for girls to do sport and exercise in!

### What if I just want to do the 'Keep Active Club' but not be a part of the Research?

You may just want to be a part of the club but not answer any questions about your opinion about sport and exercise, but please understand that the research is part of the club, but you can choose to leave the club and the research at any point if you want to.

## Appendix C: Parent Carer Consent/Opt-out Form for Secondary School Focus Groups



### PhD Research on Girls' Experiences of Sport and Exercise

#### Purpose

My name is Morgan and I am doing a PhD research project to gather a variety of girls' experiences of physical activity. The aim is to find out what is necessary for increasing girls' *enjoyment* of sport/fitness/exercise as they age. My study is part of a PhD programme at the University of Dundee in the School of Social and Environmental Sciences. My research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

#### Rationale

The Scottish Health Survey (2003, 2010) and Active Schools data (2009) show a drop in girls' participation in sport and exercise between ages 11-13. In order to understand these figures, this study seeks to uncover some of the reasons why girls stop participating and asks how can physical activity be made more enjoyable and attractive to girls of this age group?

#### Participants

I am inviting you to take part in my study because you are enrolled in one of the PE classes from one of the age groups (S1, S2, S3 or S4) that this study is interested in. After explaining the project, you will be invited to participate in a tape-recorded 15-20 minute group discussion, during class time, with 4-6 of your classmates. You do not have to participate and may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

#### Anonymity & Confidentiality

All of the data is confidential and will remain anonymous; I will only use the data to write my thesis. If you are interested in the results of my study, you may contact me following the publication of my thesis, projected timeline: October 2012.

#### Consent

If you consent to my research project and are happy to participate, please share with this leaflet with your parent/carer. If you change your mind before or during the research you are free to withdraw at any point. If you do not wish to participate, please feel free to discard this leaflet.

**Parent/Carer Information**

This leaflet and the enclosed 'parent/carers 'opt-out'' form are for you to read and decide if you are happy for your daughter to take part. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me; all of my contact details are below. If you **DO NOT** want your daughter to take part please fill out the enclosed 'parent/carers 'opt-out'' form and return to the PE department. If you consent to your daughter's participation then you do not need to do anything.

**This study was granted approval by the University of Dundee Research Ethics Committee. I have an Enhanced Disclosure Clearance for my research from Disclosure Scotland, No.: 120100083946861. If you wish to contact me with any questions, please do so at any time.**

**My contact details are below:**

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### Parent/Carer 'Opt-Out' Form

Please complete and return the form below if you **DO NOT** want your daughter to participate in this study and return to the PE department. Please only return the form if you **DO NOT** want your daughter to participate:

I **DO NOT** want my daughter to participate.

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Please print your name above

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Please print your daughter's name above

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Please sign your name above

## Appendix D: Flyer for Observations of Physical Education and Fit for Girls Activities in Secondary Schools

### PhD Research on Girls' Experiences of Sport and Exercise in the Transition Years

#### (P7-S1) and S1-S4

My name is Morgan and I am a research student at the University of Dundee in the School of Social and Environmental Sciences.

**What My Research is About:** The Scottish Health Survey (2003) and Active Schools data (2009) show a drop in girls' participation in all sport and exercise/fitness between ages 11-13. This study seeks to gather a variety of girls' experiences in P7 and S1-S4 to better understand girls' experiences of school and extracurricular sport and preferences for different types of sport and or physical activity. Mr. (name removed) and Mr. (name removed) have kindly allowed me to sit in on some Fit for Girls sessions and PE classes, so you may see me around! Please feel free to ask me questions. This part of my research is about observing what goes on in your Fit for Girls sessions and PE and I would like to get to know you all but if you'd rather that I didn't speak to you, please just tell me. At a later time I may ask to do a group interview with some of you on your experiences but I will give you more information and seek your consent so that you can make an informed decision as to whether or not you'd like to be interviewed.

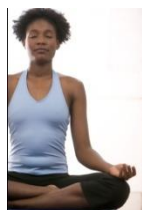
I have approval for my study from the University of Dundee Research Ethics Committee and an Enhanced Disclosure Scotland clearance which may be confirmed with the head of PE (name removed) or Active Schools Coordinator (name removed).

#### Feel free to contact me at any time:

Morgan Windram-Geddes

[M.WindramGeddes@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:M.WindramGeddes@dundee.ac.uk)

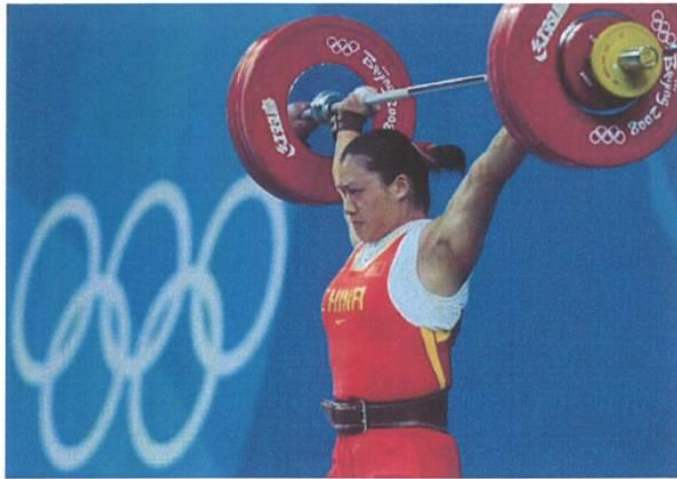
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Appendix E: Images and Questions used in Kinetic Focus Groups with Primary School Girls

What do you think about this picture?



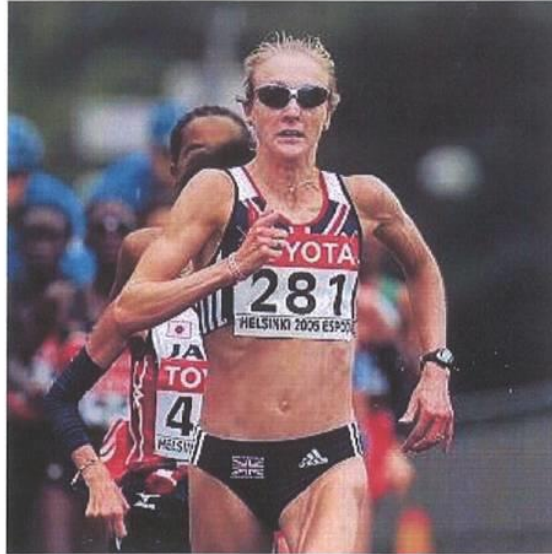
If this picture could talk what would it say?

What do you think about this picture?



If this picture could talk what would it say?

What do you think about this picture?



If this picture could talk what would it say?

What do you think about this picture?



If this picture could talk what would it say?

What do you think about this picture?



If this picture could talk what would it say?

## **Appendix F: Focus Group Questions for Primary School Girls in Keep Active Club**

### **Week 1:**

1. How did you feel before you started this activity?
2. How do you feel now that you are running around doing this activity? How do you feel when you are being active?
3. What does sport mean to you?
4. What does exercise and fitness mean to you?
5. Do you like the idea that this is a 'girls only' Keep Active Club? Why or Why not?
6. Do you like the idea that this club is mixed ages like P5-P7 or would you rather have one single year group?
7. If you do sport or fitness activities, (inside or outside of school), what kinds of things do you do and where do you do them?
8. If you could design your own fitness or sports activity club or centre/facility what would it look like? You can draw pictures and/or write/describe in words.

### **Week 2:**

9. What are your experiences of school sport activities like PE (physical education) or sports days? What are your best and worst memories of doing these things?
10. Do you think boys are able to do the same sports as girls? Do you think that girls are able to do the same sports as boys?
11. Do you think that there are specific sports that you would consider to be 'boys only' or 'girls only'?
12. Is doing sport and physical activity fun for you? What makes sport or physical activity fun for you?

**Appendix G: Focus Group Questions for Secondary School Girls in Physical Education**

1. What kind of sport or fitness activities are you all involved in? – If any? (like do they do core PE, standard grade, intermediate, etc. and or any extra-curricular stuff?)
2. Do you like doing these activities?
3. What are your reasons for doing these activities?
4. What is PE like for you? What do you do in PE class?
5. What is your best memory of doing PE in high school?
6. What is your worst memory of doing PE in high school?
7. Is your PE class with boys or all girls? What's that like?
8. Is your PE class with people who are the same fitness level or ability as you or is it mixed ability?
9. What do you like about PE?
10. What don't you like about PE?
11. Is PE different from what it was in primary school or your early years of secondary school (if S3/4)?
12. Do you do any sport or fitness or exercise activities outside of PE or outside of school?
13. If yes, what activities do you do?
14. Do you have enough opportunities available to do sport or exercise if you want to do it?
15. Are there any sports or activities that you did when you were younger that you don't do now?  
If yes, what are these?
16. Are there any particular reasons why you stopped going to these activities?
17. Have you enjoyed and/or been enthused about being involved in sport/fitness activities for the whole time you've been at secondary school?
18. What sporting activity do you enjoy the most?

19. Why?
20. Why do you think some girls don't like to do sport and exercise?
21. Is sport important to you? Why/why not?
22. Are the places that you use for PE (like your gym halls, changing rooms, etc.) acceptable or would you do anything to change these spaces?
23. Is exercise and fitness important to you? Why/why not
24. If you were doing sport or exercise outside of school would you be more likely to do it with friends , or other people—like family members, or on your own? Why?
25. What things come to mind when you think about your health?
26. Do you guys know about the Fit for Girls Programme? And what it's all about?

**Appendix H: Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Physical Education Teachers**

1. Could you please start by giving me some background information by telling me how long you've been teaching PE for and what classes you currently teach?
2. What are your general observations about girls' engagement with PE when they start their first year of secondary school?
3. What are your general observations about girls' engagement/enthusiasm for PE as they progress through school, especially between S2 and S3?
4. From your perspective and experience, what are some of the main factors that would motivate older girls S4 to do sport and exercise or fitness activities?
5. Do you think things like background, friendship groups and abilities make a difference in terms of participation/engagement levels?
6. Are PE classes mixed-sex or single-sex or a mixture of both?
7. Do you think that having single sex versus mixed-sex PE makes a difference in terms of girls' levels of engagement with PE?
8. Do you think that changes in adolescent make a difference in terms of participation/engagement levels?
9. Do you think that exams and studying have an impact on girls' participation in sport and exercise activities?
10. From your perspective, what seem to be the—curricular PE—activities that girls seem to enjoy and engage with the most?
11. Are there any ways in which you guys as a PE department/PE staff working with girls to increase participation levels? Or do you see a need to increase participation levels?

12. Are there any policies (curricular, Scottish Government/etc.) that have had an impact or are shaping the ways that you deliver PE?
13. Have there been any major changes to PE curriculum over the last 3 years?
14. Does the space you have available to you impact the variety of activities you can deliver in PE?
15. Do you ever take your PE classes outside of the school space—like making use of community/local sport/fitness facilities?
16. In what ways do you/might you teach about health during PE classes?
17. Have you been involved in any aspects of the Fit For Girls programme like going to any staff training opportunities?
18. Do you think the FFG programme has been effective at your school in increasing the number of girls' participating in some sort of sport or exercise activity?
19. Is there anything that would be helpful to you to be able to increase participation and engagement levels for girls who may be disengaged or disinterested?



**PUBLICATIONS**

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- Windram-Geddes, M. (forthcoming) Fearing Fatness: The Making of Unhealthy Bodies in Physical Education, *Emotion, Space & Society*
  - Windram-Geddes, M. (2012) Reading the Researcher's Body, *Qualitative Researcher*, 14: 5
  - Windram-Geddes, M. (2011) Book Reviews, *Gender, Place & Culture*, 18:2 304-306
  - Windram-Geddes, M (2011) Book Review, *Children's Geographies*, 9:1 119-121
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