

**The Post War Development of Football for Females in England: A
Cross Cultural and Comparative Study with the United States of
America and Norway**

Donna Woodhouse

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Submitted for the degree of PhD, Faculty of Social Science, 2002

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Abstract

This thesis charts, for the first time in any detail, the post Second World War history of football for females in England, examining the causes of the uneven growth of the female game. It also analyses the role of the media in gendering discourses around sport, especially football, and sets its discoveries against the histories of the female game in the USA and Norway.

A raft of methods was used to generate data, including interviews with people involved in the female game from the 1940s, to the present day, and surveys of players, administrators and fans, in order for the thesis to arrive at its conclusions.

The major finding of the thesis is that there is a lack of synergy between the *national* policy for female football and its *local* implementation in England, which stands in sharp contrast to the situations in the USA and Norway. Whilst the game has made unprecedented progress over the past decade, its continued growth in England is by no means guaranteed, as long as the structures of the governing body of the sport, the Football Association, remain as they are currently. The research has also discovered that press coverage of the sport operates within a *framework of assumptions* about what audiences wish to see and of what constitutes 'female appropriate' behaviour. It also demonstrates that the press invariably portrays the female sport *in relation* to the male professional game.

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Chapter One

Background, Methods, Issues, Ethics, Aims and Ethos

This chapter will look at the reasons why this research project was undertaken. The methods used for the collection of data and the formulation of theories will be examined, as will issues problematic within the research. The ethos and aims of the research will also be discussed.

Background: The Football Association

Before discussing methodologies and theory, and discussing current debates around sport and gender, it is important to look at why the Football Association (FA) agreed to fund research around females and football. The proposal to research the female game in England, the USA and Norway certainly fitted nicely with the fact that the FA had recently taken over the running of the women's game in England. The FA has always been a rather introspective, conservative organisation; 'The FA might best be described as "Reithian" in spirit,' (Russell 1997:91) only ending the distinction between amateur and professional play in 1974. Recently, the English game has found itself falling behind internationally, both on and off the field, as external organisations, such as the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the international governing body of the game, the Union des Associations Europeenne de Football (UEFA), the governing body of the game in Europe, and the European Union via the Bosman Ruling, which allows players to be released on free transfers from their clubs at the end of their contracts, began to have a greater influence on the game. The formation of the powerful English Premier League in 1992/93 also forced the FA to be more reflexive, in terms of its structures, ethos and aims.

The FA is currently undergoing some of the most significant changes in its history. During 1998/99, the FA's internal structure was the topic of public debate, when its two most senior officers were forced to resign over a cash for votes scandal; in responding to this crisis, and subsequent ones, the 92 person FA Council was shown to be cumbersome and its composition unreflective of the modern game. The enforced resignation of Glenn Hoddle, from the post of England men's coach, and a floodlight failure/betting ring debacle were also national news at this time, and the FA

found itself on the back *and* front page of national newspapers with regularity. These pressures forced the FA to rethink its relations with ‘the outside world.’

An example of the ‘modernising’ of the FA’s dealing with the game can be seen in its decision to use academic institutions to research aspects of football, both in terms of sports science and sociology. Liverpool John Moores University carried out work analysing play at the men’s World Cup in France 1998, and the late 1998/99 season playing performance of Manchester United, and Loughborough University is working in the area of sports science with the England international women’s squads to support the FA’s Talent Development Plan. Academic research, sponsored by organisations such as the FA, could then be seen as a further part of the ‘feminisation’ of football, the opening up of the game to non-traditional ways of thinking and developing; the use of diet and fitness training to prolong player careers, the celebration of the skill and finesse of overseas players, the redevelopment of stadia and the widening of the spectator appeal of the game. This is a massive shift from the earlier FA years where, as well as adopting a strong anti-commercial stance, the governing body was insular, withdrawing from FIFA in 1920 and 1928.

As a discrete, historical piece of research, the FA wanted, for the first time, to see the post-Second War history of the female game mapped. They wanted statistics, powerful weaponry in the current climate for attracting corporate sponsorship, media coverage and funding from other bodies, particularly the National Lottery. They also wanted to examine what they had done, and not done, in the past which had stifled the female game, and they also wished to know if their current plans were guiding the game in a way perceived as positive by those outside the FA who are involved in the sport.

Methods

The research has employed a raft of methods to generate data. The Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research (SNCCFR) carries out numerous, large scale, national surveys of football fans for the Premier League (1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1999a) and also for the Nationwide Divisions (1999b). As we wanted to gauge the views of a large number of fans, players and administrators, it was decided to utilise

this survey design, distribution and analysis expertise to ascertain the views of samples of those groups. The data generated from previous SNCCFR surveys was invaluable to the FA Premier League and Football League in terms of assessing fan needs, opinion at the grassroots club level about its development measures and measuring whether its initiatives had addressed old and emerging issues for players and organisers.

However, questionnaire produced data often lacks the richness of its more qualitative companion and, so, a number of interviews were carried out to gain a feel for the views of people involved in the game. This use of multiple methods may loosely be described as ‘bricolage,’ a pieced together, close knit set of practices which provide solutions to problems in concrete situations (Denzin and Lincoln 1994:2). Drawing on the cultural studies tradition, the approach used was pragmatic, strategic, reflexive and multi-method, in order to try to produce breadth and rigour in the investigation. With this type of work, the bricoleur carrying out the research should have a knowledge of debates around their field of study, but should also be aware of their personal history and how this may influence their research and approaches.

Qualitative research, in this project in the form of interviews and focus-group work, has been labelled ‘soft science’, too personal, or journalistic, and has been criticised for its lack of theory. This more naturalistic, qualitative approach has been viewed by some as an assault on the pure science of positivism which seeks to measure responses, claiming that positivist methods of analysis avoid the value laden data produced by the qualitative approach. However, whilst qualitative methods are open to researcher bias and can be difficult to replicate, they have been used in this research to document the *experiences* of those involved in the game. Partly, this is because the history of the game has never been fully documented, and as the former and current governing bodies have few records, clubs have been poor record keepers and media coverage is scant, the most sensible way of accessing the game’s history appeared to be through those who had been, and still were, part of it. However, practicalities aside, qualitative methods would have been utilised even if the game’s development had been well documented, as interviewing, face-to-face interaction with agents, is a method of becoming part of the network of people who need to be accessed to gain information and, unlike questionnaires, interviewing allows for the gathering of

names of other likely subjects (snowballing) and allows researchers to ask questions there and then in response to what the interviewees are saying. The fact that Holt, for example (1989:8) reports the history of sport as being the history of *men* in sport, should also encourage us to think of women as excluded, as not having been given a voice before, so opportunities to allow females to speak should be taken. The choice of the qualitative as a research method then came about as a response to practicalities and because of a personal belief that participants voices should be heard.

Quantitative methods were used in the research, in the form of questionnaires, simply because they were the most practical way of reaching a cross-section of people involved in the playing, spectating and administration of the women's game. Room was left on questionnaires for respondents to leave contact details and to write additional comments so that they were not completely bound to closed response questions and, if they had mentioned topics which might be usefully explored, or had indicated that they knew of people who might prove to be useful contacts, they could be contacted. The responses from the questionnaires also helped to inform some of the topics addressed in later interviews. The use of such quantitative methods was useful to the FA who lacked any detailed picture of who was playing and administering the game at a local level and required this type of information for its monitoring of equal opportunities, to gain feed back on its running of the game and to present to potential funders and the media in order to try and gain additional exposure and support for the game. It also allowed the FA to build up a database of fans and to identify geographical areas and issues where more work needed to be focussed, or from which best practice could be drawn. Quantitative work, obviously, has weaknesses. It is inflexible for the respondents, who are tied, mainly, to a set of options from which they may not deviate. Whilst this approach's proponents may claim it is unbiased, questionnaires are designed by researchers who are carrying ideas with them to their projects, ideas which may taint the design of surveys and, therefore, the results they produce. For this reason, this quantitative method was used *in tandem* with qualitative ones, so that the weaknesses of each was counter-acted by the strengths of the other.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994:5-6) claim that qualitative and quantitative research differs in *five* ways. *Firstly*, both approaches were originally shaped by positivism, which

claims that knowledge is obtained from scientific observation and testing, and can be used to predict social behaviour via pre-established laws, just as prediction is possible by definite laws in the physical sciences. However, qualitative researchers place far less emphasis on statistical measures and may use methods which generate statistics as a way of identifying small groups to involve in qualitative research. The *second* difference is that contemporary qualitative researchers see positivist approaches as just *one* way of viewing the social world, no more or less valid than other ways of seeing, a position rather more generous than some standpoints, such as critical theory and post-modern schools of thought, who thoroughly reject positivistic approaches. *Thirdly*, whilst both qualitative and quantitative methods are concerned with the individual's point of view, qualitative researchers would view quantitative methods as too distant for capturing this view-point, just as data generated by, say, the extremely focussed qualitative life history method, would be regarded by positivist researchers as too impressionistic. The *fourth* difference is that the qualitative researcher is more likely to examine the constraints the social world applies to individuals, whereas they would view quantitative research as divorced from this everyday experience. *Finally*, quantitative researchers are simply not as interested in detailed description as qualitative ones, who value the rich texts produced with subjects. One does not have to choose to 'be' one or the other, or to tie oneself exclusively to one set of methods, but one's theoretical standpoint, one's epistemological or ontological beliefs, may lead to a valuing by the researcher of qualitative over quantitative approaches or vice versa.

Obviously, the reading of literature relevant to the project took place and, as the research was sponsored by the FA, via their Public Affairs Department, an examination of the portrayal of footballing females by the media was carried out, with an examination of *Times* coverage of the Women's FA Cup Final throughout the 30 year history of the competition. Whilst England was the focus of this particular analysis, the media's relationship with the game in the USA and Norway was also examined, particularly during a research trip to the Women's World Cup in June/July of 1999. Our good relationship with the FA meant that we had early and easy access to their documentation and were also privy to internal documentation relating to the development of the game and challenges to the FA's orthodoxy on football for females. We were able to talk with employees of the FA, to get their feelings for the

game, and to examine the role of the FA as an actor. It was also agreed that I should undertake a work placement at the FA, to shadow and assist their Women's Football Co-ordinator, and, in the Public Affairs Department, to update the organisation's information on the female game and to get a feel for how women's football is dealt with by the body, as part of its larger work load. This meant I spent two weeks with the Women's Football Co-ordinator in the FA's Hertfordshire office and two weeks with the Public Affairs Department at the FA's Lancaster Gate HQ. The placements also helped us to build on our relationship with the co-funding body and gave them more of an insight in to the research. This was considered particularly important after attending an ESRC conference in 1997 where a lack of knowledge of the research taking place on the part of the non-academic funder, was highlighted as being common and a source of difficulties in terms of access and co-operation, in Collaborative Studentships.

Issues

Having the governing body of the sport as our partner provided us with invaluable data and access. However, there were a number of practical difficulties, some identified at the outset of the project and some which arose during it, some of which we were able to address or benefit from, some of which we simply had to live with. Because women's football, particularly in the late 1940s through to the late 1960s, involved a small community, and its members often did not retain links with the game after they left it, we chose the snowball technique to generate interviewees, making contact with an individual who then passed our details on to other people, or who provided us with the details of people they were still in contact with, so that we could interview them about their involvement in the game. This chain referral method (van Meter 1992:74) is problematic in that people have a tendency to refer the researcher to like-minded people, thus, care must be taken to snowball from a number of different sources to get as many 'sides' of the women's football 'story' as possible. Also, whilst the time-frame for the research begins in 1945, it was not possible to locate many females playing at that time or in the 1950s, who were still alive, or well enough, to be interviewed. This left us relying on the anecdotal evidence of people who knew players from that era, and on secondary sources. This means that there is something of a gap between the post World War One work carried out, mainly,

around Dick, Kerrs Ladies (Williamson 1991), Newsham (1994), and the establishment of the Women's Football Association (WFA) in 1969. We are talking here of a recent, if relatively small, history, which may well be lost unless players from that era can be located and their oral histories recorded in future research.

When the WFA handed over its documentation to the FA, when they took over the administration of the game in 1993, very little in the way of documentary materials ended up in the possession of the governing body. Some accounts books can be found at the FA, but the minutes of meetings, memorabilia, newsletters, development plans, photographs and other records all 'disappeared.' We can only assume that much of the material generated by the WFA was lost in their move from London to Manchester, or destroyed or retained by officers of the WFA. We were fortunate that an ex-Chair of that organisation bequeathed his records to us, so we had access to original documentary materials covering the period 1969-1993. However, as we shall see, a former WFA officer has cast doubt over the accuracy of minutes kept by the organisation and minutes also tend to be rather a dry source of information, often not reflective of the group dynamics at play. For this reason, we sought to gather a variety of WFA publications and materials from a number of individuals, and to talk with a range of people who were involved with the organisation, throughout its existence.

Whilst the placement at the FA with the Public Affairs Department during January/February of 1999 was invaluable, unfortunately, it coincided with two men's international fixtures, the departure of the men's national coach and the Charlton Athletic FC gambling syndicate/floodlight failure scandal. This meant that the attention of the person within the Department normally dealing with the promotion of the game for females was constantly being pulled in other directions. I was there at a time when it was barely possible to maintain current levels of PR for the women's game; any desire to *promote* the game had to be put on hold until more 'important' matters were dealt with by the FA's team (for 'important' here, read issues relating to the men's professional game). So, the problems which the FA were dealing with at the time allowed me an insight into their priorities.

Methodology

As previously stated, data for the project was gathered via a number of methods. The interviews carried out were *semi*-structured, so that there was some consistency in what we were asking people, in order to compare responses, but there is also flexibility in this method which allows people to talk about their very *individual* reasons for involvement in the female game, and about their experiences of being involved in the sport. The interviews provided interviewees with the kind of safe space many felt they needed when discussing issues such as the attitude of governing bodies, issues of sexuality, discrimination and the sometimes very intense personal meanings football holds for them. We spoke not just to players, but coaches, managers, administrators and journalists involved in the game from the 1940s to the present day. Structured interviews (Fontana and Frey 1994:361-376) where the same questions with a limited number of coded responses are asked, were not used, as the roles of the people being interviewed were so various and, also, because such tight structure does not allow for frequent use of open ended questions or allow the researcher to ask questions in response to an answer they have received from an interviewee.

Wherever possible, interviewees were given a choice of location for the interview to take place. Many people chose to invite me into their homes, some asked me to come to their place of work and some people made an 'event' almost of the interview, suggesting we should talk over drinks or a meal. When England players were interviewed, their hotel rooms, hotel lounges or the training pitch were the venues. An almost universal factor was the willingness of men and women to speak in detail and at length. There was often a desire, amongst older interviewees, to highlight the early state of the women's game and contrast it with how things are currently, and an urgency from people who have become involved in the game more recently to enthuse about new developments, tempered with insights about what still needs to be done to progress the game, but without a deep knowledge of the history of the women's game in this country. Before meeting with people, I wrote and spoke to them, although in the case of the England women players, access to them had to be negotiated through the National Coach who asked players if they wished to be interviewed after they had spent some time with me on the training pitch. This meant that by the time we met, interviewees were familiar with the research and/or with my voice and manner. Also,

some interviewees had heard of SNCCFR and its work, so knew that I was operating out of an agency which had a history of involvement with football. The fact that I was still playing myself, even if to a very poor standard, also seemed to make participants more comfortable around me. All of these factors are important in accessing subjects and building up a rapport with them so that they are as comfortable about being interviewed, and are as responsive, as possible.

The issue of the project's FA backing could have been problematic when trying to arrange and carry out interviews with some people involved in the women's game who were unhappy with the FA's history of involvement, so, in such instances, the *independence* of SNCCFR and the academic aspects of the research were stressed so that I was not perceived as working for the FA and, as therefore, potentially biased. All participants were assured that the interviews would be completely confidential, and that if I wished to quote them in the thesis, this would only happen if they gave their consent. As some of the people we spoke to occupy, or had occupied, unique positions within the female game, I assured them that if they gave their consent to be quoted, but were concerned that they might suffer negative repercussions as a result of the views they had expressed, but were still anxious that the points they wished to raise should be made, I would disguise the information, so that it would not be obvious from whom it had come. However, in almost every case, participants said that they were happy to be quoted directly and have their comments attributed to them, as their opinions were simply that and that they felt confident in expressing and defending those opinions. However, for legal reasons, a number of individuals have been anonymised.

Ethics

Much useful information was also given to me by interviewees once the tape recorder had been switched off. The issue of whether or not, or how, to use such data is problematic. If the information was given off tape, was it meant to be for the researcher's ears only, or was it simply that, whilst happy the views expressed *on tape* could be circulated in the public domain, the person making the non-taped remarks wanted to be absolutely sure that they were not attributed to them, perhaps for legal reasons, or because they occupy a position where the attribution of such a comment

might cause them or their organisation professional harm? ‘Off the record’ comments were, therefore, reviewed individually and only used if the identity of the person making them could be masked. Ethical issues, such as informed consent, where the subject must be made aware of the nature of the research, the right to privacy, protection of the subject from harm etc. must also be given consideration. One must not just consider that it is ‘right’ to respect subjects who are enriching your research; one must be constantly reflexive about one’s approach and practices. On a more pragmatic note, the fact that you are involved in on-going research within a small, tight-knit community means that if a respondent were to feel uncomfortable with your approach, they could communicate these feelings to others, endangering the participation of those people, and imperilling the efficacy of the whole project. No covert observation or recording was carried out during the research. In terms of practicalities, because the work was part funded by the FA, gaining access to many key figures was not problematic, and in terms of people who fall outside the influence of the governing body, there was still a tremendous willingness to participate. Even if consent to interview had been denied, covert recording would not have been used as part of this research, as this would have constituted further exploitation of an already under valued group (males and females involved in football for females) and/or may have imperilled the relationship we had with the co-funder, which would have effected future access to information and personnel.

There are *five* major stances which can be taken with regard to ethical standards. The *absolutist* model argues that disguised research is unethical and that social scientists have no right to invade people’s lives in such a manner, with only investigation in the public sphere being justified. This contrasts with the *deception* model, which allows for the researcher to glean information by whichever method they deem fit, so lying, infiltration, and entrapment of subjects are permissible. The *relativist* stance posits that researchers are free to study whatever they wish, so long as the research stems from their own experience. This means that they use their own conscience to set reasonable standards of behaviour, but they also attempt to establish open, empathetic relationships with their subjects, and this is an approach sometimes associated with feminist models of research. *Guba and Lincoln’s* model (in Denzin and Lincoln 1994:21) calls for an approach which is free of the exploitative elements of absolutism, calling for a closer researcher/subject relationship. Their model would be

deception free and lines which might lead to harm of the subject, be it physical or psychological, could not be crossed. The final model, the *contextualised-consequential*, is built around mutual respect, non-coercion and non-manipulation, where the belief is that every research act carries with it moral and ethical implications which have consequences for the research and those being researched. This model is a non-deceptive one. This research, around women and football, used a model which could most closely be associated with this contextualised-consequential stance.

The period we are *primarily* investigating is very recent history, so there is still much primary documentary evidence available, including oral histories and WFA documents. Although, as previously mentioned, much WFA material is lost, or, at least, lost to a general audience, there are still many individuals who have programmes, team sheets, newsletters, club photographs and WFA papers. So, the research was able to utilise these resources, as well as available secondary sources, to piece together a picture of what was happening during the period which the research covers. We also had access to FA minute books, and the FA library carries much UEFA and FIFA documentation. Obviously, one must exercise caution when using such sources, as there can be differing versions of events, even from individuals within the same organisation.

Although still small, there is a growing bank of academic and non-academic publications relating not just to women's football, but also to women's involvement in the male game (Coddington 1997, Lopez 1997, Webb 1998, Wellington 1998). From these, it is possible to glean information relating to many sections of the research. There is also a substantial body of work, from the USA, Norway and England, about the portrayal of sportswomen in the media which has been utilised. We spoke to female journalists about their attempts to gain more media coverage for the women's game and how they, as women, are treated in the world of journalism in the three countries being researched, as well as speaking to those involved in the sport about media coverage. Although there is no room in this thesis to report the findings of a detailed case study of a major British broadsheet newspaper's coverage of the most important fixture in the domestic female football calendar, and coverage of other female athletes around sporting events taking place at the same time, such a case

study was *undertaken*, in order to obtain a feel for whether and how this major fixture was covered by England's newspaper of national record. This examination of the media is crucial when considering how the women's game is regarded and presented by the press to its audience, and the way that women in sport, generally, are portrayed to media audiences which contain potential players, sponsors and supporters. Reading was also carried out around other relevant areas, such as the construction of masculinity (Connell 1985,1987,1995), the gendering of physical education (Scruton 1986,1992 and Clarke and Humberstone 1997) and women and leisure, (Talbot 1980, 1997) as well as background reading on the histories and current social situations in the USA and Norway. Carrying out a literature review of material produced solely on football and females would be a fairly small task, and to concentrate exclusively on such literature would be to artificially divorce football for females from the more complex raft of debates around gender and sociology/sports sociology.

When combined, the research methods we have discussed do not give us a methodology which could be clearly described as qualitative, quantitative, feminist, positivist etc. The decision to use such a raft of methods, questionnaires, interviews, primary and secondary sources, plus the drawing on of personal experiences as a sports woman and female fan of sports, particularly football, is an attempt to exploit the strengths of available methodologies, to try and cross-reference data and to plug any gaps in information and credibility there might be if a sole method was adhered to. The quantitative questionnaire work, with its rigidity and reliance on the researcher to ask the 'right' questions, in the 'right' way and to then interpret respondent's answers in the 'right' manner, but with the ability to target thousands of people. The qualitative interviews, with the richness of personal experiences that oral history provides and the opportunity for the researcher to pick up on particular points and probe further, but which consume so much time and which can be impressionistic. It was hoped that by using qualitative *and* quantitative methods, wider themes could be identified and then investigated via more focused work, or unearthed by focused work and then further explored through methods, the application of which cover larger constituencies. Certainly, even if this mixed-bag of research methods has not culminated in a conclusive outcome to a project which sought, partly, to give voice to relatively silent histories, as well as to help explain those histories, the use of exclusively quantitative or qualitative methods would have

been farcical in terms of justifying findings and impractical in terms of generating a valid amount of data.

The work of Derek Layder (1986, 1993, 1994, 1998) is itself influenced by Glaser and Strauss (1977) who attempt to bridge the micro/macro theory gap with *grounded theory*, building theory with a qualitative, flexible approach. Grounded theory argues that discovery must go hand in hand with an exploratory orientation, not merely theorising or describing. Proponents of this approach believe that formal theory must come via substantive data and that qualitative research is suited to emergent theory (Glaser & Strauss 1977:33) with substantive theory being used to concentrate on specific areas, before moving out to more general theories. Glaser and Strauss do, however, accept the need for quantitative work, as long as it is part of a multi-method, triangulatory approach. Triangulation is 'the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon' (Denzin in Jick 1983:135-136). In sociology, the idea is that confirmation of findings using a range of methods increases the *validity* of the research. Validity, for those using positivist methods, is equated with reliability and generalisability, with stability and replicability of methods. Ethnographers take a different stance towards validity. Their work focuses on description and they admit that precision is difficult because of the observational and emergent nature of their methods. However, as they are attempting to convey the reality of situations from the very individual point of view of the subject, such description is valid, as valid as positivist 'description' which, because of the nature of design and interpretation of data, is not valueless. The assumption with triangulation is that the weaknesses of one method will be compensated for by the strengths of the other method or methods used, thus strengthening the rigour and accuracy of the over all research. However, the individual nature of qualitative research, when mixed with a quantitative method to triangulate, means that it is difficult to replicate experiments. Triangulation does not compensate for ill thought out methodologies and theories, nor should the qualitative element of it be used as window dressing to confirm the results of a personally preferred quantitative approach or vice versa. It has been a useful tool in this research, helping to confirm findings, for example, from qualitative interviews, by using quantitative questionnaires, and with questionnaires generating topics to be investigated further via qualitative approaches.

Layder is concerned that both Symbolic Interactionism (SI) and grounded theory do not pay enough attention to structure and power. SI is a process by which ideas are converted into social fact, where forms of social reality are constructed by people. This view of reality formation contrasts with theories which locate human behaviour in biology, as purely instinctual processes. It also calls into question the idea that forms of social reality exist independently of the people who construct them. SI, in its humanistic form, demands that the researcher has empathy with the researched, that they see the world through the eyes of their subjects. This means the employment of 'ethnographic' methods (Layder 1993:39), such as participant observation and interviews. Hammersley (ibid) notes the increasing use of ethnographic research in sociology over the past 30 or so years. Grounded theory, however, is distinct from SI in that whilst it believes that the world should be 'discovered' by using qualitative methods, it also seeks to *explore* that world, not merely describing what can be seen or describing theories. It sees 'generating theory and doing social research as two parts of the same process' (Strauss and Corbin 1994:273).

The concentration, in the case of both SI and grounded theory, then is weighted towards the individual, and so there is a danger that structures and their influences may not be adequately examined, with these two approaches being relegated to that of creators of 'respected little islands' (Layder 1993:44). However, Glaser and Strauss seek to overcome this problem by stating that the creation of theories using their approach should be done in a context of wanting to create a more general theory; their approach should be employed with a recognition of wider context and a desire to link theories together. Such an approach is useful when examining the development of the female game as it encourages the interviewing of those involved with it and also encourages linkage between what we may discover of the female game and what we know of the wider positions of both women and sport in society. It allows us to think about the micro (via interviews) meso (via work with FA personnel) and the macro (by linking theories developed whilst focussing on females and football to wider debates around gender and sport). However, we must look outside of grounded theory and SI to use quantitative methods to accumulate data via questionnaires to cross reference qualitative findings or discover avenues which may then be explored via more ethnographic routes.

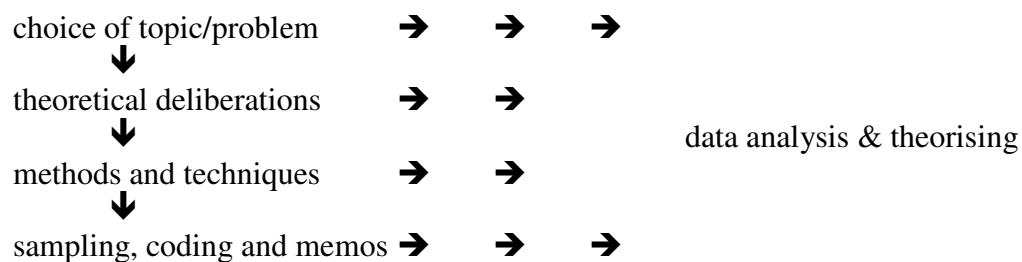
Ethos and Aims

Having addressed practicalities, methodologies and ethics, it is important to provide information about the researcher, in terms of why the project appealed to me and any preconceptions and theories which I brought with me to the research. I have always played football, encouraged to do so by two older brothers, so was interested in questions of where females get their inspiration and encouragement to play. Having not been allowed to play football at school, I also wanted to look at the role of institutions in encouraging/discouraging females in sports. Tied to this was work in my first degree in Media, Culture and Society, examining ideologies and the structures which influence and sustain them, as well as the obvious importance of media coverage of female sports participation. My working background has always involved multi-agency work, so I was interested in the idea of sports development as an area needing to operate in this type of setting, with individuals and organisations contributing to, planning, delivering and assessing services. I did not begin the research wishing to test either one or a set of theories, nor did I have any fixed ideas about why the women's game has developed in the way it has in England, the USA and Norway. I did begin the research though with certainty that a *number* of factors, such as gender roles, changes in the economic position of women, maintenance of masculine hegemony and challenges to it, sexuality and the state of men's domestic and international football were operating simultaneously and would have helped, and continue to help, shape the game for females. This is also a 'practical' piece of research, in that data generated and gathered by the project has been immediately useful to the FA in developing its strategies. It is vital then to link any theoretical approaches or conclusions arrived at to tactics which the FA and other organisations may adopt if they wish to progress the female game specifically, and sport for females generally.

Chapter Two will examine a number of theoretical standpoints and their possible contributions to our understanding of sport and females. These theories will be summarised and critiqued, and then Layder's advice of challenging their shortcomings, whilst trying to retain an overarching explanatory framework, making use of their individual contributions, will be taken on board when attempting to explain why football for females has 'happened' as it has. This means we will look at *macro* issues, such as the wider societal settings in which the game has developed,

meso issues, that is events taking place within the game and the FA, and at the *micro* level, we will look for explanations of the actions of individuals who have had an effect on the development of football for females, although, obviously, these three sites of examination are inter-twined. Drawing on his work (Layder 1998:29) the approach taken will be one of:

Fig.1.1



In the case of the research here on females and football, this translates to; examining the development of the game for females (an area identified as a specific issue for an agency which may also be reflective of more general issues around gender), examining existing theories which may point to reasons for the development pattern, choosing appropriate and effective ways to accumulate data and selecting people involved in the game to gather data from. Then we may go on to analyse the data generated and theorise, in the light of existing theories, allowing room for emergent theory, as to why the game has developed as it has and how it might develop in the future.

The approach then will be adaptive, attempting to combine the prior with the emergent. It will assume that the social world is complex and multi-layered, and will borrow from a number of approaches, but attempt not to be too heavily reliant on any one of them. It will seek to demonstrate multifarious interconnections between human agency, social activities and social organisations. It will both shape and be shaped by empirical data that emerges. It will be neither positivist nor interpretative, and will use the inductive *and* deductive for developing and elaborating theory. Epistemologically, it embraces objectivism and subjectivism in terms of its ontological prepositions and is middle range, in terms of it having an immediate focus, but being open-ended in relation to larger scale or other types of research. It

will not take the view that there is 'a specifically female knowledge' as explored by, amongst others, Stanley (1997). It will respond to Layder's desire that we

'sift through the plethora of ideas and develop a composite theory from the scattering of insights, concepts and theoretical strands that populate the variegated terrain encompassing dualistic forms of thinking' (1994:149).

It will be 'unashamedly eclectic' (Layder 1994:221).

Chapter Two

History and Theory: Opposition to Female Participation in Sport

This chapter will look at major theoretical debates around sport, starting with medical debates, in the Victorian era, about the inappropriateness of sport for females, which had a lengthy impact on views around gender and sport. Challenges to these prevailing medical views will be looked at, as will early physical education. Sex-role theory, figurational sociology and Marxist and feminist approaches will be analysed, as well as recent work on issues of changing gender identities.

Major Theoretical Debates Around Females and Sport

Moorhouse (1996:56) argues that mainstream sociology has largely ignored sport as a field of investigation, something which is surprising when one considers sport's enormous cultural significance and popularity. He criticises the examination of sport by British sociologists, where it does occur, because of the 'all too encompassing assertions' which are made in this work about norms of masculinity in sport, and about the social class aspects of sport's development. Only more recently, he claims, has there been any attention given to wider gender issues and to issues of racism in sport (Moorhouse, 1996: 58). With these thoughts in mind, we will examine some of the major theoretical debates around sport which might be usefully explored in order to assess the development of football for females in England.

The Victorian Era: Sport, Public Schools and Empire

Holt (1989:20) looks at the development of sport in Britain and challenges the belief that the history of British sport is simply that of a switch from informal, localised sports to a formal, nationally administered activity. He charts a gradual drift in attitudes towards recreation in the eighteenth century, through the transformation and enlargement of secondary education for the social elite in the Victorian age, a period during which sport became more regulated and more vigorously promoted. In this period, there was also an *imperial* fervour and patriotism amongst the middle-classes in their attitudes to sport, with public schools extolling the virtues of sport as a tool

for constructing a specific type of manliness which would continue to strengthen and expand the British Empire.

The middle years of the nineteenth century saw improvements in transport and a shift towards the urbanisation of the working population, factors which had an impact on the playing of sports. Sport became national, for participants and travelling fans, and some workers now had more disposable income to spend on sport. For these new urbanised workers, sport helped to create and sustain a new identity, but there was a 'special relationship' between sport, war and Imperialism, 'the Englishman carrying his cricket bat with him as naturally as his gun case' (*Blackwood's Magazine* 1982, quoted in Holt, 1989:7). In the domestic setting, for the non-English British, sport was a means of expressing their own separate national identities, particularly via rugby union and football. Holt cites the period from the 1860s to the start of World War One as the time when the basic pattern of contemporary sport was laid down in Britain.

He usefully reminds us that the history of sport in modern Britain is actually the history of *men* and sport with, 'female sport [...] a frail and pallid growth in the shade of men's sport' (Holt 1989:89). Holt also points to the fact that the British tradition of sport is distinctive because of the lack of strong official State backing for physical training. The Wolfenden Report on sport and community was not commissioned by the British Government, but by the Central Council on Physical Recreation (CCPR) and initiatives, such as the setting up of the National Playing Fields Association in 1925 and the provision of some physical training facilities in the 1930s by the National Council for Social Service, could hardly be described as full-blooded State intervention in sport, with games lessons not being made compulsory in State schools until 1944.

Holt argues that the amateur ethos of sport was responsible for discouraging State intervention, further claiming that it was only in 1964, with the setting up of the Sports Council by a Labour government which did not have ties with sport's amateur elite, that the State became less inhibited in its involvement in sport. The Sports Council's initiative of 'Sport For All' has not, Holt claims, overcome inequalities in sport, with facilities built under the banner being used primarily by those with already high

participation rates, and women, the old, the young, members of the ethnic minorities and the unskilled remaining under-users. He points to the absence of an institutional push in Britain to encourage more people to participate in sport, with individuals and clubs providing the impetus. Sport, Holt claims, has conviviality at its heart, but this sociability is largely *male*, with women in an enabling and supporting role to male sports participation.

At the micro level, Holt suggests that people drew their own meanings from sport, whether it was the view that it would make them stronger and fitter to lead the Empire by example, or whether, as in the case of the Celts, it was to forge their own identity against a back-drop of wider Britishness. These meanings are found against a meso-backdrop of sport being promoted by schools, whilst at the macro level, there is little State participation in regulating or promoting sport, and also a view that sport is not a suitable activity for females, at least not for those outside of the affluent classes. Sport conflicted with women's domestic responsibilities and with their important role of producing the next generation of British stock for the Empire.

Muscular Christianity and Social Darwinism

Examining some of the same themes as Holt, around public schools, Empire and sport, Mangan (1987) provides useful insights into nineteenth century concepts of 'muscular Christianity' and 'social Darwinism.' The drive behind public schools in Britain in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods was to develop leaders of men, males who were 'muscular, moral and manly' (Mangan, 1987: 135). Sport and Christianity were important components of this process, hence muscular Christianity. However, Mangan questions the importance of the religious element of this equation, describing the endurance of pupils without complaint as a reflection of 'stoicism', a secular morality, more than a sacred one. The motives driving public school education at this time were governed more by social Darwinism, but advertised to the public as the more palatable muscular Christianity.

Social Darwinism implied an 'ambivalence towards the intellect' (Mangan, 1987:149) and a belief that physical training would produce men physically strong enough to survive the strictures of war and Empire, and mentally robust enough to command

men in conflict, and rule colonials. Although this image of the public school-boy as sportsman-soldier is a recurring one in school-produced literature of the time, the efficacy of games for soldiering must not go unquestioned: 'Whether Waterloo was, or was not, won on the playing fields of Eton, Armageddon will certainly not be decided on the cinder track' (Mangan 1981:194). What is important here is that the approach of such schools demonstrated the importance of training for war and Empire at this time, and the fact that this institutionalised relationship between patriotism, manliness and the playing fields was a relationship which meant there was little room for consideration of the role of females in sport (Mangan, 1996:15).

However, Mangan's focus is primarily on public schools and games, making little mention of the role of sport in the lives of the working-class. Walvin touches more on this latter group, arguing that the poor would have been viewed by the elite at this time as, 'a caste apart [...] remarkably like colonial blacks' (Walvin, 1987: 252). He examines the spread of the drive to promote 'manliness,' among young men from the public schools, to working-class boys, after medical observers began to document the increasing poor health of this sector of the population, calling for physical drill to be introduced for the working classes as early as 1870. Churches, schools and voluntary organisations (many of these institutions being staffed by products of the elite schools) encouraged games amongst the poor.

Football was immediately popular with working-class boys; it was easy to make a ball, no other equipment was needed, there was space to play on the streets and any number of players could form into teams. Even the most resistant of educationalists saw the value of teaching football to boys, both for reasons of fitness, and to keep boys in school: 'This idea of sport as an antidote to the dangers of youth and free-time has been both continuous and universal throughout all societies' (Talbot, 1990: 3). Football came to be viewed as an elixir for personal and social ills; regular 'doses' of the sport from an early age would aid health, serve the national good by teaching the qualities needed in men, and also encourage the cohesion necessary in time of conflict.

Parratt (1996:53) argues that recreational and social clubs were a deliberate attempt by employers and government to regulate the lives of working-class females.

Women's labour was cheaper than men's, so employers were loathe not to employ females. However, as men's work was seen as earning them the *right* to leisure, it was feared that wage-earning may also give women a taste for leisure, as well as resulting in their not receiving, 'a proper training in the necessary housewifery skills' (Parratt 1996: 56). Teas, outings, friendly societies etc. were all favoured vehicles for promoting the dominant ideology of working-class female domesticity in the later part of the nineteenth century, evoking the idea of fulfilment for women within the home, especially in their role of servicer of men and their leisure needs.

Whilst Quaker employers, such as the Rowntrees, saw men and women as spiritual equals, their factories operated along lines of strict gender division, with a ban on employing married women workers in force until the 1940s. However, the notion of 'morals and muscles' (Parratt, 1996: 65) led to some employers offering Swedish drill and swimming to female workers, with the Rowntree's themselves beginning to offer such activities in 1902. Work and leisure during this era became more separate spheres and the home became an increasingly privatised area, as the nuclear family strengthened. These factors helped to produce and reinforce the gender positions of males who *do* in the public arena and females who *are* in the domestic setting.

Park (1987:8) points to earlier signs of the presence of this 'British Victorian' urge for good health in America, with the belief there that men *and* women could improve themselves via physical exercise. In the 1820s, for example, American educators urged the introduction of PE, some 50 years ahead of similar calls in England. Knowledge of Ling gymnastics reached the USA in the 1830s, again, ahead of England. These calls for physical education in schools were linked to the new and passionate belief in 'biology', a term which first appeared in publications in 1800, with the mind seen as a part of the whole body, an organ which could be made fitter if the rest of the organism was trained. State schools in the US were urged to adopt a system of PE, 'which would be scientifically superior to those already existing in England and Germany' (Park, 1987: 19). However, despite the apparent recognition in the USA that exercise could improve the lives of *both* sexes, there were few signs that this egalitarianism percolated into sport, with much the same gendered patterns of sport apparent in America as in England.

The Medical Debate

Sport is certainly not the only sphere in which arguments about the limits and functions of the body have been used as a means of controlling women. However, in sport, the medical debate has proved to be a near-constant in the opposition of sporting organisations and society to women participating in sport, and it is this appeal to biology and medicine that has justified the exclusion of females from sport, or the modification of sports for females (Cheska, 1980; McCrone, 1988; Cahn, 1994 and Cashmore, 1999). In terms of *theoretical* approaches, biological assumptions also carry influence and continue to inform functionalist ideas around gender and sport.

In Victorian Britain, the concept of neurasthenia, the malady of weakness amongst middle-class woman, was invented by medical personnel, with male doctors contending that embarking on physical and intellectual pursuits was likely to induce or exacerbate such a condition among ‘ladies’. Certainly, assumptions and codes around notions of physicality were strongly defined along class lines, with middle-class females in this period often being confined to bed during menstruation and pregnancy. Women from the working-class, however, carried out heavy physical work over long hours in factories, with little or no concession for pregnancy and childbirth, or concerns for their general health. Issues of the importance of strong stock necessary for defence of the Empire, and fears around working-class population growth, led to an emphasis on the importance of females as ‘healthy vessels’ for the foetus. A women’s duty to the nation was largely to be a fit and healthy mother. The primary function of middle-class women was simply to *be*. It was not the purpose of a middle-class female to engage in physical or intellectual activity beyond that which was strictly necessary to function from day to day.

The female body, therefore, was constrained, dictated to and monitored, with medicine playing a significant part in the process. The influence of the new scientism, especially social Darwinism, portrayed character differences between men and women as biological and, therefore, immutable. To allow women to be seen in the same light as men, was ‘unnatural;’ the legitimisation for difference was not sexist, but scientific, giving the standpoint its objectivity and strength.

Contestations

However, during the Victorian period, the claimed biological incompatibility of women with physical activity did not exclude them completely from leisure pursuits. Forms of croquet, as well as lawn tennis, were played by women in Victorian Britain, but women were corseted so tightly and wore so many petticoats that they were virtually unable to move, and were certainly restricted from movement which could be construed as combative. Their participation in leisure was very much at the level of the *social* and ladies of the elite classes were offered up in sport as forms of conspicuous displays on behalf of their husbands. Even the gentlest leisure pursuits were painted as potentially dangerous and/or immoral for females:

‘Cycling... [for women was] described as an indolent and indecent practice which would even transport girls to prostitution [...] made women incapable of bearing children [...] “besides, how dreadful it would be if, by some accident, she were to fall into the arms of a strange man.”’ (Hargreaves, 1987:137).

The opposition to women’s direct involvement in sport, based as it was on assumptions about biological differences, conveniently did not exclude women from decorative ‘sports’ displays or from supporting sporting males. Women were expected to be present at some ‘real’ sports, as spectators, cheering on their men. This is a theme exemplified by Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic movement, who argued that, ‘[...] the Olympic Games must be reserved for the solemn and periodic exultation of male athleticism, with internationalisation as a base, loyalty as a means, arts for its setting and female applause as reward,’ (quoted in Remorini, 1994:9). This theme of women ‘on the sidelines’ of (male) sport is still prevalent today, in women’s servicing of men’s leisure; women are expected to wash kit, sell raffle tickets to raise funds and do the catering (Thompson, 1990:135).

Women’s exclusion from physical activity was challenged by a small number of females in the early physical education movement. Martina Bergman, who became Madame Bergman Osterberg, brought drill gymnastics to England from Sweden, and worked for the London School Board between 1882 and 1887, training 1312 female teachers, with the drill system being taught in all London girl’s and infant’s departments by 1888 (Hargreaves, 1994:69). In 1885, Osterberg opened what went

on to become Dartford College, in order to train female physical educators, the graduates being middle-class young ladies. Another Swede, Concordia Lofving, trained in her home country under this same Ling system of gymnastics and became Lady Superintendent of Physical Education for London girl's and infant's schools in 1879. The work of women such as these in training female physical education teachers provided the first opportunity for an organised and concerted effort to prove that not only was physical activity *appropriate* for women, it was also *beneficial* to the aim of producing healthy women and, therefore, healthy mothers.

Physical education for females, which was not part of the school curriculum, was a strict regime of early nights, cold baths and regulated gymnastics. Women's colleges, such as Bedford College, established in 1903 and Dartford College, worked closely with male and female doctors (Vertinsky, 1997a). Women were weighed, measured and underwent intimate physical examinations in order that the excesses of physical 'freedom' could be regulated, and to ensure that they came to no 'harm' due to their exertions. Uniformity and a de-sexualised appearance were key, with garments worn during physical exercise by students providing both a de-personalised appearance and a continuation of the restrictive use of clothes, with tights sewn into knickers worn under boxey gymslips, with wool socks and hefty shoes.

Physical education at the time of Madame Osterberg offered not the emancipation of women in or via sport, but the opportunity for an elite few females to operate within largely male-defined parameters of 'acceptable' female sporting practice. A century on and the argument could be made that physical education is still almost as fettered by ideas of appropriateness and function as it has ever been, with the added burden that its presentation at schools is a turn-off for many young females at a time when female adolescents are dropping out of physical activity in large numbers (FT 1999, Nike 2000) and a more detailed discussion of this can be found in Chapter Six.

Where sports have traditionally been played by women, rules have often been modified to 'accommodate' their participation (Hargreaves 1987:133,141). For example, field hockey was originally a sport viewed as being effeminate for men (McCrone 1988:128) and, therefore, suitable for women. However, it was still deemed necessary for females to play on smaller pitches, have shorter playing time

and for men to govern the game. This male governance is still prevalent in sports organisations and in PE, with men tending to be heads of PE department in schools and colleges (Scruton 1992: 94). So, even when women participated in certain sports, they were often pressed to play 'lesser' versions of the men's game and competition, such as it was, was strictly separated along gender lines. Thus, if women's sport did take on any serious elements of physicality, it would not do so in direct comparison to the male version of the game. It could then be defined as qualitatively different from men's aggressive/competitive sport and not as a threat to the masculinity of men, or to women's femininity.

This division of competition can also be seen in PE lessons. 'Football, you must be mad - you should have been born a lad,' (Scruton 1992:65) the male head of a PE department in a school in England recalls saying to a girl footballer in the early 1990s. Even in games where size, power and speed may not be the determining factors, many schools split classes along gender lines and provide activities on the same basis. As a senior delegate from a 'traditionally' male sport at a Women's Sports Foundation conference said recently:

'It's ridiculous that in the 1990s we still don't offer girls the same sports that we offer boys. It just doesn't happen in any other lesson. Would we go into a French class, put all the boys on one side and teach them the words for car, mechanic and engine and put the girls on the other side and teach them the words for doll, kitchen and home?' (anon. WSF 1997b).

Such division is arbitrary, based not on ability, but on ideas of the appropriate, a concept forged by medical practitioners in the Victorian era and built on since.

In England, females who did play sport at the elite level were drawn almost exclusively from the middle or upper-classes, competing in events which were either suitably 'feminine,' tennis player, Kitty Godfree, playing successfully through the 1920s, or which would allow them to be viewed by both men and women as so novel as to be harmless. The English adventurer, the Honourable Mrs Victor Bruce, for example, drove bikes and speed boats, and flew aircraft, as well as driving in the Monte Carlo rally, in the early twentieth century.

Today, female bull fighters in Spain, such as Cristina Sanchez, may be viewed by many as, 'exceptions to be marvelled at, rather than revolutionary or change-producing' (Pink, 1997:167). Indeed, the *type* of sports being played by females was also an area of contestation, a struggle for control. Metheny (1974:294-297) outlines four categories of sport and their level of acceptability for females, levels which have remained fairly constant throughout history. These are: *categorically unacceptable* (e.g. boxing), *generally not acceptable* (e.g. football, and other contact team sports), *generally acceptable* (e.g. equestrianism) and *some forms of acceptable face to face* e.g. (fencing). She also provides a useful reminder of the way social class works as a mediating factor in what is acceptable for females, with contact sports being viewed as more acceptable for typically more physically active working-class females than for middle-class women. Metheny's work also reminds us that images of masculinity and femininity are socially sanctioned and not static.

To portray women's history in sport as one purely of exclusion, and, indeed, of collusion by females in their own restraint, is to fail to acknowledge the challenges made by some women to the barriers raised to their participation and competition. However, two further points should be made here. Such women were very much *individuals*, not part of a concerted, politicised or collective movement to access sport for women. They were women who pursued their sporting interests for sheer enjoyment, not as a political statement or in rage against inequality. Secondly, what they achieved forced those opposed to their participation to adapt and *add to* crude biological arguments in order to provide new reasons why women should be excluded from physically demanding or 'male' sports, in order to preserve sport as a male arena.

Birke and Vines (1987:341) also remind us that whilst women were allowed to participate in certain activities, such as equestrianism, their participation was tolerated only up to a point; when women wanted to become *competitive* in these areas, there was resistance to this development. From arguing that sport diverted essential energies away from the work of the womb and would stunt secondary sexual development, and arguments that sport might have unseemly and undesirable effects on hormonal balance, to fears about sport having the potential to turn women into homosexuals, we are still in a position where many parents fear 'damage' will be

caused to their daughters if they are involved in, particularly, competitive, contact sports. Such has been the variety of medical argument and such is the kudos and strength that opposition from medicine provides to female involvement in sport.

Theoretical Approaches: History *versus* Sociology

There is a healthy academic debate over the shaping of sport in Britain, including the importance of gender to its development. Primarily a sports historian, James Mangan's attitude towards sports sociology is somewhat unfortunate. At the Football India Conference, held at University College Northampton in July 2000, he welcomed delegates from various academic disciplines, the media, players and coaches, saying he felt sure they all had much to contribute to the day. However, he then made disparaging remarks about how *little* sociologists would have to contribute and how they can, in his view, cause more problems than they solve when examining the development of sport! This is in contrast to the more supportive approach of another historian, Richard Holt (1989: 362) who says:

‘What may seem conceptually confused and unacceptable to the theorist, may be appropriate and right to the historian drawing on different theories to illuminate different aspects of what is in reality not a single phenomenon, but a set of loosely related activities shifting their forms and meanings over time. Eclecticism is justified, providing it is reasoned and critical.’

Here, Holt is responding to criticism from some sociologists that historians lack a theoretical framework for their work, with historians retorting that sociologists attempt to compress the past into a small number of categories. Whilst Holt makes useful comments on the role of the State in terms of the lack of female participation in sport, and about resistance to sport as a unifying tool, gender and resistance are largely under-explored in Mangan's accounts (1981, 1987, 1996) and how sport impacted on the masses is also a secondary subject to his focus on the elite schools and sport.

There is little sense at the micro level, in Mangan's work, of how individuals *felt* about sport or about what *constrained* them to follow their prescribed paths in relation to it. At the meso level, apart from a concentration on a small number of elite

schools, there is little said by Mangan about the agencies which would have been responsible for mediating sport, including government, and at the macro level, again, there is little offered by the author which is specific to the role of women in sport, with accounts being couched almost exclusively in terms of the importance of sport to Empire and conflict.

Masculinities and Femininities

The work of the sociologist Bob Connell (1985, 1987, 1995) is an attempt to deconstruct the rigid, fixed oppositions between the 'masculine' and the 'feminine,' recognising that as well as a multiplicity of femininities, there are also many 'types' of masculinity (Wearing 1998:91). Connell looks at sex-role theory, and men and women as already constituted categories, as the two accounts of gender which have been most commonly used to analyse gender relations. Sex-role theory claims that people are given social scripts which they learn and act out, leading to women and men fulfilling and accepting certain roles. This idea underpinned much 1960s liberal feminist thought, with measures, such as equality legislation, being seen as ways of breaking down the stereotypes of gender; as ways of helping people to 'unlearn' scripts, as gender differences are *not* biological and, therefore, cannot be presented as insurmountable.

Such an approach would not just liberate females, it was claimed, it would also free men from some of the expectations placed on them. However, this approach has serious weaknesses, as Connell points out. Sex-role theory, for example, doesn't account adequately for why actors praise other actors who fulfil the expectations of their script and stigmatise those who do not. Such sanctioning/criticism of other actors' positions can only be explained via free will, the choice of the individual to grant sanction or criticise, a slippage into voluntarism. The static nature of sex-role theory also leaves it open to criticism, with changes simply *happening* to the theory, rather than the approach having an appreciation of the interplay between social structure and practice, which help create such change. Sex-role theory highlights the rigid and artificial distinctions between males and females and plays down the power exercised by men over women in micro domestic and wider meso and macro settings,

so its focus becomes not the challenging of the meso and macro structures which enforce the roles, but attempts to loosen the roles themselves.

Looking at the tendency to analyse men and women as already constituted categories, the issue of *power* is central, whether in terms of violence in the domestic setting or wider power issues around the economy. The categories 'men' and 'women' are taken for granted here, but how they come to be so is not questioned, so we are left with the essentialist sense that there is something biological about the distinction between the two categories, even though feminists working within this framework are not themselves biological determinists. Men and women tend to be presented by this approach as groups whose members are uniform, what Eisenstein calls 'false universalism' (see Connell, 1985:265). Ironically, radical feminism has rather curved back in its approaches, towards the biological, with concepts such as 'power', 'culture', and 'violence' frequently being prefixed by the word 'male'; social facts or processes here seem to be attributed to biological roots. That there are differences between members of the group 'women' is made clear, but 'men', claims Connell, are increasingly portrayed as an homogenous group, taking the responsibility for their actions away from males, and attributing the blame for them to a 'maleness' which is rooted in biology. This is the same biological argument which is so often used to categorise and contain females.

In looking for a more durable and more convincing explanation of the position of females, Connell finds some comfort in Giddens' belief that human practice always pre-supposes social structure (Giddens, 1987:94). He agrees that labour and power are important wider issues, but suggests that we need the third element of object choice or desire; cathexis. Connell is keen that we do not allow individual, localised acts of constraint to obstruct our view of wider, structural acts of oppression, just as he is at pains to point out that local victories will not overthrow the large system of control (Connell, 1996:74). He argues that the standardised appeal of the 'feminine' is necessary to promote women as sexual objects and we can see that within this framework, *sporting* women would present a challenge to that standardised outlook.

Connell also bemoans the relative lack of analysis of the meso level, the place where we mostly exist. He argues that at the macro level, few have seen the State as an

institution for reproducing gender power. Liberals see the State as a neutral arbiter, some see it as a regulator, some as a class product and, whilst keen to stress that we are not at a point of sexual crisis, he claims that there is the tendency towards an *institutional* crisis in this respect, with the family and State having lost some of their ability to sustain the legitimacy of men's power. Connell calls for an approach which allows us to look at the way that *micro* personal lives weave with macro social structures, a theorisation which does not fall into voluntarism, on the one hand, or resort to categoricalism on the other. This approach recognises that gender, like class, 'is not the machine but the way the machine works' (Connell, 1996: 267).

Finally, Connell's approach suggests that sports institutions are embedded in definite social relations and that these relations are realised and symbolised in bodily performance. This, it could be argued, leaves more 'traditional' ideas of gender identity vulnerable to challenge when females perform in conventionally masculine domains. It also means that men who do not 'prove' themselves through sport, challenge the prevailing hegemony, revealing fissures and demonstrating that within this restrictive hegemonic framework, there is, indeed, room for agency (Connell, 1996:130-142). Whilst men may have *overall* hegemonic control, hegemonic masculinity is not a natural state *at the individual level* and many males struggle to meet the demands of hegemonic masculinity.

Figurational Sociology

The work around sport of Eric Dunning and his colleagues is from an Eliasian or figurationalist perspective, and Dunning sees this approach as having a synthesising potential which can resolve many difficulties in sports sociology and sociology generally by challenging dualisms (Dunning, 1985:30) whether these be epistemological, ontological or connected with the division of scientific labour. The Eliasian approach sees humans and society as part of nature, with nature having a series of emergent levels which are interrelated but relatively autonomous. Elias criticises the separation of people from the relationships in which they are involved and offers *figurations*, the idea of a web of interdependent humans bonded to each other on several levels, recognising the importance of power to the analysis of people and society.

Figuralists claim that as long as a party has a function in a relationship, as long as they have value to another, they are not powerless, no matter how great the power differential. Proponents of this approach tend to be critical of much American sports sociology, from its very definitions of what sociology *is* to a questioning of the eclecticism of American methods and theories, with criticism, for example, of Loy et al's (1975) use of quantitative methods. Dunning claims that the development of modern sport has taken place, and is taking place, within a long term, unplanned process, which led to the emergence of industrial nation states. He sees the examination of sport as being of great value to the discipline of sociology generally and claims that figuralism is probably the only perspective which has developed a theoretical-empirical approach to sport, and that Elias, 'is the only sociologist with a claim to major status who has contributed significantly to the field' (Dunning, 1985: 37).

In terms of figural sociology, sport and gender, Dunning claims sport is, 'simultaneously one of the most significant sites of resistance against and challenge to the reproduction of traditional masculinity' (2000:220). Pointing to Elias's claim that sport is inherently conflictual, producing 'in group/out group, we group/they group' identifications, Dunning's recent work has sought to highlight the relationship not just which males have with sport, but also the relationship of females towards it. Dunning et al's previous work centred on 'sport as a male preserve' (Dunning et al, 1985) as part of the wider 'civilising process' (Dunning et al, 1992; 1993) where sport is a vital site for the forging of 'traditional' male identities. He argues that sport is increasingly isolated as a sphere for forging and maintaining masculine identities, as society becomes increasingly technological, and as females gain more relative freedom from male constraint (Dunning 2000:226). The civilising process posits that as society becomes less violent, as large scale, public conflicts reduce in frequency, sport has become an arena where socially sanctioned, more symbolic conflicts are fought (Dunning, 2000:228).

Having been criticised by Jennifer Hargreaves (1985) for the figuralist's lack of attention to the issue of females and sport, Dunning's recent work (2000) does focus more directly on the position of women with regard to sport. He argues, for example, that sports venues, such as golf courses and bowling greens, were vandalised by

suffragettes, who saw their symbolic value as male domains, with sport being used by women, in this respect, as a site of non-participatory protest (Dunning, 2000:233). Dunning posits that one of the reasons for the *increase* in female participation in sport in recent years is the desire among women for the ‘mimetic’ experience, female’s yearning to have the type of sociability and standing which males more typically gain via sport. Trying to identify the key reasons why more females have engaged more with sport over time, Dunning points to the ‘equalising’ reduction in the power of the male head of the family within the home and the increasing emancipation of females, via employment and other activities *outside* the domestic setting (Dunning, 2000: 237). Such changes in the relative position of females Dunning sees as part of the civilising process. This rather linear approach to the changing position of females in sport offers little, however, in the way of explanation for the peaks and troughs of female involvement in football, and portrays ‘power’ as being something of a see-saw; men ‘suffer’ because of the introduction of new technologies, and women ‘naturally’ benefit from such changes.

Whilst it is refreshing to see figurationalists engaging with some of their critics, in Layder’s view, Eliasian functionalism supplies, ‘illusory solutions to illusory problems’ (Layder, 1986:368). Layder points to Elias’s tendency to use stereotypes to illustrate the short-comings of other theories, as well as his rather curt dismissal and caricaturing of philosophy and the pre-scientific. Curtis (1986:65) also questions whether North American sociologists actually occupy the position ascribed to them by Dunning and his colleagues, who claim that the sports sociology of the US is flawed from its very definitions of sociology and social systems, through what Dunning perceives as an over-playing of consensus, to ‘eclecticism or theoretical agnosticism’ (Dunning, 1985:40).

This alleged patronising voice of the Eliasian seems clear in Dunning’s (1985) response to Jennifer Hargreaves’ (1985) critique of figurational sociology; a fine example of an author defending their theoretical position simply by mocking the ideas of others. Certainly, Dunning’s dismissive description of American sociological methods as being, perhaps, more suited to ‘lower level sciences’ is as crude as it is parochial (Dunning, 1985:41). Layder (1986:374) identifies Elias’s claims around figurations (as instanced by his ideas around dance) as epistemologically and

ontologically inaccurate, as is Elias's claim that dance does not exist outside of individuals, nor that it can be seen as a mental construct or an abstract, as this would mean that Elias's own writing would be 'nothing more than marks on paper' (Layder, 1986: 374). Such work, claims Layder, lacks the necessary observation of face-to-face interaction at the micro level and views people as parts of chains, thus denying them agency. This figurationalist notion of people as 'vessels' of self restraint, part of a constant chain, also masks the potential for conflict, which is an important part of agency.

Elias's work lacks a convincing sense of agency, regarding individuals as *accidental* perpetrators of outcomes which, despite being ultimately uncontrolled, are *inevitable*. This inevitability is portrayed as linear, moving towards a more 'civilised' state of affairs. Terms such as 'civilised' and 'violence' are themselves laden with values, values very much of the West. The replacement of societal violence with violence which is sanctioned in sports, for example, is assumed to be a positive, although, obviously, the presence of such value judgements is denied by leading functionalists (Dunning, 1993: 46). Little account is given to the importance of agency in these figurations, yet alone *gender*. Elias claims (1970:85), for example, that, '[...] there will emerge from the inter-weaving of moves made by two people, a game process *which neither of the two people has planned*.' Situations, or figurations, he argues, over-take individuals and groups of individuals, denying people the level of control they desire.

Whilst it may be true that individuals are not completely in control of social processes, to suggest that their initial impulses are so far removed from the end product of their actions is to deny individuals almost any power at all. Elias's perspective also fails to see individuals as able to recognise their own position within figurations, further under-valuing the role of agents. The Functionalist claim that we cannot make any meaningful headway in understanding the mechanics of society by looking *either* just at individuals, *or* just at wider figurations, is hardly a unique standpoint, and seems particularly dated with the emergence of 'new' theoretical approaches, such as ethnomethodology and postmodernism. The claim by figurationalists that sport is a source of inherently aggression-engendering frustration is also questionable; surely, for many participants, sporting contexts can be cathartic,

rather than a source of conflict and irritation, and the belief that, 'sport, like science, is socially neutral, neither intrinsically good nor intrinsically bad' (Dunning 1993:66) is naïve at best, arrogant at worst, again, effectively removing agency from the assessment of the meaning of sports and asserting an impossible 'scientific' neutrality.

Marxist Approaches

Marxism could, potentially, be a useful explanatory tool for seeking to explicate the position of women in relation to sport, highlighting, as it does, the importance of capitalist exploitation. Marxism views history as process and something which, in its more sophisticated variants, is not impersonal; whilst people are constrained by their material position, they still *act*. Of the neo-Marxists, John Hargreaves (1986:3) believes that sport is neither a sign of cultural decline or degradation, nor an opiate of the masses. Indeed, he claims that the working-class asserts itself via sport, although he also points to government programming of sport being, to a certain extent, at odds with the idea of sport as an expression of freedom. Hargreaves also claims that using sport as a vehicle for political mobilisation devalues it as a means of autonomous expression. For all their thought-provoking ideas around sport, class and the individual, neither the figurationalists nor Marxists such as Hargreaves, make much mention of *females* in sport. The assumption is, one is left to suppose, that they believe their theories have applications which are universal, and which encompass gender as a sub-fraction of class relations. Or, perhaps, gender is not considered to be a defining, explanatory feature of societal relations or inequality at all? The relations of men and women through sport, in this context, reflect normative capitalist gender relations, that is men *act* and women merely *are*. The female role here is to service the leisure activities of males.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony (John Hargreaves, 1982:14) does not view people as 'puppets' who are manipulated at will by the State, and it usefully argues that sport is not static; that attitudes to sport change, incorporating the historical with new challenges. Hegemony is a mainly *persuasive* style of control, not a coercive one, a reaction to values and beliefs in specific situations and times. It also recognises that 'society' is not homogenous, but is, rather, made up of interest groups, contesting meanings. Hegemony then, implies that the history of sport is a constant struggle

between dominant and subordinate groups, where contested meanings emerge and are challenged. The defining emphasis here is still very much on class relations, with gender relations being seen as of secondary significance. Hegemony is a useful tool because it resists the Eliasian tendency to see the development of sport as a more-or-less linear process, an apposite approach when one considers the peaks and troughs nature of the development of football for females. It is also useful for considering the ways, for example, in which struggles and accommodations over the involvement of women in sports are *arrived at*, *maintained* and *contested*, with attitudes changing at the micro, meso and macro levels. Unlike figurationalism, hegemonic theory rejects determinism and acknowledges the importance of *agency* within the constraints of hegemony's dominance of specific values, ideas, and its relative control of resources.

Cultural Studies

From a cultural studies perspective, Clarke and Critcher (1985) are critical of approaches which analyse sport outside the context of wider society. They contend that leisure is earned via and enjoyed *after* work and, so, is dominated by capital (1985:3). As Willis posits, in terms of tackling the kind of deterministic view of women's football as a sport which the FA believes simply *must* become a professional one in this country, ideology has to induce consent, or it is merely the manifestation of a group which has power over another (Willis, 1982:117). In other words, the opposition to women in sport is so ingrained, is viewed as so 'natural', that challenges to it, such as the drive for professionalism, are seen as so bizarre, that many will see it not as a challenge for what is 'right', but as an attack on the consensus that women's sport is 'less' significant than men's sport. Willis also addresses the 'biological' position of those who would use science as a means of restricting female activity in sport:

'Why it is that women can muster only 90% of a man's strength cannot help us to comprehend, explain or change the massive feeling in our society that a woman has no business flexing her muscles anyway' (Willis 1982:119).

His analytical, cultural criticism accepts that there *are* differences between people, but, crucially, it does not attempt to measure such differences. It asks, instead, why

some differences become exaggerated and are used to bolster prejudices. This must surely be a useful tool in helping us to explain the continued bias against females in sport and is also a vital device in helping to challenge opposition to the growing role of females in sports such as football.

Willis (1982:119) is also critical of the positivist approach to sports research, feeling, rather like Critcher and Clarke, that this methodological approach is too isolated and too deterministic, offering the view that cultural meanings cannot be quantified. Criticising the Eliasian approach, Willis says that the relationship between society and sport is not a linear one. The 'freedoms' of sport do not 'naturally' apply to women and if women display solidarity through sport, they are viewed as deviant, with those females who succeed as athletes often portrayed as being failures as women. In terms of female athletes themselves, Willis argues that they sometimes collude in their own oppression, by dressing 'provocatively', or, like tennis champion Billie Jean King, by taking part in male versus female sporting contests. Willis sees the concern of females to surpass the performance of males in this way as a tacit admission of female inferiority.

A cultural studies approach to females and sport, from the position of Critcher, Clarke and Willis, tends to be multi-focussed, drawing on a number of standpoints, such as Marxism and feminism, with the concept of hegemony also playing an important role. Hegemonic theory seeks to examine resistances, so it is of some use when trying to identify exactly *how* the women's game continues its development, despite concerted opposition. It also offers a demonstration of how development, in sport and other areas, is not linear but is contested at the micro level, and how individuals and groups can resist 'common sense' opposition to the involvement of females in sport, how support can be won for this opposition, and how contestation of the hegemonic position of female football as 'other', as deviant, can be reinforced and the status quo maintained at the meso and macro levels.

Feminist Approaches

Feminist authors, such as Jennifer Hargreaves and Rosemary Deem, set sport against a more general context of female oppression and gender relations. They look at

women not just as participants, but as spectators and, in contrast to the way *sportsmen* are typically examined, as *enablers*, people who facilitate other's enjoyment of leisure (Deem 1986: 345). Deem usefully talks about the differences between sport and *leisure* for many females. Leisure is often a fragmented activity, which can be participated in at home, such as sewing or watching TV, and such leisure activities are sometimes enjoyed whilst also carrying out domestic duties (Deem 1988:337). Wigmore (1996:58) also notes that because many females are bound by domestic duties, if they do exercise *outside* of the home, it is easier for them to jog, or walk than for them to organise a team event. This means that women gravitate towards individual activities, and so they may feel isolated in their leisure.

Talbot (1988) encourages those who research women and sport to incorporate this wider concept of leisure into their analysis in order to build up a fuller picture of females and sport and leisure, rather than concentrating, simply, on organised, team and competitive sports. She also points to the relationship between building leisure around the family for many women and the way that sports providers often fail to take on board women's timetables (Talbot, 1997:155). She posits that it is important to recognise the differences between 'time free from' and 'time free to,' with the study of female life timetables adding the further element of 'time free for' (Talbot, 1997:161). Jenny Hargreaves (1990) points out that women can sometimes be a barrier to their own participation in sport, building on the more general argument that women sometimes, 'collude with hegemonic masculinity' (Wearing, 1998:101).

Hargreaves recalls that early work in the area of sports feminism emanated from North America in the 1970s, with the UK catching up a decade later. In this sense, 'Feminist intervention in sport has lagged behind feminist attempts to "politicise" other areas of culture' (Hargreaves 1990: 299) a point also supported by Talbot (1988:31). Hargreaves points to the fact that much work in the area of sports sociology concentrates on *differences* between males and females, rather than on the relations between them. Hargreaves bemoans the inadequate theorising in much of this early work and says that her approach to the subject incorporates *both* women and men as part of the diverse movement which is sports feminism (Hargreaves 1990: 299). Like Layder (1998), she says that, even though there is no theoretical absolutism in research, the search for values should not be abandoned in favour of

simply patching together incompatible theories. Hargreaves argues that Liberal feminism is, essentially, gradualist and pragmatic, and it implicitly rejects biological explanations of women's position within sport, whilst concentrating on gains which can be made through institutional and legislative change.

Cockburn (1991: 215) posits that there are two equal opportunities agendas, with the liberal one being 'short term' and the radical one being longer term. She is critical of the position occupied by authors such as Dyer (1982) who are more concerned with quantitative measures of the extent to which females athletes are 'catching up the men', looking at changes in world records in a number of events. This approach uses male elite performance as a yardstick against which female performances are measured, with 'achievement' being demonstrated by running faster and jumping higher and further. 'Success' revolves around competition and victory. Here, the assumption is that equality can be measured numerically, that progression is linear and that the pushing of the body to achieve records is desirable and *the* measure of success. The liberal, policy oriented ethos and the Dyer approach also ignore the fact that women are not a homogenous group, that they experience sport and policy differently, and that minority sports and everyday play are as valuable as mainstream, competitive sport. The 'catching up the men' focus also concentrates almost exclusively on *participation*, ignoring the important areas of those who *administer* or *spectate*. Macro led, meso mediated equal opportunities strategies in sport, in reality, may only benefit a minority of females at the micro level. Liberal reform also tends to underplay the limits of policy and legislation, forgetting that entrenched attitudes mean that policies may go unheeded, unenforced or may be implemented only grudgingly. Liberal and issue focused feminism tends, then, to skim over the deeper causes of inequality and, in doing so, do not offer equality to all or adequately address wider societal discrimination.

With liberal feminism seemingly failing to change *attitudes* towards the role of females, Sheila Scraton (1994) looks at the decline of feminism, highlighting the anti-feminist backlash of the New Right in the 1980s and 1990s, which blamed feminism for, amongst other things, the breakdown of the family and the exhaustion of career women, a backlash which in the USA saw feminism and homosexuality, for some, replace Communism as the, 'embodiment of evil' (Charles, 2000:188). These

‘backlash’ forces were composed of, ‘Post-feminism, neo-conservatism and nostalgic liberalism,’ according to LaFrance (1998:118).

This effective blaming of feminism for wider societal ‘ills’ is also present within research, with the, ‘danger that the new mainstream world of theory that is engaging with post-modernity debates is providing an academic backlash against feminism’ (LaFrance, 1998: 260). LaFrance also points to the dangers of the sort of liberal feminist agenda, which allows the failure of women to penetrate the highest echelons of sports administration to be laid at the feet of individual women. Legislation is in place, so, the argument goes, if women do not achieve success, it is because they simply aren’t good enough. Kaplan and Lesley (1992) take the ‘backlash’ argument back further in time, saying that as the feminist movement gathered momentum in the 1960s and 1970s, feminist arguments were almost immediately met with, ‘arguments and theories which countered questions concerning power, status and freedom with biological answers concerning innateness’ (Kaplan and Lesley, 1992: 207). However, Charles (2000) argues that, unlike in the US, where feminists have been incorporated into State democracies, in Britain, direct access to the State is more difficult to gain, with many women having moved to left-of-centre political parties and the labour movement. In this sense: ‘Movements such as feminism emerge as a result of socio-economic and cultural change and hasten that change, but whether they emerge at all is dependent on the State’ (Charles, 2000: 213).

The alternatives to liberal feminism? Separatism, is one possible avenue for the development of sport for women and this approach takes a number of different forms. There are early instances, for example, of women playing ‘men’s’ sport with different rules, in order to make sure that sport for women could be presented as *qualitatively* different from, and safer than, that which men took part in, so as not to overtly challenge the status quo. Sports were also kept separate on moral grounds, with physicality between men and women being deemed dangerous and inappropriate by medical practitioners, moralists and sports organisers. The organisers of women’s sports also did not wish to emulate male sports, which they saw as unhelpfully aggressive and commercial.

Although, then, there were two different (although not discrete) sets of reasons here for separatism, they both carried the idea that there are ‘appropriate’ sports for females and males. More recent ‘separatist’ shifts have come about as a reaction to the discrimination encountered by women in sport. To be separate, says Hargreaves (1990:292) is the first step to wresting control from males, although it could be equally argued that fighting ‘from the outside’ is unlikely to erode male power or to offer access to the huge resources available to male dominated sports organisations. Separatism may also be driven by the desire to construct a model of sport which is philosophically different from the aggressive, competitive, commercial male versions of sport. Separatism may be seen, in this sense, as a form of radical feminism, which claims that patriarchy is the root of female oppression, not a by-product of it.

This radical feminism is markedly pro-woman and is often, claim its critics, anti-men. Ironically, radical feminist separatists can fall into the trap of biological determinism, insisting that there are innately feminine and masculine traits, portraying patriarchy almost as an outcome of biological difference, thus denying the possibility of changing gender identities. This concept of patriarchy has been criticised by a number of authors who claim it tends to see women *purely as women*, downgrading or ignoring their class and ethnicity, and also creating a victim mentality in which the agency of women is correspondingly downplayed (Wearing, 1998:38).

Positive discrimination has been examined, by some, as a method of pursuing equality in sport and other arenas. Proponents of this approach argue that anti-discrimination legislation, alone, does not work, and a further step needs to be taken to address male bias (Hargreaves, 1994:32; Deem 1987:426). Some women’s groups and sports organisations have adopted a policy of male exclusion, not even allowing membership to males who wish to try to challenge discrimination.

However, separatism can exacerbate divisions, not just between males and females, but also *within* those two groups, with minority groups, for example, losing out. bell hooks makes the vital point about the danger of the separatist approach:

‘Since men are the primary agents maintaining and supporting sexism and sexist oppression, they can only be successfully eradicated if men

are compelled to assume responsibility for transforming their consciousness and the consciences of society as a whole' (hooks, 1989 quoted in Hargreaves, 1990:294).

If women pursue a path of separatism, are they not allowing men the opportunity to abdicate their responsibility to assist in the pursuit of equality and to be reflexive about their own behaviour? Does separatism not also run the risk that the approach ignores the ways in which sport damages males, and that theories which encourage the bipolar examination of males and females in sport also ignore a variety of other influences, such as the economic positions of those who do or who wish to participate in sport, as well as ethnicity and sexual orientation? Authors, such as Deem (1986) Green et al (1987) and Griffin et al (1982), have demonstrated that sport plays a part in the lives of few *working-class* women. Most female sports participants are middle-class, with those people who are in positions of administrative responsibility in sport being mainly middle-class and male (Griffin, 1982:105). Class inequality, then, needs to be seen as an added component to gender divisions, demonstrating that we cannot look at gender in isolation. Hargreaves (1990:297) for example, highlights the work of socialist feminists, such as Barrett (1982) who cite class and gender oppression as the *two* major oppressions in history and seek a theory which does not effectively subordinate one to the other.

Although there have been many recent advances made in relation to the position of women in sport, Jennifer Hargreaves reminds us that successes are not inevitable; that there have been failures as well as successes (Hargreaves, 1990: 300). Critcher (1995) suggests that: 'The only way to reform sport is to convert it into something else that ceases to be sport' (quoted in Hargreaves, 1990: 301). This sort of position, however, remains very much at the theoretical level, and most people involved in sport, including females, are unlikely, I would suggest, to try to turn theory into practice. It is clear, however, in our own work with the FA and with those involved at the grassroots of football in England, that there is now a rather stronger link between those who 'do' sport and those who research it. This linkage is seen as essential by Hargreaves if people's actual experiences in sport are to be understood and politicised. In the past it was, perhaps, a case of the good being bad to the clever and

the clever being bad to the good, in terms of the relationship between sports activists/participants and researchers.

David Mellor, who from 1997 headed the British government's Football Task Force, which examined grassroots football, racism in football, disabled access to football stadia, and commercial and regulatory issues, chaired a conference in Strasbourg in November 1999, organised by the British Council, during which he launched an attack on a female Portuguese academic, suggesting that her presentation had been dry and not tailored towards action. He asked her: 'How many football games have you been to this season?' Described by a fellow delegate as 'breathtakingly rude,' Mellor then took offence at a jocular remark made by another delegate, who, tongue in cheek, apologised for being an academic. Piara Power, Campaign Co-ordinator of 'Kick It Out', the FA/Professional Footballers Association funded organisation working to address issues of racism in football, prefaced his own presentation, in response to Mellor's comments, by saying that although he was a practitioner and would focus on the 'practical', he felt that the dispassionate academic voice was also needed, when looking at issues around sport.

Practice and theory are contested grounds and Jennifer Hargreaves's point that it is dangerously misleading to assume that progress will continue in terms of opportunities for females in sport is put into perspective in an article by an Australian sociologist, John Carroll, who, as recently as 1985, felt comfortable in writing that:

'Women should once again be prohibited from sport; they are the true defenders of the humanist values that emanate from the household, the values of tenderness, nurture and compassion. Likewise, sport should not be muzzled by humanist values; it is the living arena for the great virtue of manliness. The late twentieth century West has two Achilles heels [...] including the relative absence of manliness, of real men [...] which forces men and women into all sorts of perversions of their true natures' (Carroll, 1985:98).

Jennifer Hargreaves's own response to this piece and another in the same issue of *Theory, Culture and Society*, by Eric Dunning (1985) aims to address this view of masculinity and sport. Responding to Carroll, she begins by saying: 'To argue about

the details of John Carroll's essay would be to acknowledge his discourse as fundamentally legitimate, and such a position is rejected here' (Hargreaves, 1985:109). Although she cuts into Carroll with delightful gusto, Hargreaves also makes the point that, unfortunately, he is not alone in his resistance to change, harking back to 'better times,' almost unfettered by calls for equality.

Although it is an extreme, Carroll's work does, nevertheless, encapsulate much of what is narrowest about Western sports sociology. It is, often implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, based on the primacy of biological difference and comes from an avowedly 'male' perspective. Although Hargreaves is relieved that Dunning's piece is more flexible and theoretical than Carroll's, she questions the applicability of his thoughts on the civilising process to a variety of urban settings and its ability to incorporate class issues into analysis. At the same time, she acknowledges its value in highlighting, for example, the symbolic violence of rugby songs towards women and homosexuals, although even here, she thinks that the power of the symbolism involved is underestimated. She also points to the article's 'biologism' (Hargreaves, 1985:110) with male violence being seen by Dunning as an 'essential' characteristic which must emerge.

Hargreaves cites sport as an arena where, almost more than in any other, male hegemony has been most complete (Hargreaves, 1985:116). For instance, women have even been excluded from traditionally male sports, such as snooker and darts, where they can compete on an equal basis with men in terms of their physical capabilities. Hargreaves uses Carroll as an example of how masculinity is not just *reinforced* via sport, but is actually *celebrated* and defended within it. However, sport, as we have argued, is also a contested domain. 'Masculine' sports have become growth areas for women's sport, encouraging on the one hand, but also potentially dangerous if females are merely being co-opted into the male-run masculine model of sports.

Hargreaves quotes a number of male theorists, including, Hoch (1972) Brohm (1978) and Sabo (1990), in outlining the destructive force sport can have on males, and argues that, rather than women being subsumed into existing sports, it is alternative sports, such as extreme sports, or newer sports, such as ultimate Frisbee, where co-

operation and non-competitiveness, and often mixed-sex play, are key, which offer the biggest challenge to male sporting hegemony. The suggestion here would seem to be that if you take away the driving forces of mainstream sport, the drive to win, the desire to measure oneself against others, the separation of females and males, and instil, instead, ideas of enjoyment and co-operation, then this decision not to give primacy to traditional sporting 'values,' the decision not to buy into the existing structure of sport, is the ultimate rejection of those 'masculine' values, and also the most potent weapon against them.

Conclusion

What has been demonstrated in this chapter is the enduring power of the early medical debate around the unsuitability of sport for females, a debate which still carries some weight in theorising about sport today. More recently, theory on sport and gender has sought to explain the position of females and males with regards to sport and how the relationship of females to sport has changed over time. Hegemonic theories attempt to explain female contestations of their designated sporting roles and how institutions have attempted to counter female advances in sport. That traditionally male sports are now gaining popularity amongst females is something which theorists, such as Connell, attempt to explain via ideas around new gender scripts and changing gender roles. However, sociology is a relatively young academic discipline and sports sociology younger still, and there are a number of sometimes competing approaches which attempt to offer reasons for the shifting participation of females in sport, as well as locating these shifts against a backdrop of wider social changes in gender 'appropriate' behaviour.

Here, approaches which fail to acknowledge, or adequately acknowledge the importance of *agency*, and those which portray developments in sport as *linear*, are rejected as tools for explaining the development of football for females. Figurational sociology, with its concentration on the civilising *process* and general lack of focus on females, cannot adequately explain the *fluctuating* nature of the development of women's football. The work of Marxists and neo-Marxists is also treated with caution, because of their concentration on *class* as *the* defining characteristic of agents, often at the expense of other components of individual's identities, as well as

the lack of *explicit* mention of gender as an explanatory concept for the development of societies. Nor is radical, *separatist* feminism a useful approach here, as it fails to acknowledge the damage that sport can do to *men*. Believing, ironically, that there are *innate* characteristics ascribable to the sexes, as well as allowing males the opportunity to place responsibility for their sexism with *biology*, feminism which espouses separatism allows men to avoid being reflexive about their own sexist attitudes and actions.

The work of those theorists whose approaches give primacy to the concepts of *hegemony* and *contestation*, offer more scope for explaining the *fluctuating* nature of the development of the female game, for explaining its rising and waning popularity as a practice. In such theories, power is highlighted as operating at a number levels, the macro, the meso and the micro, and as being contested at these levels, with agents playing a part in creating their own destiny. These theories also flag up *why* certain differences between males and females are highlighted and *how* these differences are exploited in an attempt to sustain the relative positions of both sexes. The feminist approach of Jennifer Hargreaves, critiquing, as it does, the figuralist standpoint *and* seeing the weaknesses of liberal and separatist feminisms, provides another useful avenue for explaining how women's sports generally have developed. Hargreaves' work also, importantly, sets leisure against a backdrop of other factors present in the lives of women; she does not separate people from context, nor does Hargreaves divorce sport from society. In terms of addressing why women who play sports, particularly traditionally male sports, are viewed and treated as negatively as they often are, yet, why females continue to play, how they attempt, consciously, or unconsciously, to make space for their sport, can best be addressed by utilising theories of hegemony from a feminist standpoint.

Chapter Three

A Brief History of Organised Football for Females in England, Until 1969

Introduction

The next three chapters examine the development of football for females in England from its inception to the present. *This* chapter examines some of the early history of women's football, including the period when the women's game initially grew to some strength during, and just after, the First World War. Formal FA opposition to the female game routinely constrained its early development and its later growth, as we shall demonstrate. We then move on to look at football for females after the Second World War and until 1969, the year when the Women's Football Association (WFA) was formed. This last event gave the women's game in England, for the first time, a nationally recognised governing body. The chapter will also examine aspects of the involvement of the British Government in policy for sport for females during the period in question. Chapter Four will cover the development of the women's game between 1969 and 1993, when the WFA ran the female game in England. Chapter Five will focus on the female game in this country following the FA appropriation of its national administration in 1993.

Women's Football in England: Some Early History

We can discuss only briefly here the early years of the women's game in England. Those who wish for more detailed accounts of this period should look to Newsome (1994) and Williamson (1991). We will also say a little about the origins of the modern game, in order to explore relationships and commonalities between the development of the men's and women's games in England. The development of the female game in England has been by no means linear or even, but it does seem to have passed through distinctive developmental stages, the organising chronological frame for chapters three, four and five.

Inevitably, the origins of football are still contested, but the earliest forms of the game are thought to have been played in China (Walvin 1994:11). With reference to the

early forms of football in England, Walvin notes that Nennius, the biographer of William Fitz Stephenson, writing of the period 1170-1183, mentions 'a game of ball' which was popular among peasants (Walvin, 1994:12) and folk football was still a feature of village life in early 19th century England, a game more akin to a Saturday night city centre brawl than the gentler, codified sport we know today. Football played by men was codified in England, on an uneven national basis, and with dissent from northern bases, from 1863, with the establishment of the public school dominated southern based Football Association. A 12 team professional league was first established in England in 1888 under the auspices of the skilled working class-cum-self-employed men who formed the professional, northern based Football League (Tomlinson, 1991).

Women are largely absent from the records which exist of the early struggles between the patrician, amateur ethos of the FA and the hard-headed professionalism of the men from the League, but there are signs that some women did play football during the folk football period, participating in these large and brutal set-piece games which were played primarily by members of the rural working-class (Russell 1997:6). The first *codified* women's match in England is reputed to have been played on March 23rd 1895, a regional encounter, with the North beating the South 7-1, at Crouch End. The match was arranged by the woman who would later become the first Secretary of the English Ladies Football Association, Londoner, Nettie Honeyball. Honeyball went on to organise a number of further women's fixtures in the North and Midlands that same year, with a reported 8,000 people watching the final game of the women's series at Newcastle (Williams 1991:5). This, early strong emphasis on *regional* divisions in the women's game was to be a key structural feature of the development of football for women in England until relatively recently.

Up until the formation of the WFA, in 1969, women's matches in England were *ad hoc* affairs, which were relatively rare and were played often for 'good causes,' but also very much for the simple amusement of players and spectators. This was especially true of the 'mixed-sex' encounters played as local fund-raisers. However, in 1902, the all male FA Council forbade its growing number of male member clubs from playing or hosting 'lady teams' (Williams, 1991:5). This early censure against female play was based, largely, on a mixture of medical reasoning against the

participation of women in sport, and also around moral objections to the playing of mixed-sex matches. The existence of female teams and players was also viewed by the FA as demeaning and undermining to the nascent codified men's game, which was one of the reasons for the FA's later harsher sanctions against the women's game, which were enacted in 1921 (Williams and Woodhouse 1991:16).

The FA in England was originally constituted by men from southern based public schools, who helped refine the rules of association football as a means of 'rescuing' it from the more brutal football codes which existed and challenged elsewhere, and as a bulwark against the possibly pressing 'evils' of northern professionalism (Holt 1989, Mangan 1981,1987). The early FA attitude to the possibilities of female play should not surprise. This was a period, as we have seen, when the established scientific orthodoxies, based on forms of social Darwinism and the perceived dangers to the 'pure' stock of Empire, decreed that women had no real place in sport and that, if they did, it was in more genteel, non-contact, sports, and as social appendages to their affluent husbands (Holt & Mason, 2000). Such men, and such orthodoxies, were still powerful influences in the English game after World War One, when women's football was effectively banned by the sport's national governing body.

The current administrative structure of the FA still has room to accommodate representatives from the Amateur Football Alliance, the Independent Schools, each of the Armed Forces and the Oxford and Cambridge Universities on its 92 person (it has one female member), all white FA Council. This is a strong sign that for all its recent shift towards greater professionalism and commercialism in its policies and outlook, *structurally* the Football Association still relies on an Establishment male, amateur/volunteer axis, and is influenced and shaped in its policy-making by individuals and organisations which are profoundly unreflective of the game's current playing base, in terms of class, ethnicity and gender.

Formed in 1888, the early Lancashire and Midlands-based Football League is often portrayed as being in formal opposition to the ideologies of the FA (Walvin 1994:201). The latter is often described today as being more metropolitan and more committed to a keenly commercial future for the sport, while the former has been increasingly overshadowed recently by the commercially driven FA Premier League,

and is depicted today as being more provincial and anxious to try to guard the game's more traditional values and support. Back in the nineteenth century, and for much of the twentieth century, the opposite could be said to have been true. The Football League's struggle to professionalise the men's game is not simply a matter of North versus South or purely a class issue (Mason 1996:44). However, those responsible for forming the League were certainly drawn from less gentrified backgrounds than the founders of the FA (Murray 1994:38). Their self-made mercantile backgrounds, however, offered little protection, on the contrary in fact, from the prevailing views of the time about the inappropriateness of sport for women. Moreover, although working class men had little influence over the direction of the sport nationally, at the *local* and *personal* levels, they were in a position to restrict the participation of females in sport via institutionalised divisions of labour within the family, their control of material resources, their adherence to conventional ideologies of sexuality and the body, and their insistence, ultimately applicable by force, on the performance of traditional female family duties, to the exclusion of leisure pursuits.

Women's Football and the First World War

New social conditions and opportunities at home, brought by the advent of the First World War, provided women's football with the impetus which, briefly, saw it rise in the public consciousness and, occasionally, draw enormous crowds by today's very modest standards. The need for munitions and the absence, because of conscription, of a male population which would normally have been used to service such heavy production needs, meant that women of working age were called upon to carry out traditionally male work in factories and shipyards. 37% of all females of working age were employed in the factory, field and support services as part of the war effort (Brown 1992:34) and overall, somewhere in the region of one and a half million women went to work during the war years, many of them carrying out this work in addition to their domestic duties (Braybon 1981:47). Thus, many women who would normally have been confined to the domestic environment were, instead, working collectively in heavy industry, and this new emphasis on communal, physical work was encouraged and praised by those promoting the 'patriotic' duties of the British family.

This period is crucially important for understanding later developments in the female game, not only because it was a time of enormous popularity for women's football in terms of spectatorship, if not organised participation, but because it was also an era of extraordinary, but ultimately temporary, social change. Central here is not so much the shift in the general economic circumstances of females, but more the *individual* exposure to the possibilities and new experiences brought by full-time, varied, 'heavy' work which was able to offer a degree of economic independence to women during a time when the country's economy was geared towards, and ruled by, the peculiarities of war.

Dick, Kerr Ladies

In order to provide a break from the monotony of this demanding work and to boost morale and raise funds for war charities, a number of factories established women's football teams during this period. The most famous and probably the finest of these was Dick, Kerr Ladies, a team formed at a Preston munitions factory in 1917 (Lopez 1997:6). After a number of informal football kick-about during meal breaks, which involved female workers and male apprentices at the factory, one of the enthusiastic female footballer/workers, Grace Sibbert, decided to organise a women's team. It seems likely that it was a combination of workers and managers/owners at factories who actually established most women's teams of the time. After all, the provision of equipment and the time needed to play would have been largely at the behest of those in charge of work, or of other local sponsors.

An ad hoc, northern challenge series of fixtures between rival female factory teams soon began to emerge, initially at least to raise spirits and to produce funds for charity work, but it soon became serious competition and a form of competitive sport for women which, briefly, successfully survived the end of hostilities. Although only a handful of women's teams were in existence at the time, the popularity of the women's game in the 'football-mad' (Williams, 2001) North West area of England was astonishing. A now famous illustration of the *occasional* drawing power of the women's game at this time is the 1920 Boxing Day game held at Everton FC's Goodison Park, between Dick, Kerrs and local rivals St. Helens. A capacity 53,000

fans turned up for the challenge, with, to all intents and purposes, the women's English title at stake, with a further 10,000 supporters locked out.

In England, women's fixtures were organised with supporting war charities as their *raison d'être*, thus avoiding difficult questions about competitive sport for females, and these causes were so numerous that women's teams found it impossible to play anything but fund-raising fixtures (Williamson 1991:12); there was no prospect of a competitive women's league. The charities themselves often helped to organise women's football matches, as there was no coherent administrative structures within the female game, and the FA initially proved helpful in finding Football League grounds to accommodate fixtures, and the Dick, Kerrs team toured France, representing England, and also travelled to play fixtures in Canada and the USA (Lopez 1997:8). The female game in England at this time, and after the end of the First World War, was primarily North and Midlands based, like the early versions of the male professional game. Records suggest that in 1921, there were 150 female teams in England, with the Lancashire area providing most of the more successful women's teams (Lopez 1997:6).

From 1915-1918, male professional football was suspended, although not without struggle. The early continuation of the Football League programme, in marked contrast to the almost immediate cessation of the rugby union season, was criticised by war leaders as 'unpatriotic,' even though football grounds were being used as recruiting centres on match days and professional players encouraged other men to join the services (Russell, 1997:75). It was only when Football League attendances began to fall, because of the haemorrhaging of fans to the war effort, and in the face of continued criticism of the game's 'disloyal' stance, that the League programme was finally suspended.

Women's football offered something of an alternative to fill this sporting vacuum. Female football, here, seems very much a case of 'sport as national duty,' as well as football for fun: it was not political protest through sport, nor an attempt to usurp absent males; it was not even a means of cocking a snook at the FA, who had made clear their opposition to the women's game in 1902. Russell (1997:601), however, argues that it is unclear whether female players at the time saw themselves as

challenging male hegemony. A film, based on Gail Newsham's book (1994) about Dick, Kerrs Ladies, and part financed by the Everton men's Football Club Chairman, Bill Kenwright, is planned, with Kenwright claiming that the film is about 'women fighting for their rights' (www.on-the-ball.com) but this seems an exaggerated claim.

Of course, playing for sheer fun may be construed as a political statement, but, outside the context of a coherent movement or ideology, it is hard to argue that female players were doing anything more than simply carrying on playing because they enjoyed doing so. Many authors have demonstrated the lack of any obvious linkage between female athletes and organised feminism (Burton Nelson 1995, 1998, Rudd, 1998). Female athletes seldom align themselves to wider movements for female equality, or define themselves as 'feminist'. Indeed, when we look later at this 'female apologetic' (Gerber 1974, Del Rey 1978, Cahn 1994) we see that many female athletes are actually rather conservative, keen that their achievements as sporting females are not held up by feminists as exemplars which may be used as calls for greater equity for females in other areas, with many female athletes often going out of their way to demonstrate their heterosexual, familial lifestyles, as a counter to potential and real accusations about their sexuality, generated as a result of their participation in sport.

The Inter-War Years and the Early Intervention of the Football Association

The Football Association might not have been wholly supportive of women playing football at this time, but the wider contingencies of the war years served to legitimise female play for the purposes of boosting war charity funds and local and national morale. However, *after* the war, such legitimating conditions effectively disappeared. In 1921, and obviously keen to eradicate what little organised female play there still was in England, the FA again proved itself a powerful actor by banning women's teams from playing at the stadia of its member clubs. This followed on from the FA's original 1902 edict, laying down its opposition to female play. Using unproven accusations about the alleged misappropriation of money raised by women's matches as part justification for the 1921 ban, it was also clear that the FA's opposition to female teams was rather more fundamental in its source:

‘The [FA] Council feel impelled to express their strong opinion that the game of football is quite unsuitable for females and ought not to be encouraged’ (FA Council minutes, Rule 18a, December 5th, 1921).

Proponents of the women’s game countered the FA decision with gusto, Mrs Boulton, Captain of Plymouth Ladies in 1921, arguing that:

‘The controlling body of the FA are a hundred years behind the times and their action is purely sex prejudice. Not one of our girls has felt any ill-effects from participation in the game,’ (quoted in Williamson 1991:71).

This FA ruling effectively forced female football from men’s professional club stadia onto public parks, unregistered grounds and other venues, which were hardly suited either to quality play or the courting of spectators. However, some women were determined that their game should continue and flourish. On December 12th 1921, 25 of the 150 women’s teams known to be in existence were represented at a meeting in Blackburn, where the English Ladies Football Association (ELFA) was established, with officials from some 60 women’s teams attending the new body’s next meeting (Lopez 1997:7). It is not clear exactly who the founders of the ELFA were, but a statement from them that: ‘There will be no exploiting of the teams in the interests of the man or the firm, who manages them’ (Lopez, 1997:8) suggests that there may already have been undue pressure applied to female players by those (men) who were involved in organising games. The founders of the ELFA were seeking not just to create an organisation which would offer structure and support to the female game, but one which would also offer female clubs protection from potential and very real exploitative forces. Whether those who drafted the statement were females who had experience of and were weary of such exploitation, or were supportive males, or a combination of both, we simply do not know.

The Inter-Wars Years and World War Two

The 1921 FA ban was a confirmation of widely established views on females playing the sport, but it was also partly born of a fear that the women’s game might eventually move on from being merely a war-bound oddity. Back in 1895, a *Manchester Guardian* journalist had commented that: ‘When the novelty has worn off, I do not

think that ladies football matches will attract crowds' (quoted in Wellington 1998:114). Twenty-five years later, the women's game was almost certainly perceived by some FA officials as a potential threat to the professional men's game. Elsewhere, where there were no established professional football interests to protect, attitudes seemed very different. It is interesting to note, for example, that as FA opposition to the female game grew in England, in the USA, Alfreda Inglehart, a female teacher in the Baltimore elementary school system, was conveying the fundamentals of soccer to more than 1200 boys, and that after 30 years fulfilling this role, she was admitted to the US National Soccer Hall of Fame in 1951 (www.womensoccer.org). Christensen et al (2001:1070) also report that when Dick, Kerrs toured the USA, the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* both carried: 'serious match reports [...] but in England, the emphasis was on information peripheral to the game; the reporting tended to be rather patronising and condescending.' In the USA, a rather different mind set towards the involvement of females in soccer was already discernable.

By the early part of the new century, the *Manchester Guardian's* view of 1895 was already being challenged, even if in the unusual circumstances of war. Just as those women who had developed a taste for football were determined that their appetites be sated, as evidenced by the establishment of the ELFA in 1921 and continued ad hoc games for females, so many women who had been involved in the war effort wished to retain the right to work, and also called for additional rights. Of course, the franchise movement was in existence before the start of the First World War, with Thompson and Wheeler, in 1825, appealing for women to be given the vote, and Hunt raising the issue during the debate of the 1832 Reform Bill (Smith, 1998:3). The need to address franchise issues led to the 1918 Representation of the People Act and the 1928 Representation of the People Act (Equal Franchise) the former giving the vote to women aged 30 and over who were eligible to vote in local elections or whose husbands were, the latter enfranchising women of 21 years and over. Political bargaining on the franchise issue revolved around the need to keep the quiescence of women's lobby groups by offering an expanded franchise, whilst at the same time acknowledging the inevitable resistance to any change, inside and outside of Parliament, which would leave women as the majority of the electorate.

Another factor in the decision to expand suffrage was that of public opinion, with the *Observer* newspaper reversing its opposition, shortly after the war, to the granting of female suffrage, and leading politicians reporting that they did not feel the public to be as opposed to female suffrage as they had once been (Smith, 1998:62). There was opposition from within the women's movement to the age limit of the first Act, as it would exclude many women working in factories, but the compromise age of 30 was finally agreed on in the Commons and the Lords in 1918 (Smith 1998:69). Smith questions whether the vote was actually granted to women in recognition of their efforts during the conflict, offering that it may have been a continuation of pro-reform feeling which existed *before* the War. The author also reminds us that the Act was quite conservative and that the large majority voting in favour of it in the Commons may be explained by the fact that many MPs saw reform as inevitable and preferred minor reform to popular resistance, which might lead to more radical reform. The age limit meant that the female electorate was likely to be less radical, and married, and so under the influence of husbands. Also, more radical female campaigners were likely to be living with their parents or in lodgings, so did not qualify to vote in local and, therefore, general elections.

So, almost eight and a half million women, 39.6% of the electorate, gained the right to vote as a result of the 1918 Act, although unmarried and unemployed women and many working-class women were still excluded (Smith 1998: 64). The 1928 Act came after a succession of attempts to introduce equal franchise legislation were blocked by Government opposition. However, the War was not *the* cause of electoral reform and, indeed, in the case of football, it was partly the reason for a backlash against female play, something which will be discussed in a wider context when we later examine attitudes to female progress in sport.

The FA ban of 1921 and the return of the male professional game after World War One reflected a desire to return to 'normality,' women having been granted their freedom to play the game during a period of social upheaval, when such 'inappropriate' desires and activities were excused, viewed as patriotic even. It is also likely that many *women* would have accepted the actions of the FA, viewing their own participation in football as a temporary, patriotic novelty. Moreover, women

who had been playing football during the First World War may have struggled, economically, to continue to do so during the inter-war period.

The 'winding down' of women's football during this inter-war period can be seen as part of a wider return to the pre-World War One status quo, with women expected to vacate the work positions which many of them had occupied during the conflict and return to their former domestic roles after the end of fighting, to free up jobs for men returning from the Armed Forces. The 1919 Sexual Disqualification (Removal) Act stated that sex should not disqualify a woman from civil or public appointment, but such legislation was not always embraced and implemented with vigour. This sort of intransigence still exists, with the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) launching a campaign on October 26th, 1999, to highlight the fact that women, on average, still receive only 75% of the pay of males (*Guardian* 26 October 1999).

The fact that women footballers no longer had the factory as an organising base for collective sport, and because the FA ban of 1921 denied them official sanction and both venues and match officials, meant that the economic barriers to the continuation of female play were further compounded. After the austerity of war, British people began to return to leisure pursuits (Walvin 1994:126). Men's professional football leagues boomed and record attendances being registered by 36 clubs in the inter-war period (Mason 1989:152). However, the English game remained aloof from the international arena, the FA refusing to join FIFA when it was established in 1904, but soon installing an Englishman as its President in order to better 'direct' the growth of the world game (Moorhouse, 1996: 67)!

The FA withdrew from FIFA in 1920 over continuing disputes about 'amateurism' and the governance of the global sport, and England did not participate in the World Cup until 1950. Moorhouse (1996:59) also stresses that the FA's official title is *The* Football Association, not the *English* Football Association, an indication of its belief in itself as the creator and guardian of the modern, codified game and an indication, too, of how the FA views the national football associations of other countries as lesser and alien, by effectively 'othering' these associations with its own title. It was unlikely at this time that the English FA would take on board lessons from abroad

about access to football for females, or, indeed, lessons on any other aspect of the sport.

Even though women were involved in industry during the two World Wars, there was clear delineation between work which was regarded as ‘acceptable’ for women and ‘men’s’ work: ‘women’s work’ was often grimy, repetitive and dextrous, as opposed to the heavier, more ‘skilled’ work carried out by males. In short, men and women at work operated within an established ‘framework of assumptions’ (Noakes, 1998:20). In 1939, 3000 women were involved in shipbuilding and 102,000 in engineering. By 1943, these figures had risen to 22,000 and 433,000. Yet, allowing women to work through the War was not a price all employers were keen to pay and the government was forced to compel some employers to recruit females, via the introduction of the National Service Act No.2 in December 1941. A clear legislative indication that women were expected to *combine* their domestic and working roles, rather than abandon the domestic sphere, was the 1950 Factories Order which instituted the ‘twilight shift’ system, allowing women to work outside the home *after* the day’s domestic duties had been completed, after the 1949 Royal Commission on Population recognised that labour demands would change after the end of the War.

Outside of football, but within sport, there were signs of some movement towards greater equality. The 1944 Education Act, for example, recognised the notion of sex equality, but school sport remained largely rooted in single sex camps. Even today, despite improvements in the general availability of football and other contact sports to girls, many schools still offer none of these as part of the curriculum, or even as an extra-curricular activity, or, if football is offered to them, it is done so within a ‘boys first’ hierarchy (Noakes, 1998: 19). In terms of physical education in school, the 1944 Butler Act also required local education authorities to make ‘adequate’ provision for physical training, and the provision of playing fields and gymnasias continued even during the period of post-war government spending cuts (McIntosh et al, 1991:220) such was the perceived national importance attached to having a fit, young post-war generation for the new challenges which lay ahead.

Post-Second World War: A Women's Football Revival?

In 1947, Campbell (quoted in Cashmore, 1989:163) reported that there were still 300,000 job vacancies for women in Britain, and that a further 900,000 females *would* have returned to work, if child minders and part-time work had been available. The 1951 economic boom saw 32% of the work force being female, earning 53% of what men did. However, there was little change in what work was seen as 'suitable' for women (Cashmore, 1989:190) the Second World War having been a prompter of debate around gender appropriate activity, rather than an event which prompted emancipation for females. Equal pay did eventually become a serious issue, but the government continued to discriminate against its own female employees in this respect, and the trade unions conservative position on gender was also unchanged (Rex 1991:16). Domestic duties remained the 'paramount and private task' (Rex 1991:17) of women, so although, after the Second World War, women were not driven out of employment to the extent that they had been after World War One, and the age structure of the female work force was changing, employment patterns remained very much as they had done between the wars; there had been no 'revolution in values' (Summerfield, quoted in Rex 1991:17).

Some, though, might have imagined that with a second world conflict, and with somewhat similar conditions of employment, there might be a resurgence of women's football in England. Indeed, Alfred Frankland, of Dick, Kerrs Ladies, told a *Lancashire Daily Post* reporter in 1944:

'The women of Britain are all set for a football revival after the War and are planning how to launch in this country many female football clubs, with an estimate of between 50 and 60 teams' (Melling, 1999:48).

But why should we even imagine that such a resurgence would be possible? The impact of the 1921 FA ban and the now much stronger position of the male professional game meant that women workers had few places to play and there were few male supporters of the women's game in any positions of influence. In any case, war-time *men's* football, which continued on a regional basis during World War Two, satisfied the nation's desire for competition during the height of the new global struggle. In 1947, figures for women's teams were down to an estimated 17 from the

early high of approximately 150 in 1917 (Lopez 1997:10). There was also little hope of a post-war growth of these numbers, especially after the FA had reaffirmed its opposition to the 'evil' of the women's game in 1946 (Murray 1996:46).

Although World War Two did not mark an effective re-birth of the women's game, it would be entirely wrong to portray the 1945-66 period as one where organised female play in England was non-existent. Lancastrian teams, such as Fodens, Manchester Corinthians and the still existing Dick, Kerrs, did offer opportunities for some women to compete. In the South, there was also some female football activity. Grace Triance, a young female footballer in the late 1940s and early 1950s, remembers a crowd of over 1000 in October 1949 when Kent played her own team, London Ladies, which existed between 1949 and 1953. She reports playing against women's teams from places such as Barry, Chelmsford, Barnsley, Morden, Derby, Bristol and Essex. She also remembers that Doncaster Ladies were billed as 'the all married women's team' (in interview) in match programmes of the period, in order to stress their 'respectability'.

Triance also recalls how she found out that the FA and County FAs were 'not keen' on females playing, when women's teams found difficulty in securing match officials for fixtures (in interview). She reports that her team was made up of women from Kent, Poplar, Woolwich and Plumstead, and that they had a variety of jobs; Pru Perkins, for example, was a pipe-maker, the other players working in factories and shops. London Ladies received some sponsorship in the form of cut-price kit from Noble's, a sports store in Deptford, the 30 strong squad costing £23 to kit out. London Ladies played mainly at Plumstead Working Men's Club, walking from the bus-stop to the clubhouse and washing in changing room sinks after the game.

The London Ladies team was managed by George McCarthy, whose daughter was a player, with other players' male relatives often acting as unofficial referees. There were further links between female players on the team and men associated with the male game. Club trainer, Stan Jenman, for example, was an ex professional player and Patricia Rouse's husband was an ex-Crystal Palace, Millwall and Wales goalkeeper. Triance tells how McCarthy was often ridiculed by men for managing a

women's team and that fellow female players were sometimes verbally abused by male spectators.

We have already seen, when looking historically at female resistance to their exclusion from sport, that there were individual women who, unapologetically and bravely, played their sport despite a lack of approbation from males and female alike. In women's football, evidence is relatively scarce about such players and their motives, but there are some instructive accounts from players, such as Grace Triance and Alice Stanley, and from others documented in Newsham (1994). Triance recounts:

'The football was there. Even before I started playing in the team, I'd play with my younger brother and all his mates and we'd play out in the road [...] day and night I used to play. As soon as I got out of school. Go to the play centre and play football and I used to really love football...' (in interview).

Triance here conveys a clear sense of the 'everyday' nature of involvement in football for her. Playing the sport, for her, was not a stance against the way the game viewed women, or a method of openly contesting her position as a working-class woman who wished to engage in this traditionally 'male' game; she was simply playing a sport she adored.

A decade or so later, in the North West of England, a new power-base for female football was being established. Teams such as Fodens of Sandbach and Manchester Corinthians were reviving the spirit of Dick, Kerrs by engaging in *international*, as well as domestic, play. Playing organised football, for females, depended on geography and a willingness to travel. A larger market for the female game also seemed to exist in other European countries at that time. Ex-England international and former Welsh national team manager, Sylvia Gore, who is now a football development officer on Merseyside, recalls:

'I was 12 years of age and I wanted to play for someone [...]. What I used to do was go to watch my local [male] football team, Prescott Cables, and at half-time I used to go onto the pitch and kick around with the lads. [I] Couldn't find a team locally 'cos there wasn't many,

so we heard about this team that played over in Didsbury called Manchester Corinthians [...] about 1959/60. I had one trial match with them and I was in the first team [...]. They used to have another team called Nomads, and this is where the playing for charity came in because there was no leagues then and we used to go all over the place, down to Deal, in Kent, and play tournaments. We had an agent in Portugal who paid for us to go over to different countries and we played exhibition football and there are a couple of occasions [...] which stand out in my mind. One is when we played exhibition football in Italy in the San Siro Stadium in Milan and there were about 11,000 in the crowd and we came off the pitch and it was about half ten at night. We got showered and we couldn't get out to the coach because they were surrounding us, wanting autographs (Gore, in interview).

But this period, from 1945 to the formation of the WFA in 1969, is one about which we know *relatively* little, partly because structures for the women's game are relatively absent, and so are records. Through Newsome and others, we do know that the Lancashire Ladies club existed in 1946, as did Bolton, Blackpool and Manchester women's teams. Oldham's women's team was still in existence in 1962 and Handy Angles, from the Midlands, were Kerrs' opponents in 1965. Lopez (1997:11-44) tells us of the existence of women's teams in the South West of England, with places such as Bournemouth, Trowbridge, Westbury, Portsmouth and Faversham represented. So, we have an impressionistic feel for what was happening in the London area, via recollections from Triance, as well as indications for the North and South West, but there are obvious gaps in the national picture. It could be that the positioning of women's teams corresponded with areas of strength in the *men's* professional game, with Portsmouth and Arsenal's men being strong after World War Two, Manchester United and Burnley powerful in the 1950s (although Wolverhampton Wanderers and Newcastle United's men were also successful in this decade), and Tottenham Hotspur, Everton, Liverpool, Manchester United, again, and West Ham having success in the 1960s.

We can conclude that clubs and playing opportunities for females in England were scarce in the two decades after the Second World War and that the continuation of the game relied on localised, informal pockets of organisation, which were often reliant on supportive men, and on women, parents and children who had the determination to seek out teams, and who had the economic wherewithal to travel to training and to

purchase kit. Because the women's game here, pre-1969, and even between 1969 and 1993, was so driven by *individuals* and groups of *local* enthusiasts, there is little in the way of collated records of the game's development. Future research in this area, using the 'hot-spots' of early women's football identified in this research as a guide, will, inevitably, unearth more of the 'hidden history' of the female game during this period.

The Expansion of Sport for Females

The immediate post-Second World War period was marked by huge attendances at *male* professional games, but after this initial boom across a range of leisure activities, football crowd sizes began to fall in England and continued to do so, until 1986 (Murray 1998:161). This slump in attendances, and poor international performances for England, pushed the FA to begin to review aspects of its insularity and amateurism, and the Football League was also jolted by the threat of a player strike in the 1960s, when players threatened to take industrial action over low pay and restrictive contracts (Murray 1996:111-116). This dip in the popularity of the male professional game may have contributed to a relatively benign period for women's football, especially as the culture of the male sport in England became increasingly associated with a class-limited base and spectator hooliganism (Dunning et al, 1988).

Outside of football, women had been making post-war advances in the number of sports in which they were permitted, officially, to compete. From zero participation in the Summer Olympics of 1896, 385 women from 33 countries participated in nine events in the 1948 Games and 683 female competitors took part in 33 events in 1964. Only in 1996 did women's football become an officially accredited Olympic event. However, females still did not occupy powerful *administrative* roles within sport, with the International Olympic Committee, for example, having no female members from 1896 until 1981 (www.olympicwomen.co.uk).

Here, the important issues of *class*, *sports professionalism* and the *gender 'appropriateness'* of sports come into play. Football is a contact sport with traditionally strong links in England to identity construction for working class men (Holt, 1988). So, whereas individual Olympic sports, such as certain track and field

events, and non-Olympic, individual sports, such as tennis, were becoming more accessible to certain females, British athletes, Ann Packer and Dorothy Hyman won Olympic medals in the 1960s, for example, contact and team sports remained effectively off-limits to females. Female appropriate sports, as well as being individual sports and, ideally, relatively genteel in nature, were also typically played by ‘nice girls,’ middle or upper-class females, who predominantly male sports administrators could trust to be decorous. The English tennis club, for example, was a key middle-class *social* arena, with ‘many a young romance’ beginning at such venues, argue Holt and Mason (2000:53); sport here, if not peripheral, was at least secondary to the job of confirming a young lady’s heterosexual credentials by capturing a husband.

The opportunity to train, travel and compete was still out of the reach of most working-class people, who simply could not afford such a level of involvement in sport (Holt & Mason 2000:36). The idea of *competition* is also crucial here. As a number of men’s sports, such as football, became more professional, it was possible for a small number of competitors to earn a reasonable living from being a *sportsman*. However, women’s sports were still *amateur*; if women did get the opportunity to play and to play competitively, it was not for financial reward. The 1951 census reveals that only 5468 males and 321 females were professional ‘cricketers, footballers, golfers, etc.’ (Holt & Mason, 2000:65). The amateur control of sports which had previously been in the hands of ‘aristocratic gamblers and lower-class professionals’ in Britain had now been passed along to ‘privately educated middle-class idealists’, who continued the theme of playing for joy and duty, not financial reward, opposing, for example, in the 1950s, the rise of the tennis ‘shamateur’, who received expenses for playing (Holt & Mason, 2000: 65).

Sport and Politics

In the immediate post-Second World War period, the Keynesian British Government believed it had a duty to improve the quality of people’s lives after the austerity of war, and leisure policy was part of this general drive. Internationally, Britain was not faring well in sport, especially so in football, and it was clear that sport was becoming an established part of foreign policy elsewhere, so the need to improve was also

linked to a desire for the country to be able to hold its own on the international stage. As well as for reasons of welfarism and prestige, *crisis* in and outside of sport were also posited as a reason for increasing State intervention in the sports arena, with issues such as the ‘Teddy boy’ movement of the 1950s, and the mods and rockers clashes of the 1960s, pressing the State into attempting to use sport as a diversionary tool (Polley 1998:18).

Whannel posits that there are three key areas in which the State intervenes in sport; *banning*, *regulating* and *providing facilities*. The State at one point tried to *ban* football, seeing the game as too violent; it also exercises controls around *betting and gaming* and part of its programme of *provision* was the establishing of what is now Sport England. The formation of this body’s precursor, the Central Council for Physical Recreation, marked the move from ad hoc, local State involvement to a more national and co-ordinated effort to provide leisure opportunities for the purposes of improving the population’s mental and physical health. The Council set up the Wolfenden Committee in 1957 and the resultant Sport and Community (1960) document argued that there was an overwhelming case for statutory funding for sport (Whannel 1993:90), its findings eventually leading to the formation of the Sports Council in 1971. So, far from sport and politics being separate, as many opine should be the case, the involvement of the State is often central to people’s ability to participate in sport, and the State established Sports Council, as we shall see in the next chapter, was a major player in the development of the female game in England.

This chapter has, briefly, examined the origins of football and aspects of the history of women’s football in England. The uneven development of the female game over time has been highlighted, with the peculiar social conditions of the First World War offering the female game an early opportunity to establish itself, until FA intervention effectively consigned women’s football in the inter-war period to a kind of regionalised, subterranean existence in England where it remained until the late 1960s. The slow and uneven development of the female game in England has also been mapped, briefly, against other developments in the gender equality arena, both in and outside of sport. What the chapter illustrates is that it has been necessary for a number of factors to operate simultaneously, *both inside and outside of the sport*, for the female game to enjoy its short periods of growth and success in England in the

face of wider opposition to the participation of females in, what is for the English, a traditionally masculinist, contact sport, with narrow social class connotations.

Chapter Four

The Women's Football Association

In this chapter, the origins and formation of the Women's Football Association (WFA) and its attempts to develop the female game in England will be examined. Wider social explanations for the development of the female game during this period will also be explored, before analysing the reasons for the demise of the WFA and the emergence of the FA as the new administrator of the female game in England.

A History of the Women's Football Association 1969-1993: A Lost History?

A combination of intra-organisation wrangles, the WFA's amateur nature and the gradualist FA take-over of the women's game, have left us with no *unitary* record of the WFA's history. This poor record-keeping is, however, not unusual in football specifically or sports generally, with many individual clubs and governing bodies, for reasons ranging from poor resources, to a lack of appreciation of their own contribution to sport, not recording and retaining information on their own development and that of their particular sport. What we do have, however, via questionnaires, interviews, texts and personal records, is a reasonably detailed account of the organisation's fractious past and a comprehensive history of the period when meaningful administrative foundations were laid, for the first time, for the female game in England.

Although the 1921 FA ban hadn't meant a complete cessation of women's football in England, the number of female clubs dwindled, and with them the number of games and spectators for the female sport. It was not until 1966 and the victory of the England *men's* team in the World Cup that we can trace an upturn in popularity for women playing organised football in England. The World Cup win on home soil, significantly achieved against historic rivals Germany, had the impact of raising general popular interest in England towards football (Hill 1996:177). What we have here is a moment of *national* inspiration, and also a number of pro-active *individuals* who formed a new *organisation* to take advantage of the momentum generated by the England men's victory in order to promote the female game. All of this was set

against a backdrop of changing social conditions which also need to be taken into account:

‘Increased affluence, more employment opportunities for women [particularly in physical education] and their improved access to university education all contributed to new opportunities to play the game. At least for middle-class women’ (McArdle 2000:190).

The Formation of the Women’s Football Association

The individuals involved in women’s football, and the decisions taken during the period of the WFA’s operation, shaped the female game in England for almost a quarter of a century and those decisions continued to have a degree of influence over the women’s game, even after the demise of the WFA. Arthur Hobbs, a keen amateur footballer when younger, was posted by the Army to Deal, Kent in the 1940s, where he settled, working as a carpenter for the local authority. He joined a number of local voluntary organisations, and it was through his desire to raise money for such charities that Hobbs first became involved in the administration of women’s football (Lopez 1997:40). He ran the country’s most prestigious women’s tournament in Deal in the late 1960s, and had an ambition to see the England women’s team at the forefront of the international game (Marlowe, in interview). On July 6th 1969, Hobbs launched the Ladies Football Association of Great Britain, which, on November 1st of the same year, became the Women’s Football Association, with representatives of 44 teams attending the inaugural meeting at Caxton Hall, London (Lopez 1997:56). The then Assistant Secretary, Patricia Gregory, who went on to become the WFA’s Chair, an FA Committee member and served for 14 years on UEFA’s Women’s Committee, recalls these ‘dreadful meetings,’ (in interview) with a hard core of representatives of women’s clubs. Also attending these early meetings was Olive Newsome from the Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR), the forerunner of the Sports Council (now Sport England) who assisted the new body with the design of its constitution. Gregory recalls, with amusement and weariness, some of the *class* tensions in sport invoked by Newsome, who opposed the proposal of some delegates to call the organisation the *Ladies* Football Association because ‘ladies play golf; *women* play football,’ (in interview) hence, the organisation became the *Women’s* FA. Also key to the building of the WFA as a national governing body was David Marlowe, who

occupied a number of positions within the organisation, including Chair, and who dubbed himself the ‘godfather of administration,’ (Lopez, 1997:55). Marlowe’s own interest in the female game began when he worked for the Hoover company in Wales, where some of the female workers established a team in the late 1960s (in interview) and he remained with the WFA from its formation through to its demise.

Not surprisingly, as the new body settled into the complex day-to-day business of advancing the female game, early discussions focused on finance and on the WFA’s relationship with the FA. Indeed, the WFA’s first Chair, Patricia Dunn, was soon sacrificed, as it was feared that her background as a referee who objected to not being allowed, because she was female, to officiate in games between FA affiliated *men’s* clubs, meant that she was frowned upon by the FA. The WFA was concerned that any ensuing dispute between the two organisations might be a deterrent to potential sponsors of the female game.

Early Promise

Almost immediately after that inaugural meeting in 1969, female clubs were allowed, by the FA, to affiliate to their local County FA. This was the first official recognition of the women’s game by the national governing body and its local associations. The WFA also received a letter from Denis Follows, the FA Secretary, saying that the 1921 ban had been rescinded, giving female teams access to the grounds of FA affiliated teams and access to match officials, but offering no *specific* assistance to the organisation. Hopes of an improvement in relations between the FA and the female game were raised further when the FA, the *Daily Express*, the *London Evening Standard* and the CCPR supported two women’s 5-a-side games before a men’s tournament at the Empire Pool, Wembley in April 1970, a curtain-raiser to be played in front of a crowd of 8000, which the WFA hoped would help to lend legitimacy to the women’s game. However, the BBC did not televise the event, as it had previously agreed, significantly, claiming that it could not get consent from the FA to do so.

Developments at an *international* level now began to play a part in the development of the English female game. In 1971, UEFA appointed the FA to a Commission to deal with all matters relating to football for females. A UEFA motion was passed 39-

1, with only Scotland opposing, that national associations should take over the running of the female game in their own countries. For more than a decade after the passing of the motion, which immediately became an official recommendation, the FA and WFA kept their mutual distance. The FA's relationship with the female game at this time was shaped by a number of factors. Importantly, the UEFA *recommendation* was merely that, and failure to comply with the recommendation carried no punishment for national associations. The FA also had no real interest in the female game, feeling that it had no duty or incentive to help it develop, and for their part, many WFA officers and members were still deeply suspicious of, and hostile towards, the FA which had blocked the development of the female game for so long by acts of omission and by sometimes passing rules which attempted to eradicate it.

However, in 1983, after FIFA had joined UEFA in recommending all of its member national associations take responsibility for the female game, the FA invited the WFA to become an affiliate, affording the WFA the same status as a County Association, with the WFA being *supervised* by the FA, the WFA retaining responsibility for the day-to-day development and administration of the female game. Amongst the leading European men's footballing nations, Italy, too, lagged behind in terms of embracing the female game, only complying with the UEFA and FIFA recommendations in 1986. However, their compliance was still quicker than the English FA's, the Association only *fully* complying with the FIFA instruction in 1993. Lopez notes (in interview) that national associations, such as those in Germany and Norway, which integrated the women's game fully and at an early stage, are now the leaders in football for females in Europe and powers on the world stage.

However, there was at least one senior officer at the FA at this time who was supportive of the female game. Patricia Gregory recalls (in interview) that Denis Follows, who was FA Secretary at the time of the UEFA edict, was 'always a good supporter' of the women's game, and Gregory also describes Follows' 'bridge building' between the WFA and FA as 'exemplary' (Lopez 1997:60). Follows was appointed FA Secretary in 1962, having previously been Honorary Treasurer, after serving on FA Council for 14 years as a representative of the University's Athletic Union, and he was very much an 'FA man', coming from a background in amateur

sport. Whilst the FA wanted little to do with the day-to-day running of the WFA, a joint consultative committee was set up between the WFA and FA, and the FA recognised the WFA as ‘the sole governing body for women’s football, at this time’ but one which was still answerable to the FA, with the FA giving the WFA a small grant and paying the salary of the women’s national coach. This arrangement gave the WFA the leverage and legitimacy necessary to access grants, for example, from the Football Trust and the Sports Council, and to obtain commercial sponsorship. However, women’s football remained peripheral to core FA activities, the governing body having done the minimum required of it to satisfy the edicts of the European and world football governing bodies.

Disinterest in the female game, from the male game in England, continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s, as the male game contended with its own issues, such as hooliganism and the increasing power of the elite clubs, who eventually formed the FA Premier League in 1992. Gregory and others at the WFA were actually *pleased*, that the FA had adopted a ‘hands-off’ approach, as they felt that the WFA was better positioned and more committed to affect change within the female game. At this early stage (1972) the WFA had an annual income of £1462.10 and around 200 member clubs, and Fig. 4.1 offers an indication of the slow and uneven growth of the female game, in terms of clubs affiliated to the WFA, between its formation in 1969 and its demise in 1993.

Fig. 4.1
Clubs Affiliated to the WFA, 1969-1993

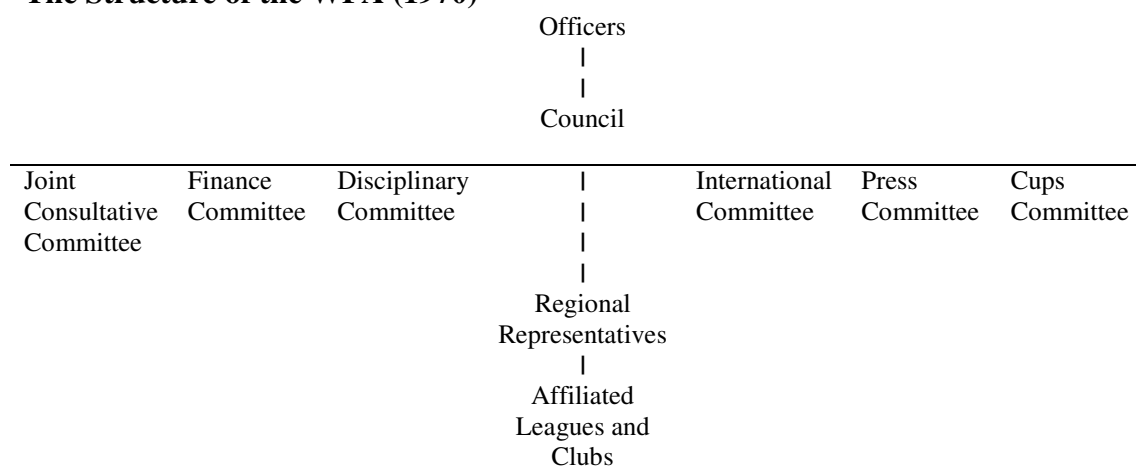
Year	Number of Clubs	Year	Number of Clubs
1969	44	1982	Not available
1970	132	1983	190
1971	190	1984	210
1972	200	1985	Not available
1973	Not available	1986	210
1974	Not available	1987	227
1975	271	1988	232
1976	Not available	1989	240
1977	248	1990	287
1978	267	1991	Not available
1979	266	1992	Not available
1980	280	1993	450*
1981	236		

*All figures from Marlowe (1999) except * from the FA.

Early Issues

After an initial union of minds on the vague developmental ‘what’ (although this unity of aims was not constant) the ‘how’ seems rather more disparate. Williams and Woodhouse (1991b:24) have pointed to the ‘gradualist’ versus ‘entrepreneurial’ approaches to development, which have much in common with my own experience of voluntary sector groups. There were those within the WFA who were content to take what the FA offered and settle for the potential of slow, but steady, growth and those who wanted to be more proactive, demanding accelerated promotion of the female game by the FA. We can clearly see the gradualist versus entrepreneurial division in the WFA hierarchy’s far from unanimous decision *not* to host a precursor competition to the first Women’s World Cup in 1972, the WFA fearing a loss of control over an event which might actually have given further impetus to the women’s game in England (Lopez:1997:62-63). It was internal division, although not always necessarily along entrepreneur/gradualist lines, which saw the WFA develop into an organisation which seemed to invest more cunning and energy, at the national level, in fighting internally than to developing a coherent national agenda for the female game.

Fig. 4.2
The Structure of the WFA (1970)



A continued lack of finance also did not help the WFA in terms of long-range planning and ambition. Apart from grants from the Sports Council, a small FA contribution and subscriptions from member clubs, the WFA was existing largely on

goodwill, with officers giving their time free of charge and using facilities at their places of work to carry out WFA administration. In terms of the strategic development of the female game, such a strained financial situation was harmful and, as exemplified in 1975, occasionally embarrassing. The WFA received no international grants for the staging of England *home* fixtures and when their match sponsor for a fixture with Sweden withdrew, the visitors were treated to 'bare bones' hospitality, which still cost the WFA £1000, leaving the organisation with only £200 to operate for the remaining half of the year. The WFA's Sports Council grant was only issued to cover certain *administrative* functions and was approximately £3500 per annum at this time, with a further £500 received from the FA in the shape of a coaching grant. This, added to subscriptions from member clubs, could hardly be considered an expansionist budget and in 1976, the national governing body of the female game had a total annual income of only £8544.72.

'Professionalisation'

Despite financial strictures of these kinds, by 1979, the WFA had 266 affiliated clubs, 23 affiliated leagues and 55 registered female referees (Marlowe 1999:129). The continued expansion of female football and the escalating strain of the reliance on goodwill and volunteerism meant that in 1979, the WFA decided it should appoint its first paid worker. Linda Whitehead, who had previously been an administrator at a men's professional club, Blackburn Rovers, was appointed Administrator of the WFA in 1980. Whitehead's appointment was met with the kind of reaction not uncommon in the voluntary sector. Some members of the WFA Committee were relieved to have administrative burdens lifted from them by the appointment of a full-time employee, but there were also feelings of loss and resentment from some who had made huge personal investments in the organisation and who saw the new employee as now doing 'their' work *and* being paid for it. Whitehead noticed opposition soon after, and throughout, her appointment:

'The biggest problem you get, and it's not with everybody, is that "You get paid and I don't" thing [...]. I'm sure that if the boot was on the other foot, I might not have been happy either. That's human nature' (in interview).

Fig. 4.2 shows the structure of the WFA, demonstrating its devolved nature, an organisation with such scant resources, and with such a small number of officers at the *national* level, that it necessarily relied heavily on the input of volunteers at a *regional* and *local* level.

Internal politicking and unsubstantiated accusations by some WFA officers around financial mismanagement and alleged inappropriate personal conduct of some involved with the Association, dogged the WFA, and it is often these matters, rather than what was actually being done to try to develop the sport, which people involved with the game at the time invariably raise when approached for their memories of the WFA. However, it would be wrong to portray the WFA simply as an organisation constricted by a lack of resources and distracted by differences in officer's attitudes, a situation under which the game could not progress as it might wish to. The Association continued to grow from its 44 original member clubs in 1969, rising to 280 clubs in 1980 and when the WFA folded in 1992/93, it had 450 member clubs (Fig. 4.1). The England national women's team won the *Sunday Times* Sports Team of the Year award in 1988 after capturing the *Mundialito* (Little World Cup) in the same year, and Whitehead received the *Times* Sports Woman Administrator of the Year Award in 1989. Successes came despite the attitude within the sport around this time, summed up by Whitehead who said; 'Many men view attempts by women to take up playing the game as tantamount to an invasion of privacy' (SNCCFR 1988:59).

Conservatism and Resistance

The WFA continued its slow and, for some, rather conservative approach to the game's development throughout the 1970s. In 1978, the organisation *supported* the FA in its defence of a case brought by schoolgirl Teresa Bennett, who claimed that she was the victim of sexual discrimination because, having reached 12 years of age, she was no longer allowed to play for her local boy's team, as this contravened FA rules on mixed football. Despite winning the initial hearing under a circuit judge in Nottingham, who ruled that the FA was guilty of discrimination because they were not allowing Bennett to use 'goods, facilities or services' provided by them, the FA

won the case on appeal, with Lord Denning ruling that football was an exempted sport under Section 44 of the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) which states:

‘Nothing in parts II-IV, in relation to any sport, game or other activity of a competitive nature where the physical strength, stamina or physique of the average woman puts her at a disadvantage to the average man, renders unlawful any act related to the participation of a person as a competitor in events involving that activity which are confined to competitors of one sex (Pannick 1983:9).

Denning, the Master of the Rolls, the judge in England who is the president of the civil division of the Court of Appeal, went on to say that:

‘If the law brings football within it, it would be exposing itself to absurdity. Everyone would say with Mr Bumble, “If the law supposes that, the law is a ass, a idiot.” [...] if it tried to make girls into boys so that they could play in a football league’ (Pannick 1983:4).

Denning’s dismissive finding, his refusal to allow the case to proceed to the House of Lords, and the condescending tone of the revised judgement document are indications of the lack of seriousness with which many in the Establishment viewed the ambition of females to play the sport, and the contentiousness of the issue of mixed football. The WFA’s support for the FA also demonstrates its conservative nature, *and* its complex strategic position. The WFA needed to remain on good terms with the potentially supportive FA, and WFA senior officers believed in the ‘inappropriateness’ of mixed play beyond a certain age (Marlowe, in interview). The WFA’s stance on mixed football, however, could also be viewed as being *progressive*, with the organisation keen for the female game to be developed *in its own right*, rather than allowing County FAs the opportunity to abdicate their responsibility to develop the game for girls, by opting for mixed play until females were old enough to play for women’s teams. The WFA contacted the English Schools Football Association (ESFA) for support in establishing a programme of football for girls in schools, but the ESFA showed little enthusiasm, a real barrier if opportunities to play the sport were to be made available to girls nationally and at an early age. Even though equality legislation was in place, such legislation was, and still can be, narrowly interpreted and implemented by those who were unwilling to embrace the *spirit* of the push for female equality, both in and outside of sport.

The Role of the Media

Media coverage of the women's game in England during the WFA years was sparse, and often trivial and superficial, if it did come at all. For example, in 1976, the Press Complaints Council found in favour of the WFA who had brought a case against the weekly magazine *Titbits*, for running a story about a fictitious women's football team. The story, ruled the Council, was 'of a salacious nature [...] full of innuendoes for which no supporting evidence had been produced' (*Titbits*, March 11-17, 1976). In an effort, belatedly, to improve its relationship with the media and to improve communications *within* the game, the WFA, encouraged by the Football Trust, employed the Trust's own public affairs company, Scott & Jones Communication, in 1989 and, indeed, it was the Trust which provided the £6000 needed to cover the PR company's fees. Scott & Jones produced the *WFA Newsletter*, which publicised England women's fixtures, listed match results and carried feature pieces on people involved with the development of the female game, but little headway was made in terms of raising the wider profile of the women's game, and some WFA officers objected to the amount of money being spent on Smith and Jones' services (WFA minutes October 26, 1991). There are signs here, in the minutes of WFA meetings, of a mix of disenchantment with the lack of progress in developing the profile of the female game and indicators of the 'make do and mend' mentality of some voluntary sector agencies, which are loathe to employ specialists if a job can be done for free by one of its own members, even if that member has little or no experience in the area. It was also a demonstration of the lack of understanding of funding shown by some WFA officers, again common in the voluntary sector, who had not seemed to grasp the fact that the Trust had granted the money to address *PR issues* and that the money spent on this would not have been made available for expenditure in other areas. However, Whitehead praises the work of the PR company, saying (in interview) that she could see the 'immediate impact' of its work on raising the profile of the women's game. This is a further demonstration of the differences of opinion which were a common feature of relations between the WFA's employee and volunteer officers.

It was through a female football player who was working for Trans World International (TWI) a television production company, that women's football received a huge boost to its public profile in Britain, in 1990. The TWI employee suggested women's football coverage as a programme idea to a producer and in that year, four

one hour long programmes were aired on Channel 4, early on Sunday evenings, providing coverage of the WFA Cup and following the progress of the England women's team in the European Championships, drawing audiences of up to three million viewers (Lopez 1997:64). Established in 1982, Channel 4's remit included the programming of 'minority' sports, so the coverage of women's football would have fulfilled part of this aspect of their contract. As production values were low, the coverage of the games would also have cost TWI/Channel 4 little, in comparison to coverage of professional men's sports, and, as the women's game was anxious to raise its profile, TWI were allowed the kind of unhindered access to players and coaches which would not have been possible, again, in many professional male sports. We will look in more detail later at issues such as media production values for female sport and the style of TV coverage of women's sports, in Chapter Seven. Suffice it to say here that the coverage of women's football was fronted by a female, Hazel Irvine, and was highly personalised and character driven, focusing more on the individuals involved in the sport than on the sport itself (Williams and Woodhouse 1991:34). However, this was the first time since the era of the 1920s factory teams that women's football in England had attracted substantial audiences, and the WFA hoped that the TV package would provide the sort of springboard needed for a breakthrough in recognition for the women's game. The FA's current Head of National Football Development, Kelly Simmons, is conscious of the power of the media to influence how the game is seen by young women. She recalls her own experience of those early broadcasts:

'Watching the Channel 4 programmes [on women's football], we were thinking how brilliant they were, because people were talking about it [...]. I wasn't working in women's football at the time, I actually saw it as a fan of football and thought, "God, it's brilliant, they are showing women playing football!"' (in interview).

Although participation in the women's game continued to increase, because, arguably, of poor infrastructure and internal wrangles, and a lack of any real knowledge or resources to nurture this new *national* focus on the female game, the sport was unable to capitalise fully on its new media exposure. Channel 4 decided not to cover women's football the following season; perhaps they had hoped for bigger audiences, although this seems unlikely. Maybe the more commercially driven American

football and the advent of *Football Italia* were seen as the way forward for Channel 4's 'minority' sports remit, and such imported programmes also carried with them low production costs. There may also have been an issue here around *advertising* and *sponsorship*, with a young, male, affluent audience more likely to watch American football and football from Italy, with women's football attracting a predominantly female audience with lower spending potential, a much less attractive proposition for sponsors and advertisers (Whannel 1992:195). The Football Trust's Richard Faulkner, a former WFA Chair whose role was pivotal in the final years of the organisation, recalls his dealings with TWI's representative. Faulkner's view is that TWI didn't want a second season of women's football coverage; their television executive's attitude was that once women's football had enjoyed some of the benefits of national exposure, women footballers should be paying for 'the privilege of being on TV!' (in interview). We see here that, despite reasonable viewing figures, by Channel 4's standards, the WFA was still battling against hard commercial pressures and narrow interests which stifled its, and Scott and Jones', attempts to promote the women's game.

Closer Links With the FA

The WFA had had a relationship, of sorts, with the FA almost from the moment it came into existence in 1969, initially through the setting up of a Joint Consultative Committee made up of officers from both organisations. In 1983, Patricia Gregory, as WFA Liaison Officer, discussed the possibility of closer links between the two organisations and in May 1984, as we have seen, the FA granted the WFA County FA status, something which didn't affect the day to day running of the organisation, but which formalised the WFA's relationship with the FA and bestowed a further degree of legitimacy upon the female game. The move also meant that a WFA representative was eligible to sit on FA Council, the executive committee of the sport's governing body. The FA then invited the WFA to organise a 6-a-side women's tournament, the games taking place before the 1984 Charity Shield at Wembley Stadium. These were the first women's matches to be played at the national stadium, another symbolic first for the female game in England.

With a crippling national economic recession and only slow progress for the female game, the number of female clubs affiliated to the WFA had slumped by the mid 1980s. In 1984/85, the number of clubs fluctuated between 200 and 220, with 24 of these being new clubs, and the need to secure more substantial funding became imperative; so too was the need to establish sound local structures. In 1985, the WFA adopted the Sports Council's 'nine regions' approach to developing sports, a move which would make applications for funding from this point on much easier. Linda Whitehead also points to the importance of this decision for maintaining good relations with the Sports Council, who were a source of vital funding for the WFA (in interview). Enthusiasm for the switch to regionalisation from local league structures was not unanimous, with local interests causing arguments over which regions teams and leagues should join, and the more conservative elements of the WFA's membership questioned the need to adopt the Sports Council's regional strategy at all.

In addition to developing a national player base, the WFA continued its attempts to boost the number of female *coaches* by running coaching initiatives in its new regions. Progress here was slow, but on the issue of referees, things were even more difficult. Progress here was hampered by the fact that women's games were not taken into consideration by the FA when assessing male and female referees for the move up from Class Three to Class Two refereeing. This meant that women referees were trapped at the Class Three level, as there was also little prospect of females being invited to act as officials in men's matches, and there were also few incentives for male referees to officiate in female fixtures. With the FA still keen to adopt a 'hands off' approach to women's football, the WFA was informed by the FA that decisions around refereeing assessments were made at the discretion of County FAs and that the FA, *nationally*, would not intercede.

Regional Development Patterns

The lack of a strong, co-ordinated national development policy meant there were gaps in provision and that even where there were solid local structures in women's football, this was usually down to driven individuals, rather than a coherent WFA strategy. Bale's work (1980), carried out at the behest of the WFA, shows that the South West, South East and North East regions had the largest number of female clubs in the late

1970s, with both North/South and rural/metropolitan divides in membership patterns. Eleven of the 17 counties with the highest female football participation rates came from South of the 'Watford Gap.' There was a relative absence of clubs in the industrial North, and Bale speculates that this is due to *economic* and *cultural* factors around issues of gender, although he says that areas with a strong history of female play, such as Lancashire, also demonstrate that the North/South divide theory is not water-tight. He concurs with Rooney (quoted in Bale 1980:137) that the reason for lower participation of women in football in metropolitan areas can be explained by the presence of many other leisure opportunities in such regions, and that the relative lack of general leisure opportunities in rural areas makes sport for females a more acceptable activity there. Again, however, he points to flaws in this theory, with more rural Dorset having no WFA member clubs at all at this time.

Although there are exceptions, as Bale points out, football for females seemed to be more popular, and, therefore, we might assume, more acceptable, or at least better tolerated, in the South of England, whereas in the more industrial North, where more traditionally masculine attitudes towards gender roles persist, the opposite *generally* seemed to be true. The industrial North was also at the heart of the establishment of the male professional game, so it is possible that the female game in these areas was 'squeezed out' as the men's professional game fought to establish itself. However, with the success over the past two decades of Doncaster Belles and the existence of Women's Premier League clubs on Merseyside, we have further inconsistencies with Bale's theory. The existence of the teams on Merseyside is best explained *not* by their links to professional male clubs in the area, but by the proselytising work of local individuals, such as Sylvia Gore, the same being true for Doncaster Belles, which is one of the few successful *independent* female clubs in the country.

A New Direction: The Football Trust

In 1983, the WFA became the WFA Limited, an indication of its desire to become a more formalised, businesslike body, but in reality, the move was based around fears about personal financial liability and the need to limit liability in the event of the organisation's financial state deteriorating further. Grants to the WFA from the Sports Council in 1983 rose to £20,000 per annum, with a further £5000 per annum

coming from the FA. Some 10% of WFA income was generated via subscriptions, but the Sports Council stated this must rise to 20-25% if its support was to continue. At this point, another major player entered the arena; the Football Trust.

In 1986, Linda Whitehead approached Richard Faulkner from the Football Trust, asking him to take over as Chair of the WFA, and in the administrative year 1986/87, Faulkner acted as Chair of a WFA panel attempting to solve a long running disciplinary dispute. Faulkner was then Deputy Chair of the Football Trust, a quango which was established in 1979 and which grew out of the Football Grounds Improvement Trust, which was itself founded in 1975, after concerns over the stadium disaster at Ibrox in 1971 and the recommendations of the resultant Wheatley Report, in 1972. The two Trusts merged in 1990, after the Taylor Report was published, following the deaths of 96 fans at Hillsborough in 1989. The Trust was funded via the football pools companies until 1997 and, after its reconstitution in 1998, by the pools companies, the FA, the FA Premier League, the Football League and PFA. Its remit was to assist clubs to act on Taylor's recommendations, as well as promoting grassroots football initiatives. The Trust was eventually wound up in May 2000 and replaced by the Football Foundation.

David Marlowe (1999:266) describes what he calls the 'highjacking' of the 1988 WFA AGM, at which Faulkner believed he would not be opposed if he stood for the position of Chair. Faulkner said later, 'I realised subsequently that I had been used; let's be quite honest about this - I think the intention was that I be used to get rid of [the then Chair] Tim Stearn' (Faulkner, in interview). Whitehead has a different view, saying that the Trust was in a position to become a major player in the development of the female game and Faulkner, as its Deputy Chair, had the skills, contacts and resources to assist the WFA. Peter Lee, a colleague of Faulkner's at the Trust, was to join him at the WFA, becoming Treasurer, in order to try to steer the organisation towards greater financial stability and the female game towards much needed growth. It also seems likely that continuing financial support for the WFA from the cash-rich Football Trust was dependent on Faulkner and Lee becoming more directly involved in the administration of the WFA in order to get to grips with the in-house struggles which then characterised the organisation.

Marlowe alleges Faulkner's nomination had been discussed by some WFA officers, excluding himself, at a previous meeting in a move designed to oust Stearn who, at the AGM, refused to stand down, thus forcing a vote, which was tied. The person acting as Chair for the agenda item used their casting vote in favour of Faulkner. Stearn was elected unopposed as Vice-Chair, retaining his place on the FA Council at the insistence of Faulkner. Unhappy with the pre-planning and use of proxy voting, some WFA members called an EGM, but Faulkner's appointment was supported, amongst others, by Stearn, and he remained as WFA Chair until 1991, by which time the WFA was receiving £40,000 per annum from the Sports Council for clerical, international and secretarial work, £75,000 for general development work from the Football Trust, and was £15,243 in the black. Faulkner's appointment seemed, at least, to place the WFA on a sounder financial footing.

In 1988, more rancour was caused when the WFA moved its headquarters from London to Manchester. Whitehead cited lower office costs for the move, along with the idea that in Manchester, the WFA would no longer be 'a small fish in a large pool' (in interview) as it had been in London. The North West has a strong tradition of football for females and Whitehead argued that the close proximity of some WFA members to the new headquarters would help with volunteer staffing of the office. Patricia Gregory, in particular, was furious with the decision, saying the move was motivated by Whitehead's personal interests, arguing that the WFA Administrator wanted to move back to her geographical roots and that the move was unauthorised by the WFA, taking place when the Chair was in the USA. Gregory contends that she had investigated the possibility of relocating the WFA to Milton Keynes or to Bristol, because these were Development Areas, offering subsidised office space, but that her suggestions were ignored.

Faulkner was a pragmatic and skilful WFA Chair, whose frankness about his time at the WFA and his constant references to the 'bigger picture' of the sport, stand in contrast to the internal politicking and 'character assassinations' which are a feature of the recollections of others about the organisation's turbulent history. The now life peer says; 'Of all the things I've done in semi-public life, it's the weirdest organisation I've ever been involved with, including the Labour Party!' (in interview). Faulkner is conscious of the importance of this period of significant change which he

presided over, with the Football Trust giving £150,000 to the WFA in 1990 to, amongst other things, establish a national women's league. It cannot be doubted that from the start of his involvement with the WFA, it was Faulkner's intention to draw the FA and WFA closer together. As someone coming from *outside* of the FA and WFA structures, but from *within* the ruling echelons of sport, he says it seemed 'insane and unproductive' that the female game had to be run outside of the sport's national governing body. He quickly identified the financial and structural weaknesses of the WFA and decided that only the FA had the resources and influence to support the WFA in the areas where it was struggling. Faulkner also recognised that national associations in other countries were supporting the women's game more strongly than was the case in England and that English administration, and the game generally, for females, was 'light-years behind women's football in Norway and the United States' (in interview).

The WFA and FA Draw Closer

The Sports Council was concerned at the increasing financial and political instability of the WFA, and closer ties between the FA and WFA were made a condition of future funding for the female game by the Council in 1990 (Marlowe 1999:299). New links between the FA and WFA were, however, resisted by some WFA officers, with merger meetings being cancelled. These WFA Committee members' opposition, drawing on interviews and WFA minutes, seems to have been based partly on an historical mistrust of the FA, because of its poor treatment of the female game, and also rooted in a wish to make the WFA succeed *in its own right*. There was a determination that those involved in the original women's project were capable of advancing the sport, and they were unwilling to let go of the reins of the female game. Marlowe claims that Faulkner and his Vice Chair, Stearn, were eventually left as the only WFA personnel negotiating with the FA, with information from their meetings not being filtered down to officers and members (in interview). WFA minutes (December 7 1991) blamed Faulkner for not arranging meetings between the FA and WFA at times when all WFA officers could attend, with previous WFA minutes calling for the rather cumbersome invitation of all WFA officers, plus the secretaries of the nine regions, along with FA representatives, to such meetings.

Marlowe writes that in his report to the 1990/91 AGM, Faulkner had said he had approached the FA with regard to their assuming responsibility for the female game in a number of areas and the possible closure of the WFA office, calling for an EGM to 'ratify the decisions' (Marlowe 1999:308). In his 1990 Chair's Report, Faulkner attempted to convince the WFA to accept the FA's offer, saying:

'We believe that what the FA is proposing makes enormous sense [...] yet allows us to retain our independence in the areas which matter. Your officers unanimously commend these ideas to you, on the basis that they should be discussed by the membership and this put to a general meeting for decisions' (Marlowe 1999:308).

Faulkner was keen not to portray the plans as a threat to the WFA, but as a way of moving the stagnating organisation, and the women's game, forward. He also reminded the WFA that the FA had the right, because of the UEFA and FIFA edicts on women's football, to take over the running of the female game in England. Both the Trust and the Sports Council had now decided that they could no longer continue to fund the WFA in its current state and favoured an FA takeover of the female game.

This is a slightly different account from David Marlowe's version of events, showing us, again, that, as Whitehead claims (in interview) we must be careful of accepting the accuracy of WFA minutes. We need to look at minutes, other WFA documents, and also take on board the narratives of those interviewed, before attempting to arrive at conclusions about these events. Faulkner was keen to formalise and widen the attendance of the meetings between the WFA and FA, but the lack of unity between the two bodies, and the resistance among some WFA officers and members to progressing the relationship, eventually brought events to a head. In October 1991, Faulkner, and the WFA Treasurer Peter Lee, resigned from the organisation. 'I resigned in order to force the issue with the FA. I needed to create a crisis. I never made any secret of the fact that that is what I did; it was a final resort' (Faulkner, in interview). It is also interesting to note that after the departure of Faulkner, who had driven the WFA throughout his time as Chair, WFA minutes descend into lengthy discussions of rules, regulations and protracted disputes, with little mention of the FA proposals.

However, the view was eventually reached that the FA plan, recommended by Faulkner, which had been sent out to leagues, was 'very well received' (Marlowe, 1999:310). With hindsight, Marlowe says 'the WFA's position was well nigh on irretrievable,' (Marlowe, 1999). Even with a clearing of all debts and a restructuring of the administration of the female game, Marlowe was doubtful that the WFA had a future as an independent body. This is an understatement. The FA had moved, because of international pressure and the potential domestic embarrassment caused by the often divided administration of the WFA, and through the influence of Faulkner in drawing the two bodies closer together, from a *laissez-faire* attitude towards the female game, towards an effective takeover of it. The voluntary organisation, which had often achieved remarkable successes within tight constraints, had dissolved because of a lack of external support and an inability to respond to the increasing demands of the female game, domestically and internationally. Importantly for the future of the female game, the FA had senior officers, such as its Chief Executive, Graham Kelly, his deputy, Patricia Smith and the Head of Coaching and Education, Charles Hughes, who *supported* the female game and saw the takeover as an opportunity, rather than a burden, although Kelly says of the general attitude within the FA at the time of the takeover, 'I don't think the FA would argue too much if I said disinterest was the prevailing feeling [...] Pat Smith, my Deputy, had to fight quite hard to loosen the purse strings' (private communication).

The suspicion of some WFA officers and members towards the FA was understandable. After all, the governing body of the national game had attempted to drive the female game out of existence at the beginning of the century and then again after World War One, reinforcing its opposition after World War Two. This combination of FA hostility, later mixed with apathy, towards the female game, offering pepper-corn funding and leaving decisions which were vital to the development of the female game to hostile *local* County FAs, was an obstacle to the WFA and FA drawing closer and forming a productive relationship. Despite sometimes shambolic organisation at the highest level of the women's game, individuals at the local level of women's football did feel *involved* in the organisation of the female game. Indeed, with the scant resources available to the WFA and with its reliance on volunteerism, those who helped to run local leagues and organise the game at a regional level often held and exercised substantial power, although,

sometimes, this power resulted in the kind of parochialism and creation of fiefdoms which led to some regions questioning the need to adopt the Sports Council regions in 1985. The fear now was that the FA would bring a distant and centralised control to the female sport in order to organise it, which would threaten local power bases and remove a degree of autonomy from the local level which was available via the structure established under the WFA's stewardship of the sport.

It is easy to forget, because of the organisation's unseemly demise, the funding obtained, the coaches and referees trained, the leagues and competitions established, the media coverage gained and the international success achieved by the WFA during its lifetime. The WFA provided a sometimes uncertain structure and often weak and divided leadership to the sport, but it also attempted to address important issues, formally and uniformly, encouraging and maintaining growth where and when it could. Unlike the situation in the United States and Norway, the WFA attempted to develop the game in England because it *had* to. The WFA was never successfully plugged into all available resources, as it might have been with a more strategic and accommodating national governing body and with a different history for the male and female games in England. As a result, the women's game in England fell further behind that of many of its international counterparts, such as the USA and Norway, whose governing bodies had more quickly and enthusiastically assumed responsibility for the development of the female game. However, the WFA's need for resources, the female game's need for improved structures and the potential domestic and international embarrassment to the FA which would be caused by the disintegration of the WFA, meant that an FA takeover of the female game, at first by degree, became inevitable.

The Beginning of the FA Takeover, 1990-1993

As we have seen, the FA did not suddenly take over the running of the women's game in 1993. The female game, rather, entered a period of modest changes in structure and in its relationship with the FA, which meant that its long term future and its place and acceptance within the national Association were negotiated. For instance, as early as 1990, the FA offered to take over the strategic development of the female game, via its Technical Department, as well as the running of the international squad

and the WFA Cup. The FA Competitions Department took effective control of the League and Association Cups in 1991/92, which were then under the control of the WFA Competitions Committee after stating:

‘The FA has no doubt that they [the WFA] were not able to handle their current activities effectively [...] and [...] this was having a detrimental effect on the growth of the women’s game [...]. The FA was responsible to FIFA for ensuring the progress of women’s football and would be held responsible for any shortfall’ (FA minutes December 5 1991).

In the same season, the FA concluded that the women’s league structure was proving problematic to stronger clubs which were struggling to find challenging regional competition, and that the league should be rationalised, with North and South divisions leading to promotion to a national league. The Association also appointed three Assistant Regional Directors for Girls and Women’s Football to encourage the growth of the female game in the same year. The formal takeover of football for females in England by the FA took place in 1993. Sue Thomas was appointed Women’s Football Co-ordinator in June 1993 and was based at the FA’s Potters Bar office, attached to its Coaching and Education Department. The WFA Council met on November 13th 1993 to dissolve the Company (the official dissolution had actually happened on June 30th 1993) and female clubs were invited to affiliate to their local County FA. The Women’s Football Alliance was established to act as a new communication channel between the female game and the FA, and the Alliance was also entitled to have a representative on FA Council. In 1993 the FA’s Women’s Football Committee was established and from that date, the FA embarked on building its ‘pyramid’ of football for females, with a broad participatory base rising to an elite pinnacle, a structural feature which will be examined in the next chapter.

Contextualising the WFA/FA Relationship

As well as looking at the female game itself, it is important to locate changing WFA/FA relations in the context of changes within *football generally*, and within *wider social* shifts, which may help to explain the way the female game has developed in England. The England men’s victory against Germany, on home soil, in the 1966 World Cup Final for those English people interested in football, and even

those not, still evokes immense passion and pride, and it is easy to see why a victory over near neighbours and opponents in a still recent War would have evoked such general popularity for the game during the period. This was also a time of rebuilding for the England men's team, which was so comprehensively beaten by Hungary, not considered a world power, in 1953, and for the general modernising of the men's professional game, with, for instance, the introduction of the League Cup, regular floodlit football and FA approval for Sunday football (Russell 1997:151,158). Whilst only a small number of females were *playing* the sport within organised leagues, some females were active *fans* of the sport during the period and have a history of supporting the male professional game.

This was also a period when the male professional game was waning in popularity, with a 30% drop in overall attendance between 1980 and 1986 (Murray 1996:161). This era covers the period when hooliganism caused revulsion amongst many fans of football, as well as among those not directly interested in the game. In 1985, 39 fans were killed at Heysel Stadium in Belgium before the European Cup Final involving Liverpool FC, after crowd disturbances, 56 fans were killed at Bradford City FC's Valley Parade when debris under a wooden stand ignited and, in 1989, 96 supporters were killed in an FA Cup semi-final at Hillsborough after crushing caused by the overfilling of terraces. After this series of high profile incidents, and there were numerous others, some caused by hooliganism, some by poor ground safety and planning, Lord Justice Taylor was charged with examining a number of issues around football stadia and how to reduce the likelihood of a repeat of these incidents. The areas looked at included modernising older grounds, addressing hooliganism, alcohol, policing, stewarding and ticketing. Taylor's recommendations encompassed areas such as the establishment of a National Football Intelligence Unit to counter hooliganism, minimum standards and legislation around ground safety, the introduction of all-seater stadia, the issuing of safety certificates to clubs and more co-ordinated planning between the emergency services as well as a review of offences and penalties for offenders (Taylor 1990).

Taylor's findings and recommendations have been a major factor in what is commonly referred to as the 'feminisation' of football. So, the new accommodations between the FA and the WFA also reflected wider changes in the professional *male*

sport and its increasing accessibility to women as spectators. Whilst it would be fanciful to believe that all female footballers are spectators of the male professional game and that all female spectators of the male professional game play the sport, our own work shows that there is linkage between female play and watching the male professional game. 33.2% of respondents in our national survey of female players say that they watch the men's game live 'regularly' and 48.1% watch live 'occasionally', suggesting that playing and spectating may have a symbiotic relationship. Reinforcing this, 27.2% of respondents in the same survey said that they had begun playing football as a result of watching the male professional game. This means that as the popularity of the male professional game increases amongst females, so there is potential for participation in the female game to expand and vice versa.

This purported 'feminisation', however, carries, for many, negative connotations, heralding the softening of a tough, 'mans' game. The Football Supporters Association campaigns for the introduction of 'safe' terracing, as an alternative to all-seater stadia, and many long-time supporters begrudge intrusion into 'their' space by 'new fans.' For new fans here read women and middle-class male supporters, who are labelled by traditionalists as lacking knowledge of the game, of lacking knowledge of the club they support and, that most heinous of football accusations, of being bandwagon jumpers, attaching themselves to the new chic of football at the expense of 'real' fans who are being priced out of the game. Women can never be 'real' fans claims one author, a self-styled reformed football hooligan:

Women like football, they don't love or worship it, that's the difference. All men know that if things had only been slightly different they could have been out there [...]. Women cannot do that because they can never actually play at the highest levels like men and therefore cannot possibly become as involved in the game with the same passion. For them, any game is just an event, but for men, it's a dream of what could, and damn it, should have been (Brimson 1996:11).

A different reading of the Taylor Report is that it didn't just make grounds safer, it also gave fans comfort and facilities which had previously been lacking in the sport. Fans were no longer viewed as a rabble, as hooligans who should be shepherded into pens and fed stale pies. Taylor's Report helped to bring organisation and

respectability to the sport and to imbue it with a professional ethos found in other sectors of the leisure industry. There is no room here to reflect on the costs, in monetary terms, to clubs and fans of implementing some of the recommendations, or to flag up issues around fan demographics (Williams, 1994,1995, 1996, 1997, 1999a, 1999b, 2001) and football as business, issues which have been explored by authors such as Morrow (1999), Conn (1997) and Fynn and Guest (1994,1998). Currently, approximately one in seven FA Premier League fans are female, an increase from one in eight in previous seasons (Williams 2001:3.2) and one in seven Nationwide Division fans are female (Williams 1999b:3.1). Women fans are not new to football; a tradition of support stretches back over a century, with 2000 females attending the Easter match at Preston FC's ground in 1885, admission being free for women, and 'the fair sex [...] in every part of the ground' at a Leicester City home fixture in 1899 (Hayward 1995:1). In the 1920s and 1930s, Brentford FC earned themselves the nickname 'The Lady Team' (Williams and Woodhouse 1991b:21) because of the large number of female fans at their stadium, many of whom travelled to the ground on transport provided by the local authority (Hayward 1995:p). However, since the implementation of many of the recommendations of the Taylor Report, more active female fans than ever before seem to have been recruited to the sport in England.

Although there were shifts within football which help to explain why the female game began to develop and to, eventually, be better supported by the FA, the emerging WFA/FA relationship also needs to be assessed against a backdrop of more general sports development, domestically and internationally. Just after the demise of the WFA, 3626 females participated in 108 events in 21 sports at the 1996 Summer Olympics (www.olympicwomen.co.uk), with increases in female participation having come steadily since 1976, when there were 1247 females in 49 events across 11 sports. At Sydney 2000, a number of female Australian Olympic medal winners carried the Olympic flame around the stadium track at the opening ceremony, to mark the 100th year of female participation in the Games, with 3906 female athletes taking part in 25 of the 28 sports at the Millennium Olympiad (www.olympic.org). The International Olympic Committee (IOC) now has 15 female members and the IOC recommended in 1996 that by 2005, 20% of their executive positions should be filled by women, a doubling of their 10% target for December 2000. The IOC has also instructed its member organisations to match these targets. In terms of participation,

the IOC says that there should be an equal number of men's and women's events at the 2004 Summer Games.

We still hear the plea that sport and politics should not mix, whenever there is a public debate about the role of sport (Houlihan in Polley 1998:13) suggesting that sport should be seen as a domain of freedom, something unhampered by politics and the State. In 1987, the Chair of the CCPR, Ron Emes said; 'The increasing influence that government manifestly sought to exert [...] necessitated constant vigilance if sport was to retain the uniquely British tradition of independent management' (Houlihan 1991:6). However, in Britain, there is a long history of political linkage with sport, at the local, national and international level. Polley quotes Allison, who says that sport is important to the State because it creates 'politically usable resources,' such as good health, social order and prestige (Polley 1998:16).

State intervention in sport is no guarantee of the delivery of an equitable product; the self-governing nature of much sport in England means that sports administrators are allowed to 'place the importance of the autonomy of the sport above the human rights of the individuals involved in or excluded from it' (Talbot 1990:8). There is, Talbot goes on to argue, 'tension [...] between sports expectations of and the demands for State support and the resentment of central control or interference' (ibid), with the State manifesting an 'ambivalent liberalism' (ibid) in its relationship with sports governing bodies. Houlihan points to this ad hoc approach to intervention, quoting the 1975 White Paper on Sport and recreation: 'it is not for the Government to seek to control or direct the diverse activities in people's leisure time' (1991:22). Certainly, the first half of the twentieth century saw sports, such as football and rugby league, distancing themselves from middle-class or aristocratic patronage and, whilst there was a growing concern in government about the health of the nation, there was still relatively little direct, significant strategic State intervention in sport, a trend which continues to the present day. Sports administration in Britain is fragmented; at the level of national government, sport does not have a government department and there is a heavy reliance on local government to deliver relevant services, with central government preferring a strong link to Sport England and volunteer-staffed governing bodies. Volunteerism, as we shall see when the structure of the FA is examined in the

next chapter, gave rise to specific problems around the development of football for females.

Whilst governments have established bodies such as Sport England, in terms of *direct* intervention, legislation relating to sport has usually been based around issues of restriction and control. This can be found as far back as the decision in 1541 to limit a number of sports, including football, on the grounds that they were ‘frivolous,’ up to the 1991 Football (Offences Act) and beyond (Houlihan 1999:22). In terms of *gender*, sport and the State, initial post-World War One sports funding pushed women into ‘female appropriate’ sports. More recently, women’s sports participation has increased, but the increases have been most significant in jogging (a relatively cheap and individual activity) and aerobics, which can be as much about body image and creating a self which is desirable to men as it is about physical activity which is healthy, enjoyable and liberating, with fees for, and the location of, municipal aerobics sessions still being prohibitive for many females (Hargreaves 1994: 239).

Alongside this general increase in female sports participation, there has been an increase in the number of women playing traditionally ‘male’ sports ‘facilitated by the growth of an equal opportunities culture which has actively promoted the idea that women should have the same access as men to [...] cultural activities’ (Hargreaves 1994:96). However, the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act has built-in constraints which allow sports organisations to retain discriminatory practices, as we saw earlier in this chapter with the Teresa Bennett case. We will not focus here in any detail on the role of school PE in gender and sport, as this area is the subject of discussion in Chapter Six when we examine the findings of a national survey of female footballers and clubs secretaries. However, the fact that the *National Curriculum* is delivered by *local* agencies means that there is a lack of uniformity in how the PE elements of the curriculum are interpreted and delivered, with a resultant lack of consistency in the type and quality of PE experienced by many girls.

Looking outside of sport for factors which might explain the growth of the female game, in the 1960s, when the WFA was established, despite the harsh economic realities of the time, the period was ‘full of excitement, optimism, Tamla Motown and all the sex you could eat’ (Hill 1996:204). Since the late 1960s, women’s economic

activity rates in Britain have increased steadily, even in times of recession. Since the mid-1980s, the concentration has been on an increase of work *and* family responsibility for women aged between 25 and 40, continuing the post-War increase in labour market activity for married women. The 1967 NHS Family Planning Act made the Pill available to women and the Abortion Act of that year made termination, if there was a health risk, an option. The availability of reliable contraception meant that some women were able to stay in the work-force for longer by delaying having children, with women who work outside the home being more likely to play sport than those who are housewives (Gregory and Windebank 2000:13).

The Equal Pay Act of 1970, the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975, covering maternity leave and return to work, and the establishment of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) as well as the 1986 widening of the Sex Discrimination Act to apply to companies with five or more employees, are part of a legislative raft which was implemented throughout the short lifetime of the WFA. Other legislation, including the 1983 Amendment to the Employment Protection Act, was designed to bring British legislation into line with the European Union concept of equal pay for work of comparable value. However, despite this new legislation, still only 33% of full-time workers are female, but 81% of *part-time* employees are female (www.eoc.org.uk). Only 10% of science and engineering employees are female, falling to 8.5% for skilled crafts, whereas 75% of secretaries are female, showing that women in work are still over-represented in traditionally 'female' jobs, and under-represented in traditionally 'masculine' work areas. EOC figures also point out that female full-time employees earn only 72% of their male counterpart's salaries (*ibid*). This part-time/full-time divide is well highlighted when we observe that between 1971 and 1995, part-time work for women increased 76%, whereas full-time female working work rose by only 3% (Pilcher 1999:48). Walby (1997:27) has the percentage of the workforce which is female at 34.1% in 1959, rising to 49.6% in 1995. Earnings amongst female full-time workers were 63% of male full-time worker earnings in 1970, rising to just 80% in 1995 (Walby 1997:31).

Highlighting the strong link between *education* and employment opportunities, Walby (1997:29) shows that in 1994, of females aged 20-29 years with higher education qualifications, only 4% were economically inactive, the figure for the same age group

without such qualifications being 56%. Women are entering higher and further education in larger numbers than ever before in England, with female university enrolment increasing faster than male enrolment, rising from 35% of all undergraduates in 1975-6 to 48% in 1994-5. Walby also points to the importance of *age* as a factor in equality, with older women being 'bound to their lot' (ibid) despite employment and educational changes going on around them. In short, the WFA emerged at a time when there was a general expansion in opportunities for some women, in terms of education and employment

We see then that the traditional, liberal feminist belief that equality in sport or other areas can best be secured via legislation is one that simply does not bear close historical scrutiny. Women's 'freedom' to work and play in different arenas during the Wars was conditional upon their return to their former roles after the conflicts, just as legislation designed to emancipate and provide females with equality of access and reward has been ad hoc and implemented in the most curmudgeonly of manners. The legislation has also produced tortuous processes of complaint for those who choose to use its mechanisms as a route to redress. Importantly, if one looks at the figures for female employment in this chapter, despite increased entry into the work-force by females, many female workers are employed part-time and in low grade jobs and, as Pilcher (1999:47) suggests, this increase in female employment may not be the result of legislation or attitudinal change, so much as the move of the UK from an industrial to a service economy. This shift has led to more women entering employment because service industries are considered to be far more 'appropriate' areas for female workers than the industrial sphere. Where women do reach the higher echelons of employment or find work within traditionally male organisations, those organisations do little to change their exclusionary practices to facilitate the entry of women into their workforce, and to encourage their retention. Women who do not fit the 'male' profile of a job do not tend to succeed in bureaucratic organisations, nor do they benefit from equal opportunities legislation (Charles 2000:106).

Gregory and Windebank also question the 'employment equals liberation' theory (2000:146) saying that we cannot expect more women to engage in full-time employment, as there is a general reduction in this type of employment. This theory also doesn't acknowledge the fact that many females still have primary or sole

responsibility for a number of domestic and community duties (Gregory and Windebank 2000:149). However, there are important *class* issues here, with females at the higher end of the social scale more likely to re-enter the work force after having children at a similar level to the one they left at than women from the lower end of the class spectrum, who are likely to return to poorer paid, part-time work. Also, whilst overall male employment has contracted, it has *expanded* in higher paid, higher status jobs, whereas women's employment has expended most in the part-time and service sectors (Elias and Purcell 1988:2000). However, although still lagging behind men in terms of equality of pay and access to the highest job ranks, more women than ever were in the workplace in the 1990s (Pilcher 1998:48). Despite the fact that many females still lack access to private transport, more women now have the economic means to buy training kit, to pay football club subscriptions and to contribute to travelling costs.

The WFA was in existence through the period of Thatcherism, when feminism was experiencing the same kind of backlash in Britain which we will see, later, occurred under the Reagan and Bush Snr. administrations in the USA. The ambition of many women in the UK to enter traditionally male areas of work and education, rather than staying in the domestic sphere, was blamed by the government of the day for a decline in morality, family values, and an increase in crime. As the number of single mothers increased and as AIDS became an issue of international concern, the British Government called for a return to 'Victorian values.' Females who did not wish to conform to these 'Victorian' standards of feminine behaviour, based around domesticity and heterosexual monogamy, were stigmatised as 'deviant' (see Abbott and Wallace, 1989 and Durham, 1991 for a discussion of the New Right and issues around family and gender). This fear of being stigmatised, in tandem with the UK's economic slump, are important external factors in explaining the stalling of the growth of the female game in the 1980s.

Conclusion

We have mapped the history of the WFA, from formation to dissolution, examining its relationship with the FA. The organisation's development, and that of the women's sport more widely, has been analysed in the context of broader changes in

sport and society. We have tried to highlight the internal struggles over the development of structures for the women's game, and to connect these, loosely, to the increasing 'feminisation' of men's football, where the professional elite game has become more accessible to females as workers, journalists and spectators, as well as to increased international pressure on the FA to adopt the female game. Outside of the game, funding from State initiated organisations, such as Sport England, has also been important in sustaining female participation in sports. Although in England some females in traditionally 'male' areas of employment are still stigmatised as deviant, there are now more females embarking on careers previously considered the domain of males, and this occupation of previously exclusively male spaces also extends to sport. The initial relationship between the FA and the WFA may have been characterised by suspicion and conditionality, but, the combination of conducive factors inside football, inside sport, and these set against the backdrop of shifting gender roles in the wider social arena, meant that the FA was now in a position not just to support the female game, but to *promote* it.

Chapter Five

The Football Association Years

In this chapter, we will look at the female game in England following its takeover by the FA in 1993. As well as FA attempts to broaden the player base, programmes to promote excellence among female players will also be examined. We will analyse the coaching, refereeing and administration of the female game and there will also be an analysis of the FA as an institution. The views of critics who question aspects of the FA's development of the game for females are also examined.

The FA Strategy for the Female Game

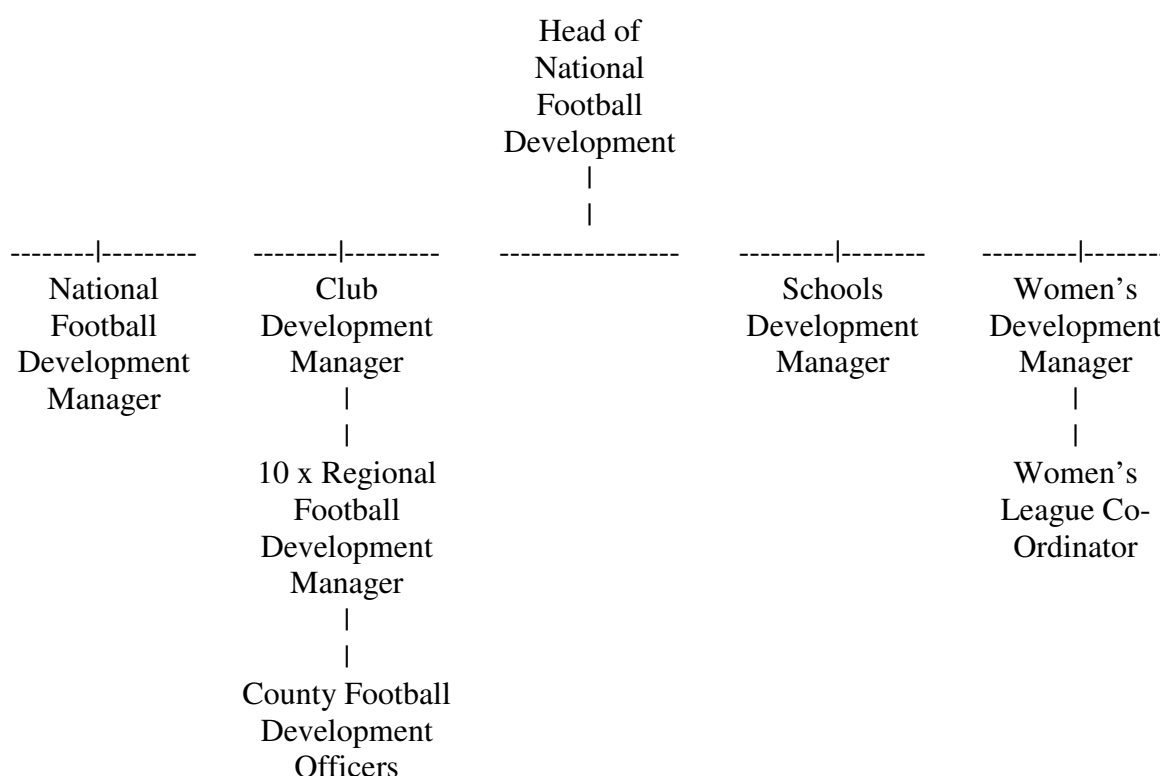
From its takeover of the women's game in 1993, the FA embarked on what was at first an ad hoc set of developmental measures, but which is now a strategy, part of its overall Talent Development Plan for all football in England. The Association views the female game as distinct from the men's variant: a game in its own right. One of the FA's aims is to stop the female game suffering by comparison with its male counterpart, as well as wishing to avoid developmental mistakes which have been made in shaping football for males (Simmons, Knight and Barber, in interview). Fig. 5.1 shows the *developmental* structure of the female game in England.

There are now 10 Regional Football Development Managers in England whose remits cover football for males *and* females: previously, there had been five Regional Directors with an exclusive 'football for females' remit. There are now 31 Centres of Excellence (Female), each County Association has a County Plan which includes a strategy to develop the female game, and the first female coach of the women's national team, Hope Powell, was appointed by the FA in autumn 1998. The Chair of the FA Women's Committee, Ray Kiddell, is also a member of the UEFA Women's Committee, and there is a development 'pyramid', offering the opportunity for mass participation and elite play for females throughout the country. The organisation which attempted to bar women from playing organised football in 1902, and again in 1921, reinforcing their oppositional stance in 1946, is now investing over £2 million per annum in female football. The FA also directly levers funds of £140,000 from the National Lottery to invest in the women's game. Although this is a relatively small

investment in terms of FA income and its spending on the male game in England, it is an annual budget much more substantial than any which had been available to the WFA.

Fig. 5.1

The Structure of the FA in Relation to Football for Females



It is useful, firstly, to look at the overall structure of the FA, in order to locate where the female game sits within it. The FA is responsible for developing and promoting football in England at all levels and is governed by the FA Council, which meets six times a year and ratifies the decisions of all FA Committees, of which the Women's Committee is one of the six dealing with more immediate policy matters. The other FA Committees are: Executive (the most senior), Disciplinary, Commercial, National League System, and Membership.

Members of the FA Council are unpaid, non-executive directors of the Company (The FA Association Limited). The 92 Council members represent football at all levels: 43 come from County Associations, five from the FA Premier League, four from the Football League, one from each of 10 divisions covering the country, 17 members who are Vice Presidents or Life Vice Presidents, and 11 members who come from

‘other associations,’ including the armed services, schools and universities, plus a Chair and Vice Chair. These members sit on a number of Standing Committees, receiving reports from permanent members of staff. These 14 Committees cover issues as diverse as refereeing, Sunday football and publications. The FA Council members appoint a Chief Executive, responsible for the day-to-day running of the FA, and the Chief Executive chairs the Management Team which is made up of staff who head up their Departments. These Departments are listed in Fig. 5.2.

Fig. 5.2
The Structure of the FA

Company Secretary	Committee Support Legal Event Management Personnel Ticketing Membership
Finance	Purchasing Facilities Travel Information Technology Accounts
Commercial	Licensing Sponsorship Contracts
Public Affairs	Media Customers Campaigns
Technical	International Youth Women Charter for Quality
Referees	-
Safety/Leagues	Security Non-Professional Leagues
Competitions/Regulations	Discipline Fixtures
Wembley	-

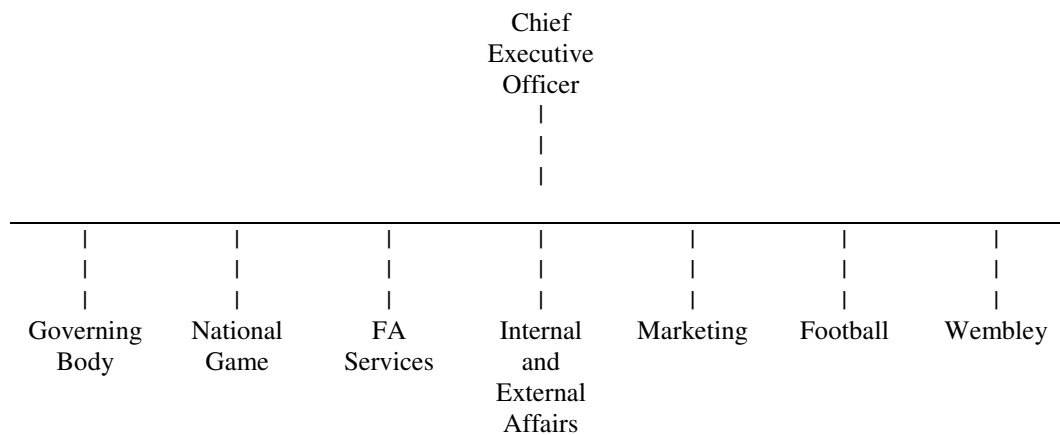
We see, then, that the FA is a governing body staffed by professionals with specialisms working to a committee structure in which, ultimately, volunteers with a history of involvement in the game have the power to make decisions. A number of staff with responsibility for the development of the sport overall, rather than just for

football for females, are now female. Five of the 10 Regional Development Managers are female, as is the National Women's Football Co-ordinator and the Head of National Football Development. Many more females are also employed in administrative positions by the FA.

However, the number of women practitioners and volunteers within the game is not mirrored in the number of females filtering through to FA Council and Committees via the commonest route, the County FA. Only one Committee member, Sue Hough of the Women's Committee, is female. We have, then, almost two systems operating together; a paid employment sphere operating under employment legislation which, theoretically, recruits the most suitably qualified candidate, although there is still much word-of-mouth recruitment in this area, and a volunteer sphere, which, traditionally, has recruited by word-of-mouth and worked on custom and practice, constructing institutional barriers to female participation and over-loading County FAs with older, white males, whose expertise rarely encompasses the female game.

The recent restructuring (Fig. 5.3) of the FA should, eventually, reduce the size of the generalist Council and give more power to specialist practitioners. In terms of the developmental shape of the female game (Fig. 5.1) the Association is attempting to move towards a more 'Norwegian' model of integration, with more *generic* football development officers who have a general remit which includes developing the female game, rather than employing officers whose *sole* responsibility is towards the female arm of the sport. This is an attempt to make women's football more central to the everyday work of many FA practitioners, an attempt to avoid the potential danger of some personnel neglecting the female game, claiming that it does not fall within their remit.

Fig. 5.3
The Proposed FA Structure



The new FA Chief Executive is Adam Crozier, formerly of advertising agency Saatchi and Saatchi, from a background which is, perhaps, illustrative of the FA's institutional shift towards non-traditional ideas and approaches and, say its critics, towards increasing commercialism and impression and presentation management. Crozier contends that; 'there is a gulf between the public perception of the FA and the reality' (www.the-fa.org). He argues that the public views the FA as a reactive, rather than a proactive, body; an organisation which tends to make ad hoc, piecemeal changes to the sport, one which merely tinkers rather than overhauls. For Crozier, the 'new' FA is, instead, a professional, forward thinking, and dynamic organisation.

Drawn from a commercial, non-sports background, the appointment of Crozier as FA Chief Executive is a high profile indication of the game and the FA's recent 'feminisation'. It indicates the move from recruiting and retaining older (male) administrators and policy makers, drawn from recruitment pools steeped in football and sports development, and institutionally geared against female advancement, towards involving younger people from commercial, media and even political backgrounds (the FA used ex-Labour Party 'spin-doctor' Alan Barnard to assist in its image assessment and change) in order to negotiate the kind of deals and partnerships, and to formulate the type of large scale, long term plans which the sport now requires.

Crozier's vision for the development of the overall game was unveiled on March 19th, 2000, the new FA Chief Executive announcing:

‘We want to be seen as the leading sports governing body in the world [...] Football at the local level is too fragmented [...] if we want to compete in women’s football on the world stage, then we have to move forward.’ (www.the-fa.org).

That the female game is promoted with rather more enthusiasm than before by the FA is partly due to this new FA managerial ethos, but is also made possible by wider societal changes around perceptions of gender appropriate behaviour and gender identity.

Pink (1997) believes that there is a plurality of gender models, rather than a rigid, timeless view of what it is to be male or female. Authors, such as Pink, ‘question the fixity of both identity and gender’ (Pink, 1997: 29). Gender identities and roles are generally viewed as more fluid in late modern societies, and some traditionally ‘masculine’ jobs, working for the emergency services, for example, are now viewed as less stigmatised for females, and some traditionally ‘feminine’ activities, such as undertaking domestic duties, or working in service industries, are being undertaken by more males. Environments or ‘pockets’ are created where females are likely to feel less uncomfortable around participation in traditionally ‘masculine’ pursuits and where organisations feel less inhibited about promoting such activities. The FA’s Director of Marketing, Paul Barber, argues that, ‘the state of mind around women’s football is indicative of wider social changes. That’s one of the reasons that launching a professional league is possible’ (in interview).

The FA Pyramid

The new FA ethos for football for females is one of both mass participation *and* elite excellence, and in both the structure of leagues and overall development plans, this development pyramid is key. Fig. 5.4 shows the FA’s Talent Development Plan for females, which was launched in 1997, in condensed form, from pinnacle down to base.

Fig. 5.4
The FA Development Pyramid for the Female Game

Age Group	Lottery Funding
England seniors	World Class Performance
England Under 18s England Under 16s National player courses and development squads Regional player courses and development squads	World Class Potential
Centres of Excellence Coaching Centres Academies	World Class Start
Affiliated junior/youth clubs National Curriculum School teams/competitions (including BT Top Sports)	Participation
Mini-leagues/mini-soccer/Soccer Star After school clubs Local authority/Football in the Community, competitions and festivals	Foundation

Kelly Simmons, the FA's National Women's Football Co-ordinator, made sufficient impact with her development plans for the female game that she has been appointed overall Head of National Football Development at the FA. Her development plans, building from the first female football strategy document in 1994 and running in tandem with the, then, newly appointed FA Technical Director, Howard Wilkinson's, Talent Development Plan, attempt to overcome the fragmentation spoken of by Crozier, and to address the issue of a lack of adequate opportunity for females in the game.

The thrust of the FA plan is to give females 'entry points' into the game and then a pathway through to which ever level of participation they are able, or wish to attain. Previously, the tendency was to offer 'taster sessions' and then leave enthused females without local opportunities to play. The plan does not concentrate solely on participation, but also aims to raise the profile of the female game and to encourage more females to become involved in football coaching.

This entry and pathway approach is, perhaps, best demonstrated by giving a concrete example. Starting at the bottom of the pyramid, at the *Foundation* level, a girl who may not have played the game in an organised way before, could be introduced to it

via a local authority or Football in the Community scheme, either at school or outside of it. Girls would play mini-soccer, seven-a-side, shorter games on small pitches, which is the form of football advocated by the FA, allowing all players to participate and gain skills. As some women's football clubs now have youth sections, beginning playing at a club would also be an option for many girls, although this would be more applicable at the next stage, *Participation*.

At this *Participation* point of the pyramid, girls join junior clubs affiliated to the FA, or youth sections of senior clubs, where they receive coaching and have the opportunity for play in the expanding raft of youth leagues, as well as in friendly games and cup competitions. Although coverage is patchy, some schools offer girls the chance to play football in PE lessons under the auspices of the National Curriculum. *BT Top Sports*, a programme for 10-11 year olds, is another method of attempting to bring football into schools, as well as being available at clubs outside of the school setting. It is also aimed at increasing the number of females coaching, as schools are encouraged to have a 50/50 balance between male and female players, and to have at least one female coach amongst staff members, although figures for qualified female teacher/coaches are not available.

Schools are provided with equipment, and teachers with instructions, by the FA, to encourage more young people to play the sport. Schools wishing to earn the FA's Chartermark (there are currently 420 schools which have this) indicating excellence in their football provision for pupils, must have members of staff with recognised FA coaching qualifications and all *visiting* coaches must also have these, as well as being members of the Football Association's Coaches Association (FACA). Football for girls must be included in the curriculum *and* extra-curricula football must be offered, and the school must also have links with a local sports club, if the Chartermark is to be gained. This ensures that children have quality coaching and have links to clubs, which means that when their participation at school ceases, they have an exit route; a local club.

A newer plank of the FA strategy of participation, aimed at linking young female players to sports clubs, is *Active Sports*, with girl's football being one of the nine sports, which share £10 million of funding, identified for development. Funded via the National Lottery and working in partnership with clubs and local authorities, the scheme aims to provide girls playing at school with the opportunity to participate at a local club to try to improve the game's chances of retaining them, as there is a significant drop-out of girls from sports generally during adolescence (FT Business Report 1999:2). Again, the focus is very much on coaching *quality*, and all participating junior clubs will be required to reach FA Charter standard. As well as increasing participation, encouraging existing women's clubs to establish junior sections, rather than setting up new clubs, is also an objective, as even at the highest levels, women's clubs have suffered from a lack of strength in depth, or from short life spans, because of a drying up of their local player pool.

World Class Start, the central section of the pyramid, is concerned with the selecting of elite players and exposing them to more and better coaching, with the aim of improving female players so that they can step up to the next level of the pyramid. Here, funding from the National Lottery, as well as from the FA, is important. The FA now funds 31 Centres of Excellence (Female) with nine more Centres planned; there are 53 Centres of Excellence for Boys (FA statistics). The Centres for females are attached, in most cases, to men's professional clubs, offering girls more intensive coaching, sports science back-up and some of the facilities one would usually associate with a professional men's club. Centres typically operate for 20 weeks of the year and run teams for Under 12s, U14s and U16s. Again, all coaching staff are qualified, with a minimum of one A licence coach per Centre, the A licence being the FA's highest coaching award.

Centres for females must also have *female* coaches, another move to train more women in this area, whether introducing them at the relatively low level of Junior Team Manager, or helping them to gain higher coaching qualifications. Although the Centres have only been on line since the 1998/99 season, the current England U16s female squad draws 25 of its 32 players from them, evidence that the females attending them have been correctly identified as 'talented' or, perhaps, that the FA is now looking, almost exclusively, to the Centres for players, thus excluding some

younger females who have not been picked up by the identification programme. As is the case in the USA, this sort of selection system, perhaps, excludes girls from lower socio-economic backgrounds because of the need for girls attending Centres of Excellence to travel, purchase kit etc. *Coaching Centres* are the stepping stone between clubs and Centres of Excellence for talented girls who are adjudged to need extra training to reach the next level of the pyramid. In some cases, because of where they live, it is still not possible for girls to have access to a Centre of Excellence, so a Coaching Centre, in this instance, provides equivalent programmes.

A newer development within the pyramid is the introduction of *football academies* for females. In 2000, there were eight further education colleges in England with fully operational programmes, rising to 15 currently, with a further seven working towards gaining academy status for the academic year 2002/3. These are further education colleges with tailor-made timetables allowing young women to continue their education, whilst also receiving high quality football coaching. As with Centres of Excellence, coaching staff must hold specified FA coaching qualifications, there must be training of female coaches, and facilities used must measure up to standards laid down by the FA. These include having outdoor *and* indoor facilities, study and homework areas, and having at least six full-time, child protection screened members of staff. As with Centres of Excellence, provision for females at academies still lags behind that for young males, with 45 boy's academies operating.

The introduction of these academies is, partly, a response by the FA to a fear that England's best young female players may be tempted away to the USA on scholarships. There, England players such as Kelly Smith, Rachel Brown and Danielle Murphy, can gain academic qualifications whilst also using sports facilities and having access to sports science back-up which would rarely be available to them in England. Building from the academies, the FA, in January 2001, announced plans for an International Player Development Centre for Females, which opened in September 2001 at Loughborough University. Here, the tuition fees, coaching, kit and accommodation of 15 female players will be paid for by the FA (*FA Bulletin* January 25, 2001).

Keeping talented young female players in England on scholarships will also avoid tensions between international commitments and American fixture scheduling. US colleges have an August to December season, with Seton Hall College and the University of Alabama refusing to release two England players for international duty in October 1999. Doubtless, when given the choice between a gentler climate and a chance to experience life abroad for three or four years, not all young female players would plump to stay in England, but at least the Loughborough scheme will now provide some players with an option.

Interviews I carried out with a number of England players show there are mixed feelings among them towards playing abroad, an option which now poses a real threat to the FA's development programme at the elite level. Once players have completed US scholarships, some of these elite England internationals may be signed up by the new Women's United Soccer Association (WUSA) the US professional league, as was the case recently with England forward Kelly Smith. England's most capped outfield player, male or female, Gill Coulthard, says of the prospects of playing overseas: 'I had the opportunity. If there's one regret I have, that would be it,' (in interview). Rachel Yankey, one of a crop of promising younger England players, who has since signed professional terms with Fulham Ladies, was enthusiastic about the chance to play in the USA, having already coached there, saying: 'Yes, I think I would; yeah, definitely, to get the experience' (in interview).

However, for some England players, remaining in England is important, both personally and for the sport. Ex-international and current national coach, Hope Powell, recalls: 'I was asked to play abroad, but I'm a bit of a 'home' person; family and friends are more important' (in interview). These thoughts are shared by Sue Smith, who has been pursued by a number of US colleges, but has chosen, instead, to study at Edge Hill College in Liverpool, so that she can still play for her club, Tranmere Rovers. Senior England international, Becky Easton, fears that an exodus of young players to overseas semi-professional and professional leagues will have a serious negative impact on the development of the female game here: 'I think that's good [playing abroad] for the individual, but not good for England if all of our best young players go' (in interview). The advent of a professional league for women in England by 2003 may tempt some female players who would have gone to play

professional football in the USA, to remain in England. However, the proposed professional league in England will face stiff competition for elite England female player's signatures from WUSA.

Players involved in *World Class Potential* funded initiatives have already been identified as elite athletes who may well play for England Under 16s and England U18s. They take part in national player courses and development squads and, for those not yet quite at the national elite level, there are regional player courses and development squads. The peak of the pyramid is *World Class Performance*, for those players who graduate from *Potential* and go on to become England senior internationals.

Coaching and Refereeing for Females

Whilst much of the FA's work concentrates on mass player participation and player talent identification, the FA is also keen to train and retain female coaches. Some male coaches currently involved in the women's game are men who have not made the grade in the male game and who have migrated to the less prestigious female version, coaches described, perhaps unkindly, as 'real dross' by ex-WFA Chair and ex-UEFA Women's Committee member Patricia Gregory (in interview). The FA is keen to retain the services of women when they stop playing, channelling them into coaching, refereeing or administration in order to increase the female presence in both the female *and* male games, with the long term aim being to see more females in senior positions within the sport.

Currently, there are 60 females on the FA's Coach Mentoring Scheme, which pairs rising female coaches with more experienced male and female colleagues. Whereas in 1997 there were only two female A License coaches in England, there are now five, with more coming through the scheme. The FA does not keep figures for *male* A licence holders, saying that there are 'simply so many', that the monitoring of their number is not an issue (private communication)! In January 2001, the FA, along with the Rugby Football Union for Women, the English Cricket Board and the Rugby League Policy Board, signed up to the *Women Into High Performance Coaching*

programme, run by the National Coaching Foundation, to try to further increase the number of highly qualified female coaches in football.

At lower levels, there are many local FA coaching courses, some of which are female only, the FA hoping that providing a female only space will encourage more women to become coaches. In 1993, the FA inherited 3,622 female coaches from the WFA. The governing body acknowledges that women as coaches and administrators are still underrepresented within the male *and* female games (FA briefing, January 2001) yet the FA does not actually *know* the number of females who are qualified at any coaching level in England, apart from at the A licence level (private communication).

The FA is also keen to increase the number of female *referees* officiating in both the female and male games, although referee recruitment and training is carried out by County FAs, rather than via a national co-ordinated initiative. Currently, there are 300 female referees, a slight increase on the number for the 1999/2000 season (www.the-fa.org). The FA is unsure how many active *male* referees there are in England, partly because the turn-over rate of referees is so high and because registration would be at County, rather than national, level (private communication).

Perhaps the best known female referee in England is Wendy Toms, who along with Janie Frampton and Amy Reayner, became the first three female officials to take charge of a game at the Football Conference level (one level below the Football League) in September 1999, and Toms is also the only woman to have officiated at a major English professional final, the Worthington Cup Final, at Wembley in February 2000. In the build up to the Final, Toms commented: 'I sincerely hope that other women watch this game and think "I can do that", so that more consider becoming referees in the future' (*Press Association* February 2, 2000). She is keen, however, to play down her sex in terms of her refereeing ambitions and she was not helped to her current position by any FA women's development programme. Despite generally positive coverage in the national media of the decision to select Toms to run the line at the Final, she did face opposition from some professionals involved in the sport. For example, ex-player and ex-FA Premier League manager, Joe Royle, is a resolute opponent of females officiating at these levels in the men's game;

‘I’m not sexist but I don’t approve of female officials in professional football. How can they make accurate decisions if they have never been tackled from behind by a 14st centre-half, elbowed in the ribs or even caught offside? Yet we are now going to have one officiating at the Worthington Cup Final. I am going to be accused of being sexist but too many people are trying to be politically correct and no one is prepared to voice the other opinion’ (February 12, 2000: Manchester City v Norwich City FC, *match day programme*).

Royle’s views, a mixture of levelling accusations at the FA of ‘political correctness gone mad,’ and of claiming that only those who have competed in the male game should be allowed to play a part in elite men’s football as an official, thus ruling out many current *male* referees, may be widely shared within the male professional game, an issue we will return to shortly.

Flaws in the System and Forms of Resistance

It must be acknowledged that the FA’s general approach, in terms of generating opportunities for female players, has produced a structure which has a strong emphasis on recruiting players into the game as young *girls* (Fig. 5.4). However, because of the growth in the number of female teams, whether based around work, men’s clubs, or college and university teams, most females who are not able to access the model at the ground floor because of their age, still have the opportunity to begin playing the game after leaving school.

There are, of course, flaws in the development system, some of which are being addressed by the FA, and these will be examined more closely when we look at the proposal to launch a professional women’s league in England in 2003. For instance, whilst the *BT Tops* football programme attracts take-up on a par with other sports, outside of the school setting, *in* schools, its take-up rate is only 50% that of other sports (FA Roadshow, Leicester City FC, April 2000). Feedback from teachers has led the FA to change the equipment being used as part of *BT Tops*, both for the girls playing football, and in terms of the information provided to teachers who, if they are not football specialists, often feel unable to lead sessions designed to encourage girls to play the sport.

In terms of the *league* structures for adult female players today, the pyramid structure remains central. The country's top ten female clubs play in the Women's Premier National Division, with two further blocks of 10 teams below this, divided into the Division North and Division South. Below this level, there are four combination leagues organised along geographical lines and below these, 10 regional leagues, with local and county leagues also operating, below this level; there is also a reserve team league. A new regional layer in the development pyramid means that the gap in class between the elite and lower teams will be narrowed.

Raising the profile of the female game is seen by the FA as key to the recruitment of players. Profile raising is also important in introducing the female game to a wider *audience*, especially with the advent of the professional league. The FA's Public Affairs Department has drafted a Communications Strategy for the women's game. This strategy is integral to the development of the game, and the implementation of the strategy relies on the work of the FA as a *whole*, not just its media arm. The strategy will be examined more closely in Chapter Seven, when we look at the media and the female game.

The attitude of male professionals, such as Joe Royle, highlighted earlier, is matched in some quarters by a 'culture of denial' about the extent to which practices of exclusion and discrimination still operate routinely in FA structures. FA coach Colin Murphy, for example, telephoned a BBC discussion show focusing on the case of Vanessa Hardwick (*BBC Radio* 5 September 3 1999). Hardwick had been found by an industrial tribunal to have been the victim of sexual discrimination on a coaching course run by the FA. Murphy claimed 'hand on heart' that Hardwick had *not* been a victim of discrimination. Although Murphy was not rebuked, the FA formally censured Royle for his comments, and the Hardwick case partly motivated the FA to organise equal opportunities training for *all* of its employees, starting with its most senior officers. The first course was delivered by Sport England at Loughborough University on December 1, 1999.

However, the sensitivities of the FA around issues of potential discrimination and anti-sexist training are clear. When I asked if I could attend the Loughborough session, as an observer, in order to see the issues being covered by the trainers, I was

told that I would not be permitted to attend as the course was for FA employees only. I was also informed that I would not be able even to look at the training pack. Despite the good relationship we had with the FA, this was not the first time that some officers had felt discomfort about this research. The Technical Co-ordinator, for example, did not wish to be interviewed, and he refused to allow access to other workers I wished to speak with. The reason he offered, via his PA, was that he was 'afraid they [FA employees] might be off-message' in their views of what was happening within, and planned for, the female game (personal communication, February 4, 1999).

When I was writing to and telephoning members of the Women's Committee to arrange interviews, I was politely informed, via e mail (October 11, 1999) that if I wished to contact an FA Committee member, I should approach the FA first, in writing. The FA would then explain the purpose of my research to the Committee member and forward my request to them. This gatekeeping function (Shoemaker 1991:1) demonstrates that, whilst many within the FA organisation were apparently happy to support research, *managing* information around the activities of the FA and its training and policy strategies for the female game had a high priority.

Of her work to promote the female game *within* the governing body, FA Public Affairs Officer, Katherine Knight, argues that resistance towards the female game is less related to gender than it is to generally heavy workloads:

'It's not a battle *every* day. I don't think that if people seem unwilling it's because they have an objection to women's football, it is just because it's yet another piece of work for them to cope with. People are professional and they know that, no matter what their own personal view on a topic, they have to do it' (in interview).

Knight claims that any failure to initiate and complete work relating to football for females has more to do with *general* structural inadequacies within the FA than resistance to carrying out tasks because they are related to women's football *per se*, although quite why her colleagues identify women's football as an area which may be neglected when the organisation is put under pressure (as was instanced during my

work placement with the FA, which is detailed in Chapter Seven) seems to remain unquestioned here.

Another example of problems gaining access to the *internal* workings of the FA can be seen with Women's Committee's accession of my request to sit in on one of its meetings. The process of negotiating this 'privilege' left one in no doubt as to the persistence of distrust of outsiders and a lack of transparency in FA structures, as well as the real presence of insularity within some sections of the organisation. There were 12 people present at the meeting, excluding myself. These included the female National Co-ordinator and her female administrator, and the female national coach, who was there in order to outline her programme for the coming season. There were two female Committee members present, with the other seven members being men, including the Chair and Vice Chair. The members of Women's Committee are either members of County FAs, or members of the Women's Football Alliance, which represents women's leagues. Sport England, as a major source of funding for the female game and with a history of assisting the development of the sport, was also represented. I was invited to sit in on the meeting, but I was made to wait in a hotel lobby whilst the Committee discussed whether my presence was acceptable to all members, even though FA permission had already been given for my attendance some days before the meeting.

On being seated, it was made clear that what was said at the meeting, in terms of policy discussions, must, very reasonably, remain within the room. The Chair felt it particularly important to stress this need for confidentiality. Yet, after initial discomfort at my presence, the Committee members seemed able to speak freely. Around one-third made occasional comments, with another third making no vocal contribution at all. The Chair and Vice Chair were the most vocal of all Committee members. Most interesting were their interactions with one of the two female Committee members, with the two most senior members of Committee seemingly dismissing the input of this experienced female advocate of the women's game. When she spoke, the two men made no eye contact with her. When she made what I took to be valid points about the inconsistency of the Committee Chair's attitude to sponsors, for example, her points were openly dismissed and on occasions, she was talked over by the Chair.

Signs of insularity, arrogance and stereotyped views of other nations were also discernible at the meeting. There was derision amongst some of the more long-serving male members of the Committee, for example, at the idea, from the Netherlands, that mixed football should be encouraged. The Netherlands' supposedly liberal views on sexuality and soft drugs were mentioned and cited as good and indicative reasons for *not* giving credence to Dutch suggestions with regard to the development of football for females. The FA of Ireland was also formally thanked for its hosting of a recent women's tournament, but it was clear from the tone of the discussion that there was some surprise in FA ranks that such a small Association had managed to do such a good job! The England team's female doctor was also referred to as 'the lovely doctor,' in a rather lascivious manner by a male Committee member and other men in the room grinned at this description, apparently identifying with his tone (research notes). It would seem that the Sport England delivered equal opportunities and anti-sexist training might usefully be offered to FA Committee members, as well as to FA staff.

Of his connection with the female sport, the Women's Committee Chair, Ray Kiddell, says that members of Women's Committee have been won over to the female game.

'I became a club secretary at 23. This was about 1960. I was the youngest there by quite some way. So I ended up being the youngest ever member of FA Council in March 1980. As far as women's football was concerned, I was not an enthusiast, I really didn't have an opinion, but when UEFA decided that the FA had to take control, I was made Chair of the working party. Now, from having a neutral view of it, my view has changed radically and I believe women's football has real potential and is really challenging. It's a game that can be played for its own sake, in some ways it can be more challenging technically than the men's game, although relatively slow. You haven't got the physique' (Kiddell in interview)

Here, we can see a number of things. Firstly, the *compulsion* from UEFA and the rather 'forced' transformation of views on the female game in England. Secondly, the apparent enthusiasm with which the female game has now been taken up by some inside the FA. Thirdly, the continuing problems of the comparisons which are still made between the male and female games. The FA seems to have work to do to

disabuse not *just* the media and fans that comparison between the male and female games is helpful and legitimate, but some of its own Committee members, too .

Kiddell is also a member of UEFA Women's Committee, but says of his role there that: 'UEFA is a very undemocratic place. You are presented with stuff at meetings and it's already done' (in interview) a point which echoes the thoughts of Patricia Gregory, the ex-WFA Chair, who spent 14 years on UEFA Women's Committee. The FA Women's Committee has some awareness of international developments in the female game, something which it did not have when the FA took over the running of the game in the early 1990s. However, as demonstrated by my attendance at Women's Committee in 1999, the approaches of other countries to the female game are not always valued. Kiddell, again:

'I wouldn't say that everything that Sweden or Norway do would be suited to us. For example, mixed football [...]. If you allow girls to play boys, all your better girl players will do that. I understand that in Norway, the geography means that you may only have five girls in a town and the next town is 200 miles away, so they have mixed play. But, how they can say that there aren't issues about child protection with mixed football, I don't know! [...] A European club competition we support, but it's a matter of resources. Yes, maybe Arsenal could do it, but could Croydon and should we support them and pay thousands of pounds?' (in interview).

Development Issues

Another key player within the FA is the former Women's National Football Co-ordinator, now Head of National Football Development, Kelly Simmons. Simmons's background is in general sports development with experience of playing and coaching football, rather than in existing FA networks, which often exclude women, because of their traditionally 'word-of-mouth' recruitment methods. Simmons shows how approaches to the female game inside the FA have changed in the last decade. She also highlights how provision and support for the women's game at the national level very much depends upon signs of *local* activity. The FA, during its early stewardship of the female game, made few resources available to those areas which, arguably, needed most in terms of aiding development:

‘I took the job [Regional Development Officer] in December ‘91 and then it was very much about encouraging women onto the existing courses, trying to set up girls Soccer Star courses. There were some excellent local authorities. I tended to pick off a few good counties and a few good people and very much focus my work on them, working on positions of strength, rather than positions of weakness’ (ibid).

Paul Barber, the FA’s Director of Marketing, has recently commissioned a national audit of football provision. He hopes that this documenting of facilities *and* lack of facilities across all counties will mean that better organised County FAs will no longer simply be able to ‘shout louder’ than less well organised and resourced County FAs, gaining more resources still. Barber identifies the FA’s unsystematic targeting of resources as a practice which much stop: ‘We have to be disciplined’(in interview).

The FA appointment of a Women’s Co-ordinator in 1993 was a key moment for Simmons, providing further impetus and strategic direction for the female game *inside* the FA:

‘When Helen [Jevons] got the job [as Women’s Co-ordinator] I think that our jobs [Regional Development Officers] dramatically changed, because Helen was the one who pushed the strategy through, to the stage where we actually had money to develop leagues and develop clubs and resource materials. We just became more enthusiastic about the job and thought that we could actually get somewhere with it; we could see where it fitted’ (in interview).

Recognising the role of other agencies, Simmons is well aware of the existing problems regarding the lack of female involvement in the routine activities of professional men’s clubs. Football in the Community schemes would seem to be a useful place to start promoting greater female involvement and participation in the game:

‘This lack of female staff is inherent in the way the schemes are run [the PFA is the professional footballers trade union and recruits from a pool of ex-players]. Roger [Reade, of the PFA] definitely wants more women as Community Officers; it’s how he funds it. It was said, not by him, at a meeting, that they hoped to have a female officer within every club’ (in interview).

Certainly, our club and player surveys, in Chapter Six, demonstrate that Football in the Community is *not* playing as prominent a role as it might be expected to in the development of the female game. Although there are, and have been, female officers at a small number of professional clubs, involved in community work, these post are mainly funded via local urban regeneration initiatives, rather than directly via the national Football in the Community initiative.

Simmons goes on to point to the ‘community’ aspects of men’s clubs as being of real importance in developing not just *playing* opportunities for females, but coaching ones, too:

‘Clubs, like the Millwalls of this world, where you have got a club who’ve got the facilities, the coaches, the human resources to develop things like the girl’s Centres of Excellence, and hopefully through the Centres and through those links with the women’s clubs, we can find some Full Badge coaches, like Jim Hicks [Millwall Women’s manager and coach at their Centre of Excellence] and women coaches can be alongside men at the Centres of Excellence and can learn from working on a weekly basis from the much more experienced coaches’ (in interview).

Dissenting Voices: The FA - A Force for Good or Ill?

Of course, change is rarely linear or uncontested and there has been resistance to FA proposals to develop the female game, both from those still generally opposed to female play, as well as from proselytisers of the female game who feel that the FA’s plans are not as ambitious as they might be. Experienced figures involved in the female game have consistently voiced concerns to me throughout this research about changes since the FA takeover. Often, such critics do not wish to be publicly identified, as they fear that their criticisms might hamper the advancement or continuation of their ‘careers’ in the female game.

The absence of strong advocates for the female game with an obviously feminist sensibility, either male or female, in senior administrative and coaching roles at the FA, has been cited as a problem within the English female game (Espelund, 1998). In Norway, Karen Espelund is General Secretary of the Norwegian FA and three in eight administrators throughout the Norwegian FA are female and, therefore, in a position

to help shape and drive through policy. In the USA, key men, such as former national coaches Anson Dorrance and Tony Di Cicco, as well as women, such as current national coach April Heinrichs and 1999 Women's World Cup Chair, Donna de Varona, have also helped to give the game momentum, both at the grassroots and senior administrative level. In England, however, a driving presence, such as is provided by Espelund in Norway, seems largely absent. The FA's Technical Department was labelled as being run by 'control freaks' (anon. 1999) by two voices within the women's game, expressing their frustration at the governing body's lack of responsiveness to their suggestions on development issues.

The FA Women's Committee now only has one female member, Sue Hough, the wife of the Committee's Vice Chair, Julie Hemsley having been voted off the Committee in 2000. Hemsley was one of the few links to the pre-FA period of development of female football and, as someone who is still involved in the game at County FA level, she provided a useful link between the grassroots and executive and between what is, to the FA at least, a somewhat lost history of the female game, and current development plans. What has also been demonstrated, historically, is the lack of any real alliance between sporting females and feminism, with Hargreaves arguing that 'sportswomen on the whole have not been the most enthusiastic feminists' (1990:299). This is something which has been evidenced in interviews with some women involved in the game. Julie Hemsley, an ex-FA Council member, emphasises both this point, about an aversion to feminism and being perceived as a feminist, *and* what some see as the FA hierarchy's unwillingness to listen to suggestions from those with grassroots involvement in the female game:

'I think what narked me in the beginning was that they [Women's Committee] would not take any notice of people involved in the women's game. It had to be done in a specific way [...] I used to fight [...] there are too many feminists in the women's game and it doesn't do us any good at all. Politically, just by *being* there I've turned things and attitudes around, rather than just saying, "well you *should* be doing this." Straight away, you get people's backs up' (Hemsley in interview)

Here, Hemsley demonstrates what one author calls the 'personal project of playing the system' (Pink 1997:201) of not wishing to antagonise those in positions of power for

fear of being labelled a ‘troublemaker’. This is a theme which also operates in the media, as we shall see in Chapter Seven, with one female football journalist keen to distance herself from suggestions that she might be a feminist:

‘I mean I’m not a feminist at all; I’m quite reticent and have learned to be the opposite to a certain extent, but if I say something that seems obvious to me, but which someone else might perceive as vaguely feminist, then they are going to have to take it out’ [of her articles in the *Times*] (Jen O’Neill, in interview).

The FA’s own Coaches Association (FACA) has also been criticised, for example, by another female journalist, a national writer on the women’s game:

‘I went to the FACA conference and that arsehole XX XX [ex-professional player and manager] was there and I know he’s old but at the beginning people referred to it [the women’s game] as ‘tottie footie’ and that was actually on someone’s floppy disk being used to do the conference write up!’ (Simpson, J., in interview).

When I attended the FACA conference in 2000, a number of delegates criticised the composition of the FA’s Women’s Committee, feeling that the Committee lacked practitioners and had some members who were ambivalent, at best, towards the female game. Women’s Committee has also been criticised by coaches and administrators for its perceived failure to listen and respond to views from ‘grassroots’ workers who feel that glitches in the national development plan are being ignored, along with their suggestions to rectify such flaws. There are women involved in the game who have experience of working with County FAs, who point to inconsistencies in the way football for females is promoted at the local level, with, for instance, Derbyshire being reported to be much less responsive to moves to develop the female game than neighbouring Sheffield and Hallam County Association (anon. in interview). Such a lack of uniformity in the local implementation of development strategies in the female game is frustrating for practitioners and volunteers, and demonstrates that the FA is still unwilling or unable to bring its full influence to bear at the *local* level.

This failure to respond to issues raised at the grassroots level is, suggests one long-time servant of the female game, due to a ‘culture of comfort’ within the FA. This

view posits that the FA took over the running of the women's game in England because they *had* to, due to the WFA's embarrassing spiral towards collapse, pressure from FIFA and UEFA, and because the FA wanted to *control* the game, rather than allowing it to flourish, and develop at a pace which they could not dictate. Such opponents bemoan the lack of internal challenges to FA plans and an unwillingness to listen to critics outside of the immediate FA set-up. Going further, they posit that the FA recruits people who are sound 'grassroots' developers, but who, at a policy level, do not contest, or do not have the political wherewithal to build on, existing FA plans; people who will simply tow the 'party line' on the development of the female game.

There is also a feeling amongst some senior grassroots activists that, as football for females is mostly planned and implemented by men experienced in the professional game, mistakes made in the development of the male game will be replicated in the female equivalent. For instance, whilst Centres of Excellence (Female) must have an FA 'A' Licensed coach, there is no such minimum qualification for a Women's Premier League manager, just as there is no requirement for a *men's* professional team to be managed by an A licence coach. This is one of the factors which may help to explain why, almost a decade after the establishment of a National League and eight years after the FA's takeover of the female game, there is still only a small cadre of elite teams and that, even amongst these, heavy defeats for some teams are not unusual. Whilst the base of the FA pyramid for female play may be broadening, at the elite club level, there seems to be little increase in terms of the number of highly skilled and fit players. Because of the lack of elite female coaches, females currently being fast tracked towards 'A' Licences are being mentored by men; English men's coaching of female and male players, currently, is not widely regarded as being near the apex of international coaching standards.

Fast tracking and mentoring schemes also mean that some long serving coaches, male and female, in the women's game feel overlooked by the FA, with surprise expressed from many quarters that coaches of the pedigree of Jim Hicks, who helped establish a female centre of excellence at Millwall which was used as a blueprint by the FA for its Centres of Excellence (Female) were passed over and an inexperienced coach installed at the head of the national team. This is not a personal slight on the incumbent of that post, who is well respected within the game, but is seen by some,

suspicious of what they see as the FA's urge to *control* the game, as further evidence that the governing body does not wish to appoint practitioners who might challenge 'the FA way.'

A Professional Women's League by 2003?

The most radical announcement made by the FA since its takeover of the female game is the proposal to establish a female professional league, starting in 2003. This is part of the FA's overall strategy document (2000) and has been portrayed as:

'A dramatic confirmation that the male-dominated FA has finally abandoned the last traces of its historic hostility to women playing a man's game [...] a vital part of its campaign to ditch its "old farts" image' (*Observer*, 19 March 2000).

The PFA have said that it will take female professional players as members, and Fulham are the first club to embrace the idea of female professionalism, with 16 full-time female professionals and 20 semi-professional players on their books. Fulham FC's Chair, businessman Mohamed Al Fayed, says he does not see his investment in the women's game as a risk, but rather as a model for larger clubs to follow: 'I want to set the example to rich clubs like Manchester United' (*Times*, 21 April 2000). The FA seems to share this belief, and sees the introduction of professionalism to the women's game as a move which will spur *men's* professional clubs to invest in the female game and increase awareness of it (www.on-the-ball.com). However, there are few signs, as yet, that the rest of the men's professional game will necessarily follow Fulham's lead. Indeed, most top women's clubs which do have connections with professional men's clubs continue to play only at lower level venues, not at their host club's home ground. Most men's professional clubs also do little to support, financially or in kind, or promote, their female teams. Will this really change when a handful of women are paid to play?

The FA have established a Professional League Project Team, made up of representatives from women's football, FA Women's Committee, the FA men's Premier League, the PFA and the Department of Media, Culture and Sport. The question of who *represents* women's football is one which was raised by ex-WFA

Chair, Patricia Gregory, who said of a recent Women's Football Alliance AGM: 'It saddens me that we [a colleague from the West Midlands League] were the only women there' (in interview). She complained bitterly about her replacement by a male, after 14 years of serving with UEFA, and also feels that, domestically, many of the men currently involved at the highest levels of administration of the female game collude to exclude females from the upper echelons of administration.

The Project Team commissioned research to investigate potential league formats, definitions of professionalism, and potential barriers to the success of the new league. The research drew on a series of focus groups made up of coaches, older elite players and young players. Groups were also set up to canvas fans and potential fans of the women's game, to investigate its market potential, and to listen to parents whose children play football.

The principle findings of the research were that the long term infrastructure of the female game must be secure and equitable from the grassroots up. The research also concluded that professionalism is inevitable and it means 'having a profession, such as in teaching, which includes a responsibility to use one's role as a footballer in the community, as opposed to for out-and-out commercial gain'. In terms of structure, the research advises that the professional league should be made up of 8-12 teams, and should run from August to May, and that the aims of the new league must be formulated and clear. Women's matches must be 'events,' more than just a 90 minute match. Consultation with the women's game was identified as vital to the success of the project, and the research also claims that there is definite supporter interest in the proposed professional league. The women's game, it concludes, has unique selling points, such as accessibility, skill and a family orientation (TW Research, 2000).

The outcomes of this research are vague, to say the least, and seem not to reflect some of the concerns raised by critics. Why professionalism is *inevitable* must, surely, be questioned. The reasons the research gives for this supposed 'inevitability' is a need to *control* the game's growth, so as to prevent imbalance, with Fulham Ladies' early professional development cited as a cause for concern. The FA's Paul Barber, who leads the Project Team, also talks of the need to, 'create artificial momentum' (in interview) around the female game and the potential success of a professional female

league, in order to attract increased sponsorship. Quite why the growth of the female game could not be sustained, or accelerated, within an amateur format did not seem to be discussed by the Project Team.

It is interesting here to note the call for a 'gentle' professionalism in women's football. The Project Team is keen not to opt for the more aggressive commercialism prevalent at the elite level of the men's professional game, which arguably has led to the neglect of development structures. Whilst this may be viewed as a laudable attempt to avoid some of the problems currently being experienced by the men's professional game, it could equally be viewed as a rather timid approach to professionalisation. The suggestion here seems to be that females have a 'duty' to their communities which does not seem to exist for *male* athletes. The attempt here, by the football Establishment, is to link female professionalism with responsibility, demonstrating a hackneyed view of women as being bound by a duty to serve others, rather than being able to put their own earning potential and success first.

The issue for the female game here is whether to use the men's professional game as a yardstick in order to 'prove' the equivalency of merit of the female game, or to forge a quite different identity for the women's professional game, as Willis suggests, to make the women's game a *female* version of the sport, identifying, as he does, comparison with the male game as an admission of weakness (1982:119). Hargreaves (1994:245-255) also addresses this issue of mimicking male sport, seeing it as an issue with relevance from the administration of sports for females, through to the playing and promoting of female sport.

The FA's Director of Marketing, Paul Barber says that the Association will market the female game:

'As a distinct brand [...] it should not be seen as an add-on to the male game [...]. I don't like to see women's games played before or after professional men's fixtures. It invites comparisons and comparison is the only major threat to the development of the [female] professional league' (in interview).

Whilst Barber's *commercial* approach towards the female game is one based on its own merits, *separate* from the male professional equivalent, there would seem to be some conflict within the FA about how to develop the female game. Steve Parkin, the Head of the National Game, recently moved towards *integration*, in terms of football *development*, by scrapping the five posts of Regional Directors for Girls and Women's football and recruiting, instead, 10 generic Regional Football Development Managers. Parkin, like Barber, is from a commercial background, and he demonstrates how entrenched the views about 'naturalness' and gender remain at the FA, even amongst its newer recruits. His view is that: 'it is natural for boys and girls to play separately, once they reach a certain age' (in interview). Parkin stoically defends the volunteers who run County Associations and who still populate FA Council: 'It's unfair to refer to them as "blazers"' he argues, refuting the claims I put to him from some at the grassroots of the female game that *national* FA policy around the female game does not always translate into support for the women's game *locally*. So it would seem that the FA's aim is for the women's game to retain an amateur *ethos* within the *structure* of a new professionalism, because this is seen as a 'purer' version of a now tainted male sport, and because those who oversee the development of the women's game wish it to remain viewed as a different and, perhaps, 'lesser' version of the 'true' sport, which is, of course, a male one.

Whilst, as we have seen, the concept of professionalism and the adoption of 'professional' attitudes at the apex of the female game, have been welcomed by some, others are less convinced of the viability of a professional league, and are worried about its implications for less well organised clubs. Already, Arsenal, one of the strongest teams in the country, have lost England international, Rachael Yankey, to professional Fulham. The likelihood is that there will be a drain of players to the new professional clubs. Croydon have recently accepted support from, and taken the name of, men's FA Premier League club, Charlton Athletic, in order to benefit from that Club's resources. Croydon see a merger with Charlton as a way of surviving and developing in the upcoming professional era. Acrimonious wrangles between players and club officers, however, meant that Charlton's registration was delayed at the start of the 2000/2001 season and several of the Clubs fixtures had to be postponed. The ambition to be in a position to prosper in the professional era caused rifts between

those who had supported the team in the Croydon past, and those who saw merger as the only way forward in the new era.

There are still many unanswered questions about the professional era. For instance, just how is the proposed league to be funded? The FA have stated that money from their current female football budget will not be diverted to fund the league, so external funding must be attracted. Paul Barber says: 'The FA needs partners to reach people; the kind of companies who have eight million female customers per week, more women than the FA could ever hope to reach' (in interview). He responds to critics of the women's professional league, who claim most clubs will simply not be able to afford to offer players contracts, by saying:

'Women's clubs will be able to put together their own business plans, helped by the fact that the *league* already has a major sponsor, and they will also have to cut their cloth accordingly [...] Elite men's football still relies on local businesses to sponsor kit, for example' (in interview).

Having the media 'on side' and having a solid fan-base for the proposed professional league will be vital, and here are two further potential stumbling blocks to success. Some of the traditional foes of the female game are already mobilising. The *Times* football writer Brian Glanville argued that the plan for a professional league is: 'A feeble and misguided gesture towards political correctness [...] an enormous waste of money [...]. Women's football is like watching paint dry' (*BBC Radio 5*, 20 March 2000). In terms of sponsorship and television rights, the women's game has been packaged by the FA with the men's game, so that sponsors and BSkyB have 'bought' women's elite football as part of the deal which brings BSkyB lucrative ownership of the rights to cover the most elite of men's football in England. However, BSkyB have not always fully exploited their broadcast rights to the women's game, and currently TV is awash with coverage of the men's game. Is there space, and an audience, for women's football on television?

A 'family audience' has been identified as the potential fan-base for the proposed new league, although it has been made clear in the FA research that gate receipts are *not* viewed as a source of income to support the league (TW Research, 2000). In terms of

attracting more fans to the female game, also important for providing atmosphere at televised matches, Yal Bekar, from *On The Ball*, the female football magazine, (now *She Kicks*) argues that poor crowds could be as big an obstacle to the new league as ingrained male cynicism. Crowds at women's games are still small, 100 supporters constitutes a good crowd at most elite league games in England, even though crowds of around 2000 are not unheard of at clashes between teams such as Doncaster and Arsenal. What must also be questioned here is the depth of talent within the women's game in England and the ability of the sport to attract and hold an audience at grounds, and on TV. For example, despite eight years of operation, the National Women's Premier League still delivers unacceptably wide margins of victory, and in the 2000/2001 season, Liverpool were relegated from the top level without earning a single point. The Head of the FA Professional Women's League Project Team claims that the standard of competition in the women's game is not a significant factor in its sale to sponsors; it is the *ethos* of the women's game which sponsors will buy into (Barber, in interview). But will potential spectators buy into an ethos?

The FA's Paul Barber says that there is a need for those at the grassroots of the female game to trust the FA's plans around the professional league, as the league will be used as a lever to generate income for the sport, which will filter down to the lower levels. Some feel that the proposed league is something of a 'knee jerk' reaction to the introduction of a professional league in the USA. This mimicking of development overseas is regarded by some as ironic, when so many other examples of good practice from the USA are ignored by the FA. There is acknowledgment from these dissenting voices that pre-1993, the WFA's development of the game was not ideal, but that this was mainly due to a lack of financial resources, rather than a lack of knowledge and commitment. Now, dissenters feel that, whilst the female game is far better *resourced* than ever before, the FA approach is passionless and unresponsive to local needs.

Conclusion

The professional league in England is still two seasons away and can, perhaps, learn something about likely pitfalls from the USA's professional women's league. What we *have* seen over the past decade, however, is an increased involvement and

investment in all aspects of the female game by the FA. Despite internal tensions and external fears, many new structures have been put in place and further expansion of the game is planned. In terms of sport generally, the past decade has seen females competing in a wider range of traditionally 'masculine' sports, including football, and doing so from junior level upwards. This has happened against a backdrop of, for many females, expanded choices in terms of education and career, and a relative loosening of the noose of expectation where 'career,' for many young women, had previously meant domestic service.

However, the development approach in female football under the FA, it is argued by critics, is too highly regulated; a top down approach, and one which is controlled and managed by a duopoly of a residual core of long serving administrators, who have piloted the men's game over many years, and a new generation of commercially astute young managers and image formers. The women's game seems torn between seeking acceptance by aping the male game and being a genuinely open participatory sport.

Chapter Six

Active Supporters, Players and Administrators of Football for Females in England

This chapter examines the demographics and views of active supporters of the female game in England, including fans, players and club secretaries. This chapter will provide an insight into, amongst other things, the views of key personnel in the female game on the role of the FA in the running of the sport, on local playing and coaching opportunities, and on whether elite women's football has any real potential as a spectator sport, as well as on current media coverage of the game.

A. Active Spectators of the Women's Game

Extensive work has been carried out by the SNCCFR at the University of Leicester on profiles of supporters at men's professional football clubs in England (Williams 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1999a, 1999b). The Centre has also carried out a small amount of more focussed work on female fans at men's football (Woodhouse 1991) but there has been no detailed work looking at spectatorship at women's football, either nationally or internationally. In order to add knowledge in this area, in 1998, we carried out questionnaire surveys of fans at three England women's international football matches

As those attending the games spanned a number of age ranges, and as the games were held in three different parts of the country, we analysed the resulting data to see if there were any significant variations in the views of our respondents by age and venue. The ranges used for age analysis were:

Age group 15-20 years	(140 respondents)
Age group 21-30 years	(247 respondents)
Age group 31-40 years	(392 respondents)
Age group 41-50 years	(216 respondents)
Age group 51 + years	(91 respondents)

As there has been no academic work carried out yet on fans at England *men's* games, comparisons will not be made between fans at men's and women's matches. The

small sample collected here, and the specificity of international match crowds, would also make direct comparisons with supporters at *men's club* football matches less than helpful.

Both anecdotal and documentary evidence suggests that attendance at women's league and international fixtures in some other countries is higher than in England. Although there are some female fixtures, local derbies around London and on Merseyside, which attract larger crowds, most elite female club fixtures in England attract little more than a hundred fans. In Italy and Scandinavia, international women's fixtures can attract in the region of 10,000 spectators. The record for a women's international played in England was broken after our own surveys were carried out, a crowd of 7102 watching England play the Ukraine at Leyton Orient's Brisbane Road on November 28 2000 (*FA Bulletin* December 3 2000).

The fixture details for our three match surveys were as follows:

- Millwall FC, The New Den (8 March 1998, 2pm) v Germany (World Cup qualifier)
- West Bromwich Albion FC, The Hawthorns (24 April 1998, 7.30pm) v Italy (friendly)
- Oldham Athletic FC, Boundary Park (14 May 1998, 7.30pm) v Norway (World Cup qualifier)

This research on active supporters of the women's game covered venues in the South, Midlands and North, meaning that the work sampled the views of supporters from a number of counties, important, as the development of the female game in England relies heavily on regional development. Admission prices at all three grounds were either £3 or £2 for adults, with under 16s admission being free, either by previously circulated complimentary ticket or on the turnstiles.

The break-down of fan questionnaires distributed and returned in the survey is as follows:

Fig. 6.1
Supporter Questionnaire Details

Venue	Attendance	Distributed	Returned	As a % of attendance	Response %
New Den	4917	1063	489	9.9	46.0
Hawthorns	2525	682	359	14.2	52.6
Boundary Park	2380	1167	430	18.1	36.8
Total	9822	2919	1278	13.0	43.9

A response rate of almost 44% is a very reasonable return for a survey of this kind and we believe it provides us with some useful and reasonably reliable data on adult attendees of international women's football matches in England.

Although nearly all of the questionnaires were collected at the games, a handful of respondents mailed their completed questionnaires to the Centre in the week following the fixtures. The questionnaires were handed out at turnstiles, by a team of researchers, to adult fans and to older junior fans (over 14 years of age). As many tickets for these fixtures are distributed by the FA to local schools, the crowds for the three matches contained a substantial number of young spectators. Although the questionnaire was simple and designed for quick completion, we wanted to look at the profile of mainly *adult spectators* at women's matches; people who had actually paid to be there.

Potential respondents were supplied with pens, and the purpose of the survey was briefly explained to them by the researchers. Text in the match day programme and pre-match and half-time announcements also encouraged potential respondents to complete the questionnaires, which were collected at half-time by researchers who walked amongst the fans, and also at full-time by the research team, who attempted to cover all of the exits used. As an incentive for respondents to return the questionnaires, a prize was offered for one respondent per venue, selected at random. Prizes, such as England jerseys signed by members of the women's squad, and football boots, were provided by the FA and sponsors. The completed surveys were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The questionnaires for fans, players and club secretaries, were reviewed by the FA's Women's Football Co-ordinator and Public Affairs Department, in order to ensure that the questionnaire canvassed respondent's views on specific FA initiatives, as well as gathering data which would be generally useful to the FA and of research interest to us. The questionnaire design was based around closed multiple responses, or short open response options, and was presented on one double-sided A4 sheet, folded to A5.

The Research Venues

i) The New Den, South East London

The New Den, home to the men's Nationwide Division Two team Millwall FC, has a capacity of 20,146. The game we covered on March 8th 1998 had an afternoon kick off and was a World Cup qualifier against European Champions and traditional England rivals, Germany. It was the third of six qualification games for the 1999 Women's World Cup. Complimentary tickets for the game had been distributed to local schools by Millwall FC, which accounts for what seemed to be a high proportion of under 14s in the crowd, with many younger people being accompanied by paying adults. In all, 4917 people attended the fixture, a large crowd for an elite women's game in England.

Millwall FC has a strong history of community based football work with girls and boys, employing ex-England women's international, Lou Waller, as a Community Officer and having a successful National League women's team, Millwall Lionesses. South East London also has a long tradition of football for females, going back at least to the 1940s.

Turnstiles allowing access to two sides of the ground were used for this match, helping to compress the crowd and create a lively atmosphere, despite a 1-0 defeat for England. The game was played on International Women's Day and screened live by Sky Sports, attracting a TV audience of 119,000, making it the 17th most popular of the 83 sports events screened by Sky Sports that week (FA *Bulletin* March 12 1998). To indicate government commitment to the women's game, Sports Minister Tony Banks attended the fixture, as did Joan Ruddock, Minister for Women and local MP.

The weather was cold but dry and so would not have been a major deterrent to fans attending to fixture.

Although the researchers could access executive areas at this and all matches, they chose to spend the majority of their time sitting with the main body of the crowd, in order to get a feel for the atmosphere in the ground, to speak to spectators generally and to answer any questions that fans had about the research specifically. This arrangement also meant that the researchers, who wore 'hi-vi' vests, were more easily identifiable to respondents wishing to return completed questionnaires.

ii) The Hawthorns, West Bromwich

The Hawthorn's is home to Nationwide Division One club West Bromwich Albion and has a capacity of 25,396. The match we covered on April 24th 1998 was an evening kick off, a friendly against a full strength Italian team, who were runners up in the 1997 European Championship. Italy boasts a semi-professional women's league, in which a number of current and ex-England women's internationals have played. Complimentary tickets for this evening game had been distributed to local schools, which, again, accounts for the high proportion of under 14s in the crowd, with many younger people being accompanied, once more, by paying adults. 2525 spectators attended the match. Turnstiles allowing access to two sides of the ground were used at this fixture, which helped to produce an atmosphere that, whilst not as intense as the one at the New Den, was still loud enough to be heard on the approaches to the venue. England suffered a 2-1 defeat, despite having taken the lead. The weather was appalling, with a high wind lashing rain on the venue, a factor which would certainly have deterred some potential spectators, and something which may have had a detrimental effect on survey response rates.

iii) Boundary Park, Oldham

Boundary Park is home to Nationwide Division Two club Oldham Athletic and has a capacity of 13,700. The match we covered on May 14th, 1998 was a World Cup qualifier against the, then, World Champions, Norway. It was the fourth qualifying game of the campaign, with England needing a victory to have any chance of

qualifying for the final stages of World Cup 1999. 21,000 complimentary tickets for the evening game had been distributed to local schools by Oldham Athletic, which, again, accounts for the high proportion of under 14s in the crowd, with 2380 people attending the game. Many younger people were, once more, accompanied by paying adults. The low attendance shows a rather poor take-up rate amongst those given free tickets for the fixture. Turnstiles allowing access to two sides of the ground were used, with a third side of the ground prepared if needed. This arrangement helped to compress the crowd and to create a lively atmosphere. The weather for this evening fixture was fine, so would not have deterred potential spectators. Whilst the crowd was not as large as the ones at either the New Den or The Hawthorns, the volume and persistence of chanting was markedly higher than at the previous two fixtures. The area has a number of men's professional teams, and at one point, rival Manchester City and Oldham Athletic fans, sited behind the few Norwegian fans attending the game, became so vociferous in their chanting for those men's clubs that stewards deemed it necessary to stand between them. England lost the game in the final minute, again, 2-1, after taking the lead, conceding an own goal in the process.

1. Demographic Data

Fig. 6.2

The Demographics of Fans at the Matches (%)

	New Den	The Hawthorns	Boundary Park	Total
Male	44.4	42.9	48.8	45.4
Female	55.6	57.1	51.2	54.6
White	94.7	97.5	99.0	97.1
African Caribbean	3.9	2.5	0.5	2.3
Asian	1.4	0.0	0.5	0.6
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
14 years or under	8.7	11.6	15.1	11.8
15-20 years	11.7	13.6	9.1	11.5
21-30 years	24.3	19.4	15.9	19.8
31-40 years	34.5	29.9	30.5	31.7
41-50 years	13.8	20.0	19.7	17.8
51 years or over	7.0	5.5	9.4	7.4
Professional	16.5	20.1	15.3	17.3
Managerial/technical	22.6	14.6	21.1	19.4
Skilled non-manual	22.9	25.6	28.0	25.5
Skilled manual	16.1	15.6	22.2	17.9
Partly skilled manual	15.1	18.1	13.0	15.5
Unskilled	6.8	6.0	0.4	4.4
Student	20.3	23.4	21.9	22.0
Employed	68.7	64.3	65.8	66.6
Not employed	7.2	5.8	5.2	6.4
Retired	3.8	3.9	7.1	5.0

We can see from the above data that the crowds at the matches were predominantly white. The majority of respondents are between 21 and 40 years of age and are white-collar middle-class, although questionnaires do have a built-in bias towards completion by middle-class respondents. The age and social class of many of the spectators, as well as the fact that many of those attending were male, means this is an attractive audience for potential sponsors, who would welcome the disposable income of such a fan-base. The low number of fans from the ethnic minorities attending the games is something which will be discussed in more detail when we look at those females who *play* the game, later in the chapter.

2. Active Support for the Female Game

Fig. 6.3

How many women's matches have you attended this season? (%)

	New Den	Hawthorns	Boundary Park
More than ten	22.9	33.2	19.9
5-10	3.6	3.4	3.8
3-5	5.9	4.2	6.3
1-2	26.3	21.1	27.5
None	41.3	38.1	42.5

Fans at The Hawthorns were the *most regular attendees* of women's games, despite the fact that West Bromwich Albion's female team is not an elite club, demonstrating that local success is not a prerequisite for interest in the game. The large number of respondents for whom this was their first women's game attended of the season could demonstrate the large number of fans of the women's game who are 'new' fans of the sport, or could simply be a reflection of the fact that most women who *play* the game are unable to watch matches, other than internationals, because of scheduling. The 15-20 age group was the most active section of watchers, with 33.3% attending 10 or more games that season, and only 26.1% having attended no games, an encouraging finding, perhaps, from the point of view of building a spectator base for the national squad.

Fig. 6.4

How many professional men's matches have you attended this season? (%)

	Millwall	WBA	Oldham
More than ten	36.7	43.1	42.2
5-10	9.2	11.1	8.9
3-5	12.8	14.5	12.7
1-2	17.4	17.3	13.9
None	23.9	14.0	22.3

These figures demonstrate that many attendees of these fixtures are also regular attendees at men's games, suggesting that existing fans of the male sport can provide a pool of support for the female game. 47.7% of women aged 41-50 and 48.4% of those aged 51+ went to men's professional games, making them the most frequent attendees of this form of football. Perhaps this is because they have fewer family ties,

more economic freedom or perhaps because older female fans have a greater interest in, and commitment to, the sport generally. It is also interesting to note the number of fans at women's games who *do not* actively support the men's game, highlighting the fact that the female game has a different appeal to that of the professional male game. Millwall provided the least committed fan base of the male professional game, suggesting that Millwall FC has a substantial *independent* fan base for the female game.

Fig. 6.5

How long have you been attending women's football? (%)

	Millwall	WBA	Oldham
Long time fan	15.5	18.3	14.8
A few years	23.6	24.9	18.7
Just this season	9.7	12.4	9.3
First match	51.2	35.4	57.2

For the majority of fans, this was their first women's game, demonstrating that the Clubs and FA's targeting of fans had generated some spectators who were new to the sport. As many attenders reported that they would watch more women's matches in the future, this offers encouragement for building a reliable fan-base. Fans aged 15-20 years attended most female games, with 27.1% per cent saying that they were long time fans and only 35.7% of them saying that this was their first women's game, again, an encouraging response for building a young fan-base for the sport. Again, fans at the Hawthorns demonstrated themselves to be more familiar with the female game, suggesting that good local work promoting the female game is taking place in the Midlands, despite the poor attendance at the match there.

Fig. 6.6

How often do you attend women's internationals? (%)

I don't	66.6
When I can	20.3
Local ones	7.4
All	5.7

We see that for most spectators at all of the venues, this was their first experience of the women's game at this level, so, again, it is encouraging to see that so many of them indicated they would watch women's games in the future. 49.3% of 15-20 year

olds said they did attended women's internationals, indicating that this age group is the *most involved* in elite spectatorship, encouraging in terms of the potential of this group to become long term enthusiasts of the sport. It seems likely that the youthfulness of the crowd is linked to the rise in youth play and club membership. However, the 'typical' fan at the three matches canvassed is a white, professional, in the 31-50 years age range, with the gender balance of the crowd being 55%/45% female to male, demonstrating that the women's game has a considerable cross-gender appeal. The ethnic/class make-up of the England crowds reflects the white, middle class nature of spectatorship at the 1999 Women's World Cup in the USA, something which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Eight.

3. Involvement with the game

Fig. 6.7

Spectator involvement in women's football (%)

Role	Millwall	WBA	Oldham
Player	23.5	21.2	19.4
Administrator	9.0	8.1	7.2
Fan	21.6	20.5	19.0
Not involved	45.9	50.2	54.4

Respondents aged 21-30 years were *least involved* as fans of the women's game, with spectators in the 51+ age group being *most involved*. This offers encouragement in terms of attracting an older fan-base and keeping people involved in the game after they have stopped playing. The reason for the lower number of younger people involved as fans can be explained when one thinks that they are more involved as *players* and would often be participating in the game rather than watching it. However, we should note, overall, the high level of involvement of spectators in the female game, as players and administrators, which suggests that if the game is to attract larger audiences, it must appeal to those unconnected with the game, rather than relying on those who are already aware of its potential to constitute half of the crowd at such games.

Fig. 6.8

Are any of the people you came to the match with friends/relatives of women playing today?

Yes	No
87.2	12.8

Linked to the affirmative responses in Fig. 6.7, we see that many of the attendees were friends and relatives of players involved in matches. The resultant audience thus has an intimate link with the sport. The crowds were not so much made up of fans of the sport, as supporters of *individuals* who were playing. Whilst the 87.2% figure shows a huge degree of commitment to the sport by those involved in it, it also demonstrates a failure to generate interest in the sport outside of existing supporter circles. Whilst high attendance by those linked to players proves the effectiveness of *word of mouth advertising*, it also reinforces the over-reliance on garnering spectators from pools of people already aware of the female game's appeal. The use of word of mouth to advertise fixtures could also lead to ethnic minority spectators continuing to be excluded, as they are under-represented, as we shall see later, as players.

Fig. 6.9

Do you have school age children who play football? (%)

	Yes
Girls	20.4
Boys	20.9

What is interesting here is that almost as many respondents have girls who play football as have boys who do. This means that as well as watching the sport themselves, many parents are encouraging their children to play it, irrespective of sex, creating an atmosphere where to be involved in the female game is seen as a 'normal' activity.

Fig. 6.10

Where did you travel from to see this game? (%)

	Local post code areas
New Den	73.0
Hawthorns	69.8
Boundary Park	79.6

Support at all three games was *very localised*, especially at the most northern of the venues, Oldham. This is not necessarily a problem, as regions can generate enough support to draw large crowds to women's games. However, this does suggest, and the FA is already acting on this, that such elite games should be played at a variety of venues, as large numbers of fans are unlikely to travel great distances to watch England's women play.

4. Information About Matches

Fig. 6.11

How did you hear about today's game? (%)

	Millwall	WBA	Oldham
TV	10.0	10.5	9.8
Friends	27.4	26.0	29.1
Radio	7.3	5.6	6.5
Your club	28.4	29.0	26.4
Local newspaper	19.2	18.6	18.3
National newspaper	6.2	5.2	4.3
Poster/advertisement	6.5	5.1	5.6

Again, we see the effectiveness of word of mouth as a form of advertising, something reflected in the high percentage of attenders who have links to those involved in the matches. Obtaining match information from a women's clubs also scored highly, suggesting that the FA's use of the *Bulletin* to inform clubs of fixtures is effective. There was further *local* work which alerted spectators to the fixture, with the local press publicising the games. However, there was little *national* publicity for the fixtures.

Fig. 6.12

Which national newspaper do you read for coverage of the women's game? (%)

None	62.8
<i>Express</i>	16.1
<i>Sun</i>	4.9
Others	16.2

As we will see in the survey of players, many people simply do not use a national newspaper to keep abreast of the sport, but of those who do, the *Express* is the most

popular. At the time, the newspaper published a weekly column of coverage of the women's game, although the column is no longer carried.

5. Today's game

Fig. 6.13

What did you think about the quality of play today?

Poor	0.3
Not good	2.1
Average	16.3
Good	56.1
Excellent	25.2

The majority of fans were clearly impressed by the standard of play. This is encouraging, as many of the fans were first time watchers and so may not have known what standard of play to expect, and/or they were experienced spectators of the *male* professional game, a discerning, experienced audience. That the spectators enjoyed the games despite disappointing results for England also offers encouragement for the promotion of the game. Although the number of responses from male first time watchers makes analysis of their responses to this question statistically insignificant, the response from male *and* female first time watchers shows that 82.4% of them thought the standard of play was excellent or good, signifying that the female game constitutes an attractive event for new fans

Fig. 6.14

What do you think about the general arrangements for today's game? (%)

Excellent	24.4
Good	60.6
Average	12.1
Not good	1.9
Poor	1.0

As with responses around the standard of play, it is encouraging to see that the general arrangements for the games were well received by spectators who will be more likely to attend female games again if they perceive their organisation to be professional and venues welcoming.

Fig. 6.15

Has watching the game today made you think about attending more top women's matches? (%)

Possibly	5.1
Probably	52.6
Definitely	42.3

The standard of play and the match arrangements are contributory factors to the decision to watch the sport again and the data here shows that many spectators at the three fixtures would attend future matches, boding well for the construction of a fan-base for the women's game.

Conclusions

The findings of the surveys at the three England games offer some hope for attracting fans to future England home fixtures and to the proposed professional league, in that a significant percentage of first time spectators said they would watch more games and that many fans were impressed by the standard of play. The fact that support was highly *localised* would not be an issue for a national league, amateur or professional, with the need for *national* media promotion not being as much of an issue for league fixtures as for international ones. The highly localised nature of attenders was matched by the highly localised nature of *publicity* for the matches, with little national media coverage for the games generated, the fixtures turning into local events, rather than events of national significance with a local focus.

Another issue for the FA is the *insularity* of the crowd, with a high proportion of those at the games already involved in football for females; the proposed professional league will need to appeal to a much wider spectator base if it is to generate income to help support its development and to gain sponsorship and media coverage, and the national team's appeal will also need to be broadened if crowds at England games are to increase in size.

The crowds, as well as being localised, were also predominantly *white* and spectators drawn from *middle-class* backgrounds. The fan base here then seems to reflect the player base of the female game, indicating that the sport is in danger of becoming

something of a middle-class enclave, on and off the pitch, not the accessible sport the FA wishes it to be.

B. Players in the English Women's Game

Very little is known about female elite or lower lever players world-wide, with only the work of Pfister et al (1999), which is examined in Chapter Eight, touching on female player profiles. Such work around male players is also largely absent, so there will be no comparisons drawn here between profiles of male and female footballers. The aim of the survey of senior female players was to look at the basic demographics of female players, to discover how female players first became involved in the game, to assess the attitudes of other people to their participation and to assess the opinions of players of the FA's development of the game for females locally and nationally. Other issues covered included ascertaining players' views on media coverage of the sport and examining where players look for information on the female game. There were approximately 700 women's clubs affiliated to the FA at the time of the survey. We chose to send questionnaires to players at the 30 elite teams who make up the top three divisions of the women's game and to an additional 200 female clubs across all levels. These clubs were drawn from leagues which gave us a mix of player ability and of geographical areas

Because the FA had no usable database of female players, 2600 questionnaires were mailed out via club secretaries, with the requisite number of postage paid envelopes enclosed for return of the questionnaires. These questionnaires were mailed out in early May 1999, with a covering letter co-signed by the FA's Women's Football Co-ordinator. The double sided, A4, corner stapled questionnaire's front page carried information about the Centre's work around women and football, and gave a contact number for secretaries to use if they has any issues with the questionnaires. The questionnaire carried an assurance of confidentiality for respondents. The mailing out of the questionnaires at the end of the season was intended to allow for completion after all potential respondents had experienced at least one season in the senior game. As stated before, the Centre is experienced in the use of postal questionnaires, and for

this particular piece of work, this was deemed the most practicable way of targeting the largest population of senior female players at all levels of the game.

By August 1st 1999, 396 questionnaires had been returned. This represents a response rate of 15.2%. As well as the covering letter encouraging returns, the FA carried a piece in its *Bulletin*, a publication circulated to secretaries at all female clubs on a weekly basis, encouraging secretaries to distribute, and players to return, questionnaires. However, 15.2% is a modest return, below the average of 20%-40% for postal questionnaires (Frankfort-Nachimas and Nachimas, 1996:226). It can be explained, in part, by the fact that the season was drawing to a close, so club secretaries may not have been able to distribute the questionnaires to players at practices and matches. Also, at the end of the season, club AGMs often take place, with changes in club secretary being common, so the questionnaires may not have been included in the handover package from old to new club secretary. The fact that secretaries acted as gatekeepers, because the questionnaires could not be sent *directly* to players, was also an issue. In order to boost the response rate, a follow-up letter was sent to club secretaries along with the club secretary questionnaire which we sent to them in September 1999, encouraging secretaries who had not already done so to pass the player questionnaires which we sent to them in May on to potential respondents, or to ask for replacements, in order to try to boost the response rate on the player questionnaire. Thirteen clubs requested 10 questionnaires each, with a total of 54 of these being returned, raising the final response rate from players to 17.3%.

As the sample contained responses from the five areas covered by the FA's Regional Directors for Women's and Girl's Football, as well as responses from a number of international players, and as respondents ranged in age from 16 to 41 years, responses were analysed to see if there were any significant variations from the national results in terms of location, standard of play and age.

The age bands used were:

Age group = 16-21 years	(177 respondents)
Age group = 22-26 years	(74 respondents)
Age group = 27-31 years	(82 respondents)
Age group = 32-36 years	(44 respondents)
Age group = 37-41 years	(27 respondents)

These age divisions were not made arbitrarily. The FA took over the running of the women's game in 1993, so we might expect to see responses from younger players indicating that they have benefited from improved playing opportunities. There was also a surge of interest in the women's game in the mid/late 1980s which may have an impact on the responses from people in the 27-31 years age group. Players in the final two age groups may have been playing at a time when there was little support for the female game, so they would have witnessed significant changes across their playing careers.

In terms of regional analysis, we grouped respondents so that they fitted into one of the five FA development regions. This is helpful to the FA who can use this data to help them assess the regional progress of the game, and to us to see if any data was generated which might explain the historically uneven geographical development of the sport for females.

A= London and South East	(103 respondents)
B= South West & South	(99 respondents)
C= East Midlands and Midlands	(53 respondents)
D= West Midlands & North West	(102 respondents)
E= North East & North	(68 respondents)

We also analysed, separately, the responses of the 25 international players (7.8% of respondents), to see if their experiences of the game differ from those of less elite female players.

1. Demographics of Respondent Female Players

Fig. 6.16

Age in years (%)

Sixteen-twenty one	40.6
Twenty two-twenty six	18.5
Twenty seven-thirty one	20.2
Thirty two-thirty six	12.2
Thirty six-forty one	8.5

Fig. 6.17

Social class (%)

Professional	8.2
Managerial	26.0
Skilled non-manual	18.5
Manual skilled	6.9
Semi-skilled	9.8
Unskilled	0.5
Unemployed	30.1

Fig.6.18

Ethnicity

White	91.4
Asian	0.5
African Caribbean	2.0
Other	6.1

This breakdown of the sample by age and ethnicity demonstrates that the game's major constituency is *white and under 30* years of age. This under-representation of females from the ethnic minorities is in sharp contrast to the professional male game, where British-born black professional players are over-represented, at around 13% (Bradbury 2001:3).

We carried out a number of focus groups, at the behest of the FA, as part of their Active Sports initiative, aimed at promoting football to girls and to *retaining* them as players, through adolescence and beyond. The views expressed by many Asian female pupils in our Active Sports focus groups, and certainly the reporting by them of their *parents'* attitudes towards their potential involvement in football, mirror the

views of Javaid 'Jimmy' Khan, an ex-Pakistan football international and Sports Development Officer at Preston Council. He argued: 'Sadly, Asian culture as a whole considers the game a waste of time. And when it comes to women playing football, it is considered a sin,' (*Q News*, June 1998). Also echoing our focus group work, this report goes on to confirm that sport is something which younger Asian girls may be allowed to participate in, but, 'as they grew older, their parents withdrew them [...] their parents didn't like it' (ibid.).

The FA has expressed the view (*Q News*, June 1998) that it is not the institutions in the sport which provide the biggest barriers to the participation of ethnic minority females; it is a lack of enthusiasm from these females, something which the FA attributes to the tremendous cultural stigma still attached to participating in football for women and girls from such ethnic backgrounds. This seems a rather circular argument, and certainly one which, rather conveniently, provides agencies with the option of having to give little thought to the institutional issues involved when attempting to increase the involvement of young Asian females in the game. Those who have worked with providers of sport will have heard the arguments offered about why provision for Asian female sports provision is so limited: 'We don't provide sport for *them*, because Asian girls are not interested in it/unable to travel/ need to play indoors, away from males' etc. There *are* cultural issues involved here, especially around issues of faith, sexuality and the body, but there are also huge general attitudinal differences between first, second and third generation British Asians. Assumptions about ethnicity, sport and gender are themselves hidebound and out of date. This applies to perceptions of Asian males and football as much as to women. There are still scouts, coaches and managers in men's football who believe that Asian males are too small to play the game, that such players will place their faith above the sport, and will experience difficulties with diet at Ramadan, etc. (Bradbury, 2001:73) just as there are still coaches who believe that African Caribbean players are lazy and better suited to being 'stacked' in certain playing positions.

De Knop et al (1996:153) say that Islamic girls are characterised by their limited involvement in sport, which is due to their involvement in domestic tasks which place demands on their time, as well as the familial emphasis, which we have already seen, on the importance of prioritising academic work. Although parents have considerable

influence over which sports, if any, may be played by daughters, the same authors also point to work which recognises that the choice *not* to participate in sport is also made by many Asian females themselves:

‘Many young women wish to adopt a lifestyle that retains the fundamental beliefs and practices of their parents, whilst at the same time enjoying the same freedom, *within the constraints they chose to impose on themselves*, which they see in the behaviour of their male peers as well as in their white friends,’ (Verma and Derby, quoted in de Knop 1994:153).

Here, interpretations and cultural assumptions are key. Whilst it is assumed by many sports practitioners that Islam limits female opportunities to participate in sport, a number of authors have suggested that Islam is *not* restrictive (de Knop et al 1996) with both opponents and proponents finding arguments within the Koran to support their stances.

In terms of the *age* of players who responded, it is, perhaps, not surprising that many participants in the female game are at the *lower end of the age ranges*, as these players might have less responsibility, in terms of family and work commitments, which allows them to participate in of the sport. Also, as many female clubs do not have a veterans team, there would be fewer opportunities for older women to play the game. As the game has only been administered by the FA since 1993, with efforts being made to form youth teams, as this was a neglected area pre-1993, one might also expect the playing population to occupy the lower age bands.

Looking at players by father’s occupation to establish *social class* of household, we can see that a significant number of women accessing the game as players are drawn from middle-class backgrounds. This tendency for players to come from the higher end of the socio-economic scale is also borne out when we see the occupational status of players themselves. What must also be borne in mind here are the rigid sex role distinctions often drawn in working class households, where football might still be perceived very much as a ‘man’s game.’ When asked how easy it is for them to afford to play the game, 44.9% of respondents said they could only afford to play ‘with effort’, adding further to concerns that the game may not be accessible to all

females. It seems that the game is *excluding females from lower income families* or who themselves have a low income, or is still perceived as too masculine a sport to attract working class women.

2. Development of Female Players

One of the concerns of the FA in promoting football for females is that girls be introduced to the game at an early age in order to give them the opportunity to acquire basic skills and associated playing confidence. The FA has developed a clear development path for females to progress to the highest level of the game and, as this structure has not been in place for long, future research is needed to measure the impact of these structures over time. We were also interested in trying to assess the extent to which football at school had become a factor in the lives of young female players and so asked a series of closed and open response questions to cover these areas.

79.4% of respondents reported that they started playing the game *for fun* between the ages of five and 10 years. Looking at the ages of players when they first played *for a club*, 60.9% began playing football in this setting between nine and 15 years of age. In terms of gaining skills early on which to build to progress to elite play, this situation is not ideal and may also be a result of the fact that most women's teams still do not have junior sections, something which will be touched on later in the chapter.

Early play

Fig. 6.19
Age Started Playing for Fun (%)

Age Range	5 yrs old	6 yrs old	7 yrs old	8 yrs old	9 yrs old	10 yrs old
16-21	9.7	3.2	16.1	19.4	9.7	12.9
22-26	15.2	12.9	19.3	12.9	10.5	11.1
27-31	20.3	14.5	17.4	10.1	11.1	13.0
32-36	16.9	13.0	15.6	13.0	2.6	14.3
37-41	22.0	4.9	19.5	4.9	7.3	14.6

When the figures are broken down looking at the most common ages at which players began to play for fun (i.e. not with an organised club) and their current age, there appears to be no suggestion that older players began playing later in life. This suggests that playing the game for fun at an early stage is something which was thriving well *before* the FA takeover and demonstrates that girls often begin to play the game outside of an organised environment, reinforcing the fact that *fathers, brothers and friends are major influences on early play*. This tallies with Deem's argument that many women who engage with sport are drawn in by an influential friend or family member (Deem, 1988:337).

Fig. 6.20

Age Bands in Which Respondents Had Played Football (%)

Age Range	Under 12, 14, 16 and 18 bands
16-21	20.7
22-26	12.1
27-31	4.2

The figures above suggest that, whereas the female game used to have little in the way of age banded play, the women's game may have become more structured and targeted towards channelling players into *age banded play* at a early age, and that younger players now have a more clearly defined developmental path to follow.

In terms of recruitment to clubs, 35.1% of females said they had heard about the first club they played for via a friend, 15.1% via a newspaper advertisement and 6.7% said they were approached by the club they now play for. This demonstrates that *word of mouth*, unfocussed advertising and *friendship networks*, rather than a formal recruitment strategy, are the most prevalent methods of recruiting new players, and that this is true across age bands and regions. The danger here is that like will recruit like, with already under-represented groups continuing to be excluded. Higher up the pyramid, however, as we shall see later, in the club survey, elite clubs do demonstrate signs of more systematic recruiting.

3. Early Influences on Female Players

In order to assess early influences on players, we asked respondents to indicate whether their father and mother had or have a strong interest in football.

Fig. 6.21

	Father's Relationship to Football	Mother's Relationship to Football (%)
Watched and played	36.6	3.4
Watched, but no real interest	0.2	0.7
Watched	32.1	31.7
Played, but no real interest	0.2	0.0
Played	6.1	0.7
No real interest	24.7	63.5

Fig. 6.22

Father's Relationship to Football (%)

	Elite players	Other players
Watched and played	45.7	36.6
Watched	42.9	32.1
Played	2.9	6.1
No real interest	5.7	24.7

Fig. 6.23

Mother's Relationship to Football (%)

	Elite players	Other players
Watched and played	17.4	3.4
Watched	34.3	31.8
Played	0.0	0.7
No real interest	45.7	63.5

These figures demonstrate that elite female footballers have parents who are *more active* in their relationship with football and *less disinterested* than those who play at a lower level, this being particularly true for the *fathers* of elite players. However, having a parent who solely *plays* the game does not seem to be a significant factor here in the production of female players.

Fig. 6.24
Biggest Influence on Taking up Playing (%)

	Elite players	Other players
Father	31.3	23.0
Mother	9.4	5.6
Brother	15.6	11.0
Both parents	12.5	4.0
Friends	3.1	17.1
Self-motivation	6.1	10.8

Here, elite players appear to be more influenced by their father, mother, or both parents and *less influenced by friends* than the general sample, stressing the importance of familial support in developing elite players which means they have to *rely less on self-motivation* than players at a lower level. We can see that there is a link between the most successful players and strong family support, so promotion of the female game not just to players and potential players, but to their relatives, is vital.

Fig. 6.25
Person who most influenced respondents to start playing football (%)

Father	23.0
Friends	17.1
Brother	11.0
Myself	10.8
Teacher	8.0
Mother	5.6
Nobody	4.2
Both parents	4.0
Partner	3.3

We can see from looking at Figs. 8.6 and 8.7, that parental participation is by no means a prerequisite for young females to play the game, although, particularly, in the case of fathers, an interest in the game is marked. Apart from the strong influence of *fathers*, that of *brothers, friends and self-motivation* stood out. What seems clear here is that *male* parental involvement in football is probably an important factor for a substantial proportion of the sample, but not the majority. *Female* family figures are relatively *unimportant*, showing, perhaps, a lack of female role models, but also demonstrating that young female players have the ability to draw on encouragement from *males* with whom they have contact.

Fig. 6.26**Biggest Influence on Respondents Beginning to Play Football(%)**

Age	Father	Brother	Friends
16-21	41.9	12.9	16.1
22-26	25.9	8.2	17.6
27-31	21.7	13.0	15.9
32-36	16.7	12.8	19.2
37-41	9.5	9.5	16.7

The role of male family members and of friends in influencing females to play was pronounced. However, the *waning* influence of fathers as the current age of players increases is interesting. Perhaps, it is now more acceptable for fathers to encourage their daughters to play? Certainly, Nike, in the US, *targets* fathers as supporters of their daughters' wishes to play (Cole and Hribar 1995:135).

Fig. 6.27**If your parents were opposed to you playing, why was this? (%)**

Fear of injury	40.5
Not ladylike	39.2
Homophobia	9.5
Reasons of faith	2.7
Mother hates sports	2.7
Education took priority	2.7
Mother opposed	1.4
Too much traveling	1.3

87.9% of respondent said that their parents had always been supportive of their playing; however, this, of course, means that one in eight respondents reported parental opposition or disinterest. Although understandable, the high incidence of fear of injury reported here as a reason for parental opposition may well be born of viewing girls as fragile and the sport as too 'physical' for them. Homophobia, an element of the debate around the 'unfeminine' nature of football, also registered as a popular objection to participation, bearing out the fact that lesbianism is used as a weapon to prevent women's participation in 'masculine' sports. In the area of sexuality and sport, argue Kaplan and Lesley: 'Medicine functions as an extension of the law, in areas where the arm of the law cannot reach. The treatment of homosexuals [...] becomes a perverted form of 'correction' of a socially unacceptable behaviour' (Kaplan and Lesley, 1992: 219).

In her work around Canadian lesbian athletes, Fusco (1998: 91) talks about the consequences of managing homosexual identities for a group of women in sport. She claims that there is an unwritten code within sports organisations and governing bodies that lesbianism should not be mentioned. So, it remains an issue which is not addressed. She claims lesbians in sport have adopted three strategies for coping with their isolation and treatment: *silence and secrecy*, *assimilation* and *risk taking*.

Using *silence and secrecy*, a lesbian athlete simply hides their sexual orientation, as a means of avoiding being stigmatised by team-mates and coaches. When lesbian athletes use *assimilation*, they 'retreat into sameness,' mimicking the behaviour of their fellow, straight, athletes, a form of behaviour which can extend as far as joining in with homophobic 'banter.' Another part of this mechanism is for some lesbians to 'normalise' or 'de-politicise' their sexuality by trying to make it a non-issue.

The final category of *risk taking* is more confrontational, with, for instance, lesbians, challenging the homophobic language of their fellow athletes, and with one of the interviewees adopting an 'in your face' attitude (Fusco, 1998:105). One of the negative consequences of these coping strategies is that lesbian athletes can be left feeling disconnected from the lesbian *and* sports communities. Having constantly to employ these strategies, says Fusco, also leaves some lesbian athletes feeling drained of energy, because even though they are conscious of homophobia within sport, they are still, at times, surprised by its intensity (Fusco, 1998:109). However, the fact that many lesbians continue to play sport, and that some lesbians actively seek out sport as an arena where they feel that they are likely to find other lesbians, shows that some do use sports as a site to resist prejudice, both against their participation in sport because they are *female*, and against homophobia within sport.

One author also points to lesbian athletes' lack of economic power, at the elite level, citing sponsor's decisions not to use openly lesbian tennis player, Martina Navratilova to endorse their products, and corporate threats to withdraw funding for conferences and sports events if the events involve an acknowledgment of lesbianism in sport (LaFrance 1998:92). Just as females taking part in sport risk 'accusations' of homosexuality, so men who do not engage in sport, or who engage in 'feminine' activities, run the risk of having their sexuality questioned: 'Society cuts the penis off

the male who enters dance [...] and places it on the woman who participates in competitive athletics,' (Boslooper and Hayes, quoted in Horne et al 1999:137).

Fig. 6.28

How important was Football in the Community in encouraging you to start playing? (%)

Region	Very	Quite	Not
A	13.7	19.2	67.1
B	4.5	10.1	85.4
C	4.4	8.9	86.7
D	8.9	6.9	84.3
E	7.4	13.0	79.6

Football in the Community is demonstrated to be more important to girls in London and the South East than anywhere else in the country in encouraging their initial interest in playing the game. This is, perhaps, understandable when one considers that London clubs, such as Leyton Orient and Millwall, already had established schemes before Football in the Community initiatives began piloting in the North in 1986, before becoming a national scheme. However, across the rest of the country, the potential of Football in the Community to encourage female play is not being capitalised upon, with one author pointing to a weakness in the way the scheme works, often offering taster sessions without long term structure (McArdle, 2000:203). 30.3% of respondents said a professional male tournament or player had prompted their interest in the game, suggesting that interest in football sparked by the *men's* professional game has a significant part to play in inspiring female players to take up the sport, the corollary of this being that more work with men's clubs would boost the playing popularity of the female game, although, of course, the argument could be made that male footballers inspire girls because they rarely see *female* footballers who might provide them with a heroine.

Playing Football in School

Information from the FA shows that, apart from netball, football is now the sport played most by girls in England (*FA Bulletin* February 8, 2000). In order to assess the

influence of school on early play, we asked a series of questions about football and junior and secondary schools.

Fig. 6.29

What was your school's attitude towards female play? (%)

	Junior School	Secondary School
Encouraging	24.7	27.2
Discouraging	26.7	34.6
Neutral	48.6	38.2

Here, we see that at junior and secondary schools, an attitude of *neutrality at best* towards girls playing seems to be the norm. Although there are now a number of school focussed initiatives, such as Charter Marking and Active Sports, which are discussed in Chapter Five, this means that at what is often the first point of contact with organised sports for girls, they are not encouraged to play football by teachers, setting a pattern which persists throughout their school careers and beyond.

Fig. 6.30

Junior School Attitude to Girls Football by Age(%)

Age	Encouraging	Discouraging	Neutral
16-21	40.6	13.7	45.7
22-26	13.9	37.5	48.6
27-31	8.6	38.3	53.1
32-36	7.0	46.5	46.5
37-41	4.4	21.7	73.9

Fig. 6.31

Secondary School Attitude to Girls Football by Age(%)

Age	Encouraging	Discouraging	Neutral
16-21	46.0	19.3	34.7
22-26	19.2	34.24	46.6
27-31	7.4	54.32	38.3
32-36	4.7	55.8	39.5
37-41	4.2	45.83	50.0

Here, at both junior and secondary schools, we see a trend, with younger players, generally, being *encouraged more and discouraged less* at school, with lower levels of neutrality than players in the higher age brackets. This would suggest a trend of progressive encouragement for younger players in schools, though even amongst the youngest respondents, less than half report being encouraged to play football at school. However, this is still a ten fold improvement of the situation 20-30 years before, when encouragement at school was almost completely absent.

Fig. 6.32

Types of Football Played at Junior School (%)

Age	Played in playground <i>and</i> PE <i>and</i> versus other schools <i>and</i> at an after school club
A	46.9
B	24.6
C	8.1
D	5.1
E	2.3

The younger the player, it seems, the wider the *range* of organised playing options at school, with older players reporting playground football *only* as their commonest form of school play. This is an indication that although schools are still not the sites of encouragement for girls to play the game that the FA might wish them to be, as well as the opportunity to play informally during lesson breaks, many schools do have organised football sessions for female pupils.

As school appears to be an important site for many female players, it would be instructive to look at this area for possible explanations of why girls from the ethnic minorities, particularly British Asian girls, are underrepresented as players. Zaman (1997:51) presents the three basic models of PE for Muslim girls as *assimilation, integration and separation*. The first of these, *assimilation*, involves adopting Western standards around physicality, something which is simply not an option for most Muslim girls. The second, the ‘multi-cultural’ approach of *integration*, is a form of assimilation which retains elements of the minority culture. This approach, as exemplified by allowing Muslim girls to wear tracksuit bottoms during play, whilst other pupils wear shorts or skirts, doesn’t, she argues, address the issues of respect and appropriateness. The third model, *separation*, claims that Muslim female pupil’s

needs should be treated as separate and different. Here, females are not seen as the problem; it is, instead, the structures of difference which are identified as creating barriers to the participation of young Asian girls in sport. Scraton (1993) and Talbot (1992) support this separatist model of sporting activity for Muslim girls. Zaman argues that not only are all three models patriarchal, they are also racist, failing to recognise females as Muslims. She points to the fact that Mohammed approved of physical activity and that prayer is a very physical process. She argues that some of the girls in her research would be more likely to exercise if exercise was presented as a part of their faith.

To Muslim parents, Zaman argues, leisure/PE is problematic *because* it is presented in a very Westernised way, thus falling outside of the sacred sphere and into the profane. Whilst there is little evidence (de Knop et al, 1999:157) to suggest that sport is an especially good vehicle for social integration, this desire to foster understanding via sport has driven some recent attempts to promote sport as a means of ethnic integration. However, this integrationist approach, which favours the functionalist stance that contact between prejudiced groups or between groups and an ‘alien’ activity, *should* reduce prejudice, may be counter-productive in terms of drawing Muslim females into sport. Carr (1994) points out:

‘What the Eurocentric view sees as a sexist core in this cultural tradition, or as a restriction on equal opportunities, the Muslim view sees as a positive moral code to guide their community and as an essential part of the community structure [...]. It poses the moral dilemma of individual freedom, equality of opportunity and life chances against the rights of the group to maintain its cultural traditions and control over its members in the political context of Christian domination’ (quoted in de Knop 1996:157).

Our research with Asian female school pupils in a Leicester school, around the Active Sport initiative, raised the issue of a lack of *role models*. No one involved in the groups, for example, could name a single female footballer, with pupils pointing out the difference between this fact and their keen awareness of male footballers:

‘With the lads and the men [...] the lads look and say, “I want to be him when I’m older”, or whatever. But you can’t do that with the girls. You don’t know when it’s on [women’s football], but the men’s football, you know.’ (Focus Group, 5 May 2000).

It is unlikely, outside of the Olympic Games and Wimbledon tennis periods, perhaps, that these girls would routinely see, in the media, images of women playing sport. Whilst positive female role models alone are not a guarantor that girls will take up sport and, whilst many girls may have male athletes whom they respect and admire, it is probably difficult for young girls, particularly *Asian* girls, to visualise themselves taking part in sport, if they rarely see images of females involved in such activity.

The Asian pupils in our focus groups expressed a strong concern to access sport *via their school*. This approach, with Active Sports seeking to build bridges between schools and local sports clubs, would provide parents with some reassurance about their children’s supervision and safety, and would also give pupils the chance to play a wider variety of sports, more often and at a more advanced level. Bains and Johal (1998:196) claim that, contrary to popular belief, many Asian girls *do* play sport, with school being their first port of call for games. However, they provide little evidence to back up this claim and we are left with the feeling that Asian girls play sport at school, during PE, simply because it is part of the curriculum. There are many enduring myths in sports around ethnicity and the ‘disinterested’ Asian female. Whilst having some kind of cultural base, especially if we are foolish enough to view Asian females as a uniform block, rather than the very diverse groupings they inhabit, ‘disinterest’ is still used as an escape route by many agencies which are themselves disinterested in offering provision for minorities, or fearful of tackling issues which are alien to their own organisations.

4. Coaching Issues

We asked a number of questions around opportunities for females to become involved in *coaching* the sport, as coaching is an important avenue for retaining players after they have stopped playing competitively and as coaching, like playing, if not more so, is still considered a male arena. Almost one third of respondents (63.3%) said they felt that FA coaching courses are *not* geared towards female participants.

Approximately one in five respondents (21.2%) said they favoured women only courses, with this finding being potentially helpful to the FA when deciding whether or not to offer female only courses nationally or in specific locations. An argument in favour of such division is that ‘separatist’ development could, initially, give some females the confidence to develop as coaches, thus helping to change the attitudes of males opposed to female coaches, and simultaneously inspiring other females to take up coaching. However, 45% said they did *not* favour single sex coaching courses, suggesting that whilst many females feel uncomfortable in a predominantly male coaching atmosphere, even more feel that offering separate coaching sessions is *not* the way to encourage more females to become coaches. The danger of offering female only courses is that this approach ‘lets men off the hook’, that is, providing female only coaching spaces for female coaches does not work on changing the problematic behaviour of male coaches and players, or help females to become *integral* to FA work.

When asked whether they feel that women are *accepted* as football coaches, 20.7% said they felt females were accepted. However, 64.6% reported that there was still opposition to females occupying coaching berths. This feeling that there is still opposition was of particular relevance at a time when the FA had just lost a sexual discrimination case brought by Vanessa Hardwick, who had failed to obtain her coaching A Licence, as a result of unfair treatment by assessors. Male coaches who had been less successful on the course were awarded the Licence whilst she was not even discussed as a borderline case. A tribunal found that:

‘The applicant was a victim of sex discrimination under sections 1 (1) a, 13 (1) (b) and 14 (1) (d) of the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act. The tribunal awards the Application the sum of £5000 in respect of injury to feelings plus interest’ (industrial tribunal finding, June 1999).

The FA chose to pay a fine rather than award the Licence, as they considered Hardwick had not reached the required standard, so she received £15,000 in total. It is also worth noting that the FA had to admit to a flaw in the scheduling of elite coaching courses ‘enhancing the employment prospects of retired professional soccer players at the expense of the humble teacher’ (McArdle, 2000:141); a case not just of jobs for the boys, but of jobs for *real* boys - the ones who have played professionally.

Despite the fact that many females perceived prejudice against them within the game, 34.4% of respondents in our survey indicated a desire to remain involved with the game in some capacity after they stopped playing. However, most female coaches are limited to working with females and children, and in an unpaid capacity, rather than, as is the case with male coaches, being able to ply their trade across all sectors of the playing community, hence offering them more opportunities to earn a living from coaching.

5. The Football Association

When assessing the FA's perceived promotion of the sport for women, it was clear that many respondents considered that there was still much work for the Association to do, and some of the suggestions are listed in Fig. 8.17. 47.0% of respondents felt the FA could do more to advance the game, and only 14.4% rated the FA's efforts as good.

Fig. 6.33

How do you feel about the FA's promotion of the women's game? (%)

Region	Good	OK	Could do more	Poor	Don't know
A	17.6	27.9	43.5	6.2	4.8
B	8.5	26.6	46.8	10.6	7.5
C	12.5	12.5	54.2	12.5	8.3
D	16.5	15.3	51.1	9.8	7.3
E	9.4	32.1	50.9	5.7	1.9
TOTAL	14.4	23.7	47.0	9.0	5.9

The East and East Midlands region is the most questioning of the FA's promotion of the female game. The region has a strong tradition of female play, has a Centre of Excellence and is in the first wave of Active Sports regions. However, it has never had an elite level women's team or produced international players, and has rarely staged elite fixtures so, perhaps, views itself as somewhat neglected by the governing body.

Fig. 6.34**How do you feel about the FA's promotion of the game? (%)**

	Elite players	Other players
Good	26.5	14.2
OK	26.5	23.5
More could be done	37.1	48.0
Poor	0.0	8.5
Don't know	9.9	5.9

Perhaps, unsurprisingly, elite players rate the FA's promotion of the game more positively than players at lower levels, although over a third of elite players still feel that the FA could do more. Their higher rating of FA performance is, perhaps, explained via elite player's more intense and intimate involvement with the game. Elite players may also see their own progress to the elite level as linked to the FA's development programmes. Whilst more confidence about the FA's performance amongst *some* of its elite female players may be viewed positively by the governing body, the disparity between the views of elite and 'ordinary' players of FA performance is a cause for concern, demonstrating that the pyramid development system may not have a strong enough base to adequately support the female game's development.

Fig. 6.35**What should the FA do to further develop the female game? (%)**

More promotion	39.0
Televising the sport	23.3
Encourage men's clubs to help female clubs	19.0
More general support from the FA	7.5
Money	5.4
National media	4.5
Encourage grass roots development	0.8
More general support from County FAs	0.3
Encourage more play in schools	0.2

Although many of the suggestions are rather general, *lack of publicity* for the game seems to be important to a significant number of the respondents. There seems here to be a desire for 'top down' promotion of the female game, with few respondents feeling that the grassroots approach will help to develop the game, although, perhaps,

we might more accurately hazard that respondents feel it would not develop the game as *quickly* as they would wish.

6. Local issues

We asked players what changes, *locally*, would assist the game's development in their own area. Better media coverage accounted for 21.7% of all responses, better facilities and more local tournaments each registered 17%, and better promotion in schools 12.1%. Again these responses reinforce how important the *promotion* of the game is viewed by those involved with it, echoing the desire on the part of those who play for a 'top down' approach, as seen in Fig. 8.17, rather than for concerted *local* work.

Fig. 6.36

How is football for females viewed locally? (%)

As something which is normal	34.2
No real objections to it	33.9
Some opposition to it	29.4
Lots of opposition to it	2.5

Little *serious* local opposition to females playing football was reported by our respondents, but almost one third of all respondents reported that there was still *some* opposition to the women's game in their area, which calls into question the commitment of local authorities, men's clubs and County FAs to the development of the female game.

46.9% of respondents said they thought there were *enough* opportunities to play locally, but 25.4% said that there were not. 48.2% of players said they felt able to play to the standard they wished to in their area, but 44.1% said they felt that they were not able to do this. Only 9.5% of respondents rated local opportunities to play as 'excellent', and 18.9% felt opportunities were not good/poor. This means that, overall, local playing opportunities are not meeting the needs of many female players. When asked if they had ever *stopped* playing, 11.3% of respondents said they had had to withdraw from the sport at some point because they couldn't find a suitable club locally.

Fig. 6.37**How do you rate local playing opportunities? (%)**

Region	Excellent	Good	Fair	Not good	Poor
A	10.1	46.3	25.5	13.4	4.7
B	10.4	36.5	31.3	19.7	2.1
C	8.5	36.2	34.0	8.5	12.8
D	9.5	42.1	29.5	16.8	2.1
E	9.1	38.2	38.2	7.2	7.3
TOTAL	9.5	39.9	31.7	13.1	5.8

Again, the East and East Midlands registers low numbers of respondents who agree that local opportunities for play are ‘excellent’ and higher numbers who feel that local playing opportunities are ‘poor.’ The East Midlands data might be seen as confirming earlier responses on the area’s relatively negative perceptions of the role of the FA in supporting the female game in the region, and also that support for, and development of, the sport nationwide is patchy. There may be well supported ‘hot spots’ for the female game, benefiting from strong FA support, producing players and teams of elite standard, areas where FA support is perceived as, at least, reasonable, and ‘cold spots’, such as the East Midlands, where FA support is perceived as less forthcoming.

When we asked if attitudes, nationally, to females playing football had changed, 68% of respondents said they felt that it was now much easier for females to play, with only 4.7% saying they felt the situation had not improved. In terms of female player ambition, 67.9% of respondents reported that they felt it was easier for females to be more ambitious about the standard they could play at, but 15.5% said they felt that women could be no more ambitious now than before. This demonstrates that whilst, overall, there is greater confidence amongst females playing the game, there is still a significant number of players who feel that attitudinal changes amongst those opposed to women’s football are negligible.

7. Communications

The media’s coverage of the sport, whether local or national, is not rated highly by female players in the sample. Only 5.5% of respondents said that their local newspaper gave ‘lots’ of coverage to female football, 30.3% said ‘some’ coverage, 44.8% ‘a little’, but 19.4% reported no coverage at all. 69% reported that they did not

buy a national newspaper for coverage of the women's game, with 22% doing so only occasionally.

Fig. 6.38

Which national newspaper offers the best coverage of women's football? (%)

None of them	52.1
<i>Express</i>	35.7
Other newspapers	8.6
<i>Times</i>	3.6

Unsurprisingly, many respondents felt no national newspaper gave good coverage to the women's game, but coverage in the *Express* was cited as offering the best coverage available at the time. However, that season, the *Express*' coverage of the game had been dropped, initially, claimed their Sports Editor Mike Allen (in interview) due to pressure of space because of Olympic coverage, and then because of the lack of a suitable correspondent. This means that the most regular and most popular newspaper source of information on the elite women's game is no longer available for those who want to follow developments in the female game at the national level.

We offered our respondents a list of eight possible sources of information about the women's game, ranging from national newspapers, through to the FA's *Bulletin*, to ascertain where they garnered information on the sport. 17.4% said *On The Ball* magazine and their own club were their only two sources of information, and 14% said that their own club was their only source, indicating that the information from the FA's *Bulletin*, which is mailed to every affiliated female club, may well be reaching club secretaries, but that information from it is *not filtering through to players*. As the *Express* column is no longer produced and the *Times* twice weekly coverage of the sport, which began after the *Express* launched its women's football column, is now sporadic, this means that most players probably operate in a vacuum of knowledge about what is happening in the women's game outside of their own club or local league. This is confirmed by the fact that 45.6% of respondents said it was 'not easy' to obtain information about women's football and that one in seven females thought it was 'hard' to get *any* information. Thus, many female players must be left with the feeling that their sport does not exist in the public consciousness, a disheartening state

a affairs for many, especially those player/administrators attempting to develop the female game.

The popular BBC drama series *Playing the Field*, which is based on characters at a women's football club was, at the time, the only regular, mainstream terrestrial TV programming which contained narratives around women's football. However, the sport had become very much secondary to other narratives in the series, which concentrated on the colourful private lives of many team members, and those of their families and friends. Respondents have mixed views on the series, perhaps because the sport is peripheral to 'relationship' plots, which have included a storyline about the lesbianism of one of the team members. Whilst 26.1% of respondents said they liked the programme, 50.3% described their views as 'mixed,' and 17.5% said they did not like the series.

Fig. 6.39
Respondent's Views on *Playing the Field*

Age	Liked it
A	43.3
B	26.6
C	24.3
D	20.7
E	16.2

Older players seem to have more reservations about the series, perhaps because of a concern about this peripheral nature of sport in the show. As more experienced footballers, they may also have issues with the programme's tendency to trivialise actual play, which was often of a poor standard.

In the early 1990s, a television documentary focussed on National League team Doncaster Belles, the team on which *Playing the Field's* club, 'Castlefield Blues', is based. The film makers followed the team through training and games, but also focussed on team members' off the field exploits, including instances of drunken behaviour. The FA's Kelly Simmons said of the documentary;

'I was disappointed, because I had people contacting me. To play football and have a good time, that's great, but to go out drinking, go into clubs and bare their bottoms, that is not so brilliant That was

showing our country's elite performers and that really did not help people to take the sport seriously' (Simmons in interview).

As well as, arguably, being part of a wider media pattern of trivialisation and exploitation of female athletes, the documentary also raised issues around female appropriate behaviour.

'I thought it was an affectionate film, but it was also just opportunistic; it had this point that women are just like male players and they can do all the excessive things that men do and *sport makes women men* [my italics]. I think that's what I really objected to and I think this is why parents ring and say, "I don't want my daughter to be like that; she's a female and she shouldn't do that kind of thing." They [the programme makers] got the angle they wanted' (ibid).

Conclusion

As with fans, the player base in female football is predominantly white and middle-class, as is the case in the USA and Norway, so the sport is unattractive to ethnic minority and working class women, for a variety of reasons discussed in the chapter. *Family interest* in the sport and *familial support* are important factors for girls beginning and continuing to play football. This out of school support is important when one considers that, despite schools becoming more encouraging of girls play, *most players reported not feeling encouraged to play at school*.

There was a feeling that proselytising for the female game at the level of the *national* Association did not filter down to the *local* level, where County FAs were often viewed as unsupportive and local attitudes to female play were still considered oppositional. Despite recent increases in ad hoc and regular coverage of the female game in newspapers, players were still largely unimpressed with media coverage of the sport, with older players seeming to be particularly cautious of enthusing about the progress the female sport has made generally.

Although it would be disingenuous to single out one region as deviating from the general sample *consistently and significantly*, the East and East Midlands did demonstrate a degree of discontent with both the *national* governing body's

promotion of the game for females and with *local* provision. However, emergent issues, on the whole, do seem to be very much *uniform* ones, suggesting that some aspects of the FA's development programme for the female game have been successful, but that where the initiatives are failing, they are doing so *nationally and across age ranges and playing abilities*.

C. Female Clubs

This survey was intended to give us a feel for how female clubs were established, their patterns of recruitment, the number and type of teams being run by female clubs and their sources of support. From the FA's point of view, the survey was intended to generate results which would help them identify areas for further developmental work generally, and more intensive work in specific locations.

We posted double sided, A4, corner stapled questionnaires to club secretaries at 589 clubs affiliated to the FA. 392 of the club secretary addresses were obtained from the FA's mailing list, which covers the most elite and senior of teams. A further 197 were sent to club grounds, using an independently compiled club directory. This meant that approximately 100 affiliated club were not included in the sample because of the lack of a comprehensive national club database. The questionnaires were mailed out in the final week of September 1999, along with pre-paid envelopes for their return. Again, the questionnaire carried an assurance that responses were confidential. A message of support was, again, carried in the FA's *Bulletin* as a means of encouraging club secretaries to complete and return the questionnaires. At the November cut off date, 177 questionnaires had been completed and returned, a reasonable response rate of 31%.

In order to see if there were any significant regional variations, we grouped respondents into the five FA Regions. These respondent clubs by region were as follows:

A= London and South East	51 respondents
B= South and South West	38 respondents
C= East Midlands and Midlands	24 respondents
D= West Midlands and North West	45 respondents
E= North and North East	15 respondents

As we had returns from 18 of the country's 30 elite clubs, we examined their responses separately to see if their history and experiences were different from those of clubs playing at lower levels. This might also enable us to track different routes of development at elite clubs, which more junior clubs might successfully imitate.

1. Club formation and support

74.7% of responding women's clubs were formed from 1989 onwards, a date which coincides with *Channel 4* coverage of the women's game, so we might speculate that this national television coverage inspired the formation of a number of female clubs.

Fig. 6.40

How was your club established? (%)

By a group of friends	43.6
By a men's club	21.9
By Football in the Community	13.1
By a school	8.1
Via work	6.9
By our local authority	6.4

In terms of *how* clubs were established, we see that it is the impetus provided by *individuals or small groups of women*, rather than the work of agencies, which inspires the formation of a significant number of female clubs. The one in five figure for women's clubs formed by men's clubs indicates that there *is* support for the female game from within the men's sport, and that this route of formation, where there are, perhaps, male team members with female relatives whom they wish to enable to play, may offer a richer vein of exploration for the FA than Football in the Community schemes, which are usually based only around men's *professional* teams.

Fig. 6.41**How was your team established? By region (%)**

	Friendship group	Football in the Community	Men's club	Local authority	Others
A	42.2	11.1	24.4	14.0	8.3
B	52.9	8.8	23.5	3.0	11.8
C	50.0	13.6	22.7	0.0	13.7
D	60.7	16.7	14.7	7.5	0.4
E	41.7	7.1	33.3	8.3	9.6

What is interesting, when we look at regional responses to club formation, is the extent to which local authority assistance is important in London and the South East, but of apparently *no importance* in the East Midlands and Midlands. This might suggest a much more aggressive and progressive application to issues of equal opportunities in sport for females in some metropolitan boroughs, and a relative lack of such proactive work elsewhere. Also, it is interesting to note the lower levels of involvement of men's clubs in developing the female game in the West Midlands and North West, compared to our small North East sample, with friendship groups seeming to fill this void in the West Midlands.

Fig. 6.42**How was your club established? (%)**

	Elite clubs	Other clubs
Friendship group	52.9	43.6
Men's club	11.8	21.9
Football in the Community	17.6	13.1

For elite clubs, the initial assistance of a men's club was *less* important than for the general sample, with Football in the Community and friendship group initiatives being more important. This suggests that women's teams can be formed and flourish without necessarily relying on a men's club, although it should be remembered that many teams forge a closer relationship with their male counterparts once they are established, and that 26 of the current 30 elite female teams in England have a relationship with a men's professional club. It should also be noted, of course, that many elite female clubs were formed before the FA take over of the female game in 1993 and before the establishment of the Football Foundation and National Lottery,

agencies for whom the establishment of a female team is often a pre-requisite of a men's club's successful bid for grant monies.

Respondents from 23.6% of female clubs said that their own club had no link with a male club, 48.3% reported that they used a men's clubs ground and facilities and 12.1% said they received kit and coaching support from a men's club. This shows that male clubs' support for the female game is still poor, with a number of female clubs either surviving independently, or having to rely on other sources of support, even if their club carries the name and strip of their associated men's club. Whilst formation by, and the support of, a men's club is by no means *the* only possible route by which football for females may flourish, it is important that support from men's clubs, if it does come, should be more than just the provision of strip, which allows the men's club to promote themselves, rather disingenuously, as committed supporters of the female game. The backing of women's teams by men's clubs is also an important way of lending the female game 'legitimacy' in the eyes of many fans of the male game, and so would be a useful local plank of a national strategy to improve the standing of the women's game amongst people who might define themselves as 'football fans.'

Fig. 6.43

Female club links with men's teams (%)

	Share ground and facilities	Provided with kit and coaching	Share ground and facilities <i>and</i> provided with kit and coaching	No link
A	41.7	21.5	17.6	19.2
B	55.9	2.9	23.5	17.7
C	41.7	12.5	25.0	20.8
D	55.3	11.1	33.3	0.3
E	53.3	0.0	20.0	26.7

We see here that there is considerable regional variation in terms of support given by male teams to their female counterparts, with West Midlands and North West respondents almost all having a link with a male team, but the North East and North region seeming least well served, in terms of the provision of kit and coaching. However, few teams seem to have a complete support package, reinforcing a feeling held by some at all levels of the female game that many men's teams are happy for

female teams to take their club name and even wear club colours, without assisting with the provision of the raft of support services which it takes to run a football club. Of course, many female clubs may be happy to be independent of a male club's patronage, seeing self sufficiency or support from outside of the male game as a preferred way to develop their clubs.

Fig. 6.44

Links with men's club (%)

	Elite club	Other clubs
Ground/facilities	56.3	44.2
Kit/coaching	12.5	12.3
Ground/facilities/kit/coaching	25.0	19.3
No link	6.3	24.1

Fig. 6.44 indicates that men's clubs do have more links to *elite* female clubs. This might suggest that assistance from men's professional clubs is helpful in developing female clubs to National League level. However, these statistics may be indicative of a willingness on the part of male clubs to develop relationships with female clubs *after* they have attained elite status, in order to gain kudos by association.

Almost one third of respondents (32.9%) said that their local authority was not important to their club's development, 24.1% that it was quite important and, again, 24.1% very important. As is the case with County FAs, local authorities are responsible for delivering much football at a local level, so it is encouraging to see that around half of the clubs have, at least, a reasonable relationship with them, although, obviously, there is still room for improvement in this area, with almost one third of clubs indicating that their local authority was not integral to their formation or continued existence.

Fig. 6.45

How important is the support of your local authority? (%)

	Elite clubs	Other clubs
Very	29.4	24.1
Quite	35.3	24.1
Not	23.5	32.9
Don't know	11.8	18.8

The evidence provided in Fig. 6.45 indicates that elite female clubs work more closely with local authorities and recognise their importance for club development. Whether local authorities latch onto already successful female teams in an attempt to gain kudos, or whether work by councils at the local level is key to developing elite clubs is unclear. However, our survey work would seem to suggest that the assistance of a local authority is, at least, an element of the package required to develop and sustain elite female clubs.

Looking at how elite teams *generate income*, 55.6% receive income from a men's club and 55.6% via sponsorship, the corresponding figures for the general sample are only 16.5% and 31.5%. This would seem to confirm that many elite teams rely more on male clubs for support and that they are either a more attractive sponsorship proposition for companies or are more skilled at negotiating funding deals with sponsors, or both.

2. Players and coaches

Looking first at issues of *player* recruitment, we asked a series of questions about how clubs try to attract junior and senior players. Many clubs experience difficulties trying to recruit players under 16 years of age, with 48.8% stating junior recruitment was 'a problem'. This may be linked to the fact that many clubs report that they do not have a systematic recruitment strategy or age banded play, as well as a general trend of sports drop-out amongst teenage females (*Adidas* 1999, *Nike* 1999). 23.8% of respondents said that their club could recruit just enough juniors and 27.3% of clubs reported having 'plenty' of young players. The previously reported lack of encouragement of girls to play football at school also, doubtless, adds to recruiting difficulties.

Fig. 6.46**How easy is it to recruit junior players? (%)**

Region	We have plenty of juniors	We have enough juniors	We have problems recruiting juniors
A	27.7	17.0	55.3
B	18.9	29.7	51.4
C	21.7	30.4	47.9
D	32.6	16.3	51.1
E	40.0	33.3	26.7
TOTAL	28.1	25.2	46.7

The figures from the North and North East region are the most encouraging of those presented here, but it is clear that there is a *general* problem with the recruitment of girls. The reasons for this, discussed above, will, perhaps, be addressed by the Active Sports initiative, which seeks to link schools with sports clubs, and via Charter Marking to improve the amount and standard of football coaching offered in schools.

Fig. 6.47**How easy is it to recruit junior players? (%)**

	Elite clubs	Other clubs
We have plenty	64.7	27.3
We have enough	11.8	23.8
We have problems	23.5	48.9

Elite teams have fewer problems than clubs from the lower echelons recruiting junior players. We may assume that this is partly because successful clubs, simply because they are successful, attract more players generally and that, again, if elite clubs have better organisation, they may also have a recruitment *strategy*. However, almost one quarter of elite teams still have problems recruiting junior players.

Work in schools as a means of increasing junior recruitment is clearly not, generally, being explored, with 83.8% of female clubs not involved in work with junior schools and 87.8% not involved with secondary schools. Whilst this is an issue which Active Sports and the FA's Charter Marking scheme hope to address, having difficulties recruiting juniors and a lack of club/school linkage are by-products of the historical lack of co-operation between the WFA and the ESFA around in-school provision of football for girls.

Those who seek to encourage young people to participate in sport, and to join a football club, are operating within a context of general falling youth interest in sport, and low participation rates amongst the female school population. Here, a lack of encouragement of girls to play at school, as highlighted previously in this chapter, is key. Recent research claims that four out of 10 girls do not feel motivated to play sports (Nike/YST, 2000: summary). The reasons for this turning away from sport, both in and out of school, are multiple, including the 'hidden [PE] curriculum' in which teachers and other authority figures mobilise ingrained beliefs about gender and sport, helping to reproduce inequality of provision (MacMillan, 1991:36) with discomfort in changing rooms, concern about becoming 'sweaty', a dislike of PE kit, boredom, a lack of physical competence and fear of injury being cited as barriers to participation (FT Business Report, 1999). Evans (1984:13) argues that one of the reasons PE is not attractive to many females is that it does not fit with conventional conceptions of femininity, a point partially supported by Hopwood and Carrington (1994:237). Whilst school is a site of great potential to promote sport to young people, it is also reported by children to be the place where many people are *put off* physical activity for life (TES, 2 July 1999, *Guardian*, 23 March 1999).

One teacher interviewed in the *Adidas* research (FT Business Report 1999:5) cited families which have no engaging 'culture of sport' as contributing to their children's lack of enthusiasm for physical activity. Members of higher socio-economic groups tend to participate more in formally organised physical activities. Drawing on this, we can see how socio-economic factors may contribute to lower football participation amongst some groups. The *prestige* and popular coverage of the sports on offer to female pupils at school may also be rather less compelling than that associated with sports more typically offered to male pupils. Netball and hockey, for example, are not professional sports, nor are they high profile or commonly televised sports in England.

Scruton (1992) argues that, for boys, an interest in school sport can act as a form of resistance to the disciplinary and 'unmanly' demands of desk-work. For girls, however, school sport *confirms* classroom conformity by effectively 'de-sexualising' girls and stripping them of the very codes of dress and behaviour which are central to their own resistance, providing another barrier to participation. Evans, Hopwood and

Carrington (1994:243) claim that there *is* some support for the notion that sports participation for girls *can* be compatible with conventional notions of femininity, e.g. in relation to promoting a particular body image. However, and reflecting our own findings in our Active Sports research, the FT Business Report (1999:11) indicates that most pupils do not see the value of PE as a means of keeping fit, even though weight control and an acceptable body image were important to most female pupils.

Sheila Scraton's (1986, 1987, 1992) work shows how the physical education curriculum has traditionally been based on three concepts of femininity: *physical ability/capability*, *sexuality* and *motherhood*. In terms of the first concept, *physical ability/capability*, Scraton's work (1992) has shown how many teachers, particularly older ones, and ones for whom physical education was not a major in their training, still hold quite conservative views of how the subject should be taught, and what activities it should, and should not, include for girls.

Scraton's second category, *sexuality*, is another sensitive area, which links medicine, those involved with the promotion of sport and, as we shall see later, media images of women in sport. 'The sexual ambiguity of female athletes [...] is pounced upon in the media with greater frequency and given more pernicious treatment than the homosexuality of sportsmen' (Hargreaves, 1994:170). As we have seen, participation of women in sport in the Victorian era was portrayed as 'unnatural' and women, today, who participate, particularly in traditionally male sports, are frequently 'accused' of lesbianism, a weapon used against those females bold enough to challenge established positions. Medicine has been used here, and continues to be used, not only to confine women and remind them of their duty to nation through motherhood, but also to appeal to the irrational fear of non-heterosexuality. This subjects many females involved in 'inappropriate' sports to suffer additional pressure. It can also deter teachers and parents from encouraging girls into sport.

Scraton's (1992) third concept, *motherhood*, is somewhat less powerful now, as motherhood, for many women, is no longer an inevitability. However, her second category, *sexuality*, still has a strong negative effect on both girl's views of PE and how teachers design lessons based on the concepts of sexuality and capability because, 'the idea of what counts as "normal" is a powerful one,' (Wellington

1998:119). In many PE lessons, drab uniform is still compulsory, depressing the potential for individuality and hiding the femininity of young women, and the regime of period notes and compulsory showers still smacks of medical inspection. Although the National Curriculum allows for flexibility in terms of building invasion sports, such as football, into lessons for girls, many PE teachers are still driven by ideas of smart dress and good deportment for their female pupils, with contact sports, such as football, running contrary to the fulfilment of these aims:

‘British physical education is gendered in ideology [and] teaching methods [...]. Whilst teachers of physical education may claim that they espouse equal opportunities for all children, their teaching behaviours and practices reveal entrenched sex stereotyping, based on “common sense” notions of what is suitable for girls and boys [...]. Competitive activities embody the end of exclusive success on the face of it, antithetical to the aim of equality of opportunity’ (Talbot 1993:74).

It may seem a little unfair to focus on PE in schools when many other institutions place obstacles in front of females wishing to participate in sports. However, school PE remains the first point of contact with affordable, safe, organised sports for many females and as such, it is a site of incalculable importance in terms of shaping female attitudes to physical activity and promoting the playing of football.

A great deal of the contemporary work of the FA and Sport England is based around encouraging youth participation in sport. Although there were debates in Britain in the 1980s and 1990s about the value of competitive sports in schools, invasion (e.g. rugby), striking (e.g. rounders) and net/wall games (e.g. basketball) now form part of the National Curriculum PE requirement (although from September 2000, pupils taking GCSEs have been allowed to drop team sports). In a recent report, it is the negative aspects of competition generally, as applied to boys and girls, which is questioned by one teacher. Another presumes that boys are innately better suited to competition than girls (FT Business Report, 1999:8).

The ‘hidden curriculum’ in which teachers and other authority figures mobilise ingrained beliefs about gender and sport and, thus, help to reproduce inequality, still operates (MacMillan, 1991:36). Whatever provision there is for sport in schools,

much of the delivery and choices about what is made available to boys and girls relies on PE teachers, and if the mindset still exists that some sports are 'less appropriate' for girls than others, then this is a formidable barrier which is counter-productive to efforts to produce equality of provision. The solution to this problematic is as much a part of teacher training and in-service training as it is of curriculum design. As with coaching positions in the post-Title IX era in the USA, British women have lost out in PE department mergers, with men often taking administrative positions and going on to head up PE departments. Also, professional PE journals tend to be edited by men, and there exists, 'an unsatisfactory situation of benign apathy towards equal opportunities in PE departments' (Flintoff, 1990:19).

A lack of quality facilities available to schools is a practical problem which hinders the provision of PE. The FT Business Report (1999:6) says that 106 British primary, 55 secondary and 11 special schools do not have a playground. 94% of respondent primary schools have no gym, 92% no swimming pool and 97% no tennis courts. During the 1980s and 1990s, many local authorities sold school playing fields in an effort to raise cash to fund services and, despite a commitment to halt sales, in 1997 the National Association of Playing Fields reported that 40 playing fields were still being sold each month. Some teachers involved in the *Adidas* funded work were critical of local authorities, whose spending on sport generally had fallen by 40% in real terms since 1987, with £3-4 billion being needed to bring facilities back up to what Sport England considers to be an 'adequate' standard across the country (www.english.sports.gov.uk). 'It is clear that pupils in most State schools no longer enjoy the opportunities of their predecessors', claims one author (Houlihan, 1997: 246) and this contributes to the difficulties many female football clubs have in recruiting young players.

If, as Scraton claims (1992:73), the three main aims of school PE are *enjoyment*, *preparation for leisure* and *an instilling of standards*, then PE is failing many pupils, perhaps especially female pupils. As Evans (1984:12) puts it: 'Physical education fails to equip them [female pupils] with the skills, aptitude and motivation for future involvement in physical recreation as a form of leisure.' As we have already seen, the sports offered and the manner in which they are presented in the school setting do not

provide all pupils with activities which they enjoy. The experience of PE, with uniforms and sweat and the demands of physical competence brought about by a focus on competition, causes many girls to avoid it altogether or to become less involved as they become older. Research by Scully and Clarke (1997:27) centring on Northern Ireland, shows that whereas 66% of boys named a team sport as their favourite sport, only 36% of girls did. This means that girls, if they do play sport at all, gravitate towards individual, non-contact sports such as tennis, swimming and athletics.

Fig. 6.48

What has been the trend at your club, in terms of general player numbers, over recent years? (%)

	We have a lot more	We have a few more	We have the same number	We have fewer
A	44.9	28.6	12.2	14.3
B	44.7	23.7	23.7	7.9
C	33.3	37.6	12.4	16.7
D	41.9	23.3	27.9	6.9
E	60.0	13.3	26.7	0.0
TOTAL	45.0	25.2	20.6	9.2

It appears that clubs in the North and North East have *least* recruitment issues, encouraging for the building of a broad playing base, but this area, along with the East and East Midlands, has produced a relatively small number of elite teams and players in the past, suggesting that mass player recruitment does not necessarily translate into elite player production. This failure to turn mass recruitment into elite player production in the North and North East, and the decrease in new recruits in the East and East Midlands, in tandem with player and club discontent indicated by some previous responses in this latter geographical area, gives cause for concern in terms of overall development. Again, it demonstrates that national initiatives may not be having a local impact in all geographical areas, emphasising the need for more intensive local work by County FAs and local authorities.

Fig. 6.49

What has been the trend at your club, in terms of general player numbers, over recent years? (%)

	Elite clubs	Other clubs
Lot more	64.7	44.6
Few more	33.3	25.4
Same	2.0	19.7
Less	0.0	10.3

As with youth recruitment, overall recruitment is far healthier for elite teams and the reasons for this, we can postulate, are the same as for youth recruitment.

63.8% of women's clubs run only one adult team, with 32.2% running two. This is a barrier to the development of the game, as the presence of a reserve team is important in terms of retaining the interest of those not selected for first team football and in making sure that clubs do not fold due to a small player pool. It is also a lure for recruiting younger players for whom it would be a stepping stone to first team football, so FA work around encouraging strength in depth, beyond merely setting up a national reserve league, is needed here.

Coaching

40% of female clubs have a female coach, but 38.1% of clubs use *unqualified* coaches. The first figure is, arguably, encouraging, as it demonstrates that more females are becoming coaches, but the latter is cause for concern, as unqualified male and female coaches have not been through the FA's training programme, which covers issues such as child protection, as well as technical coaching skills. Using unqualified coaches means that players are not receiving the most up to date coaching and may not be able to develop as well as they might with a qualified coach. Strikingly, *all coaches at elite female teams were qualified FA coaches*, compared to 61.9% of the general sample, and the presence of a qualified coach may be seen as a contributory factor to club success here. However, for clubs operating at lower levels, a qualified coach may either be difficult to attract to their club, simply because women's football is still viewed as a lesser form of football by many coaches involved in the game, or because they may lack the resources to pay a qualified coach, relying instead on an unqualified volunteer.

3. The Football Association

When asked to assess their club's relationship with their County FA, only 6.3% of respondents said the relationship was 'excellent.' 48.6% described it as 'limited' and 18.3% as 'negative.' The club/County FA relationship findings give cause for grave concern, with almost one in five respondents still reporting that their County FA is unhelpful. Whilst the FA has a *national strategy* for developing the game, much *local* delivery and administration falls to County FAs, organisations which are mainly staffed by volunteers, most of whom are white, male, middle-aged and come from a background in the *male* game. If County FAs are unhelpful, or perceived to be so, by clubs, this is an issue which has to be addressed by the FA if provision for the female game, and treatment of participants, is to be equitable and uniform. Some counties employ a full or part-time paid worker and the FA is pushing to make this the norm, with part of such an officer's remit being local promotion of the female game.

Fig. 6.50

Describe your club's relationship with your local County FA (%)

	Elite clubs	Other clubs
Excellent	5.6	6.3
OK	16.7	26.9
Limited	61.1	48.6
Negative	16.7	18.3

Club success would seem to have little bearing on views of County FAs, with elite teams not responding especially positively about their relationship with the local arm of the governing body, suggesting that the issue here isn't merely one of 'unsuccessful' relatively unorganised clubs failing to utilise their local association, or blaming a lack of local assistance for their relative lack of success, but of a more general County FA reticence to support the female game.

When asked to describe their club's relationship with their FA Regional Director, the FA employee with responsibility for developing the female game in their area, only 8.4% of respondents said the relationship was 'excellent.' 42.7% described it as 'limited' and 27.4% of respondents said they did not realise that such a worker existed! This, again, is a striking finding. Regional Directors have large geographical areas to cover, so they do not necessarily come into contact with all clubs directly.

However, Regional Directors form part of clubs' *perceptions* of the work of the FA so, it would seem that work needs to be done to explain the role of Regional Directors to club secretaries and to demonstrate to Regional Directors that they are not viewed in a positive light by many clubs. Obviously, the *system* of employing regional directors, and alerting clubs to their existence, also needs to be examined, as it seems that many clubs are oblivious to the fact that the FA employs such workers. If the issue is not addressed, clubs may decide not to approach Regional Directors, thus losing out on funding opportunities and access to initiatives. The recent move to employing 10 *generic* regional officers may help to overcome some of the problems indicated by our data, in that the areas they cover are smaller than those covered by the five Regional Directors, but, this is offset by the fact that these new regional worker's remit cover, *all* forms of football, rather than focussing specifically on the development of the female game.

Fig. 6.51

Describe the assistance your club receives from your Regional Director (%)

	Excellent	OK	Limited	Didn't know there was one
A	6.4	17.1	48.9	27.6
B	11.4	17.2	48.6	22.8
C	0.0	22.7	40.9	36.4
D	11.4	29.6	36.4	22.6
E	6.7	13.3	33.3	46.7

In the North and North East, there would seem to be the most marked lack of knowledge around the existence of Regional Directors and the East and East Midlands, again, shows a level of discontent with FA support. This may be an example of the 'London effect,' with nationally driven initiatives not always having as strong an impact in the regions.

Fig. 6.52

Describe the support your club receives from your Regional Director (%)

	Elite clubs	Other clubs
Excellent	17.7	8.4
OK	23.5	21.6
Limited	47.1	42.8
Didn't know we had one	11.8	27.6

The relationship between elite clubs and Regional Directors appears better than amongst the general sample, as does knowledge of the fact such workers exist. This can be attributed, perhaps, to the fact that elite clubs have more structure and may be in a better position to contact Regional Directors and utilise advice they receive from them, success breeding success. It may also be an indication of the over-concentration by the FA on the elite tier of the game, to the detriment of clubs lower down the FA pyramid.

We asked club secretaries how effective the FA is in offering support to their club; only 2.4% of them said ‘very’ effective. 41.4% described the FA as ‘not very’ supportive and 21.9% said the support offered to them by the game’s governing body was ‘poor.’ When linked to the responses on the perceptions of Regional Directors and County FAs, these responses demonstrate that for many clubs, the FA’s efforts to promote the game still leave much to be desired at the local *and* national level. Whether the Association is offering services and opportunities to clubs which they do not see as relevant, or whether the FA is simply not offering, or perceived not to be offering, clubs the services which they are asking for, is not clear.

Fig. 6.53

How effective is the FA in giving support to your club? (%)

	Elite clubs	Other clubs
Very	5.9	2.4
Quite	64.7	34.3
Not very	29.4	42.1
Poor	0.0	21.9

Elite clubs view the FA as being much more supportive than do teams from lower divisions, although, again, few elite clubs find the governing body’s support to be ‘very’ effective. Again, this lower level of criticism from elite clubs may be because they are better organised and have systems in place to utilise FA assistance, whereas clubs from lower divisions may be organised on a more ad hoc basis, or their more positive response may simply be due to the fact that the FA is targeting more of its resources at elite level clubs.

4. Other agencies/development needs

Fundraising, with 65.9%, coaching junior players with 29.0%, transport with 54.5% and recruiting players with 49.4% are the areas where secretaries consider their clubs need most assistance. Although increased investment, unsurprisingly, came high on the list of requests, with transport, presumably, being a part of this, other core issues were recognised by clubs, including a recognition of the problems around recruitment and the coaching of younger players, indicating a recognition amongst clubs of the need for long term, local work.

Fig.6.54

In which area is more work needed to aid the development of the female game? (%)

Local female clubs	TV	School	Press coverage	Youth play	England team	Coaches	Men's clubs
89.1	85.1	85.1	79.4	57.1	54.9	51.4	50.9

Although some responses, such as 'more help for local women's clubs,' are vague, and some requests, e.g. for more money, are not surprising, the list shows that club secretaries are aware of *a broad range of issues* here, around both recruitment and non-playing female involvement in the game, as well as profile and money-raising at local and national levels.

Fig. 6.55

How is your club funded? (%)

Subscriptions	Events	Sponsor	Local authority	Men's club	National Lottery	County FA
96.0	81.3	31.5	14.2	16.5	1.1	6.8

The final two columns link back to previous sets of responses about the unhelpfulness or perceived unhelpfulness of County FAs and Regional Directors, who can offer dedicated funding to female clubs or assist them with Lottery applications. It is, however, encouraging to see that many clubs are identifying a number of sources from which to obtain funding, rather than relying on just one or two sources of income, although this need to find money from a number of sources seems to be

caused by a lack of substantial support from any one organisation, rather than being born of the willingness of a number of funders to support the female game.

36.3% of the grounds which women's clubs played on were owned by a men's clubs, 34.5% of grounds by the local authority and 13.7% by schools, although it is likely here that many of these school grounds are also owned by the local authority. In terms of accessing these facilities, 67.1% of respondents reported their access to be 'good', but 28.9% of respondents said they 'sometimes' experience difficulty accessing them. Very few women's clubs own the ground where they play or have priority of play there, so female teams are often allocated the least preferred time-slot for pitches and the poorest playing and changing facilities. The fact that some local authorities, County FAs and men's clubs control the grounds where female clubs play, and that many appear not to have an intimate relationship with these female clubs, means that this pushes female clubs to the periphery when it comes to the allocation of resources, from funding though to accessing facilities. This is an issue which is exacerbated by the general lack of involvement of females in administrative roles in both the male and female games.

5. Communication

43.8% of respondents said there had been 'no change' in the publicity afforded to the game locally, with the same figure for 'a little change'. 56.8% reported they thought there was 'a little more' publicity nationally and 29.0% said they thought there was 'no change.' This shows that there is little improvement, perceived or real, in terms of coverage of the game, nationally or locally, disheartening for clubs and a reflection of the media's continued viewing of the game as trivial, as well as a failure on the part of the FA to bring the media 'on side'.

When asked how they find out about international fixtures, 74.9% of respondents said they hear of games via the FA's *Bulletin*, 58.3% through *On The Ball* magazine and 21.6% by word of mouth. This demonstrates that the FA's primary information channel to clubs, the *Bulletin*, seems to be an effective communication channel.

6. The Game's Progress

Looking at the pace of change the game has experienced nationally, 50.0% of respondents assess the pace as 'reasonable' and 34.7% as 'slow.' 52.0% said they are 'heartened' by recent developments in the game, but 28.7% are 'disappointed.' Looking to the future, 64.0% predict 'slow' growth for the game and 29.1% feel that the game will 'really take off.' There would seem then, to be an impatience with progress so far, a fairly low estimation of the game's recent growth and an air of caution over its future. Perhaps club secretaries, many of whom may have been involved in the game for a number years, feel they have 'seen it all before' and are wary of celebrating too soon the increased participation figures for females which the FA is so keen to highlight. Perhaps poor *local* experiences of progress influences secretaries view on *national* progress. Whatever the reasons, the FA's positive spin on the growth of the female game has not been taken on board unquestioningly by club secretaries.

Fig. 6.56

How would you describe the speed of progress, locally, in the female game? (%)

	Rapid	Reasonable	Slow	No progress
A	9.8	47.1	43.1	0.0
B	13.3	44.2	39.6	2.9
C	8.7	60.9	13.1	17.3
D	8.9	55.6	31.1	4.4
E	20.0	40.0	40.0	0.0

Locally, and this is not surprising when we look back to the regional views on the FA locally and nationally, there is discontent shown by some of the East and East Midland clubs, with the highest number of clubs reporting that they feel no progress has been made locally in this region. However, in the North and North East, where, as we have seen previously, there are few reported problems with junior or general player recruitment, there is a more positive view of the progress of the female game locally.

Conclusion

The feeling that there is a general *lack of local support* for the game was marked, with Regional Directors and County FAs heavily criticised by many club secretaries.

Football in the Community and local authorities were also not viewed as integral to the establishment or support of the female game and male club support for the women's game was inconsistent.

Although responses from elite clubs were more positive about the support they receive from a variety of sources, they were still critical of County FA's backing for the female game, one of the most striking findings, demonstrating that national policy and support for the women's game often does not translate to local action and support. The reasons for this are *structural*, with the volunteer personnel at many County FAs being unsympathetic to the female sport and the FA faced with the prospect of having to continue to change its own structures if the female game is to flourish nationally.

The female game has moved on at great pace in terms of participation since the FA take over. However, as the club survey demonstrates, there are development issues and geographical areas where work needs to be focussed and intensified. As with the player survey, the East and East Midlands is the area where *most discontent* was expressed, although, again, it would be unfair to single out this area as the *sole site of discontent*. Clubs in different regions and of different standards clearly have different views on the development of the game in some instances and it is this variation of views which the FA must acknowledge and address if it is to avoid a repetition of the uneven development of the game which was evidenced during the WFA years.

Overall Survey Conclusions

Whilst progress has been made around developing the game for females, in terms of formulating and implementing a national strategy, there are still development issues, particularly *local delivery of national policies*, around which more work is needed if the game's development is to be even and long term. This need for further development is demonstrated in our surveys by respondents *nationally and across age ranges and playing abilities*.

The minutiae of the fan, player and club secretary survey findings should be taken on board by the FA and others charged with promoting the female game, and there are many areas, around local and national issues, which are ripe for further research.

However, the *general thrust* of the findings is the recognition that *national policy and enthusiasm are not being implemented and owned locally*. The reasons for this failure of translation from national to local is structural. The responsibility for delivering the female game is not solely the FA's; local authorities and sports clubs also have a role to play, but the FA's own structures are impeding its ability to deliver the game and to encourage and support other agencies who are also trying to encourage and support female play.

Women's football has been played in England for over a century, and the FA had only been the sport's administrator for six years when the surveys were carried out, so perhaps, it is unfair to expect the Association to have made the strides that various constituencies within the game would wish for, or, indeed, to have arrived at a consensus as to what those strides are but, as the issues preventing a full embracing of the national desire for change at a local level are structural ones, the issues flagged up by respondents seem unlikely to be resolved unless the FA reflects on its own ways of working, its own administrative structures, an exercise which would have implications not just for the female game, but for the way the sport as a whole is administered in England.

Chapter Seven

Female Athletes and the Media

This chapter will look at academic work from Britain, the USA and Norway on the reporting of women in sport. It will also examine the amount and quality of coverage offered to women's sports generally, and women's football specifically, by the media in England. It will look at who produces this coverage and at the recurring theme of lesbianism in the reporting of female sport.

Common Themes in Reporting of Women and Sport

Despite the growth in sports specific radio in the UK and the boom in sports related magazines and internet sports coverage, newspapers and television are still, arguably, the two most accessible forms of media via which people receive sports coverage in England. The discussion of the coverage of women's football in England will, therefore, be broadened, not just to include issues of newspaper reporting of females in sport, but also to encompass aspects of television coverage of sportswomen. Media coverage of the Women's World Cup and coverage of football for females in the USA and Norway is addressed in Chapter Eight.

Media Coverage: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches

At this point, it would be instructive to take an overview of some of the work produced in the area of females, sport and the media. In their analysis of Norwegian sports coverage in the four largest circulation newspapers in that country, Fasting and Tangen demonstrate a rise in coverage of women's sports, from around 5% in 1873 to 10% in 1980/81 (1983:63). Fasting and Tangen's observations on TV coverage, via *The Sports Review*, Norway's weekly sports magazine programme, show only 5% of coverage dedicated to women's sports, as opposed to 82% for men. When looking at *readership* of sports coverage, Fasting and Tangen report that the percentage of males reading sports news was considerably lower than the percentage of male sports covered. When examining TV coverage, they report that 49% of the female population and 64% of the male population watched *The Sports Review*. Again, the viewing figures are disproportionate to the amount of male/female sports covered.

As well as examining the *amount* of coverage of women's sport, both in newspapers and on television, it is important to focus on the '*quality*' of what appears; after all, what benefit would there be in blanket coverage of women's sports if that coverage was of a poor standard? The language contained within the reporting of sport must also be carefully analysed as: 'It's too late now to keep women out of sports, so the tactics for undermining their accomplishments have had to grow subtler' (Dowling 2000:192-193). Messner et al refer to the 'gendered language of televised sport' (Messner et al 1993:121). They claim that language is an important part of presenting the visual image and recognise in their research 'gender marking' and the 'hierarchy of naming' (Messner et al 1993:125). In the first instance, programmes or coverage are titled '*women's* basketball', or captions indicate to the viewer that they are watching '*the women's* final.' The gender marking is also verbalised, during commentary. During men's games, there is little or no gender marking; this is simply 'the final' or 'basketball' etc. (ibid). Women are often infantilised and their performances, therefore, denigrated by commentary, an approach to language use which is used by *female* commentators, just as it is by male ones. Female athletes are often described as 'girls,' whereas male competitors are usually referred to as men or 'the lads,' conveying strength and maturity. Messner et al also report that first names are used for women during commentary much more often than for men, who are normally called by their family name, this demonstrating a familiarity with the female athletes by the commentators not conveyed when they speak of male athletes, for whom the use of a surname maintains a distance, a respect. Women are also referred to as 'ladies' a word which, for many, implies certain standards of behaviour, even frailty. Females are continually presented as 'other' in television coverage of women's sport, and males as the norm.

In tandem, these two techniques, it is argued, serve to differentiate between sport and women's sport, and create a hierarchy which has white males at the top, followed by black males, followed by black and white females. The researchers note that ethnicity seems to play no part in the constructing of this presentational hierarchy of female athletes. This ties in with Connell's observations on masculinities and sport which show how white hegemonic masculinities are privileged over both feminine *and* black hegemonic masculinities (1987:85). In terms of the development of these techniques, Messner et al argue that the *sexualisation and trivialisation* of female athletes is less

likely to be overt today, but that there is still subtle suggestion at play, and that this subtlety does not render the pernicious presentation of female athletes any less powerful.

Duncan and Hasbrook (1988:1) had previously highlighted this 'denial of power' in televised women's sport. They point to the small amount of coverage of women's sports generally and the smaller still coverage of women's team sports. They argue that whereas individual sports are motivated by the desire for achievement, team sport success is driven by the desire for power, and so to deny coverage to women's team sports is to deny women the opportunity to wield power and influence in the sporting world. Kane (1996:105) looks back to Metheney's analysis of 'sex appropriate' sports, where coverage of events such as women's golf and gymnastics are viewed as much less threatening to the general sports status quo than women competing in traditionally male team events, such as basketball and football. Another common ploy amongst commentators, according to Duncan and Hasbrook (1988:8) and Kane (1996:113) is that of *ambivalence*, where narrators/writers praise the achievements of female athletes, whilst subtly belittling those same athletic endeavours. Such ambivalence is not detectable in commentary of men's sports. Using basketball as their example, they contrast the focus on the *individual* team members in women's sports with the emphasis on the team as a whole in men's basketball. They also argue that women's *skills* and reading of the game are virtually ignored, and, instead, their *movement* is commented on. The authors found that the visual presentation of the sport did not carry such bias, hazarding that this is because of a lack of opportunity to differentiate between male and female play patterns created by the sheer speed of the game, rather than by choice.

Dealing with the *sexualised* presentation of females in sports, Duncan and Hasbrook (1988:11-14) cite surfing coverage as an example where the emphasis on the coverage of women is on passive, non-participatory shots of women on the beach, as there is time to dwell on this area between coverage of the competitors. The authors note only one equivalent male 'beefcake' shot, reflecting the assumptions producers make about audiences, in terms of their make-up and their perceived wants, something which will be touched on later. Paradoxically, when reporting on female competitors, the commentary is comparable with that accompanying the male competition; positive,

yet critical. Unfortunately, the commentary is undermined by the visual dimension of the coverage, with female competitors, as well as women on the beach, being the focus of sexualised camera work, serving, as is demonstrated by the analysis of basketball coverage in the same article, to reduce or deny the athletic skills of the competitors. This concentration on the *appearance* of female athletes is echoed by Boyle and Haynes (2000:132) who report that British heptathlete Denise Lewis's beauty, rather than her European Championship winning performance, is the focus of a piece about the athlete in the British broadsheet newspaper, the *Daily Telegraph* (5 April 1999). Lewis has, according to the article, 'looks that Aphrodite would have killed for' and the athlete reminded the photographer accompanying the reporter of 'super-model' Naomi Campbell.

Duncan and Hasbrook (1988) go on to analyse the coverage of a marathon, in which the men's and women's starts are separate. They report disproportionately low coverage of the women's race at key points. At one point, where a woman did receive 'extra' coverage, being interviewed during the race, it was because of her 'sex appeal', they argue, not her performance. A round-up of previous races also sees under-representation of females in TV coverage. Even when the female race is being covered visually, there are examples of the *men's* race being commented on. There are also instances here of the male commentator on the female race making disparaging remarks about female competitors, but these were often countered by his female colleague.

The Systematic Hiding and Rendering Safe of Sportswomen

Tied in with the previously mentioned idea of qualifying women's successes to reduce them and render them less threatening, we have the commonly occurring theme of *comparison* with male athletes. This is certainly true of football coverage, with comparisons being used both to highlight the *differences* (perceived as weakness) between women's and men's style of play, and also to give readers a reference point which journalists think will help them to understand the style of play of a female team or individual, a female footballer's play, apparently, not being describable simply in its own terms. In Klein (1988:143) we see an example of a commentator telling the audience where a female victor would have placed in the same distance male race.

This reinforces the idea of male performance being the norm, the yardstick by which all other performance shall be measured, thus denying women the validity of their performance in its own right. This is linked to the argument that out and out opposition to women participating in sport has now had to be abandoned in the face of female emancipation in other areas of life, but has been replaced by a 'they (women athletes) want to be treated the same as men? Well, let's see what they can do' form of opposition, as exemplified in Theberge (1991) and Birrell and Theberge (1994).

Linked to this idea of comparison to demonstrate difference, articles by Duncan et al (1988, 1993) also address the issue of the *naturalisation* of more general perceived male/female differences in sport, via visual images. Duncan claims that in sports photographs, females are more likely to be captured expressing emotion, whilst the typical male pose is one of steely concentration or exuberance. This tendency builds on the more general image of the female as an essentially emotional creature, not entirely in control of herself, juxtaposed directly with representations of the male as strong and in control, typically in a dynamic shot. The invisibility of the female as athlete has implications for providing positive role models for young females. At virtually every conference and meeting I have attended through the course of this research, the importance of female role models has been a recurring theme. This is an acknowledgement of the potential positive, as well as the negative, influence that the media may have on its audience and potential audience. The idea here is that if men and women see little coverage of females in sport, they will continue to believe in the myth of low female participation, and that if what they do see is trivialised and narrow coverage, this will shape their view of women's abilities and, in terms of the next generation of potential female athletes, perhaps, discourage them from participation, by making them believe that their enjoyment of sport is something which is undervalued at best and, at worst, mocked. Males and females can 'learn' about how they should behave and appear via media portrayals of the sexes. (Robinson 1993:79). As Duncan and Hasbrook (1988:20) state, the media are more than just a reservoir of social values and norms; they have the potential to influence and change larger social ideologies and practices. As Fasting and Tangen argue (1983:67) in order to imitate, females need role models and, because of the lack of media coverage of females in sport, this means adopting a *male* role model or not having one provided by the media at all.

Duncan and Messner (1998), return with further analysis in the area of American television coverage of gender and sport. They look at four areas; *production*, *attribution*, *exclusion* and *symbolic dominance*. The authors look first at *production*, reporting the ‘symbolic annihilation’ (Duncan and Messner 1998:171) of women athletes via their sparse coverage, with only 5% of total sports coverage in the USA in 1990 being of women’s sports, with little change in 1994. They point to the lower standards of production values in women’s sports coverage which serve to trivialise women’s sport, whereas the greater production capacities for men’s sports frame their performances as dramatic. According to Kane and Greendorfer, ‘by their symbolic annihilation of the female athlete, the media tell us that sportswomen have little, if any, value in our society, particularly in relation to male athletes’ (1994 quoted in Kane 1996:107). In terms of trying to attract an audience, Duncan and Messner identify much less promotion or hyping of upcoming women’s sports coverage by US television networks than of men’s events. This is harmful in that low audience figures can help to justify the argument that little women’s sport is televised because there is no demand for it, whereas the truth may be that viewers are actually *unaware* that the coverage exists and when they do view, they are presented with much less of a spectacle than that which they are used to seeing when they view men’s sports. Advertisers also place demands on programmers, with male elite sport in particular delivering a preferred audience for many companies wishing to promote goods and services. Brown usefully picks up on this economic component, pointing out that the most popular sports today are highly commercialised and have international competitions (Brown 1992b:47) and that this may have some influence on the degree of women’s sports coverage. ‘Television coverage, has become the *sine quo non* of sporting prosperity’ (McKay and Rowe (1987:263).

Duncan and Messner then move on to *attribution*. Their first point here is that TV images of sport tend to play up the image of the ‘big man’ (1998:174). Secondly, that comparisons between the comments on strength and weakness, as seen in men’s basketball, is 6:1, but closer to 2:1 in women’s basketball, and that commentary often mentions words which suggest weakness or ineffectuality when narrating women’s basketball. This strength/weakness dichotomy is also a *visible* one, with shots framed to reinforce the narration and vice versa. Finally, under *attribution*, the authors come to *agency*, the way that commentators account, in highly gendered terms, for the

success or failure of athletes. Men are framed as active agents of their own success, whilst women's achievements were often linked to family, luck etc. When women fail, it is often pointed out to viewers that the failure was the fault of the female athlete for not taking control of the situation, whereas a man's failure is often presented as being due to the power and talent of their opponents; the commentators operate, it seems, with stereotypical gendered attributions.

The *third* major category Duncan and Messner use is that of *exclusion*. Here we are told of the commentator's power to define audience perceptions of what athletes will achieve. Staying with basketball, women's misses are described as such, whereas in the men's game, they are transformed into success; for example, a shot is missed by a male player because the shooter is 'too strong' or a miss might be described as *almost* being two points. Men's incompetencies on court were often *softened* by commentary whereas women's errors were simply narrated as such.

The final Duncan and Messner category is *symbolic dominance*, where men are presented as the norm and women as 'other'. Again, they have three subcategories, the first being *asymmetrical gender marking*. This returns to Duncan and Hasbrook's research on 'sex labelling' in sport, for example, 'women's basketball,' (1998:10) rather than just basketball, both verbally and on screen and with stills showing women in make-up and jewellery and out of uniform, whilst men are always shown in their strip. This is a point further developed in Kane's (1996:111) work around asymmetrical gender marking. Secondly and finally, Duncan and Messner, again, reflect on their previous research, talking about the *infantilisation* and *sexualisation and hierarchical naming* of female athletes. This time, they expand on their sexualisation theory, noting that men are typically framed within the context of heterosexual relationships and that women are often portrayed as humorous sex-objects, rather than athletes. Duncan (1990:29) also remarks on the way that female athletes are often posed for photographs in styles which are reminiscent of soft porn imagery. This precedence of women's sexuality over their athleticism extends to the use of lesbianism as a weapon against female athletes, something which will be examined in relation to football later in this chapter. Birrell and Theberge (1994) also provide a useful summary of how the media can restrict our ideas of what women can achieve in sport via symbolic annihilation, trivialisation/marginalisation,

objectification/sexualisation, hidden homophobia, the depiction of women in sport as tragic/incomplete and women as unnatural athletes/women athletes as unnatural women.

Preferred Meanings

The assumption made so far in the research covered here is that *what* the media show and *how* they present it has an influence on the audience. Schramm's 'hypodermic model' sometimes referred to as the 'silver bullet' model, where the audience is seen as a passive, unquestioning recipient of messages, has been refined (see Fiske 1982 or McQuail 1984 for a discussion of communication models), and the audience is now seen by researchers as consisting more of active agents who may derive their own additional meanings from texts, or dismiss the producers preferred audience reading altogether (Kane 1996:101). These preferred meanings are the messages or themes which the producer of a particular text attempts to convey and have accepted and, in the instance of sport, the non or limited appearance of females promotes the meaning that female sport is less important than male sport. The audio, visual and textual messages presented to the audience are interpreted by them and provide the ingredients from which they construct their knowledge of females in the sphere of sports. Of course, the media is not the sole provider of information of this kind; audiences, may, through their relationships with women and men, or their own involvement in sport, have experienced a different reality to that offered to them by the media. However, if various mediums are consistently providing similar messages about the frailty, ineptitude and sexualised nature of female competitors, then the potential influence the media has on shaping the views of its users, should not be dismissed.

Mass media coverage reflects the gender role expectations conveyed in other areas of society, Kane (1996) pointing out how the media constructs women as second class athletes, counterfeit versions of 'real' male athletes, drawing on Boutilier and San Giovanni (1983) to emphasise the power of the media by arguing that 'virtually no institution [...] or individual is left unaffected by the images and the words that emanate from these sources' (Kane 1996:110). People, claims Kane, internalise

messages, values and beliefs promoted by the media, messages which discourage women from gaining self respect from their physicality.

In Britain, people who rely on the media to inform them about sports could be forgiven for thinking that few women actually *participate* in sport and that those who do, take part in a very limited range of events. Therberge and Cronk (1986) reinforce the point that this situation is not unique to Britain, citing the USA as another country where female participation rates are not reflected in the quantity of media coverage of female sport. In Australia, Brown (1992b:50) reports that whilst women's netball is that country's most popular team sport, based on registration, women are still largely invisible in media coverage of sport. Sport, for many people, has become mediated (Robinson 1993:66). Alexander (1994a:649) talks of journalist's views of what their audience will be interested in, pointing to their value judgement that women's sports are intrinsically less interesting than men's, before highlighting the fact that sporting events are not in themselves 'interesting' but are made so. In an analysis of the 1991 World Athletics Championship, Alexander highlights the importance of *space*; men's athletics is perceived as *global*, whilst women's athletics is presented as being only of interest if there was a Briton competing, Liz McColgan and Yvonne Murray breaking into the ranks of the 'most photographed' athletes at the Championships (Alexander 1994b:657). Woodhouse and Williams (1999:42) briefly examine this idea of what producers think sports audiences will like, when looking at female sports presenters in the UK. They point to the fact that when women are used to host sports programmes, particularly on the satellite sports channel BSkyB, they are 'conventionally attractive' and that their knowledge of the sport which they are covering may not be the prime motivation of TV executives when such presenters are selected for jobs. Sports shows such as these are seeking out young, male audiences for advertisers and sponsors, hence the additional attraction of these female presenters.

Production of Sports Reporting

In terms of who *produces* sports media coverage, Alexander's study of British newspapers showed that they employed 81 sports reporters, all of them male, during the 1991 World Athletics Championships, with the only articles written by women on the Championships being placed in gossip columns (1994b:660) adding further to the

trivialisation of women in sport. Again, Woodhouse and Williams (1999:42-43) looking at women involved in non-playing roles in football, point to the condescending attitude of male sports print journalists to their female colleagues and the barriers faced by women who want to write sports copy, particularly when the sport involved is 'traditionally male.' Many of these points are touched on by Jean Simpson, a journalist who wrote a weekly column on women's football for a British daily newspaper, in the late 1990s:

'The *Express*, in the last say five years, has had four women do sports work and they've all come from a features background and they've all stayed for the maximum of a season or two and then they disappear and at the moment, there's no women up there at all' (Simpson, J. in interview).

This demonstrates the small number of women working in sports at this particular daily newspaper and, when we see later the attitude of some male journalist to females in sports and sports journalism, we also have at least a partial explanation of why so few women make it to, or stay at, sports desks. In terms of how filed stories can be treated by male sub-editors, who may have little knowledge of the female version of the sport being dealt with, the same journalist explains:

'You write your story, file it and then it goes to the sub editor. When its men's football, they all know who David Beckham is and Man. United are Man. United, not Manchester but with women's football they don't know that Debbie Bampton is quite a big cheese and so she might be subbed out [...] so the technical side of things was a nightmare. I don't know if Jen [O'Neill who writes for the *Times*] does this, or whether it's the sub, but her introduction always has to be linked to a men's football story. We started doing it like that, then stopped. World class example was when I did a piece half on Manchester Women and half on Southampton Saints and with all respect, Manchester Women are nobody, yet the sub thought "Man. Utd; right we'll use this as a lever to get people to read the column," just like people try to say "Well, this woman's the female Alan Shearer" to draw people in. It's a double edged sword because it brings the newcomers in but you cannot afford to alienate the people who actually know about the game (ibid).

Here we see not only the lack of conventional sports desk knowledge around the women's game, which might be expected in a sports department which covers a wide

variety of sports, but we also have demonstrated the tendency to introduce the *men's* professional game into reporting of the women's sport, in order to lend it 'legitimacy'.

In terms of the perceptions of the journalist and her credibility amongst the male dominated sports staff, Simpson goes on to say:

'I got the impression that if I had more of a background in men's football than the women's stuff I do, I would get more respect. The next girl who comes in would have more credibility if she came from a football background. I didn't have the weight of that whole "man and boy" thing. The sports desk is dominated by football and the women have to have that parlance to get any respect. I think the average age on the sports desk would be 35 upwards. The younger ones, rather than turning the whole thing around, have to fit into that sports-boy banter to be accepted, so they are as PC as anything outside and that's the way they are going to be because they are of that generation, but at that sports desk, they get into that tired banter.' (ibid).

Here, Simpson highlights wonderfully the idea of the sports desk as a male domain and a domain dominated, for the most part, by men's professional football. It is a space where even if women are permitted entry, they have to operate in this climate of male 'banter'. If the female journalist concerned is involved in covering a female sport, she may have even more to endure, as highlighted by the following extraordinary exchange which Simpson recalls:

'Someone wanted me to write about Garswood [a women's club] in the Northern League and the sub came to me to check the facts and one of my colleagues said, "oh, what's the head [line] gonna be? 'Dirty Northern Bitches?'" and that was serious and I thought to sit here and have someone do that; it's a joke and this is after two and a half seasons doing it and if you didn't get that quote it was "Dirty Northern Bitches!" People tell me that the *Express* is one of the more right on 'papers!' (ibid).

Simpson also identifies some of the key issues faced by women working in sports journalism, such as women's football not being seen as a valuable area of reporting by newspapers, and the pressures to conform to the male dominated areas of coverage, and to male behaviour:

‘Someone like XX XX, [newspaper sports journalist] I find a lovely person to talk to in general, but has no time for women’s football, thinks it’s a joke, feels that if that was all she wrote about, she’d get no respect from her male counterparts and part of that thing is her wanting to be among the lads. XX XX [television sports presenter] is totally behind women’s football. When she started off though, she tried to be “one of the lads” and then she said she looked in the mirror and thought “what the hell are you doing?” If you’re being one of the lads then you’re not actually getting the respect; you’re not really one of them. So, now she’s changed [...] I’ve got no time for some, like XX XX and XX XX [female TV football presenters] because they say one thing to one person and one to another. God only knows though what struggles they’ve been through to get where they are, but for me to hear a women say that women’s football is a joke [...] it makes *these* women a joke. Ooooooh; I’m so angry! They are idiots if they can’t see that we are all part of that same struggle. I hate to hear women denigrating other women’ (ibid).

The FA’s Media Officer with responsibility for Women’s Football and the Regions, Katherine Knight adds:

‘They [female journalists] want to prove themselves as journalists who report well on men’s football. Women have their own battles to fight as sports journalists. People like Jean Simpson and Sarah Potter are very pro-women in sport and then you get someone like XX XX [from a national newspaper] who’s not happy if she’s sent to cover an England women’s story *because* she’s a woman if that means she misses out on the chance to report on an Arsenal [men’s] game. It’s not that she’s against women’s football it’s just that she is sidelined and they pick a bloke to cover the men’s game’ (Knight in interview).

This type of ‘sex assigning’ by sport serves to limit female reporters, channelling them towards coverage of female sports and allowing male journalists to abdicate responsibility for women’s sports.

Simpson goes on to highlight the trade-off that some female journalists have made, having to become ‘one of the lads’ in order to succeed in the ‘lads’ world. She has considered whether her experiences of being a female sports journalist would have been different if she had worked at a broadsheet, where coverage of sports, generally, is less sensational, a wider range of sports are covered, even if only in terms of their results, and females are often employed on staff and as guest writers.

‘I always assume that the broadsheets must be totally different because I see so many female faces in there. I know that they are not always doing match reports, but quite a few of them have columns [...]. When you go to the *Guardian*, I don’t think you’ll have the kind of atmosphere where people are talking about Jo Guest’s [glamour model] breasts. I’m assuming that is a tabloid thing’ (Simpson in interview).

Simpson here is also raising issues about the readership of newspapers, about what editors think their readers might be prepared to read, in terms of the sports covered and the style of writing. She is also, probably, working on the assumption that broadsheet newspapers have readerships from a higher socio-economic background and that such newspapers may take more ‘risks’ in terms of which sports they cover, with the centre-left broadsheets having a more liberal, receptive audience. Such newspapers may not operate within quite the same overtly ‘laddish’ sports desk culture.

Lesbianism and Media Coverage

Another ‘weapon’ (Birrell and Theberge, 1994) used to deter females from participating in sport, and, perhaps, from reporting on it too, is the lesbian label. The issue of the lesbian myth in sport has been touched on in a previous chapter on the development of PE in Britain and also when looking at the recent role of the FA in developing the female game in England. In their study of female football players in *New Zealand* (Cox and Thompson 2000) 14 of the 16 players they worked with alluded to themselves as being tomboys when they were younger, and felt that, as footballers, they had their sexuality questioned in a way which female netball players, netball being a ‘traditional’ female team sport, did not. Players ‘tested’ team mates to establish whether they were lesbian, and the two team members who were ‘outed’ at the club decided to lessen their ‘deviancy’ in the eyes of their team mates by saying that they were bisexual. For many outside and inside the sport, claim the authors, the fear of lesbianism is still embedded in women’s soccer, with many players recalling that their introduction to soccer included warnings about the presence of lesbians and their predatory nature. The media’s role in perpetuating this myth is to portray many female athletes as ‘ladies’, lady equating to ‘normal’ woman, in turn equating to heterosexual woman. In contrast, any female who deviates from this genteel, graceful

norm is subjected to a questioning of their sexuality or mockery of their physical appearance, with the outed members of the soccer team conforming to standards of appearance that denote heterosexually defined femininity. An example of the treatment meted out to those who do not conform can be found in the British broadsheet newspaper, the *Times*, when staff writer Simon Barnes writes of French tennis player Mary Pierce:

‘She has grown a set of quite terrifyingly masculine appendages. Phwoar, look at those muscles! [...] a pair of biceps like Boris Becker’s thighs. It is like the Incredible Hulk in drag and slow motion,’ (quoted in Boyle and Haynes 2000:132).

Newspapers certainly seem keener to report on conventionally attractive tennis players, such as the young, ‘glamorous’ Russian, Anna Kournikova (the *Sun* promised to carry a photograph of her every day during the 2000 Wimbledon Championships) than to cover ‘power’ players, such as the USA’s Navratilova and the Williams sisters. French player Amelie Mauresmo, who is openly gay, has been the victim of fellow female professionals, in terms of derogatory comments about her physicality, comments seized upon by the press. One opponent, Lindsay Davenport, said after a recent match with Mauresmo: ‘A couple of times, I mean, I thought I was playing a guy out there, the girl was hitting it so hard, and I would look over there and she’s so strong in the shoulders’ (www.findarticles.com). Davenport’s comments were followed by those of fellow professional, Martina Hingis, who described Mauresmo as ‘half a man; she’s here with her girlfriend’ (ibid). Any person who can generate the power that Mauresmo does, does not fit the conventional image of what Davenport and Hingis seem to regard as ‘womanly’; to them, she is a ‘man,’ partly because of her sexual orientation, and, in the case of Davenport, because of her physical strength.

Conversely, as well as this portrayal of the female athlete as ‘deviant’ if they stray from the feminine norm of behaviour and appearance, we have the reinforcement of successful female athletes as daughter, mother or wife, to render sport a ‘safe’ activity for female participants, emphasising their heterosexuality and the fact that sport has not separated them from their womanly, family duties. For example, we see in a pre-event piece looking at the Burleigh Horse Trials in 1999, an action shot of rider Ian

Stark, spurring his horse through a water obstacle, but the lead piece shows female rider and former Burleigh *winner* Emily King, in the garden of her home with her two children, with the text making explicit reference to her husband (*Times*, 1 September 1999).

Looking to the future, Brown (1992b:51) envisions three interrelated forces which will influence the way females in sport are portrayed by the media; the organisation and practices of sporting associations (the structure and functions of the FA were dealt with in Chapter Five), government policy and programmes (some dealt with, again, in Chapter Five, and in Chapter Six), and the organisation of media bodies and their practices. This final point harks back to the idea that producers of messages believe that women's sport is inherently inferior, are predominantly male, and that media organisations do not lend themselves to employing women who have responsibilities outside of the workplace.

***Times* Coverage of the Women's Football Association Cup Final**

In order to identify themes around how women's football is reported in a major national newspaper, we examined 30 years of coverage of the WFA Cup Final in the *Times*, the newspaper of public record in the UK. The WFA Cup competition began in 1971, and is the major domestic cup competition within the women's game, and its Final is the show piece of the women's football season. Space precludes a detailed report of the findings here, but to summarise, throughout the time period, there is no clear, linear pattern of change, in terms of the quality and quantity of reporting which the *Times* afforded the Final. The fixture was *first* mentioned in 1984, but there were gaps in coverage after this date. Although part of the explanation for this, pre-1993, may be assumed to be down to the WFA's lack of expertise in publicising the sport, this cannot fully explain its appearance and consequent disappearance.

Coverage of the Women's Final did not become a regular feature immediately after the FA had taken over the running of the female game, despite the fact that the game's governing body supplied the *Times* with material around the fixture, so, if the supply side does not provide us with an explanation for irregular coverage, then we must

look to the *Times*' agenda for reasons for the sporadic reporting. Perhaps the women's game was covered occasionally as a 'novelty' sport or because there were column inches to fill in some editions of the newspaper? Perhaps, more recently, coverage of the women's game is part of the *Times* drive to increase its readership, including female readers, via an expanded domestic and overseas sports portfolio? Perhaps it is merely a reflection of a growing public interest in football, generally, and football for females specifically? What is certain is that even with the services of a freelancer to write free of charge, consistent, high quality *Times* coverage of the Women's Final in the future is by no means guaranteed; the pattern of past coverage shows us this.

The quality of the *Times* coverage has been variable, from Simon Barnes's engaging, lengthy 1993 preview piece, looking at wider issues in the women's game, through to Louise Taylor's rather lazy 1994 effort at reporting on the Final. The use of female freelancers to cover the fixture is an indication of the importance, or rather lack of importance, which the *Times* places on the Women's Cup Final, not usually deeming the fixture worthy of the use of a member of their sport desk staff. When sports desk staff are used, they are respected football correspondents who are not imperilling their already well established reputations by covering the fixture. On the whole, their pieces are given more space than those of freelancers, and go well beyond the remit of mere match reporting, looking at other aspects of the sport. It is *their* seniority, *their* football expertise which earns extra space for the fixture, not the importance of the fixture itself.

Some of the *Times* coverage of the Women's Cup Final was written by female freelancers, underlining the occasional and low status in which the women's game is held by the newspaper, and its view of the perceived interest of the sport to its readership. As Woodhouse and Williams (1999:44) point out, there is no guarantee that pieces written by *females* about sport involving females will be positive accounts, with some female journalists, such as the *Evening Standard*'s Kate Battersby, taking a decidedly anti-feminist and anti-female stance. Indeed, in one of the best examples of *Times* coverage (*Times*, 26 April 1993) the journalist is *male* and writes a detailed and positive account of the women's game. As Jean Simpson pointed out, earlier in the chapter, why should we expect female journalists to champion women's sports when

these sports are so under-valued and when the best way to further your journalistic career is to concentrate on the male game?

There was also no significant rise in the amount of women's sports, generally, covered in the *Times* over this period of three decades as a proportion of *overall* sports coverage; the rise in coverage is mostly constituted by an increase in the coverage of *men's* sports (Brown 1992b:50). Why there has not been a proportionate increase in the amount of female sports coverage, we might sensibly postulate, is due to a number of factors. The *Times* continuation of coverage of public school sports and their desire to recruit and retain an affluent and influential readership (for affluent and influential read mostly male) via a concentration on elite sports and those available primarily on satellite TV, form part of the explanation. The linkage between ownership of newspapers and satellite TV channels should also be noted here.

There are many impediments then to the expansion of reporting of female sports, mostly put in place by those who set the agendas for coverage, with these barriers not being successfully breached because they are based on *assumptions* about what readers want, about the *value* of certain sports and about the *appropriateness* of female competition. *Times* coverage, and that of other newspapers in England, is seemingly lagging behind a more general societal debate and the gradual changing of views about what are no longer considered 'unsuitable' sporting activities for females, such as the discussions sparked by world welterweight champion Jane Couch's application for a licence to box in Britain. Couch's application was opposed by the sports governing body, the Boxing Board of Control, who refused to even read it, but who were eventually forced to grant the licence after their claim that the possibility of non-malignant breast lumps and the potential for Pre-Menstrual Tension, made women unsuitable boxers, was rejected by an industrial tribunal in 1998 (www.punkcast.com). If a proportionate increase in coverage of women's sports does occur in the *Times* and other newspapers, it will, surely, be a gradual increase and would still be as dependent upon the 'instincts' of those involved in the production of newspapers as it would be on any increase in female participation and international success in sport, or the supply of information from the governing bodies of women's sports.

Another constant in *Times* coverage of sport throughout this period is the carrying of men's minor domestic and overseas football results, and results from a number of 'minority,' elite sports, such as real tennis and rifles. Obviously, there is no suggestion that such results should *not* be provided by the *Times*, or should be sacrificed to make way for sports with larger participation bases, such as women's football. The *Times*' carriage of such results is a reflection of its strong public school/field sports background, but surely, as sports coverage and the breadth of available sports (for instance 'extreme' sports) has grown, the *Times*' adherence to its established sporting agenda now seems slightly skewed and quite dated.

Supply Side Issue

The FA does have a Communications Strategy for female football. The four main aims of the strategy are; to increase the profile of the women's game at every level, to create an image of the women's game as a desirable sport for girls and women, to place women's football on the media agenda and to create a distinct identity for football played by girls and women. The FA Media Officer with responsibility for women's football, Katherine Knight, has a clear agenda; 'I want women's football to be part of the sporting calendar' (in interview). The national sporting calendar is a list of events with which most people in the country can identify, such as the men's FA Cup Final and the Grand National, even though the audience may not be regular fans of the sport featured (Whannel 1992:15). This calendar, which enjoys high profile media coverage, foregrounds the events it covers and marginalizes those which it does not. The events in the calendar, which include the Oxford v Cambridge Boat Race, the Six Nations Rugby Union Championship and Royal Ascot, are not necessarily drawn from high participation sports, nor are they all from sports which generate huge amounts of sponsorship and income; they are often sports rooted in 'tradition,' the sports, in many instances, of the social elites and ruling classes, the cadre which is, largely, in charge of the production of the media which covers these events. These events access a *family* and *occasional* sports audience, as well as the mainstream sports one, thus making the calendar a target for the FA in helping to popularise the female game. To break into this calendar of events is to break through decades of media support for, and privileging of, such events (there is an equivalent non-sporting

calendar which gives TV coverage to events such as the Lord Mayor of London's Parade and the Last Night of the Proms) so when we see how entrenched media support for these events has become, we can see the difficulties Knight and her colleagues face when trying to force women's football onto the agenda.

The key themes of the FA strategy for promoting the female game are *credibility, equality, visibility, entertainment, education and health*. The game is to be promoted not just as a competitive sport, but as a way to encourage fitness, self-esteem, equity and respect; 'We have exactly the same product as in the USA, and I know that America is slightly different, but we have an athletic, exciting, interesting sport, so there's no reason why we can't do it,' (Knight in interview). The Communications Strategy is a formal encapsulation of what has already been happening within the FA on an ad hoc basis. Since September 1997, the FA has mailed its weekly *Bulletin* to its affiliated female clubs and the media, carrying not just results, but information on the latest developments within the female game. In Winter 1999, the first edition of the *Women's Football Newsletter* was produced, containing news on developments. The launch of the *Newsletter* coincided with the launch of the FA's web site, which carries historical, and the most recent, information on the female game. *On The Ball* magazine (now *She Kicks*) the only women's football magazine in England, has been part-funded, at times, by the FA. The magazine, which also has a website, has a comprehensive results service, regional round-ups and offers overviews of developments. However, financial problems mean that the bi-monthly issues have, in fact, been rather less frequent, with regularity of coverage being identified as a problem by Knight. One-off pieces in newspapers and football magazines, or on TV and radio are helpful, but people need to know *where* to look and *when* to look for information on the female game; if they have to struggle to find information, says Knight, then the impact of the publicity is lessened. Established in 1997, the Football Association's Coaches Association (FACA) has sessions dedicated to the female game at its annual conferences and publishes articles relating to the female game in the magazine it sends to members. In October 1998, the FA hosted the third UEFA Women and Football Conference, another opportunity not just for those involved with the game to exchange ideas and discuss policy, but for the FA to gain media coverage for the women's game.

A major part of the FA's promotional drive, especially with the advent of a professional women's league, is to secure TV coverage of the sport at the elite level, preferably on a terrestrial channel, for maximum exposure. Currently, BSkyB owns the rights to cover England women's internationals and women's Cup football. Although the frequency and standard of coverage has improved markedly recently, in comparison to the coverage of even lower division men's domestic fixtures, production values and pre-publicity for the women's game are poor. BSkyB does not always screen women's international fixtures, England's 2-0 defeat of Portugal in February 2000, for example, being passed over, as there was a full programme of men's domestic football on the same day which BSkyB gave priority to; this despite the fact that the women's international between England and Germany on March 8, 1998 attracted a BSkyB audience of 119,000, making it the 17th most popular of the 83 sports screened by them that week (*Bulletin* 3 December 1998). However, the relationship with BSkyB does seem to be improving. The satellite channel covered the inaugural Women's Charity Shield in 2000, live, including advertising the match in the week before the fixture. After the game, *Channel 4 News* showed footage of the teams running out at the start of the game, being presented to dignitaries, the goals scored during the match, and a clip about the USA women's team, reporting that football for females is the fastest growing sport in England (*Bulletin* 18 May 2000). Sky Sports web site also has a section which highlights elite domestic women's league games and international fixtures, although, again, as with much of the *Times* coverage, the copy is provided by a female freelancer, in this case, Cathy Gibb, and is irregular and brief.

The tender for the new TV contract for the women's game aims to address issues of inconsistency of coverage, vying for screening of a League match each week and the televising of one match from each round of both Cups, as well as live screening of all home internationals, tied to a promotional piece. It has been recommended that the FA appoints a full-time promotional and marketing officer for the female game as currently, they have to rely on one member of the Public Affairs Department promoting the game within the framework of their general football promotion remit. In the past, the television coverage of women's football has been described as 'at best tongue in cheek and at worst demeaning,' (Wellington 1998:118). The capturing of a TV deal to cover the proposed women's professional league in England is vital, in

terms of widening exposure and attracting sponsors, with Horowitz (in Guilianotti 1999:91) also offering that televising sport increases gate receipts in the US by enhancing team recognition and loyalty. If a deal offering regular, quality coverage is not secured then the FA's plans for a professional women's league may be scuppered. As a senior American TV executive stated, 'If you are on television you exist. If you are not on television, you don't exist. And that is what television has done to sport' (Gilady quoted in Alexander 1994:637).

In terms of *radio* coverage of women's football, exposure on *BBC Radio 5*, the station dedicated to news and sport, has been poor. In his role as the FA's Head of Public Affairs, David Davis met with the Deputy Director General of the BBC in December 1999 to discuss the still unsigned contract between the Corporation and the FA which had promised regular highlighting of the women's game. When Katherine Knight had previously met with a female producer at the station to discuss the lack of coverage, she was told to 'give me some pretty faces' (in interview) by the female producer if she wanted to get coverage for the women's national team.

Non-traditional media and non-news media have also been explored by the FA as avenues for promoting the female game. As well as their own web site and that of *On The Ball*, *Football 365*, *Umbro*, *Sky* and *Sportal* have also covered the female game, but again, this coverage was not regular. The *Times* and *Express* internet sites carry the articles published about the women's game in their newspapers, and *Ceefax* and *Teletext* are now regular sources of information. However, neither the internet nor TV text services are available in every household, so, their impact is limited. These sources may also merely be preaching to the converted, providing information to people who already know of, and support, the women's game and who are already receiving information from a number of different sources. This is why Knight is keen to persuade general football magazines and non-sports, non-news TV to carry female football storylines and features. In June 1999, coinciding with the 1999 Women's World Cup, the FA ran its first Women's Football Awareness Week, an attempt to put the game on the media agenda that week and after. The post-initiative assessment, carried out by the consultancy who organised the campaign, concluded that the promotion had been 'a success' and had produced media coverage worth £640,000 (Ptarmigan 1999:10). However, without a starting point from which to measure the

amount of coverage generated between June 12 and 20th 1999, and without rigorous after-event garnering of feedback from agencies and individuals involved, it is difficult to accept this assessment at face value.

Knight (in interview) also spoke of the importance of skilling elite female players, not just so that they can cope with calls for media interviews, but so that they can be more confident and obtain more support from sponsors, some of whom currently give very poor reward for the work of female players, whilst male players who are contracted to them, backed by the enormous success of the Premier League, and supported by agents acting on their behalf, reap huge rewards from commercial deals. 'We should be holistic,' continues Knight, indicating that the FA sees itself as having a role not just in promoting the female game, but in offering guidance to those who play it, particularly at the elite level, to aid that promotion and to assist players, trying to ensure that they receive more recognition and better reward for their endeavours. She is keen to select a small number of talented, young, players so that the media can focus on them as healthy, skilful, eloquent individuals, rather like members of the USA women's team, using this as a means of launching more interest in the game. Although this does pander to the idea of providing the media with what it wants and with what it thinks its audience will like (one can hardly imagine the FA picking females who are anything less than conventionally attractive) it does fit in with the overall strategy of the governing body of promoting the game as a healthy activity, a game of fitness and skill and a game which can be played to a 'serious' level, not a marginal sport which is a dead-end for participants in terms of opportunity and financial reward. Knight also recognises the importance of skilling up *clubs* deal with the press, as very few clubs have full-time workers dealing with the female game, and even if they do, they may not have the kind of skills needed to deal with sometimes negative and aggressive media approaches.

Strides then have been made in increasing the quantity and quality of coverage, and the range of mediums used, to publicise the women's game. However, as we have seen with respect to the analysis of coverage of the Women's Cup Final in the *Times*, and interviews with Knight, Simpson and O'Neill, there are still substantial obstacles to be overcome if the game is to generate the amount and type of coverage it craves.

‘You can’t appeal to a mass audience and that’s the whole dilemma. Sarah Winterburn [a freelance sports journalist] I have total respect for, but she knows if she wants to make money, in the long run, she has to do men’s [football]. XX XX [a presenter on a satellite sports channel] is an awful, awful specimen! Such a hypocrite and you can quote me on that. Some of them know now that they have to say certain things, but I remember doing an interview with her where she said women’s football was a joke, no, no, she didn’t say that. I was talking about female football *commentators* and she said that she switched the TV on once to watch golf and she heard a female commentator on BBC 2 and said “what does that silly cow know about golf!?” She said she preferred a man’s voice to do the commentary [...] XX XX [a terrestrial television presenter] is another; “Can’t see a woman being a commentator” she said; “they don’t have the credibility” [...] I think there’s a direct link between women’s football being taken seriously and women in men’s football being taken seriously’ (Simpson, J. in interview).

Simpson’s faith that the initially unique *Express* women’s football column was ‘safe’ has proved to be misplaced:

‘The biggest weapon in keeping it [the column] was that the *Times* now has a column, so I knew it was safe, but at the start of the last two seasons, it’s always been, “will it come back/will it not?” Also, there’s the internal politics, that the bloke who came up with the column left and does the new bloke keep his idea, hope it works and take credit for it, or does he drop it to make room for one of his own ideas? Mike Allen is the Sports Ed. and I don’t think he can dismantle it now. He wouldn’t get away with it.’ (ibid).

Speaking to Allen (in interview), I was told that the women’s football column would not be returning at the start of the season, but that it was scheduled to return at the end of September. Allen cited the departure of the journalist who had taken over the column from Simpson and pressure on space created by pre-Olympic and Olympic coverage as reasons for the column not being carried. However, the column did not reappear that season. *The Guardian*, perhaps spotting a gap in national newspaper coverage of the women’s game, began a weekly column on Mondays in April 2001, written by Paula Coccozza, who has been covering men’s football since 1994, including Italian football, for a variety of magazines and newspapers. It is not known whether this column will become a regular feature. Women’s football here is suffering the double bind of being squeezed out in favour of other sports and of not having a pool of journalists able and willing to report on it. As is the case with Holt

and Barnes in the *Times*, usually only *men* already well established in sports journalism feel confident enough to be able to report, from time to time, on the female game; a novel departure from their usual stomping ground. The *Times* now only carry irregular pieces, as their usual women's football columnist is not always available to provide copy. The situation with tabloid newspapers is even less encouraging, the pattern of expanding general sports coverage, as with broadsheets, being followed, but female and non-mainstream sports remaining relatively neglected or, as was the case with tennis player Anna Kournikova, coverage of female athletes remaining sexualised.

Knight, speaking of her own experiences, whilst working for the FA, of sports editors' reluctance to cover the female game, and also of the unwillingness of some *female* journalists to report on the sport says:

'Some still use the excuse that people just aren't interested. I don't know how they decide that. *Radio 5* asked what the story was when I told them there was a training camp before the Switzerland v England European qualifier and I said "well is that not a story?" and I gave him lots of other angles and it was only when I said that we were having problems with the US colleges releasing players that his ears pricked up and that's not the story I wanted to give him [...]. It's not sexism so much amongst journalists, as some female journalists aren't that interested' (Knight in interview).

The FA's Head of Football Development, Kelly Simmons, is also frustrated at the media's coverage of women and sport, and the way it sometimes chooses to highlight trivial or sensational moments in women's football, whilst ignoring it most of the time.

'I don't know how they choose what to show [...] the whole attitude to women and sport, not just women and football [...] we were talking about this at the Women's Sports Foundation conference. The press will cover an international but they won't cover league matches. They basically say that they won't provide the journalists to cover all the games. It's ridiculous. The tabloid press last year picked up on the fact that there was a match abandoned because it turned into a brawl. Then one about the player who decided to celebrate a goal by doing a Ravenelli [where a player pulls the front of their jersey over their head, exposing their chest] That's the attitude we are up against' (in interview a).

There are more women visible around sport on TV, but these tend not to be *participants*. Yes, Trish Adudu has made regular appearances as the *Channel 5* studio sports reporter, Eleanor Oldroyd is a regular on the BBC's breakfast TV sports slot and Sue Thearle appears on the Corporation's evening news programme as sports anchor. Before her death, Helen Rollason presented the BBC's flagship sport programme *Grandstand*, and Sue Barker has matched this and presented the BBC's long running *Question of Sport* quiz show, with comedian Jo Brand presenting one of the burgeoning raft of sports related comedy shows *You Cannot Be Serious* and making appearances on the 'laddish' sports quiz, *They Think It's All Over*. Gaby Yorath and Helen Chamberlain are pivotal in football magazine programmes, with Chamberlain about to front *BBC Radio 5's* new sports quiz *Hell's, Bells 'n' Buzzers* (*Ceefax*, 1 December 2000) and more women are writing on sports for a variety of newspapers. The visibility of females *participating* in sports though has hardly increased, despite a general surge in sports coverage across media.

A combination of media production values and assumptions about what audiences 'want' have been two major factors in rendering female athletes almost invisible in the media. The *quantity* of female sports coverage is minute when compared to that of male coverage, which has increased significantly, and even when female sports are covered, *qualitatively*, the coverage has lower production values than coverage of men's sport. Coverage is also often presented *in relation* to men's sports. Female athletes are frequently made more 'palatable' to audiences by portraying them as wives or mothers, as well as, or rather than, athletes, a device which also emphasises the *heterosexuality* of female competitors, although the media also exercises a fascination with the real and suspected lesbianism of many female athletes. In terms of the *supply side*, in the case of women's football, the FA still does not employ a worker whose sole function is to work with the media to increase coverage of the female game. Women's sport, generally, has been rendered invisible, and when it has made appearances, it has been as a footnote to the equivalent men's sport, with female competitors presented as non-threatening, as oddities, or as examples of why sports, sometimes even female appropriate sports such as tennis, are 'unsuitable' arenas for females.

Chapter Eight

International Comparisons: Football for Females in The United States of America and Norway

This chapter looks at the rationale for selecting the USA and Norway for comparison with the female game in England. It then looks at the development of soccer, and soccer for females, in the two countries. Although restrictions on space prohibit a full discussion of the 1999 Women's World Cup, held in America, aspects of the tournament will be highlighted, as they are indicators of wider themes in US women's soccer.

Choosing Countries for Comparative Research

The reasons for selecting the USA and Norway for comparison with England, in terms of the development of football for females, are multiple and based on both similarities and differences between the three countries. All three countries have legislation around equal opportunities and an infrastructure which facilitates sports development for females. Norway has a strong international tradition of both women's *and* men's football (the men's team was ranked 16th in the world by FIFA at May 2001). The USA, like Norway, is a world power in women's football, having won the World Cup in 1995 and the Olympic title in 2000. However, in the USA, soccer ranks low on the nation's list of popular sports, and the men's national team was ranked 18th in the world by FIFA (at May 2001), a position generally acknowledged as being flattering because of the ranking points available to the USA from competing in the weak CONCACAF Cup. The USA and Norway have also been described as 'European "border" countries' (Norberg 1998:65) with values and priorities more in tune with each other than with Europe. They are 'young' countries, which have undergone rapid societal changes. From the FA's point of view, comparative work is important because both the USA and Norway have female teams, across all age bands, which are consistently superior to England's.

Because of the comparative nature of the research, it was important to liaise with the national football associations of Norway and the USA and to establish contacts with practitioners in the two countries. It is interesting to note that, though men's football

has become an increasingly global sport and our awareness of the game in other countries has increased, the English FA was strikingly uninformed about the history and current state of the female game in the two chosen countries. Our own relationship with the FA meant that this establishment of links with the USA and Norway was made easier. Also, a the trip to the Women's World Cup in 1999 (WWC'99) allowed us to establish relationships, particularly with administrators and journalists, from the two countries. In terms of academic literature, there is much work published around Title IX in the US (sports equity in education legislation) and many analyses of the US media portrayal of sportswomen. There is also a considerable amount of research from Norway, especially on media coverage of women in sport there, and of Norwegian women's participation in sport. Tellingly, the Norwegian FA's national headquarters is also the base of one of that country's leading researchers of females in sport.

Information generated by comparative research can be fruitful in terms of beginning to understand how and why specific sporting traditions and trajectories are established in different countries, and whether such traditions or specific initiatives might be easily 'grafted' onto other cultures. However, there are factors to bear in mind when comparing the English experience of females and football to those of the USA and Norway. As Scruton et al (1997:101) point out, 'discourses around gender must be historically and culturally located.' In a presentation to FIFA in 1999, Fasting et al pointed to the relative paucity of cross-cultural research around women and leisure, which is surprising, they argued, when one considers that, 'all social research contains some form of comparison [...] thinking without comparison is unthinkable,' (FIFA Symposium 1999).

These authors remind us that sports research, historically, has focused on the natural sciences and, even though the past 30 years have seen an increase in the number of social and behavioural science studies, this work is primarily andocentric, and has concentrated on concepts such as role conflict theory, where a degree of angst amongst women playing sport is *assumed*. Looking at comparisons between sport and females in Norway and England, Pfister et al (1999:1) cite the basic problem of language as a potential barrier, or as a source of potential misinterpretation. The authors point out, for example, how 'physical activity' is not a uniformly understood

term, with figures in England for female participation being greatly inflated by the use of 'walking' as an admissible sports/physical activity/leisure category in research such as the General Household Survey.

Some Observations on the History of Sport and Gender: The USA

Sport in the US has been dominated by the themes of class, social integration and commercialism (Houlihan, 1997:55). Field sports were a symbol of elitism in the late colonial period, with immigration in the nineteenth century bringing a variety of sports to the States, with immigrants establishing sports clubs, and by the end of the century, the country had an elaborate infrastructure of voluntary and semi-commercial clubs catering for people of different classes, religions and ethnic origins. In the US, sport was a vehicle to integrate large numbers of immigrants into the country, whereas in England, such large scale immigration was not a feature. Another difference between the USA and Britain, in terms of sports development, is that whilst in Britain, as we have noted in Chapter Two, sport was seen as building character, in the USA *winning* at sport was viewed as character building (Houlihan 1997:252).

After World War One, the link between sport and citizenship in the USA was stronger than ever before, but federal government was marginal to this organisation of sport, with local government playing a more substantial role via school and collegiate sports provision. However, as was the case with many sports in Britain, technological advances, for instance around transport and communication, helped to stimulate fan appeal by allowing sports to become 'supralocal' (Ingham and Beamish, 1986:178). These two authors also argue that the progressive movement in the US saw sport as a means of resolving crises resulting from entrepreneurial capitalism, a means of instilling civic responsibility and of regulating the potential excesses of capitalism and restless labour. As in England, sport was seen as a means of providing 'moral rescue' and of promoting ideas of self-sacrifice (Ingham and Beamish, 1986:189).

However, unlike in England, recreational and educational-instructional programmes have remained subservient to *commercialism*. Sport has lacked the same *working-class* platform in the US that is evident in England because of the differing way that

the labour movement has been organised. Sport has also, claim Ingham and Beamish, been sold to the US public aggressively as *spectacle*, whereas in Britain, the sports sell has usually relied partly, at least, on sporting activities having some wider, traditional and local meaning. This is one of the reasons why it is so hard for 'non-traditional' sports to have an impact on the public consciousness in England.

In terms of sport and politic structures, America has a 'deep seated scepticism towards the efficacy of State action' (Houlihan 1997:52) and restricting federal expenditure is a popular campaign ticket, with the rule of thumb being that the less government there is when it comes to sport, the better. Indeed, Washington has no administrative capacity for sport, save the occasional Presidential Commission. Although government in the US is highly decentralised, Congressional and Presidential concerns over physical education in schools have led to federal funding in this area, reducing the autonomy of local government and the schools themselves. State departments have adopted an interventionist and regulatory approach around PE but provision remains variable, with four States having no requirement to provide curriculum PE, and teachers having little or no autonomy around delivery (Houlihan, 1997:220).

Until the early 1970s, sport in the USA was largely dominated by *white* male interests (Houlihan, 1997: 56). If we look at women and sport in the USA at the turn of the century, it too was marked by the social and cultural constraints we have identified in operation in Victorian England, and which were also a feature of the development of sport in Norway. The perceived tensions between sport and conventional femininity, for example, meant that US educators proposed an approach of moderation (Cahn, 1995:8) for women who wished to participate, attempting to hold at arms length the 'vitalists' who believed that women had finite mental and physical capacities and that exercise, either physical or mental, would be ruinous to health. In the 1880s, physical culture specialists founded the Sargent School and Boston 'Normal' (teacher training) School of Gymnastics, the graduates of whom spread their methods, in much the same way as Osterberg in Britain. There was also a class split between the 'rough' and the 'respectable', with some lower-class women favouring participation in boxing and wrestling, while upper-class women pursued the gentler activities of archery and golf.

As in Victorian England, middle and upper-class female participation in sport in the US was as much about the public display of a husband's wealth as it was about concern for exercise and enjoyment. In 1891, Bryn Mawr College founded the first college Women's Athletic Association in the US to organise the growing appetite amongst female students for a variety of sports, including basketball and rowing (Atkinson 1987:47). A few more 'radical' US women took up shooting, polo and auto racing, but the majority of women in sport at this time were engaged in gentle, non-competitive pursuits and were not drawn from the working-class, but from the middle and upper-classes.

Whilst opposition to sport for females in the USA was widespread, using the medical arguments already discussed earlier in this thesis, proponents saw sport as a way for women to realise their full potential, arguing that, 'athletics imbued women with such "human" attributes as loyalty' (Cahn, 1995:19). Linking sport to fashion and body image, others argued that sport improved health and beauty, and the founder of the Sargent School also spoke, in Darwinian terms, of the importance of fitness and attractiveness in securing mates to perpetuate the species (Vertinsky, 1987:260). Sargent, a Yale educated male medical doctor, was an anthropometrics advocate and established the college which in 1833 was one of only four 'normal' schools of physical education for females in the US (Atkinson, 1987:80).

However, those who wished to see more women engage in physical activity fought a constant battle against accusations that sport has a 'masculinising' effect on female players, and they were pressed to use the image of the hale and hearty, ruddy-cheeked woman to counter accusations that athletes would become 'mannish'. The medical lobby in the USA held that if females *must* play sport, it should be regulated, moderate exercise. However, many college women preferred more 'masculine' sports, and female physical educators established separate athletics departments at colleges where they ran adapted forms of men's games as a way of placating opponents of women playing sports. At the same time, they also responded to calls from female students for competitive sports, including basketball, which now has a successful female professional league in the US. Some educators were keen to celebrate the athletic female body, but the media was more interested in these women

as sexual objects, with the baseball writer and *advocate* of women's sports, Gartland Rice writing in the first decade of the twentieth century:

'She's got the "proper" curve, you know, well rounded out and neat,
She has the "speed" - nor do we refer unto her feet.
She always "makes a hit" to boot, and what is very nice,
She's ready at the proper time to "make a sacrifice"
(quoted in Cahn, 1995: 25).

In response to such attitudes, female educators decided to institutionalise their beliefs in moderation and sought to extend their professional control by setting up organisations governing physical activity for female students. Events mirrored what was happening in England, with programmes of activity being based around moderate, non-competitive exercise, girls being carefully monitored for any 'masculinising' effects, as well as an acceptance of some physical activity on the part of 'genteel,' middle and upper-class ladies, in order that they were fit enough to secure the purity of the national stock. Participation in sport by females was small-scale, concentrated within elite circles, controlled and, thus, tolerated by the State and sports governing bodies, as it was not perceived to be a threat to the position of women or to the status of men's sport.

However, the 1920s heralded a more adventurous age for some American females, with the 'flapper' era. Modern women of this era wore their hair short, used make-up and dressed in a way which exposed the arms and legs. This was the period when American Helen Wills Moody won eight Wimbledon Championships, female tennis players, swimmers and golfers became nationally recognised, the US sent its first women's team to the Olympics and, away from the elite arena, female athletes in the US participated across a range of sports in larger numbers than ever before (Cahn, 1994:31). The achievements of elite sportswomen were viewed partly with admiration, but partly with consternation, as they displayed 'masculine' traits of strength, stamina and the will to win. Increased affluence and leisure time meant that the 1920s was a 'golden age' for sports in the US generally, and whilst women's sports were never the main commercial attraction, they, too, flourished.

Married women in the USA rarely participated in sport and many working-class girls preferred the cinema and dance hall to the sports field, so we are still talking here of a narrow band of participants. However, the expansion of community sports programmes in the 1920s and 1930s meant more women from rural and urban settings, and from all social backgrounds, were participants, and the fame of a few and the boldness of many, coupled with the increase in the competitive nature of women's sports, posed a threat to the current order. Whilst there was negotiation and contestation between men and women, struggling either for further expansion of women's sports, or for a turning back of the tide, there would be a backlash against women's sport in the USA, just as there had been against women's football in England, in the early part of the twentieth century.

It was *female* US educators who lead the chorus of disapproval at the commercial aspects of some competitive sports and the potential for females to become too competitive, too 'masculine', in their efforts to win (Cahn, 1994:26). Educators also feared the increasing number of working-class women participating in sport and felt that this increased the risk of sports becoming 'mannish' and a danger to 'their girls.' These women formed alliances to try to keep control of women's sports with organisations from a variety of fields, from the medical profession, to men's amateur athletics, and reserved their greatest enmity for the men who coached and funded women's competitive sports.

What we have here is opposition to women's sports, set not just along gendered lines, but with added elements of middle-class fears about the behaviour of the working-class, issues of 'race', and also the challenge to the amateur ethos posed by commercialism, made all the more potent by the fact that many of these opponents of women's sport were *female* educators. Efforts to stop competitive sports at the interscholastic level meant that in 1945, only 16-17% of colleges had inter-varsity sport for females (Cahn, 1994:79). However, sport was still available to women, even in the Depression era, at the community level, with low budget softball and ten-pin bowling remaining popular, federal governments providing funds as a hoped for antidote to social unrest. The New Deal building programmes, as well as creating work for the unemployed, provided new sports facilities and opened up the chance to participate in sport to many working-class American women.

Soccer in the United States

Soccer in the US is a minority sport for males, with the US men's 1994 World Cup team described, disparagingly by a US journalist, as being made up mainly of 'new immigrants' (*San Jose Mercury*, July 4 1999). Soccer is a sport which lives in the huge shadows of American football, baseball and basketball, both collegiate and professional. Although the country's first men's club soccer team was in existence as early as 1862, and the USA has been a full member of FIFA since 1914, it is still viewed very much as a nascent soccer nation, with the hosting of the 1994 World Cup being granted to the USA partly in the hope of promoting the sport and providing a launch pad for a new professional league (see Guilianotti and Williams 1994 for more detail). Soccer is viewed as less prestigious than 'native' American sports; there are fewer opportunities to gain scholarships to play soccer at college and the financial rewards for its elite players are relatively small, with better players often moving to Europe. 'Soccer remained closely associated with immigrants, a stigma which proved fatal to its potential of becoming a popular team sport in the new world' (Markovits, 1990: 241). That opposition to soccer should be based on its 'otherness' is bizarre when one considers that baseball and American football are actually derivations of the 'British' sports of rounders and rugby. In a 1996 issue of *Soccer News*, Salisbury wrote that

'We have all seen it, heard it, read it. Soccer isn't a "real" sport. Soccer is boring. Soccer is only for geeky gym class kids with pocket-protectors and thick glasses. Soccer is a foreign game for hooligan, drunken psycho-fans. Soccer is just plain un-American' (www-ceg.ceg.uiuc.edu).

Attempts to establish men's soccer as a popular, economically viable professional sport in the US have had a chequered past, with the failure to land a long term, national TV contract cited as a major reason for the sport's failure to capture the national imagination (Markovits, 1990:252). The United States Football Association (USFA) was granted membership of FIFA in 1914 and the country's original professional league, the American Professional Soccer League (APSL) was established in 1921, with an indoor league following in 1923, the Association sending a USA team to the first World Cup in Uruguay in 1930, some 20 years before the English first competed in the finals. In 1958, an International Soccer League (ISL)

was established in the US, and for more than a decade, overseas men's club teams visited America to play US teams. Two major new professional leagues were set up in the USA in 1967, one sanctioned by the USFA and one independent, and the two merged to form the National American Soccer League (NASL) which had 18 member teams by 1974 and signed a national TV contract in 1977.

Arguably, the history of men's professional soccer in the USA has been rather more successful in creating acronyms than interest amongst fans and the media. The game had constantly tried to re-invent itself, using rule changes and the indoor, as well as outdoor version of the sport, to attract fans to stadia and to try to capture a lucrative television deal which would attract viewers and sponsors. The US game has looked abroad, importing elite players in order to try to attract new fans and satisfy existing ones. In 1977, for example, after the signing of overseas stars Pele and Beckenbauer, 77,691 fans watched a domestic play-off game at Giants Stadium New York between the New York Cosmos and Fort Lauderdale Strikers, but average gates were a meagre 13,400 (www.soccerspot.com) not enough to support the high wage bills of these stars, and clubs were bankrupted.

In another attempt to popularise soccer in the US, *indoor* soccer was adopted as the way forward in the USA in the 1980s, in the hope that its shorter games and higher scoring might prove a more attractive product for fans and a better TV package than the outdoor game, which was viewed as too strategy driven, with few natural breaks for commercials (www.soccerspot.com). Soccer in the USA has been, 'stigmatised as slow, boring and devoid of action because of the relative paucity of goals compared with any of the "big three"' [baseball, basketball and gridiron] (Markovits 1990:242). The 1994 men's World Cup, it was hoped, would have wide popular appeal because it might appeal to the sporting patriotism of 'mainstream' Americans, as well as country-of-origin support from US ethnic minorities. It was hoped that Major League Soccer (MLS) launched after the Tournament, would be able to ride this wave of fan and media interest to capture the US national sports imagination. MLS still operates, but both its 'minority' sports image and the relatively poor quality of its play leaves it immeasurably behind the Big Three in terms of its permeation of the American sporting psyche.

Perhaps it is this image among many men in the US of soccer as an imported minority, ‘novelty’ sport, which lacks most of the physical excesses of gridiron, and also the statistics driven discourses which make up much of the language of US male fan sports culture, which helps to explain why females have been positively *encouraged* to colonise it, overshadowing their male counterparts and even winning the approval of the country during WWC’99. In many ways, soccer in the US is the antithesis of how it is commonly viewed in England. It is a non-contact sport, in comparison to gridiron and is, therefore, considered a physically and ‘morally’ safe activity for female participation. In England, the game is still viewed, despite its recent ‘feminisation’, as a highly physical ‘man’s game’ with strong working-class roots. For women to take the playing of football seriously in England is, apparently, still to imperil their femininity.

Professional sport in US urban centres is also dominated by *black* players. Men’s soccer in the US, by contrast, has its greatest appeal amongst US Hispanics, and soccer for females finds most popularity in white suburbs, where it can be played by younger males and females together. Whilst it would be foolish to suggest that there is an absence of homophobia in women’s sport in the US, in America, to be a female soccer player is, generally, to be seen as fit and graceful; to be an athlete. American women who chose to play gridiron are unlikely to be viewed in the same way.

Structurally, female soccer in the USA is almost unrecognisable in comparison to its English counterpart. The women’s game in England experienced a period of considerable popularity early in the last century, and Dick Kerrs travelled to play exhibition games in the USA in the 1920s (Lopez, 1997: 8) but it is not until the late 1970s, that the women’s game in the USA made its mark.

Fig. 8.1: Soccer Participation in the USA (millions)

	1987	1990	1993	1999	19981	1yr +/-	11yr +/-
Men	9.333	10.216	9.711	11.081	10.679	-3.6%	+14.4%
Women	6.055	5.729	6.654	7.145	7.497	+4.9%	+23.8%
Total	15.388	15.945	16.365	18.226	18.176	-0.3%	+18.1%

(Source: www.us-soccer.com).

Indeed, women's football moved from virtual obscurity to having almost 7.5 million female players (Fig. 8.1) and the USA became the holders of Olympic and World titles simultaneously in just 20 years. Key to this remarkable progress is a piece of equality legislation; Title IX.

The Governance of US Women's Sport

A key player in the governance of US sport was the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW). Cahn (1995: 258) claims that the group's success led to such a backlash that it eventually folded, but that its work in the field of sports equity in education created innumerable opportunities for US females. Up until its formation, young women with an interest in sport would, at best, be ushered into a career as a PE teacher. Existing organisations within women's collegiate sports met at a workshop in 1969 to look at issues such as provision, competition and development, and it was from this meeting that the AIAW sprang. The organisation was formed in 1971, one year before Title IX was enacted, and was a shaper of the legislation and helped fight groups, such as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) who opposed it. When Anson Dorrance, a soccer coach from the University of North Carolina, who went on to become US women's coach, and Chris Lidstone, from Colorado, approached the NCAA in 1981 to establish a women's collegiate soccer league, they were told by the organisation, which Pettus (1998:249) describes as 'lethargic' towards women's sports, that as they could not muster the 80 teams necessary to constitute a large enough pool, a league would not be established. So, the two coaches turned to the AIAW, which allowed them to run a small league, drawing on the 50 or so teams operating at the time.

Despite the common goal of increasing opportunity for females, at first the AIAW was torn between mimicking men's programmes and building new approaches to athletics. The NCCA wished to establish a women's soccer championship in 1981, and the eventual passing of this motion resulted in a loss of members for the AIAW and the loss of an ABC television contract worth around half a million dollars (Pettus, 1998:252). In such circumstances, the organisation voted to dissolve itself, feeling that it could no longer achieve its goals and that its existence was detrimental to women's sport. The AIAW had been part of massive changes in the funding and

organisation of women's collegiate sport in the USA, which had taken place over just a decade, but a consequence of this success was that the body was challenged by the established collegiate governing body, and whilst many of its members remained involved in collegiate sports organisation, there was no longer a unified organisation dealing exclusively with the development of sport for females at US universities. Women's collegiate sport was to be governed by the existing order.

Title IX and the Development of Female Sport in the USA

In 1971, a Connecticut judge asserted that: 'Athletic competition builds character in our boys. We do not need that kind of character in our girls' (www.ed.gov/pubs/TitleIX). In 1972, the Educational Amendments Act was passed and one section of this law, Title IX, prohibits discrimination against females in Federally funded education, including athletics programmes:

'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,'
(www.dol.gov/dol/oasam/public/regs/statutes/titleix).

The legislation was modelled on the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and was followed by Acts addressing issues around disability (1973, 1990) and ageism (1975). Today, females in the USA who were under 10 years of age in 1972 have much higher sports participation rates than females who grew up pre-Title IX, 55% compared to 36% (www.feminist.org). US goalkeeper, Brianna Scurry, said recently: 'We never really went through what girls did years ago [...] what we've been able to do [...] is because of Title IX,' (*New York Times*, July 17 1999).

In 1972, around 31,000 women in the US were involved in college sport; this has since more than tripled, and spending on female collegiate sport, which was \$100,000 per annum in 1972, in 2001 was \$200 million. In 1972, on average, colleges had 2.1 female sports teams; this is now 7.7 per college. In 1971, 300,000 girls played high school sport in the US; in 1997 the number was 2.4 million. The corresponding figures for boys are 3.7 million and 3.8 million; almost static. However, as it only

applied to educational programmes and activities, the legislation did not cover community based programmes, such as Little League baseball, leaving this as an arena of discrimination for large numbers of females, League officials having spent almost \$2million fighting to maintain girls' exclusion from Little League (Dowling, 2000:96).

Title IX though was not an unopposed piece of legislation and has had some negative repercussions for females in sport in the US. As Goode says of the male dominance of sport: 'They [men] enjoy an exploitative position [...] why should they give it up?' (quoted in McKay, 1997:147). Almost three decades after its passage, schools and colleges are still not uniformly complying with the central tenets of the legislation (McDonald, 2000: 41). From its inception, politicians attempted to drive through new legislation to dilute Title IX's impact, and the NCAA immediately complained that male sport programmes would suffer if girls programmes had to be funded equally.

Nor has the legislation guaranteed parity for female *coaches* in terms of pay. Many colleges recruited male coaches to help them establish women's soccer programmes and, if male and female athletics programmes were merged, in many cases it was the *male* coach who took charge of the new department. In terms of pay, the average salary for the soccer coach of a US college men's team is \$42,000, but for a women's team, it is \$38,592 (www.iastate.edu). At the 'Big 12' US colleges, the average salary difference between the head coach of a men's team and a women's team was between \$18,000 and \$25,000 in 1996-97 (www.chronicle.com). Salaries for coaching the more traditional and valued sports of baseball, basketball and gridiron are also higher than for soccer.

The Women's Sports Foundation found that around 75% of head and assistant coaching positions at US colleges are held by men (www.womenssportsfoundation.org). Only 1.9% of head coaches of male teams are female, whereas 45% of women's team head coaches are male. As women's sports become more popular and lucrative, men have claimed leadership roles within them, denying females the ability to control the sports in which they participate. This male leadership is also part of the *legitimising* of female sport: 'If sports are to be taken seriously, they must be run by men' (Boxhill, in Wigmore, 1996:64).

Title IX only truly came into operation in 1975, because of the need to build mechanisms to enforce it. Even after this gap between the legislation being passed and it being implemented, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) did not vigorously pursue complaints lodged under the auspices of the legislation. Under the Reagan and Bush Snr. administrations, the Departments responsible for the enforcement of Title IX (Health Education and Welfare and, later, Education) dragged their feet, and a 1984 Supreme Court decision (*Grove City v Bell*) said that the ruling covered only programmes funded by federal law; other athletics programmes could continue as pre-Title IX. This decision was overturned in 1988 by the Civil Rights Restoration Act, which asserted that an entire educational institution was covered by the legislation, even if only parts of it received federal funding, and the OCR publicly affirmed its commitment to Title IX. In 1992, the Supreme Court over-ruled Federal and Appeals Courts to say that punitive damages were allowed under Title IX, so victims of sexual harassment or discrimination were entitled to financial compensation.

The formulation and implementation of Title IX was, undoubtedly, influenced by the US women's movement. The achievements of feminism in the US at the turn of the century, and the suffrage victory of 1920, were not so much achieved through being plugged into male political politics and professions as from the building of separate female institutions. For instance, when male colleges refused to accept female students, 'sister colleges' educated women (Freedman, 1995: 76). However, the women's movement was never universal and failed to build on its separate institution building approach in the 1920s, and its leadership allowed some members to exploit popular racist sentiment. After the 1920 victory, the women's movement declined in terms of size and influence, after beginning to adopt men's values and integrate into their institutions (Freedman, 1995: 79). As soon as male politicians recognised that females no longer constituted a solid voting bloc or political organisation, they refused to appoint women to powerful political positions, denying them influence within organisations, so while many feminists remained active in politics, the women's movement as a whole remained independent from political parties (Sapiro, 1986:122).

Between 1945 and 1960, there was no co-ordinated women's movement to speak of in the USA, but female political activism during this period meant women's rights made

significant progress at the federal level and paved the way for the second wave of feminism which would emerge in the late 1960s. After this time, the women's movement gained momentum and two strands emerged: females who held positions of power and who were active at various levels of government, and younger women who were part of *social* movements (Tronto, 1995:399). The movement adhered during the 1970s to see the enactment of the Equal Rights Amendment Act, but groups with specific identities, such as black or lesbian women, sprung up during this decade and beyond. In the Reagan/Bush Snr. era of the 1980s, as we will see later, there was a backlash against feminism, the movement recovering some ground during the Clinton administrations.

In terms of the impact of Title IX on women's soccer, Brown University, Rhode Island began the first official women's varsity soccer programme in 1977. Pettus reports (1998:247) that several top women's colleges had offered soccer in the 1920s, after the Committee on Women's Sports had created a 'diluted' version of the game, in terms of time played, pitch dimensions and the level of aggression permitted. However, it was only after the passing of Title IX that the game was played regularly, and in an organised format, at colleges.

Anson Dorrance, the US women's Head Coach from 1986-1994, is still a soccer coach at the University of North Carolina and is credited with helping to build US women's soccer, via his talent identification and training methods. He established a women's soccer programme at North Carolina in 1979, with the first National Championships being held the following year. Dorrance says that after making 'a travesty' (Dowling, 2000:142) of the first women's teams he coached, he came to the conclusion that men and women are completely different; that women would rather stop playing than risk damaging a relationship with a team mate, whereas men are more 'objective'. He based his theories on those of US female developmental psychologists of the late 1970s and early 1980s, such as Jean Baker-Miller and Carol Gilligan, who reacted to earlier 'constructionist' feminist writers by saying that there are authentic differences between the sexes which women should claim and draw strength from. Dorrance believes that women must better fit their desire to play sport at the highest level with their need to be liked by team mates, and that they have to work harder to hone their competitive edge.

The US is reliant on its collegiate system to produce elite female players and, within this narrow recruitment band, it is further reliant on a core number of colleges to develop international players. Notwithstanding the fact that the USA now has an established *structure* for the female game, which links a professional league with a financed collegiate system and a successful international team, as in England, key proselytising individuals, whether players, administrators or coaches, have still been responsible for much of the development and promotion of the game in the USA.

Since 1992, when Title IX was enhanced, 75 US Universities have established women's soccer teams; during this period, the next biggest increase in female teams was in fast-pitch softball, with 19 new teams. In 1981, only 17 Division 1 college female soccer teams were in existence; in 1998, this figure was 252. In 1981, the NCAA had 77 women's soccer teams; in 1998, this figure was 959.

Fig. 8.2

Top 10 sports for women, based on total number of Division 1, 2 and 3 colleges that fielded teams for the 1998-99 school year

Sport	Number of schools
Basketball	1004
Volleyball	963
Cross country	891
Tennis	877
Softball	832
Soccer	791
Track (outdoor)	672
Track (indoor)	560
Swimming	457
Golf	346

(Source: *USA Today*, 9 July 1999).

The Development Pathway

The USA then, produces its elite female players via a system which culminates in college attendance, in much the same way it does with elite competitors from a variety of other sports. But what of the pathways to soccer, pre-university? I asked a number of US coaches and Bobby Howe, Director of Coaching and Education for USSoccer, to outline how girls progress from expressing an interest in wanting to play the game to becoming members of the national squad.

Many US girls start out playing soccer between the ages of five and nine, in recreational leagues, as do boys. There are three youth soccer bodies in the USA, with the Boys and Girls Clubs of America also running soccer programmes. The Soccer Association for Youth (SAY) runs programmes, but the American Youth Soccer Organisation (AYSO) and United States Youth Soccer Association (USYSA) are the two major developmental groups. AYSO has 630,000 members and was established in 1964; it is funded, mainly, through affiliation fees, but also has 20 national sponsors and licensees. The organisation is active in 47 States and claims 250,000 coaches, referees and other volunteers, with 55 staff at its headquarters. Of the 630,000 members, 30% are female, with 50% as their female membership target, something which has been achieved in some communities.

The USYSA is the youth arm of USSoccer and has 500,000 volunteers and administrators and 250,000 dedicated coaches for its 2.5 million youth players between the ages of five and 19. It has 55 member state associations, that is, one in each state and two in California, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas. It was established in 1974 with just over 100,000 members. Its four operating regions have State Associations (East, MidWest, South and West), bodies made up of representatives from members, leagues, clubs and teams. The delegates from these State Associations elect a National Board of Directors who run the non-profit, educational organisation. AYSO and USYSA are the third largest amateur leisure groups in the US, after ten-pin bowling organisations and the National Rifle Association.

Fig. 8.3
Female Soccer Participation by USYSA Region

South	5,233,000	28.9%
North Central	4,506,000	24.9%
Northeast	4,211,000	23.3%
West	4,148,000	22.9%
Total	18,098,000	100%

(www.us-soccer.com).

Fig. 8.4**Male and Female Soccer Participation by Age in the USA**

6-11 years	7,376,000	40.8%
12-17 years	6,034,000	33.3%
18-24 years	3,208,000	17.7%
35+ years	1,480,000	8.2%
Total	18,098,000	100%

(www.us-soccer.com).

Young people, typically, play in one of 6000 leagues across the US run by one of the two organisations, until the ages of nine or 11 (USYSA Class 4) and then the divide begins to be made between those who wish to continue playing purely for fun and those who wish to aim towards the elite programmes. Players try out for elite club programmes, and at the age of 12/13, the state selection process begins, with states sub-dividing into districts, with those who shine at the district level moving into the state squads. State teams play within the four national regions, from which regional teams are selected and the national squad is selected from the regional teams. This process repeats between the ages of 13 and 18.

The development path, says Michael Lindeburg, coach of Acorns, a California Class 1 youth team (in interview) is well defined. He also points to the Olympic Development Programme (ODP) as a method of identifying the best players in the country, which has the added advantage of not requiring a formal invitation through an established programme to the first testing levels. Howe recognises that high school female soccer is vastly inferior to elite club play and points to the importance of college programmes to take forward the game. There are minor variations within this development pathway, but women making it to the US team via another route are exceptions, with Shannon Macmillan, who is from a lower socio-economic background than most of her team-mates, and who was passed over for the ODP, being an example of how it is possible to move to the highest level in the US without adhering strictly to the developmental pathway (*Boston Globe* 4 July 1999). USSoccer has produced a wide ranging strategy document for all its forms of soccer (Project 2010) covering issues on and off the field of play. Although the report's main thrust is to improve the *male* game, the structural and attitudinal changes it encourages are applicable to the female game, as Project 2010 seeks to address the weaknesses inherent in USSoccer's development of the sport generally.

Soccer Today for Females in the USA

The most recent reliable available statistics tell us that of all players in the USA, 39%, or approximately nine million, are female, and that in high schools, 191,350 girls play, compared to 272,810 boys (Lopez, 1997:166). WWC'99 demonstrated that there is a media, sponsor and fan appetite for the elite female game, so with these factors in mind, the US has attempted to ride the success of WWC'99 by launching a national professional women's league aiming to build on the USISL governed 'W' league (established in 1995) and the amateur Women's Premier Soccer League (WPSL) serving the West of the US, which has been running since 1998 and is sanctioned by the USASA. Neither of these two leagues has a national television deal or a large fan base

In December 1996, after the US Olympic female soccer win, sports product companies *Nike*, *Reebok*, *Adidas* and *Umbro* discussed establishing a women's soccer circuit in the USA but, despite these talks, it was only in 1998 that the National Soccer Alliance (NSA) began, chaired by Anson Dorrance. With low ticket prices, aiming at crowds of 3000, and a 10-week April-June season, salaries were to be profit-related and pitched at \$15,000-\$30,000; *Nike* and *Reebok* provided sponsorship. At the end of the regular season, two All Star women's teams were chosen and they toured five US cities in five weeks playing for the All Star Cup. The tour included open practices, autograph signing sessions and clinics to maximise exposure for the League.

The growing gap between the standard of US college soccer and that required to be successful at the international level has been identified as an area of concern in the USA (Howe, in interview). Many US commentators see the setting up of a women's professional league as a way of reducing this gap. USSoccer commissioned a feasibility study in 1999, financed by the Disney Channel's founder John Hendricks, the man behind previous plans for a professional women's league. Alan Rothenberg, Chair of the WWC'99 Board of Directors, envisioned an 8-12 team league, playing spring and summer in major venues, such as Los Angeles, New York and Chicago.

Rothenberg commented, however, that blue chip companies and TV companies would, 'probably hang onto their pens and wallets' (www.sportsillustrated.cnn.com)

until after the Sydney Olympics in 2000, and that the league simply could not operate without their backing. Urging caution, Rothenberg contended that, even with the internationally low standing of the US men's team, the male game's more proven market meant MLS could be launched more swiftly after a men's World Cup than a women's league could be after WWC'99, and that it was wiser to wait and, 'do it right,' because if the attempt, 'falls on its face [...] that'll make another 20 years before anyone wants to try again' (www.wwc99.com).

There were further developments in February 2000, when a consortium claimed it had secured \$40 million worth of backing from cable TV companies to begin an eight team Women's United Soccer Association league (WUSA) in April 2001. The eight backers included media and entertainment company Time Warner. In May 2000, after MLS decided not to file an application to run the league, the WUSA bid was accepted and a professional women's league was launched in spring 2001. Over five years, a minimum of \$40 million will be invested, with room for expansion from an eight to a 12 team league. WUSA has named its first eight franchise venues: Atlanta, Bay Area, Boston, Carolina, New York, Philadelphia, San Diego, and Washington DC. The League has a four year agreement with Turner Sports Inc, which means 88 games will be televised on the Turner Television Network and CCN/Sports Illustrated through that period, and will be available to audiences beyond the USA.

Problems for the Female Game in the USA

So far, the USA has been portrayed as a very positive locale for females wishing to play soccer, but the structure of female football in the US is still fragile. The NSA report (www.us-soccer.com) exploring the possibility of a professional women's league, points to seven areas of concern. Firstly, it identifies *poor infrastructure*, which blocks the use of marketing tools. Yes, women's soccer is run by a professional organisation, USSoccer, but it is also substantially volunteer-driven. This links to the second concern raised in the report that the *administration* of the women's game is a 'political quagmire at virtually all levels'. There is *fragmentation and attrition at the youth soccer level* and, as with many voluntary sector organisations, infighting seems almost compulsory. Also identified as problematic is the fact that, although Project 2010 now exists, there had *never previously been a unified plan to advance the*

women's game to semi-professional, let alone, professional status and, tied to this is the US's lack of expertise and experience in handling amateur sports franchises.

Low player transfer to the administrative side of the game also provides a worrying drain on experience. The final two points are, as if the previous five were not handicap enough, that huge barriers exist concerning the *attitudes of sports fans* to the game and the women's game, and *issues around playing structure*. Women's soccer is in a 'double bind'; soccer is not universally accepted by general sports fans in the USA, and women's soccer is unfavourably compared to the men's game by those who are already fans of soccer. Many female players are also dissatisfied with the structure of the sport, with a large section of graduates not being challenged by the amateur elite club system, leaving them to stagnate in the USA or having to look for other opportunities, such as playing in Japan.

Participation in soccer in the USA is not something all females can afford. Howe has already acknowledged this, saying; 'We are hoping that ability, not affordability, will be the criteria for selection' (in interview). The black US goalkeeper, Brianna Scurry, says of soccer provision for girls in poorer, urban areas: 'There's not a lot of grass in the inner city (*Chicago Tribune*, June 21 1999). The Acorns coach, Michael Lindeburg, is angered by the lack of outreach work to identify new talent in these areas and to make the game more accessible, saying that the governing body, 'doesn't do much, in fact, it does nothing to try to identify disadvantaged players kicking a ball of cloth and rope around a dirt lot' (in interview). Lindeburg says that most young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds have never heard of the ODP, and who amongst them could afford to fund themselves through it if they had?

In short, soccer for females in the US offers opportunities, but only to young people whose families can afford to equip their growing daughters with kit, and who can pay club fees and transport their charges to training camps, etc. In comparison to equipment-laden gridiron, soccer only really requires boots and shin pads, but the equipment is a drop in the ocean of overall costs. Even though scholarships are available at colleges, the levels of educational achievement and financial means required to get to that stage are far beyond the reach of many aspiring girls from working-class backgrounds. The figures below (Figs. 8.5 and 8.6), although they are

problematic because they combine male and female participation rates, illustrate that soccer in the US is still accessed most by participants who are white and in higher income brackets.

Fig. 8.5

Male and female soccer participation in the USA by household income

Less than \$25,000	5,029,000	27.8%
\$25,000-\$49,000	6,563,000	36.2%
\$50,000-\$74,999	3,289,000	18.2%
\$75,000+	3,217,000	17.8%

(Source: www.us-soccer.com).

Fig. 8.6

Male and female soccer participation in the USA by ethnicity

White	13,807,000	76.3%
Hispanic	2,262,000	12.5%
African American	1,377,000	7.6%
Other	652,000	3.6%

(Source: www.us-soccer.com).

New Directions

Moving the focus away from *playing*, USSoccer does not currently offer, nor is it planning to offer, female only *coaching* courses. Approximately 10% of its coaching course candidates are female, a figure which has risen over the past few years. The same ‘no women only’ approach applies to female referee training, with women officiating in men’s leagues. Of approximately 100 people who work for USSoccer, between 40% and 50% of staff positions are filled by females. The General Manager of the men’s national team is female, as are the Director of Constituent Services, Manager of Coaching Programmes, Women’s National Team Coach, National Coaching Co-ordinator a member of the in-house legal team, and the National Teams Travel and Events Co-ordinator (Howe, in interview).

Youth development is now key for the Americans, as many of their top performing players at WWC ‘99 and at the 2000 Olympics have decided to bow out of the game, at least at the international level. This lack of strength in depth was highlighted recently on a Team USA tour to Australia. Many of the WWC’99 team refused to

travel, holding out for more lucrative new contracts, potentially forcing selectors to turn to a pool of players with little or no international experience to fill the vacuum. Many players felt that USSoccer was not rewarding them for their success over the previous three years. The dispute was settled in February 2000, when the players' minimum monthly salary was raised from \$3,150 to \$5,000, with a share of up to \$800,000 if the team won Olympic gold in Sydney.

Further encouragement may also be taken from the CONCACAF decisions that the prizes for the 2000 Women's and Men's Gold Cups would be the same, with the winners of each trophy receiving \$150,000. The pre-Sydney deal also incorporates support for female youth programmes, building in financial support at the same level as for boys' programmes, with female senior international salaries now pitched at around what the average MLS club professional male would earn, but still below the level of the US men's team salary. Add to this the loss of the 2000 Olympic Final to Norway, and it becomes apparent that women's soccer in the USA will face a number of challenges in the future, as it is confronted with the task of constructing a more robust playing structure and the administrative machinery needed to drive forward its plans.

If the USA is to produce a system which encourages more *depth* of talent, the warnings of the NSA business plan must be heeded. A professional league would not only keep players active, it would also plug the yawning gap between international games, so keeping media and audience interest alive. NSA research also indicates that newspaper readers; 'Don't care about sport unless it has a top pro league' (www.us-soccer.com). USSoccer has only had a solid financial foundation for a decade and MLS's future is still not secure; the poor track record of *men's* professional soccer in the US means that some see the new women's league as another failure on the horizon.

The 'spin' that the promoters of the US women's league are using to secure fans is a familiar one; that; 'Women possess a natural allure,' (www.us-soccer.com) and that women's soccer is 'fun'. This approach has been taken, rather than one which emphasises the female game's skill, flair and physicality. The professional league plan is 'realistic', indicating that the women's game, amidst other sports in the USA,

would not be headline news, but could be promoted to a broad fan-base, with creative marketing. The report adopts a typically American late-modern view of sport as entertainment, referring to the league as; ‘A ready made entertainment package able to integrate itself within both the sports and popular culture of the US’ (www.us-soccer.com).

Sponsorship, *Nike* and Women’s Sport in the USA

‘This is not about how cool I am, how big I am, money, chromosomes or a single player. This is my game. This is my future. Watch me play.’

The above WWC’99 slogan is striking, as it purports to reject both commercialism and biology. This is startling when one considers the previously explored history of opposition to women in sport, based as it is on biological arguments, as well as the raft of commercial interests supporting WWC’99. One of these, *Nike*, who sponsor the US team, targeted US women in the early 1990s, realising that women were the fastest growing group of purchasers of sporting goods in the US. Women buy 80% of all workout gear in the USA and women’s team sports are recording the biggest swell in popularity of all sports in that country (Goldman and Papson 1998:118).

In 1979, when they were first alerted to the potential of the female market, *Nike* dismissed targeting women, saying that they felt to pursue the female market ‘would compromise [*Nike*’s] authentic and serious sport image’ (Cole and Hribar 1995:359). At this point, *Reebok* aimed at the female market, as it attempted to narrow the sales gap on its competitor, overtaking *Nike* on female sales in the late 1980s. In response, *Nike* launched a series of TV and magazine advertisements, starting with the 1991 ‘empathy’ campaign, a response to research which showed that females do not respond to the sort of hero-worship sports advertising found to be attractive to men. The campaign narrative, instead, revolved around *equity* issues, recognising that women’s attempts to play sport have always been challenged.

One of the advertisements features the US women’s football team in a ‘spoof’ on marriage vows, with the team members pledging themselves to *each other*. This is

typical, claim Goldman and Papson (1995:121) of *Nike's* promotion of female solidarity and commitment *on* the field, with the absence of such camaraderie *off* it. This contrasted with its advertisements for men's sports apparel. In 1995, *Nike* ran a controversial, 'If You Let Me Play' commercial, in which girls faced the camera and recited statements about how participation in sport can provide a number of health and personal safety benefits for females (Goldman and Papson, 1995:133, for the full text). This campaign was presented as more of a series of public service announcements than company commercials. The drive behind this campaign, said the creators, apart from, we must assume, selling product, was that, without knowing it, many parents and teachers buy into the idea that girls need to be protected from a variety of things, including sport, but that sport can actually provide the setting for girls to grow in confidence and build self esteem which will help them to develop important social skills.

One year after this campaign, the sister advertisement 'There's a girl being born in America' was run by *Nike*, built around the idea that girls should be given a sporting chance (Goldman and Papson 1995:137). It is interesting to note that the language used in both of these campaigns revolves around girls having to *ask* for a chance to play sport: '*If you let me play/and then someone will give her a chance*'. Girls are asking permission and *Nike*, in identifying fathers as a target audience for the commercials, were clear that it is men who have the power to grant such permission. Finally, in its advertisements built around US soccer player Mia Hamm, *Nike* points an ironically accusing finger at television, saying that the world's best footballer will not be seen by many people this Sunday, 'Because all the networks agree, the best football player in America [pause] isn't good for ratings' (Goldman and Papson, 1995:141).

Nike is presenting itself here as a company which understands the feelings of sportswomen, which understands the barriers they face and which is not afraid to criticise those who construct and maintain the barriers; a company which, 'transforms its image from rabid business competitor to good public citizen' (LaFrance 1998:118). Yet, *Nike* exploits female workers in third world countries where many of its products are made, with a worker from one of their factories, visiting the US, saying that the women employed at her workplace thought the *Nike* maxim 'Just Do It' meant that

they should not protest about conditions and pay and should just get on with their work (Cole and Hriber 1995:366).

Nike, in effect, peddle an 'old and co-opted version of the white man's burden' (LaFrance, 1998: 132) claiming that it is better to employ women overseas at below minimum wage than for them to be unemployed, with the female purchaser of *Nike* products then becoming part of the exploitation of other females. The Company supports the oppression of some females, whilst creating a narrative built around 'one size fits all' classical humanism, 'constructing an homogenised ideal of liberated womanhood' (McDonald, 2000:41). *Nike's* motto encourages women to forget about constraints placed upon them in their pursuit of playing sport (Cole and Hribar, 1995:353) by encouraging them to pull themselves up by their bra straps (McDonald 2000: 40) to be individuals, because either the work of feminism is done or feminism is responsible for the inequalities facing American women and men (the 1980s Reagan era backlash against feminism is discussed in Cole and Hribar ((1995:356)) and McDonald (2000:37)). The *Nike* ethos then, despite its apparent recognition of group oppression, as seen in its 'empathy' advertisement, is one of *individualism*.

US Media Coverage of the 1999 Women's World Cup

Overtly sexist articles were not widespread during WWC'99, especially when one considers the huge volume of reporting. That they were featured at all, during what was billed as a celebration of female sporting endeavour and skill, is indication enough, nevertheless, that the press still operates within well established parameters in its reporting of women's sport. In an interesting article, bucking the trend of merely celebrating the 'wholesomeness' of the US team, and the mainly unquestioning observance of the US media of this as 'truth' during WWC'99, one writer wondered whether the US team would have been so glorified and would have achieved so much press coverage if it had been, 'black, boyish and unglamorous' (*New York Times*, 8 July 1999). Did the US nation adopt the US women's team because they were on schedule to win? Did a team awash with gleaming white teeth and heterosexual credentials, a team including soccer moms and a star player married to that 'straightest' and most 'all-American' of men, a Marine, appeal to the media and white, suburban centres in a way that a 'black, boyish and unglamorous' team

simply could not have? Another US journalist gave voice to this 'hidden' view, calling to her readers:

'Let's break the code and acknowledge openly that to Americans, one of the most appealing characteristics of our women's soccer champions is their apparent heterosexuality' (*Arlington Heights Daily Herald*, 13 July 1999).

Spectators at the 1999 Women's World Cup

A conversation with *LA Times* soccer writer, Grahame Jones, and talks with tournament organisers, revealed a possibly 'racialised' dimension to the marketing and promotion of WWC'99. English-born Jones, who has been covering women's soccer for 20 years, invited me to look at the crowd at JKC Stadium, Washington to try to spot a non-white face; I struggled. He said that an average crowd at Washington's RFK stadium would be predominantly male and 20% of it made up of fans from the ethnic minorities: 'Not the kind of crowd the organisers want' (in interview).

Marla Messing, Chair of the tournament's Organising Committee, said that the organisers employed a Grassroots Marketing Officer, and that 30% of ticket sales were made pre-tournament to clubs who had been targeted with national mail-outs. As women's soccer in the US is most popular amongst the more affluent, white community, it was this constituency, rather than traditional sports fans or fans of men's soccer, which was mainly targeted. The location of some of the stadia, away from public transport routes, meant that even if poorer families could afford the relatively cheap ticket prices (you could watch four games in Chicago for \$36 and see both the Final and third and fourth place games in Los Angeles for \$45) they would have had to have negotiated the additional obstacle of getting to the stadium, a difficult and expensive endeavour for those families without access to a car.

Sitting in stadia, amidst crowds of up to 92,000, you could be forgiven for thinking that the host cities themselves would be alive with talk of the tournament, but this was not so. I spoke to local people and tourists in Washington, Boston, San Jose, Stanford and Los Angeles, to cab and bus drivers and hotel staff, and visited tourist information

offices, and I was struck by how small the wider impact of the tournament was. A Norwegian journalist also noted that the tournament was having little impact *away* from the immediate vicinity of the grounds. This phenomenon of 'citizen disempowerment,' or lack of ownership of a mega-event, has been reported around the World Student Games in Sheffield (Roche 1992) and was a feature of the men's World Cup in the USA in 1994.

Doubtless, there were people with a real knowledge of soccer at WWC'99. There were also people for whom this may have been an introduction to a life-time of soccer support. However, the 4th of July game at Stanford Stadium gives us, perhaps, the best illustration of the relative lack of depth of interest in the sport in the USA, and a profile of the sort of audience the organisers had targeted. 73,203 people watched the US beat Brazil in the semi-final that day. Then 67,000 people left the stadium. Only 6,000 people remained to watch the MLS men's game between New England Revolution and San Jose Earthquakes. I stood outside the stadium, asking people why they were leaving when there was still another soccer match to watch: 'Oh; we only came to see the US women win. We don't watch soccer; it's dull,' a woman in her 30s told me. 'I just wanted to see Mia [Hamm]' remarked a young girl. I later caught the train to San Jose and went to a sports bar to chat to people about the US win. No one there had been at the game or seen it on TV, and few had heard the result. 'Soccer's *your* sport,' one customer explained. 'We've got baseball, basketball and football; soccer just doesn't cut it.'

It may be disingenuous to be critical of fans who had come to watch a women's international game for not staying to watch a *men's domestic* fixture. Possibly, there is a distinction so great in the minds of US fans that men's and women's soccer are seen as *completely* separate sports and, maybe, this is no disadvantage, as women's football in England continues to suffer by comparison with the men's game. However, there must also be a questioning of whether a diet of occasional women's international fixtures and a nascent professional women's league alone will be enough to maintain enthusiasm for, and nurture understanding of, this arm of the sport in the US. On that most American of days, immediately after a win which had put their team into the final of a world championship, the enthusiasm of those who had viewed the game more to share nationalistic glory, perhaps, than for an appreciation of the

sport, had not carried even a few miles down the road from the stadium to a sports bar. What the procrastination around establishing a women's professional league in the USA tells us, amongst other things, is that when the game is stripped of the prop of patriotism and the prospect of victory, its WWC'99 fan-base might be shown to be the temporary construction it almost certainly was. As a Dana Pennett article pointed out, the danger was that the tournament could be, 'exposed for what it was; a moment. That's it. A blip on the screen' (www.womensoccer.com).

Concluding Comments on Soccer for Females in the USA

Soccer for females in the USA is assisted by federal finance, has a clear system through which players progress to the elite level and has an image as a 'clean' sport, in relation to many men's and women's professional sports where drugs use is present, an established Boston journalist, Frank Del'appa, writing during WWC '99 that 'in an era of sports strikes and lock outs, the US women's soccer team is a throw back to a less jaded time' (*Boston Globe*, 27 June 1999). Young players from other countries are being tempted to colleges in the US to play soccer because of the opportunities to access support in that country. WWC'99 has built on this 'land of opportunity' image for the female game and the USA is a powerful international competitor in the women's sport.

However, the US game lacks structural strength and depth, participation is not available to all sections of the population, and the sport still has to build a long term and productive relationship with potential financiers and the media. The 1999 US women's soccer team were *Sports Illustrated* Sportswomen of the Year, making the cover of the magazine twice in that year. There was a high level of media coverage throughout WWC'99, there were large crowds and TV audiences set records. However, the immediate post-tournament signals were that the popularity of the women's game was waning fast. When the US women's team paraded the WWC'99 trophy through the streets of New York, days after the victory, only 5,000 fans turned out to see them. Three years on from the largest stand-alone women's sporting event ever, it is debateable that many people in the US could name a female player other than, perhaps, Mia Hamm.

Soccer for females in the USA has developed substantially because it has not had to fight domestic male ownership of the sport. Soccer is seen as a 'foreign', non-masculine sport and, therefore, one that the American sports' orthodoxy is not keen to embrace. It is safe ground for females, a sport which women have been encouraged to play, because of its low levels of physical contact, its 'otherness', its affordability and its simple rules. Legislatively, Title IX provided the freedom and the funding for the female game to take root in colleges. However, the fact that it is female *soccer* which perhaps benefited most from this Act, the legislation did little to prompt a boom in, for example, female gridiron, tells us much. Here was a game which the American male sports nexus neither identified with, nor wanted to colonise or defend. Soccer, in the US, is not considered a 'real' sport at all, nor is it one which is widely seen as risking the 'de-gendering' of the mainly white, mainly affluent females who play it. Soccer in the US is still widely seen, in short, as harmless play. It is only taken seriously by the world which exists, and so it hardly exists at all, outside of the borders of the American sports consciousness.

Some Observations of the History of Sport and Gender: Norway

Norway is a country prides itself on its equity traditions: 'In comparison with other European countries, Norway has always been known as an egalitarian society' (www.ssb.no). Norway has enjoyed political consensus since before the First World War and all policies with a high gender impact have been passed with large majorities (Kuhnle, 1986: 174). In terms of the country's reaction to the introduction of 'female friendly' legislation, and the increasing role of women in public life, as males become more active in the domestic sphere, Kuhnle (1986: 189) claims that such changes have been possible only because, 'Norway is not politically or culturally receptive to either Thatcherism or Reaganism.'

The egalitarian approach to much legislation in Norway is shown, for example, in the recognition that child care is 'work', and both parents can take paid leave to care for sick children, with women having pension contributions maintained, although at a lower level than whilst working, if they take breaks to have children. Statutory maternity leave also includes a period of one month which *has* to be taken by the father, because child care is seen as the work of *both* parents (Crompton, 1996:4). In

the West, claims one author, men's attitudes to women's employment rights have become more liberal over time (Ellingsaeter, 1995) but *pro-active* gender policies, as instanced in Norway, do have an impact on changing people's attitudes towards gender relations more widely. Crompton suggests that we should see this as an indication of the need to press for wider institutional change around gender legislation.

The Norwegian State sees itself and the women's movement as allies in striving for equality. The Norwegian Government identifies the entry of women into the workforce in large numbers in the 1960s and 1970s, and the increased entrance of women into education in the early 1980s, as two key points determining the current position of females in Norwegian society. Since 1965, the nine out of 10 figure for women staying at home has been converted to nine out of 10 working *outside* the home today. In the 1990s, 52% of people enrolled at university were women, with the figure being 55% colleges (Crompton (1996).

Turning to gender and legislation in Norway, the Government's Ministry of Children and Family Affairs passed the Gender Equality Act in 1978. This legislation's objectives are to:

'Promote equal status between the sexes, and aims in particular at improving the position of women [...] public authorities shall promote gender equality in all sectors of society [...] women and men shall be given equal opportunities in education, employment and cultural and professional advancement' (www.odin.dep.no).

The Act also established a Gender Equity Council, an Ombudsman and a Board, the mechanisms for ensuring that the Act is fully complied with. As well as arbitrating cases of discrimination, this triad attempts to keep gender issues to the fore, demonstrating to a public that believes it has already achieved equality that there is still work to be done. The Ombudsman also recommends ways in which the legislation could be improved. As well as this piece of legislation, there are a number of other initiatives in Norway which address issues of gender equality.

The Children and Family Affairs Ministry was charged with responding to debates at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women and here, as with Norwegian sports, we see the approach is fundamentally integrationalist. The Ministry wants to 'mainstream' the gender perspective, ensuring that all Ministries and Departments build in gender relevant measures and approaches to their work (www.odin.dep.no). Six specific areas of work have been prioritised here. These are: women's rights, women's role in the decision making process, women and the economy, women and education, women's health and women and natural resources and environmental management. As with sport in Norway, there is a call for women to be in positions of power, the theory being that if females are in such positions, they will place 'women's concerns' high on the political agenda (Crompton, 1996:4).

The Norwegian legislative approach to getting females into positions of influence is reflected in the high number of women involved in politics. The Ministry has taken up this baton and opens its documents on equity and empowerment with the statement that: 'It is in the interests of society as a whole that women's values and women's sense of justice be integrated into political life' (www.odin.dep.no). Whilst the 'fact' asserted here that there are separate female values and senses may be questioned, this positive sentiment is one which, officially, drives policy decisions in Norway. The UK is a *liberal* welfare state, with little more than basic help for mothers. Although Norway's levels of child care benefits were previously lower than their Scandinavian neighbours, which is why so many Norwegian women were engaged in part-time work, Norway is a *social* democratic welfare state, with an increasing level of child care benefits (Crompton, 1996:3).

The Ministry for Children and Family Affairs argues that quotas have proved the most effective way of achieving balance in political bodies, with the goal of 40% female representation in parliament and government, as well as on county councils, having been achieved. At the municipal level, the figure is 33%. Four of the six major political parties employ quotas for selecting female candidates. 'Women, Quality and Competence' was a project (1998-2001) aiming to ensure that 30% of senior executive positions were filled by women by 2001. The project also encouraged mentoring and monitoring, as well as the keeping of a database of women with high level qualifications. With broad aims, but aims which are also very relevant to sports,

a major national conference was held in 1996, sponsored by the Ministry, to promote a 'balanced and non-stereotypical portrayal of women in the media' (www.odin.dep.no). The Norwegian Ministry of Cultural Affairs also funds a management training scheme for women in the press, issuing an annual grant for this work of 500,000 Kroner (approximately £41,500).

Norway's attitude to gender and politics doesn't just influence domestic policy. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs compiled a Strategy For Women and Gender Equality in Development Co-operation, which states that gender issues are central to basic human rights and are a plank of Norway's dealings with other countries (Report No. 19 to the *Storting* ((Norwegian Parliament)) 1995/96). But, 'the necessity of integrating women's concerns into Norwegian development assistance' to countries overseas was established earlier in 1974/75, in Report 94 of that session. Another *Storting* Report, in 1994/95, meant Norway became one of the first countries to apply aid strategies to *women* in developing countries. The gender programme is a rolling one and, in 1997, the Norwegian Prime Minister created the post of political adviser with special responsibility for gender equality, the postholder heading a committee of state secretaries to promote and monitor initiatives. We see here then a much more comprehensive raft of legislation and policy on gender issues than in the UK, legislation which is frequently reviewed, and which has built-in targets. As well as gender-specific initiatives and legislation, the issue of gender is one which is incorporated into non-gender specific policy decisions and is also reflected in the way Norwegian sports organise themselves administratively.

Sport in Norway: Some History

Organised sports in Norway were not generally embraced as early as they were in Britain, a point made by one author when she describes: 'The late awakening of the interest of females in organised sports' (von der Lippe 1994:183). Without making specific reference to females, Goksoyr (1996:129-132) discusses the role of sport in promoting national identity in Norway from the late nineteenth century. He identifies three phases in the development of Norwegian sport and nationalism, beginning in 1814. At this time, Norway began to become more industrialised and urbanised, changing the socio-economic structure of the nation. From the 1860s, a 'modern'

sports movement started to develop and the formerly localised, religion-anchored May 17th Constitution Day celebrations began to involve organised, competitive sport, to become more secular and to become a national event. Even when Constitution Day had been a predominantly middle-class occasion, the sporting element had involved the working-class and sport here was used as a deliberate instrument to extend the popular base of the celebration.

The *second* phase, from 1880 until the collapse of the Norway/Sweden union in 1905, saw a number of 'foreign' impulses shaping Norwegian sport. As well as traditional Nordic sport, German 'Turnen' and Swedish 'Ling' exercises were taken on board, and the Nordic/German/Swedish influences were embodied in the Central Association for the Spread of Physical Exercise and the Practice of Arms. The idea here was that sport should be more than simply a pastime: it should be a way of strengthening the nation and making citizenship stronger. *British* sporting influences were not adopted because the Norwegian government and sports organisations saw British sport as being in opposition to these drives. The British were regarded as having a 'sport for sports sake' ideology, whereas in Norway, sport was '*idreat*'; something *more* than sport. 'Practice *idreat* and detest sport and record breaking', instructed Frithjof Nansen, a Norwegian sportsman and explorer (Goksoyr 1996:132). During this phase, the notion of the 'national' also began to be applied to sport in Norway. For example, the British version of rowing was rejected in favour of 'national rowing', viewed as a more practical activity.

The *third* phase of Norwegian sports development and nation building, began in 1905, during which Norway boycotted the Nordic games in protest at political conflicts. Norway attempted to forge a separate identity from Sweden and used sport as part of this effort, participating in the unofficial 1906 Athens Olympics. However, many Norwegian elite sports participants, especially gymnasts, regarded the Olympics as 'sports for sports sake', not as *idraet*. They were joined in their distaste for international competition by the Norwegian Ski Federation, which, rather like the FA in England at the time, preferred 'splendid isolation' (Goksoyr, 1998:139). The Norwegian skiers saw themselves as the inventors of skiing and were opposed to the vulgarity of sporting competition.

However, since the end of World War One, non 'native' sports have gained more acceptance in Norway and with, 'a growing number of international contests, football, regardless of its origins, functioned as a factor of national identification' (Goksoyr, 1998:140). Norway, and its neighbours Sweden and Finland, used sport in an attempt to unify and develop their changing nations, using Hobsbawm's observation that, 'the imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people (quoted in Goksoyr, 1998:140).

Pre-1930, Norwegian women could only compete at the national level in riding, tennis, swimming and skiing, and in 1938, only 13% of organised sports clubs in Norway were for females. Von der Lippe (1994) argues that low sports participation for females was the result of a mix of the practical and the social. Norway had few major conurbations and much of the population was rural and scattered, so organisations and competition would have been difficult to co-ordinate. She also points out that the typical role of the woman was as housewife, with any forays made by women into organised sport being seen not as a challenge to this status quo, but as a means of making domestically rooted females stronger and fitter to carry out their strenuous roles.

The attitude towards women and sport, that women should be decorous in participation, was imported into Norway from the English upper-classes, but was at odds with the daily experiences of many Norwegian women whose lives involved much physical work. The Victorian barriers to female sports participation, in England, based around science and medicine, were also at work during this period in the Norwegian context, as shown by a Norwegian medical practitioner who claimed: 'When they [women] desire and aim to compete with others, they overstretch their capacities and talents. What follows is not only unhealthy, but also disgraceful' (quoted in Pfister and von der Lippe 1994:35).

Physical activity for Norwegian females was not generally promoted through schools during the three phases of sports development, with only girls between the ages of 14 and 18 being offered PE, from 1915. This meant that children in rural areas received no formal PE at all, as they left school by the age of 14, and PE for children was not made *obligatory* in rural areas until 1936. So it was left, largely, to the informal

mechanism of children skiing to school, and playing outdoor sports, to improve the health and sporting skills of Norwegian girls.

In September 1933, the Norwegian Federation of Sports (NFS) recommended that females form their own sports federations. However, when the Norwegian Track and Field Federation was formed that year, it was the first and only time that a non-integrationalist approach was adopted to the issue of sport and gender in Norway. Gymnastics, tennis, fencing, swimming, rowing, skating and skiing for females were all integrated within the existing male federations and track and field soon also switched to this administrative model.

The Organisation of Sport in Norway

Norberg (1998:117) argues that Norwegian sports organisations, like many in England and the US, are established and run by volunteers. From the 1930s onwards, the corporative 'Nordic' model of societal development via co-operation, meant that voluntary sports organisations were seen as a means to development, rather than a threat to it. Norberg points to the intimate relationship these voluntary organisations have often had with the Norwegian State, with the organisations sometimes acting, 'in the place of authority (Norberg, 1998:116). However, he also argues that voluntary organisations present both dangers and opportunities and that in Norway, the State has attempted to co-opt sports bodies in an attempt not just to promote sports, but also in order to *control* these bodies.

The advantage of this close relationship, for sports organisations, is that they have been in a position to influence government and have still managed to remain relatively autonomous, since the Norwegian sports movement has demonstrated its dislike of increased State interference from the time of the German occupation during the Second World War. Norberg also highlights the overall shift of sports from private to public organisation, from a middle-class constituency to a wider one. He charts the power shifts over time, from voluntary organisations holding most sway over sports development, to the increasing influence of the State, and finally back, more recently, to the voluntary sector being the more influential of the two (Norberg, 1998).

Klausen (1996: 116) argues that there has been no significant recent increase in the number of females involved in sport in Scandinavia, and that there are clear lines between the sports most popular for men and for women. She also highlights the more aggressive approach in Norway, when it comes to the use of the mass media, to promote women in sport. Whilst the issue of participation may be being addressed, issues of re-presentation and of *representation*, where real power to influence policy lies, are being neglected, with women only being present at the lower levels of sports administration, around 30% of such positions being filled by females in Norway (Klausen, 1996: 117).

Fasting's (1986) analysis focuses specifically on women's membership of, and representation in, Norwegian sports organisations. She found, initially, that sports organisations had little information about their members. Research has shown, however, that whilst females make up 35% of sports club members, they constitute only 19% of general assembly members and only 15% of executive board members. 11% are committee members, with 12% of top level coaches, and only 7% of top referees, being female, a state of affairs which she cites as being common to many countries (Fasting, 1986:4) a claim supported by Klausen (1996) and White and Brackenridge (1986:4).

Fasting also argues that women are underrepresented, administratively, in sports in Norway which have 50% or more female participants, pointing to socialisation as a cause for girls being pushed towards the private, rather than this public, administrative, sphere. At a basic level, she asserts, Norwegian women have only been allowed to compete in 214 of 247 sports available to men, with gymnastics, skiing, European handball, track and field and football the most popular sports for females, with female football participation rising 250% between 1979 and 1986. A 1984 survey of 30 year olds based in Oslo showed 85% of men and 82% of women agreeing that football is a suitable sport for females (Fasting 1986:5). Fasting cites this as a sign of rapid attitudinal change, since the formal development of football for females in Norway was introduced only roughly a decade before the research took place. She cites strong female leaders and strong representation on committees as reasons for the swift development of the women's game.

Fasting also claims that because there has never been division along sex lines in sports organisations in Norway, this has meant that, rather than having equality of development, men have taken positions of power and organised sport, with the result being that sport has been developed *by and for* males. She draws here on arguments which claim that, in assimilation, 'the characteristics of the minority tend to be distorted to fit those of the majority' (Kanter quoted in Fasting, 1986:11). In this context, the culture of the minority is regarded as inferior. This leaves women, she claims, with the options, if they want to retain their own values (she makes the assumption here that there are separate and uniform female values) of choosing either to form their own associations, or of attaining positions of influence within the existing order. In Norway, separatism is not the option chosen, although there is room for specialism within organisations.

In 1984, the Norwegian Confederation of Sport (NCS) appointed a Women's Committee, made up of seven females, who were charged with examining the promotion of female sports. The NCS had previously had a Women's Committee, formed in 1946, but it was deemed unnecessary and disbanded in 1953. The Committee's 1985 plan, 'More Sport for More Women,' recommended the employment of consultants to work solely with women's sports. The Women's Committee at that time had a budget of 1.5 million Kroner and they distributed one million of this in 1985/86 and met with the leaders of individual sports federations to address gender issues. The Committee also looked at the media presentation of female athletes and, co-operating with the National Organisation for Sports Journalists, organised two seminars to boost the quality and quantity of such coverage. A key recommendation was that a member of the Women's Committee should sit on the executive board of the NCS, because experience shows that for female sport to develop equitably, 'there must be a direct connection to the people who have the power in the organisation' (Fasting 1986:13).

Following this development, 21 of the country's 45 individual sports governing bodies established women's committees and 10 of the 19 district associations also now have women's committees. The NCS established the Women's Committee for a period of three years only, with their General Assembly voting on whether it should

continue to operate, in the spring of 1987. The Committee no longer exists, having been abolished in 1991.

The NCS Women's Committee developed a course entitled, 'Women Can, Will and Dare,' as part of its prioritisation of increasing the number of female sports leaders, and in 1985/86, 1,000 women took the course. The central plank of their approach was that there must be women in positions of influence if equality in sports is to be achieved and maintained. To this end, the Committee helped to develop a national network of female sports leaders. However, the Committee realised that those women have to be elected or co-opted if they are to occupy positions of power and that males currently in those positions hold influence over whether this will happen. Only longer term research will be able to detect whether the course and the other strands of the Committee's work were a success. If the results of this analysis were to prove unpromising, then separatism might be seen as a more legitimate option than it has done before in Norway, or there might be room for the formation of meta-organisations, such as the Women's Sports Foundation in the UK or the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport, which work around general issues of female involvement in sports. Gender assimilation has been the way of things in Norway so far and with some success; whether it will remain so we cannot yet accurately predict.

Football in Norway

Approximately 250,000 of Norway's population of 4.3 million people play football. The country has 36,840 sports facilities and 11% of these are football pitches. The NCS figures for 1990 show that 22% of the country's footballers were female, some 61,521 females, rising from 40,370 in 1983 and 58,341 in 1988 (www.ssb.no). Currently, 35% of men are members of sports clubs and 22% of females (Fasting 1986:4).

The Norwegian Football Federation (NFF) the governing body of football in Norway, was established in 1902 and affiliated to FIFA in 1908. The Norwegian men's football team is relatively unsuccessful in world terms, its only major championship achievement being the winning of a bronze medal at the 1936 Olympics, although the

team are currently ranked number seven in the world by FIFA, a considerable achievement for a country with no full-time professional men's league. Norwegian football lacks the strong industrial base of the male working-class game in England, and a number of elite Norwegian male players now play in the English FA Premier League and Football League. In its infancy, participation in football for males in Norway was limited, both socially and geographically, and it was only in 1936 that the national team became more representative of the population (Goksoyr, 1998:109). The first men's football league was established in Norway in 1914, with just six teams, but a regular national league, a version of which still runs today, did not begin to operate until 1937.

The history of football for females in Norway is somewhat shorter than that of the male game, but it has brought more international success. The game began to be played with regularity, and in an organised way, by females in Norway only in 1972 and a Women's Football Committee was established in 1975/6, with the NFF taking over the running of the women's game the following year, administering some 95 clubs. The Norwegian's first women's international match was played as recently as 1978, and the first regional league was established the year after. By 1987, the first 10 team, national amateur league for women had been inaugurated.

The most recent participation statistics for Norway show that 10,000 females aged 19 and over now play the game; 400 players are aged between 16 and 18, and 46,000 are under 16 years of age. There are 134 female Under-19s teams, 599 female U16s, 708 female U14s, 737 female U12s and 5,431 mixed sex teams at U10 levels, with approximately 4,000 female teams operating in all (NFF, 2000). The senior national women's team (there are U20, U18 and U16 teams, too) were unofficial World Cup winners in 1988, winners of the official tournament in 1995 and runners up in 1991, as well as European Champions in 1993 and runners up in 1989 and 1991. In 2000, the Norwegian women's team beat the USA 3-2, to become Olympic champions.

Norway suffers, like England, from a lack of crowd support for the female game, with 250 being the average crowd for national league matches there. Crowds are even smaller in the two lower divisions which are divided into six regions, with a league system going down to Division Five, as well as a veteran's league for those over 28

years of age. Girl's leagues are based on the same age divisions as is boy's football, with 'mini' football also available for the Under 8s.

The women's game is not professional in Norway. The only recompense provided to women for playing is for lost salary when they are on international duty. In 1990, the NFF launched the Top Club Project, in which elite clubs were given money to employ consultants to devise income generation strategies. Another aim of the project is to improve media coverage of the sport (Lopez, 1997:147). Some teams not included in the project, but having seen its effectiveness, have themselves employed consultants to try to emulate the success of other clubs, in terms of income generation and profile raising.

The Structure of Football for Females in Norway

Scruton et al (1999:102,103) point out that in England and Spain, women can be active in sport in public or private recreational contexts, whereas in Norway, participants tend to be members of sports *clubs*. Scruton et al's research around elite players shows that in Norway, participants in female football teams come from a variety of social backgrounds, whereas in England, the majority of players are from working-class backgrounds (our own survey findings, in Chapter Six, do not tally with Scruton et al's). The average starting age for playing was similar in Norway and England, between four and six years old, and most females gained access to the sport via male contacts. Unlike in England, where 77.8% of respondents in our female player survey said that they had played football at junior school, in at least a playground context, Norwegian players did not identify school as an important site for sport.

A factor common to the English and Norwegian players, however, is their identification of themselves as 'other' because of their playing of the game. Norwegian players talk of being 'tomboys' (Scruton et al, 1999:104) the authors taking it upon themselves to interpret these quotes as 'sad', and the players valorise the state of being masculine. Scruton et al argue that women playing football within this mind set are merely aping male behaviour, demonstrating a shift in what we think

of as acceptable feminine behaviour, rather than forging new identities. These women are simply crossing into male territory, not playing on their own terms.

Significantly, the NFF does not speak of 'men's' or 'women's football', just 'football,' with primary divisions being made on the grounds of age and ability, rather than along lines of sex. This is striking, and tells us something of the Norwegian's attitude to developing the sport and, perhaps, why their international female team is so successful. The NFF has 15 female employees amongst a central staff of 50, including the most senior post of General Secretary, with female workers also appearing in marketing, accounts, secretarial support and ticketing. Because the women's game is fully integrated within the NFF, there are few officers at the NFF with particular responsibility for female play, although there are two practitioners whose time is dedicated to working around the national women's team, and some elite clubs also have part time female football officers who are employed by the governing body.

The 'player-centred' approach of the NFF is aimed at recruiting as many female players as possible, a broad base approach to retaining players, and to developing more able players (NFF 1997). In an address to the third UEFA Women's Conference in 1998, Karen Espelund, who was then Vice President of the NFF, and who is now its General Secretary, outlined the Norwegian approach, having previously been invited to speak about this approach in the context of youth (boys and girls) football at the UEFA Youth Conference in 1995. She made clear the Norwegian view that it is vital to have the female game represented at all levels, up to and including the highest policy making echelon, in order to utilise expertise within any organisation. Initially, Norway had a separate Women's Football Committee, but the strategy of this group, from the outset, was to secure formal ties with the NFF. This integrationalist approach covers not just players, but also coaches, referees, and volunteers, etc.

At regional and national executive levels in Norway, football committees operate a quota system, with a three in eight female membership, this linked to the strong belief in role modelling in all activity areas. Grassroots football is built around the family and volunteerism, with the preferred model being to have three parents or

grandparents, one coach, and one leader per 10/15 players. Significantly, until the age of 13, there is no competitive football in Norway for boys or girls. Rather, participation and skills development are encouraged, with schools now seen as vital to the development of the game, PE teachers receiving instruction from Regional Associations about available activities.

The NFF organises courses to train females as coaches, Leder 1, 2 and 3 Kurs at the less senior level, and Olympiatoppen Kvinneprosjekt at the more elite level, but, again, whilst female participation is encouraged, these courses are not single sex. Only 10% of elite female team coaches in Norway are female and in other leagues, most coaches are male, an issue being addressed by the latest NFF plan. Only nine Norwegian women hold the highest possible football coaching qualification, the D badge and 37 hold the C badge; there are no figures available for B holders. The NFF has around 200 female referees registered, from new recruits to those on the elite FIFA list.

Football is now the most popular sport for young girls in Norway and the NFF notes that more children in lower age grades are now playing football than had previously been the case, and that more girls are playing with boys during breaks between classes. The NFF ethos is built around people of equal age playing each other, rather than a strict adherence to girl versus girl and boy versus boy play in mixed age groups. 'The way of organising it [football] should be flexible and promote girls football. This means the possibility for girls to play in boy's teams' (Espelund, 1998).

At a FIFA Symposium in July 1999, this issue of mixed football for young people was also raised by Vera Pauw, a FIFA instructor and now manager of Scotland's female team. The work she presented claimed that single sex football *reinforces* prejudices and that girls who play in mixed teams have a much better self image, and that mixed football has also encouraged a huge growth in the number of females playing the game in Holland, where mixed football may be played up to the age of 18. Her paper argues that up until the age of 14, girls are stronger, physically, and more mature, mentally, than boys, so the decision to opt for single sex football before this age is based on cultural factors, rather than any 'legitimate' argument that girls need to be protected from mixed play, because they lack the size and strength of same age

males. Her work has been dismissed at FA Women's Committee in England. In Norway, there is also flexibility in whether five, seven or 11-a-side football is played by children, with Espelund (1998) claiming that this flexibility has not merely encouraged participation, it has also improved the standard of play, because of the increased amount of time spent on the ball in small sided games.

The Norwegian Association outlined its work and the position of female football in their country in a 1997 report to FIFA, a document which still guides the approach to the development of the game in Norway. The Norwegians are giving high priority to the improvement of their national teams and they employ six full-time talent instructors whose time is divided equally between girls and boys football. In terms of female clubs, the Norwegians have a four year plan to improve income potential and structure, and finance from the NFF allows those same elite clubs to hire a part-time administrative worker. The Norwegians are also working to improve the profile of their top referees; currently they have two FIFA list female referees and four FIFA list female referees assistants. The majority of female football games in Norway are officiated by females, and female officials are also working in men's Third Division football in Norway, working towards gaining the experience to officiate in Division Two. There are female only courses for referees, but at the higher levels, female officials train and work with male colleagues.

In terms of assessing their own progress, the NFF says that the development of the women's game is positive and that their recruitment of female football leaders is acceptable, as is female representation at legislative and executive levels of the central and regional associations, with three females sitting on the eight-person Executive Committee and two females on each of the six-person Standing Committees at the national level. However, the NFF feels that recruitment of female referees and coaches is still too low, and their plan aims to address this, targeting the retention of ex-players who will transfer to non-playing roles within the sport (Espelund, 2000). They are also concerned at teenage drop-out rates from football amongst girls, and the fact that whilst 78% of boys in Norway begin playing football between 11 and 12 years of age, the figure for girls is only between 20% and 28%. The NFF plan is to continue to evaluate the national and club development programme, to improve the recruitment of leaders, referees and coaches, and to increase player recruitment 10%,

year on year. It also sets attainment targets for its national squads in upcoming championships, as a means of assessing the efficacy of their development programmes.

Looking to the global future of the female game, the Norwegian FA is keen for wider discussion around integration of the male and female games, has successfully pushed for a European women's *club* championship and an expansion of the U18 Women's European Championships, as well as an expansion to the Olympic Tournament. 'We are absolutely optimistic regarding the prospects of international women's football; the foundation exists for continued growth worldwide,' (Espelund, 1998). The Norwegians stress the importance of international tournaments to arouse interest in the game and the need for all governing bodies to develop domestic competitions for women.

To those who believe that female football should be separate and different (for different, in many instances, read inferior), that there should be strict age cut-off points in mixed football, and that 11-a-side is king, the Norwegian model makes for unpleasant reading. Whilst acknowledging that countries are at different stages in the development of football generally, and female football more specifically, the Norwegians believe that their model reflects a sound and equitable developmental philosophy, and they are keen to spread it. As one Norwegian journalist said at the 1999 Women's World Cup, without arrogance: 'Yes, we are in a different league. We and the USA have a different mind set [to the English]. In the USA, they take it even further than us' (Johannesen, in interview).

The Norwegian delegates at the 1998 UEFA Women's Football conference in London were stimulating, keen to compare ideas and approaches with other delegates, and were equally at ease whether speaking about playing, coaching, officiating or administration. In contrast, I was struck by the behaviour and attitude of some of the senior members of the English FA delegation. Sitting behind two of these delegates, it was easy to observe their open disinterest in speakers, sometimes not wearing headphones to receive translation, sometimes chatting as addresses were being delivered. I participated in a workshop headed by Bente Skogvang, a Norwegian woman who officiated in the inaugural World Cup and is involved in research into the

women's game. In the workshop, any suggestions that mixed football might be helpful to the game's development, were dismissed by the senior FA delegates with an arrogance rather at odds with the position of England's current international women's standing and with an air reminiscent of the period during the 1970s when the then FA Chair, Ted Croker, said: 'We just don't like males and females playing together. I like feminine girls. Anyway; it's not natural' (quoted in Wellington, 1998:115).

That the FA wished to host the conference, the first one in 17 years, is a demonstration of its desire to be at the forefront of the international development of the female game. FA personnel invested enormous energy into organising what was generally a well received event, and exchanged ideas with colleagues from a number of countries. However, at the most senior level, despite advances by and within the FA, there is still an 'old guard' which sneers at ideas from outside the 'home of football.' This old guard is still in a position to influence policy and the direction of the game for females in this country.

Women's Football and the Media in Norway

Images of women in sport both reflect local practices and help to shape consciousness on gender and sport issues. Early studies in Norway show a slowly changing picture of press coverage in this area. In her study of the largest Norwegian newspaper, *Aftenposten*, von der Lippe, for example, shows that in 1926, men's sports constituted 99% of all sports reported, with 1% of coverage dedicated to female sport. In 1936, the corresponding figures were 87% and 5%, with 8% of space given over to sports where there was mixed play or where males *and* females competed (1994: 183).

WWC'99 was an important site for making contacts with Norwegian journalists and for observing the commitment of the Norwegian media to covering the finals of a tournament where Norway were defending champions, and were expected to, at least, reach the semi-final stage. Henriette Johannesen was one of 20 Norwegian journalists to travel to WWC'99 to follow the Norwegian national team. She reported that Norwegian national newspapers *do* cover the female game, but rather in the same way that they would cover a Division Two men's game in that country. The NFF report

that they are 'happy' with national newspaper coverage of women's football in their country, that regional newspapers carry national team reports and reports on elite clubs, if they have one in their area, with local newspapers also providing coverage of the women's game. Johannesen's newspaper's local team is Klepp, and it is the newspaper's policy to follow its two male teams and one female team, rather than using freelancers, attempting to give all three teams equality of coverage. Johannesen was the first woman to be hired by the sports department at the newspaper and was the only woman amongst the 20 Norwegian journalists at the tournament. When I spoke to Johannesen, on a match free day, she explained that she felt the need to get away from her colleagues for a day, adding she felt that she is given 'special treatment' by some of them *because she is a woman*, special treatment which she felt she had not earned; 'I just want to do a good job,' (Johannesen, in interview).

Johannesen, says that as well as it being unusual to have female sports journalists in Norway, it is also unusual to have them in senior newspaper and television sports berths, although she adds that a newspaper based in the Norwegian town of Kristiansand has a female Head of Sport. NRK, the national broadcaster, does have females in senior positions in the sports section, but not at the very highest level. Both Johannesen and the NFF confirm that TV coverage of women's games in Norway is sporadic, with international games covered, or top league and cup games broadcast, to plug gaps in the male professional season. National team members, such as Hege Riise and Linda Medalen, are fairly well known in Norway. However, in Medalen's case, this has more to do with her risqué poses for publications (the obligatory football covering her modesty) and the fact that she has recently gone public on the issue of her homosexuality.

International women's football fixtures played in Norway are usually covered by both national television and newspapers, as are important away fixtures. NRK radio and TV both have female sports anchors, but commercial stations have none. The country has no female-specific football magazine, with female football developments in Norway occasionally being reported on in *Fotball*, the country's biggest selling football magazine, which carries a pre-season review of clubs and leagues which is equivalent for men and women. Sports accounted for 10.2% of Norwegian's TV viewing in 1997 (www.ssb.no) falling from 15% in 1995, with news, drama and

children's TV being more popular. 25% of Norwegians watched the WWC'99 Final, despite the fact that Norway had been eliminated at the semi-final stage (*BBC Radio 5*, June 17 1999). Coverage of women's football in Norway, then, is only, really, of the elite level and is inconsistent at that, but it is certainly more frequent than coverage in England or the US, although the barrier of language prevents a qualitative comparison. Overall, the NFF says: 'The media [in Norway] has a professional attitude towards the coverage of women's football. The performances of women's football are judged as fairly as for all other sports; thus we have good media coverage' (NFF 1997:14).

As we saw earlier with the analysis of the FA and its relationship to football for females, national football governing bodies do not operate in isolation, and the governing bodies of England, the USA and Norway all have to function within policy set by FIFA and also, in the case of England and Norway, UEFA. It was these bodies which instructed their members to take charge of their female game and which continue to advise members on general policy direction. However, recommendations around football for females made at both the 1998 UEFA Women's Conference and the 1999 FIFA Women's Symposium were vague, targetless in many instances and are, largely, unmonitored at the supra-national level. For instance, the UEFA Conference recommended increasing media and marketing to improve the image of the women's game, as well as calling for increased representation of women in executive positions. The FIFA Los Angeles Symposium Declaration of July 1999 included calls on governments to implement and reinforce anti-discrimination policies, calls for more significant financial investment from national associations, for more media coverage, appeals for a commitment to increase the financing of programmes for women's football and calls for improvements in its own administration around the female game, as well as a recognition that there should be more women in decision making executive positions in the women's game.

These are laudable aims, but, in the case of the Symposium, less committed national associations were effectively left free to allow the female game to wither when FIFA refused to make its distribution of development funds in any way dependent upon those national associations developing their female game. Without suggestions as to how these aims should be achieved, and without the international governing bodies

applying pressure on intransigent national associations, it seems likely that at the next FIFA Symposium, in 2003, the list of issues relating to the female game which need to be addressed will be very familiar.

Given the vagueness of some of these recommendations, which carry no identified sanction if they are not complied with, and given the fact that they identify general *problems* but fail to suggest more specific *solutions*, it is clear that the promotion of the female game, in the main, is down to the commitment of individual national associations. These associations operate within wider frameworks and against the backdrop of localised sporting traditions, so in the USA and Norway football for females is at a more advanced stage of development than is the case in England, because of a number of structural factors which are largely absent in England.

Some Concluding Comments: The USA, Norway and England

In the USA, the female game has developed primarily because of the country's *college* system. It has grown against the backdrop of male dominated domestic sports which *do not include soccer*, hence reducing the women's game's need to compete, both in cultural terms and commercially, with its male equivalent. In comparison to aggressive, domestic US male sports, soccer is considered '*appropriate*' for females. It offers relatively low levels of physical contact and aggression, and has no established 'native' traditions in the USA. Finally, key to the development of soccer for females in the USA is strong *sports equal opportunities legislation* which has helped provide the finance for college programmes and, despite being challenged by universities, has created a protected space in which the female game was able to establish itself. The USA now has a professional women's soccer league, with a television deal and major brand sponsors. *Outside of sport*, despite the anti-feminist backlash during the Reagan and Bush Snr. terms, widening employment and educational opportunities for some females in the USA and shifts, similar to those which occurred in the UK, around female and male gender role distinctions, have helped to create an atmosphere more conducive to female participation in traditionally male areas of activity, more generally.

In Norway, *equal opportunities legislation* in and outside of sport has, as is the case in the USA, been key to the development of the female game, in terms of playing *and* administration. Although men's football is more popular in Norway than in the USA, there is no entrenched male *class* interest in football in Norway which might act as a barrier to female participation, and football is still rivalled in popularity by 'domestic' alpine sports, reducing somewhat the potential for football to develop an oppressive and precious identity as a national game for Norway. *Administratively*, females are better represented than in the USA and, much more so, than in England, and, although in Norway there is less development of the game within the education system, the country does have a strong mixed-sex *sports club structure* which encourages youth participation.

Although media coverage of females in sport is still significantly lower than that of males in sport in Norway, there is, at least quantitatively, more coverage of women's football in Norway at the local and national levels than there is in England. Outside of sport, a comprehensive raft of equity legislation around employment, education, and family and child care puts some women in a stronger cultural and economic position than their counterparts in both the USA and England. This also helps to make involvement in sport more affordable and means that entry into what might be considered exclusive 'male' sporting preserves in other national contexts is far less stigmatised than it might be in, say, England.

In England, despite a long, if interrupted and uncertain, history of female play, and despite recent improved support from the game's governing body, the female game has to contend with a number of factors which act as barriers to participation and excellence. Unlike in the USA and Norway, in England, there is relatively *weak equal opportunities legislation and ideology* both inside and outside of sport, with the Sex Discrimination Act actually permitting discrimination in sport. There is a poor history, in comparison with the USA, of developing the sport for girls and young women within the *education system* and this is not compensated for, as is the case in Norway, by a strong female *community sports club* involvement. Finally, perhaps the most significant obstacle to the development of the female game in England is the strong *male, class hold on football*, from fans, through to players and administrators. This is also true of other sports in England, of course, and deters not just female

participation, but, arguably, that of members of other 'minority' groups. Females involved in football in England, on and off the field of play, must confront exclusionary employment practices, a lack of flexibility around provision of courses and facilities and still, in many cases, face up to physical and verbal intimidation. Most media coverage of sportswomen in Britain concentrates on track and field, tennis and other 'female appropriate' sports. Females who play traditionally 'masculine' sports remain largely ignored, and/or are treated as curiosities, or worse still, as abhorrent. Many women also still lack the economic wherewithal, or the time, to participate in sport, because of restricted employment opportunities, relatively low levels of pay, and the demands still placed on them to fulfil a number of domestic functions.

Although in the USA and Norway, there is still a *relative* lack of support for females who wish to participate in traditionally male sports, there is much less *institutional opposition* to their participation in football and less *male protectionism* around the sport. As opposed to conditions in parts of the USA and in Norway, females who strive to play football in England do so in a climate which, at the local level, often does not merely offer apathy towards female involvement, but still *actively opposes* female participation.

Chapter Nine

Conclusion

At the start of this thesis, four areas were identified as being potentially useful in attempting to explain the recent development of football for females in England. In terms of the *economic* position of women, whilst more women have entered the labour market, this has primarily been in part-time, low status jobs, thus doing relatively little to promote, for the majority of women, the economic freedom needed to play sports. Our survey work shows that more female footballers are from the middle classes (52.7%) than from the working classes, yet, these relatively affluent women are unable to secure *administrative* roles within the game, demonstrating that economic wherewithal *alone* is not the key which opens the door to positions of power within the sport. Here then we must question the Marxist approaches, and those of Clarke and Critcher, outlined in Chapter Two, where class is *the* defining characteristic of agents, as, beyond economic wherewithal, institutional obstacles around gender still prevent full participation in the sport by females.

Whilst more women are now in employment outside of the home, there is still an expectation that female paid work is done *alongside* domestic chores, so many females are still bound to the domestic setting, even if they do also work outside of it. Parratt's (1996:53) argument that in the Victorian era women's labour was cheaper than men's, and, therefore, attractive to employers, still holds true. However, as men's work was seen as earning them the *right* to leisure, to counter the fear that wage-earning might also create a demand for leisure amongst women, females are still primary bearers of domestic responsibilities, with fewer males taking on domestic duties than there are females entering the work force, with females still also, therefore, being the primary servicers of men's leisure.

This continuation of responsibility for domestic duties gives credence to Talbot's (1988) claims that many females build leisure around the family, hence the low participation rates of working class women in football, as they are likely to bear more familial responsibilities than their middle class counterparts, in football. Those who are not bound to family and the domestic run the risk of being labelled 'other', of

having their identity as 'real' women questioned if they remain single and/or childless.

We have then a somewhat inconclusive argument that as women's economic positions improve, so they are more easily able to access sport, with Hargreaves (1990:297) for example, highlighting the work of socialist feminists, such as Barrett (1982) who cite class *and* gender oppression as the *two* major oppressions in history and seek a theory which does not effectively subordinate one to the other. Whilst stressing the importance of legislation to assist females in the playing of football, this thesis does *not* claim that equality legislation guarantees access to sporting opportunities for females. The tendency, in all three countries focussed on, is for the female game to be played not just predominantly by females from the middle-classes, but also by few females from the ethnic minorities, showing that gender is only *one* component in determining who plays the sport.

In the second area, changing gender roles, there are debates around changes to what is considered *appropriate behaviour* for females *and* males. That traditionally male sports are now gaining popularity amongst females is something which theorists, such as Connell, attempt to explain via ideas around new gender scripts and changing gender roles. However, despite the increasing involvement of *some* males in domestic and child care duties, and their high profile focus (one might think here of David Beckham in terms of such changes in relation to football) this slight shifting in the gender role responsibilities of males is highly dependent upon *cultural background*, so barriers to sports participation for many women, provided by family circumstances and routine relations with men, are still very much in place. More women than ever before are engaging in physical activity in their leisure time, but much of this involvement is around fitness cultures, jogging and aerobics, not 'sports.' Indeed, many of these activities seem to be as much about creating the 'perfect' body, a 'feminine' image, desirable to men, as they are about the enjoyment of sport or leisure.

Where women do seek to occupy positions previously thought of as 'belonging' to males, whether this be inside or outside of sport, there is contestation between these women and those people who wish to retain the status quo, who adapt arguments

rooted in biology in an attempt to keep females excluded. Some females counter these arguments and the hegemonic struggle for meanings and positions continues. This non linear progression of women in sports participation and administration is why approaches, such as figurational sociology, which fail to acknowledge, or adequately acknowledge, the importance of *agency*, and which portray developments as *linear*, are rejected as adequate explanations for the uneven development of the female game in England.

Connell's (1996:130-142) approach more usefully offers that sports institutions are embedded in definite social relations, and that these relations are realised and symbolised in bodily performance. This leaves more traditional ideas of gender identity vulnerable to challenge when females perform in conventionally masculine domains, and also helps to explain why men who do not participate in sport are sometimes viewed as lesser men than those who do. *How* gender roles come to 'shift' is an area of intense debate. Hargreaves argues that liberal, equal opportunities based feminism is gradualist and pragmatic, and implicitly rejects biological explanations of women's position within sport, whilst concentrating on gains which can be made through institutional and legislative change. However, in comparison to the USA and Norway, with their raft of sporting and non sporting equal opportunities legislation, women in England have had little State assistance in helping to loosen gender roles, yet still the women's game has developed with a degree of success. This, again, is why this thesis values the role of agency as a force for change.

Concern is shared with authors, such as Cockburn, (1991:215) who reject Dyer's (1982) 'catching up the men' approach to assessing the progress of females in sport as too individualistic and quantitative, using male elite performance as a yardstick against which female performances are measured. The assumption here is that equality can be measured numerically, and that progression is linear. The liberal, policy oriented ethos and the Dyer approach also fail to acknowledge that women are not a homogenous group, and experience sport and policy differently. Dyer also focuses almost exclusively on *participation*, ignoring the important area of *administration*, and the fact that institutional power for women does not automatically follow on the heels of an improvement in elite performance, or an increase in the number of females participating.

That female advances in sport, changes in what are acceptable achievements and behaviours, are continually met by individual and institutional opposition, including opposition from the media, further demonstrates the struggle for change and how arguments which keep females excluded are adapted and then *re-* challenged by those who wish to see extended female participation. In the USA and Norway, women can challenge at the institutional level, whereas in England, women lack such power, with athletes in England never having developed a political consciousness akin to that operating in the two other countries being analysed.

The *type* of sports being played by females is still an area of contestation, a struggle for control. Metheney's (1974:294-297) four categories of acceptability for female sports (*categorically unacceptable* ((e.g. boxing)), *generally not acceptable* ((e.g. football)), *generally acceptable* ((e.g. equestrianism)) and *some forms of acceptable face to face* e.g. ((fencing)) have remained fairly constant throughout history, with those who stray outside of the categories being viewed not as challengers to the status quo, so much as *individuals* to be either marvelled at or pitied. The core concept of what constitutes acceptable sporting behaviour for females and men remains fairly static.

Medicine provides the anchor to which ideas of the appropriate are secured, with differences between men and women being presented as biological and, therefore, immutable. To allow women to compete in sports and, therefore, to be seen in the same light as men, was, and still is, presented as 'unnatural;' the power of the legitimacy of difference is *scientific*, giving the standpoint its objectivity and strength. In order to advance the female game, the FA has played into the hands of those who still use biology as a barrier to prevent or limit women's participation in sport, portraying the female game as an activity (rather than a sport) which is beneficial to health, whilst the male game continues to be promoted as fast, exciting and combative. The FA sanctions female play, but not on the same terms as male play; females are *female* footballers, not footballers. Dunning claims that one of the reasons for the increase in female participation in sport is females' yearning to have the type of sociability and standing which males more typically gain via sport. Whether women wish to emulate males, or derive the same benefits from sports which males do, is unclear. However, what is certain is that the FA is keen to portray the

female game as qualitatively different from the male game, in order to render it another and, therefore, lesser version of the sport.

An investigation of the third category, *sexuality*, shows that the stigma of lesbianism still operates amongst those who play and develop sports for females, as well as those who report on them, especially those sports which have, traditionally, been considered 'masculine' preserves. Women who engage with contact team sports, such as football, continue to have their sexuality questioned; they are portrayed as being aggressive, unfeminine and of being unattractive to, and, perhaps, not attracted to, men. Even those women who play more 'female appropriate' sports, such as tennis, but who play with great physicality, such as the Williams sisters and the openly lesbian Amelie Mauresmo, are often portrayed as being overtly masculine; masculine here is code for lesbian. The media presentation of such athletes as deviating from the norm in their play and, therefore, their private lives, is used as a means of deterring other females from taking up sports, or pursuing them aggressively, for fear that they, too, might suffer from homophobia.

Women who play football, and other traditionally male sports, continues to be 'othered.' The media here plays an important role, with commentators and journalists highlighting the 'masculine' traits of some female athletes, whilst still attempting to link female competitors to the domestic setting, to demonstrate their abnormality, or emphasise their normality, depending upon the sport and the style of participation. Whilst the media experience of sportswomen projected from the macro level may not tally with everyone's lived experience of sportswomen at the meso and micro levels, that women remain so invisible, and that when they are visible they are presented as straying from the norm, may well act as a deterrent to potential participants.

The fourth category, examining whether *developments in men's football* have had an impact on developments in the female game, shows no clear, linear pattern. Women's football flourished around the time of World War One, when the men's professional game was suspended, but there was no repeat in the growth of the female game during World War Two. A men's World Cup win provided the impetus for the women's game to grow from 1966, and as men's football waned in popularity in the 1980s, the women's game continued to grow and received national television coverage. More

recently, the men's professional game has become more popular and commercially lucrative at the elite level, whilst at lower levels, many clubs struggle; the female game continues to grow.

Holt's claim that the development of sport in Britain is not simply that of a switch from informal, localised sports to a formal, nationally administered state of affairs (1989:20) certainly holds true for football. Despite the increase in professionalisation at the national level, and the introduction of a national policy for the female game, the delivery of football *locally* is still down to County FAs whose make up is unreflective of the modern game and who are able to thwart, deliberately, or by oversight, the expansion and strengthening of the female game. Whilst the link between sport and imperialism may no longer be a strong one, sport is still a means by which specific types of manliness are constructed, with the 'idea of sport as an antidote to the dangers of youth and free-time...both continuous and universal throughout all societies' (Talbot, 1990: 3). However, this is sport as a means of discipline and redemption for young men, not young *women*. To allow females to participate in activities partly, at least, designed to imbue manliness would be to reduce the efficacy of that wider social project. At the local level, men's football remains the only 'true' game, with local volunteers creating barriers to ensure that the female game does not imperil the masculinist aims of the sport overall.

Hargreaves cites sport as an arena where, almost more than in any other, male hegemony is still most complete (Hargreaves, 1985:116). For instance, women have even been excluded from traditionally male sports, such as snooker and darts, where they can compete on an equal basis with men in terms of their physical capabilities. Dunning claims sport is, 'simultaneously one of the most significant sites of resistance against and challenge to the reproduction of traditional masculinity' (2000:220). He argues that sport is inherently conflictual, producing 'in group/out group, we group/they group' identifications. Adhering to the concept of the 'civilising process' (Dunning et al, 1992; 1993) he sees sport as a vital site for the forging of 'traditional' male identities, and as an increasingly isolated sphere for forging and maintaining such identities, as females gain more relative freedom from male constraint (Dunning 2000:226). However, sport is still a contested domain. 'Masculine' sports have become growth areas for female participation, and, gradually,

a combination of forces, inside and outside of sport, and the ‘feminisation’ of football in England, has forced the FA to partially accommodate some of the ambitions of females who wish to play the game.

It was stated at the outset that these were four *guiding* categories, a framework which might help to explain the development of the female game, and that other categories may emerge which might supplant or supplement them. Two themes which have emerged are the importance of the structure of the sport’s governing body, and of government intervention in the development of sport, and we have looked at the development of the female game in the USA, Norway and England in the light of these issues. In the USA, USSoccer has always administered the women’s game, integrating it into its existing structures. Soccer for females has been developed at US colleges as a result of sports equity legislation Title IX, and the sport is now increasingly popular for females, pre and post-college. In Norway, a raft of non-sports and sports specific equity legislation has resulted in the relatively high representation of women in administrative roles within sports governing bodies. Such legislative support, and the presence of females at the highest levels of sports administration, means that the sport for females is integrated with men’s at the administrative and other levels, and is driven forward as part of the core programme of the game’s development. The USA and Norway may have shared our Victorian ancestor’s negative views of females in sport, with much the same gendered patterns of sport apparent in America as in England (Park1987:8) but, whereas in England such attitudes persist, the national urge to produce PE and sports systems superior to those already in existence in Britain have helped the USA and Norway to develop more equitable systems of sports delivery for females, via macro legislation, which has helped to overcome resistance at the meso and micro levels.

In England, football for females, and women’s sport in general, has been marked by exclusion or forced *separatism*, with women’s football only being administered by the game’s national governing body in England since 1993. Women’s football still does not occupy a central position in its new FA era, either in terms of status or in accessing the FA’s considerable resources. Gender equity legislation in England allows sport to opt *out* of equitable provision, rather than attempting, as is the case in the US and Norway, to encourage and guarantee it. From 1969 to 1993, the WFA

relied on the State, via the Sports Council, for financial support, but this was assistance which did little to encourage the WFA organisation to develop the game systematically. It was small scale, non-strategic, concentrated almost exclusively on the field of play, and accommodated, at least initially, the FA's decision not to administer the sport.

Unlike in the US and Norway, the game is not administratively integrated in England, with a Women's Committee still in existence at the FA and no dissolution of it planned, an important practical and symbolic separateness. There are few women in senior positions within the FA organisation, at the local or national level, and there is little experience of the women's game amongst the volunteers who sit on FA Committees and who 'staff' County FAs. This is where some of the major problems in the FA's new development plans for the female game lie; in the lack of synergy between national initiatives and practitioner generated strategy, and local, volunteer implemented initiatives, or the lack thereof. The FA is not homogenous, but is, rather, made up of interest groups at the national and local levels, contesting meanings. The history of the sport is one of constant struggle between dominant and subordinate groups, where contested meanings emerge and are challenged. Hegemony here then is a useful explanatory concept because it resists the Eliasian tendency to see the development of sport as linear, apposite when one considers the peaks and troughs nature of the development of football for females in England.

As the FA strives to modernise, it looks to other countries for ideas on how to develop the football 'product', increasingly recruiting senior workers from non-football and non-sports backgrounds. Its local agencies, the volunteer run County FAs, however, remain virtually untouched by the changes in personnel and attitudes taking place at the national level. In a sport which often seems to flout employment law in terms of the recruitment and retention of staff (Bradbury, 2001:79) County FAs continue to rely on white, male volunteers, with backgrounds only in the male strands of the sport, to deliver equitable programmes in each county. Local mechanism of redress, if they exist at all, are also operated by the same tranche of volunteers. Whilst recognising the difficulties of relying on volunteers for service delivery, the FA has yet to address the discriminatory practices of County FAs, or to assess the value of the current County FA system within its new structure.

The local level is key to an analysis of the female game. When looking at football for females, the FA is a still cumbersome body attempting to keep pace with the modern game, but its authority is continually challenged by the powerful Premier League, UEFA and FIFA, and so those at the meso and micro levels become more influential as the Association struggles to influence the direction of the game nationally. Outside of football, the State is still loathe to involve itself in the delivery of sport, preferring to deliver policy via intermediaries, such as the Sports Lottery. No anti-discrimination legislation on a par with that in the USA and Norway has been introduced, either relating purely to sport or with wider applications, so, this lack of thrust from the macro level again increases the influence of those at the meso and micro levels, placing the onus on them to provide, or allowing them the space not to provide, accessible sports opportunities. Connell points up this dichotomy between the micro and macro, stating that we should not allow individual, localised acts of constraint to obstruct our view of wider, structural acts of oppression, just as it is vital to recognise that local victories will not overthrow the larger system of control (Connell, 1996:74).

Even though more females are now playing football than ever before, the sport is still governed by men who hold resources and shape and implement policy, with this also having been true of the WFA years. As the female game is run by the same people who run the male game, the likelihood of a strongly politicised campaign to increase the resources available to the female sport is reduced. The institutionalisation of the female game means that those committed and opposed to the development of it are now part of the same organisation, locally and nationally. This means that the continued expansion of the female game is by no means guaranteed, with Hargreaves usefully reminding us that progress is not always linear (Hargreaves 1990:300). This continuing hegemonic battle for control of the female game can be seen in the stalling of attempts to launch a professional women's league in England. Some saw the league as a natural progression for the sport. For others, the opposition to women in the sport is so ingrained, is viewed as so 'natural', that challenges to it, such as the drive for professionalism, are seen as so bizarre, that many see it not as a challenge for what is 'right', but as an attack on the consensus that women's sport is 'less' significant than men's sport. Meanings in sport are contested at the micro, meso and macro levels, with individuals and groups constructing and resisting 'common sense'

notions around sport. Although there is an often frustrating lack of synergy between the 'modern' FA at the national level, and its volunteer drivers at the local level, local volunteers involved in the female game are unlikely to sever links with the governing body. As well as involving abandoning some of the more useful structures which the FA has helped to build, and spurning the organisation's financial resources, such a move would allow the governing body to, again, abdicate responsibility for the female game, and would also remove the challenge to individuals and institutions, inside and outside of the sport, to be reflexive about their own sexist attitudes and actions.

The governing body's relationship with the media, and the public's attitude towards women's football in England remain important issues, especially at a time when the FA is attempting to establish a professional women's league. Media coverage of women's sport plays a part in shaping individual and institutional views on whether or not females would be supported in their attempts to play traditionally male sports. Football for females does not *need* media coverage to exist and grow; the history of the women's game in this country demonstrates that. However, positive, regular coverage of the female sport would help to increase pressure on the FA to maintain and increase support for it; historically, the decision of, at the macro level, the media's ruling echelon to continue to ignore the sport has helped to generate support, at the micro, meso and macro levels, for those inside and outside of the FA, who prefer the female game not to develop, citing a lack of wider public interest as one of their defences.

There is then, not surprisingly, no single over-riding factor which has shaped how football for females has developed in England, the United States and Norway. A combination of factors *inside football*, *inside sport* generally and *outside football and sport* help to generate the conditions which shape how the game progresses, regresses or remains static. If we link back to Layder's work, examined in Chapter One, this Conclusion does not claim that we should abandon the search for a unifying theory which might explain the development of the female game. It may be more useful, rather, to view the development of the game as being affected on a number of *levels*. The State, via sports specific and non-sports specific legislation and funding, as we have seen, has played a major part in developing the sport and may be said to be the most influential factor around the development of football for females at the *macro*

level. The FA's previous hostility towards the female game, and its current structure, are major impediments at the *meso* level, and at the micro level, the macro and meso combine to challenge the agency of individual females who may, or may not, be involved with the sport, and the agency of those who would continue to obstruct the game's progress.

We have seen that the development of the game for females in England has been less linear than that in the USA and Norway. Will the expansion in the women's game post-1993 continue? The game is not yet integrated within the national governing body to the extent it is in both the US and Norway, and is delivered by a number of agencies, its delivery not being seen as solely the responsibility of one body. This means that, unlike at any other point in its development, strategy *and* delivery would have to collapse at a number of sites for the game's recent progress to be radically reversed. The game may still not be part of the nation's sporting calendar, it may attract few spectators, and it may face crucial challenges in terms of broadening its acceptance and appeal, but its provision is now part of the workload of local agencies *nationally*, and it is via this, encouraged by the governing body's strategy, that football for females in England has its new strengths, as well as its weaknesses.

'Sport used badly, can encourage personal vanity and group vanity, greedy desire for victory and hatred for rivals, an intolerant esprit de corps and contempt for people who are beyond a certain arbitrary selected pale' (Wolfenden Report, 1960: introduction).

Football for females is no longer viewed, generally, as being quite as far beyond the pale as it once was. The hostility towards it of those inside and outside of the game is subsiding, if slowly. However, hostility, in many instances, has been replaced by a lack of appreciation of what is needed to advance the game, or by, at the local level, the sort of intransigence which still threatens to restrict the desire and the ability of many females to engage with football. For this to be overcome, the very structures of the FA must be changed, if the game in England is to emulate the success of the female sport in the USA and Norway. A change in structure, which would narrow the gap, administratively and philosophically, between the national and the local, between practitioners and volunteers must, however, be supported by conducive external conditions, such as the adoption and enforcement of equal opportunities legislation.

To simply mimic a number of individual initiatives use to promote the female game in the USA and Norway, such as designing a programmes to promote elite level play and launching a professional league, will not succeed in developing the game, unless conditions outside of the sport exist which will help the governing body to bring about a change in the mindset of those with influence within the sport.

That the FA's approach to the development of the female game is based around negotiating what is considered appropriate behaviour for females is a further demonstration of the hegemonic battle for power over the game and, as such, is part of a wider negotiation of what females are, or are not, sanctioned to do. When females play traditionally male sports, they threaten the ideal of standardised sexual appeal and behaviours (Connell, 1996:74) eroding the more general, non sporting, concept of what it is to be a woman, hence opposition to changing gender roles in sport from those outside of it. Whilst few high profile female athletes project themselves as feminist, their actions help to sustain an evolving battle for hegemonic control, with those who wish to play finding inspiration in them, and those who oppose female athleticism being forced by them to defend and refine their arguments for the maintenance of women's exclusion from, or regulated participation in, sport.

It has taken the female game over a century to achieve even its current modest status. Its growth has been slow and non-linear, in terms of both the number of participants and elite level success achieved. Now that the game is controlled, administratively, by the game's national governing body, it has the fiscal resources which it lacked previously, but is in danger of becoming institutionalised, as those proselytising for and against it, and those who feel indifferent towards it, are contained within an organisation which has a history of reaction, rather than pro-action and which is, as indicated by its structure, built on tradition, traditions which have excluded females as players and administrators, and those who wish to challenge this exclusion, have no external leverage, in the form of legislation.

That women continue to play traditionally male sports, not just football, and continue to enter areas of work previously thought of as male domains, gives hope that the women's game will continue to develop, but the *speed and direction* of this development will continue to be dictated by a cadre of people involved in the sport,

with any opposition to their approach able to be thwarted at the local, regional and national level.

Appendices

Appendix I Interviewees

Allen, Mike	<i>Daily Express</i> Sports Editor	04.09.2000
Barber, Paul	Head of the Professional Women's League Project Team at the FA and FA Director of Marketing	23.05.2001
Brown, Rachel	England player, on a scholarship in the USA	11.01.2000
Burke, Karen	England player	03.02.99
Coulthard, Gillian	England captain	03.02.1999
Alf de Blassis	Canadian football writer	23.06.1999
Ebbage, Jane	'A' Licence coach at Chesterfield Centre of Excellence (Female)	07.09.1999
Evans, Toni	Ex-Doncaster Belles player	22.02.2000
Faulkner, Richard (Lord Faulkner of Worcester)	Ex-WFA Chair	26.01.2000
Focus group	Female pupils from Ellesmere School, Leicester	30.03.2000

Focus group	Female pupils from Rushey Meade School, Leicester	03 and 04.05.2000
Focus group	Female pupils from King Edward 7th School, Melton, Leicestershire	16 and 17.05.2000
Forde, Sarah	English freelance journalist	10.06.1999
Freakley, Jackie	EmGals and Leicester City Ladies player. Also played in Holland.	15.08.1998
Giguerre, Sarah	US college player, playing for the University of Leicester	25.03.1999
Gregory, Patricia	Ex-WFA Chair, ex-UEFA and ex-FA Women's Committees member	07.12.1999
Gore, Sylvia	Ex-England player and Football Development Officer at Knowsley District Council	08.09.1999
Hanson, Lorraine	Ex-Doncaster Belles and England	26.02.2000
Hardy, Norman	EmGals manager	12.08.1998
Hemsley, Julie	Ex-England player and assistant manager, ex-WFA, FA Council and FA Women's Committee	12.01.2000
Howe, Bobby.	USSoccer Director of Coaching	18.08.1999
Howker, Chris	Leicester City Ladies	08.08.1898

Ives, Mark	Hertfordshire County FA	22.01.1999
Johannesen, Henrietta	Norwegian journalist	24.06.1999
Jones, Graham	<i>LA Times</i> journalist	23.06.1999
Kiddell, Ray	Chair of FA Women's Committee and member of UEFA Women's Committee	12.01.2000
Knight, Katherine	FA Public Affairs Officer and Media Relations Officer for Women's Football/Regions	26.11.1999
Lindeburg, Michael	Coach of US Class One youth team	20.08.1999
Lopez, Sue	Ex-England player, ex-WFA, 'A' Licence Coach, Head of Women's Football at Southampton FC	12.08.1999
Marley, Mo	England player, Football Development Officer for Merseyside and mentored as part of the FA Women's Coach Mentoring Scheme	03.02.1999
McCann, Dr. Christine	Chesterfield player and coach at their Centre of Excellence (Female)	30.03.2000
Murphy, Danielle	England player on a scholarship in the USA	28.01.2000

O'Neill, Jennifer	Editor of <i>On The Ball</i> and a player with Premier League Blythe Spartan Kestrels	11.01.2000
Parkin, Steve	Head of the National Game at the Football Association	23.05.2001
Powell, Hope	Ex-England player. England National Coach	03.02.1999
Pryor, Sue	Ex-Millwall administrator and player, administrator with Croydon LFC and member of London County FA	26.11.1999
Reagan, Martin	Ex-England manager	08.08.1999
Rudd, Dave	Ex-Hertfordshire Girls League	04.02.1999
Schultz, Ike	<i>New York Times</i> journalist	23.06.1999
Shave, Linda	EmGals player	07.10.1998
Simmons, Kelly	FA Women's National Football Co-ordinator. Now Head of National Football Development	17.11.1997a) 08.03.2000b)
Simpson, Jean	Former <i>Express</i> women's football columnist	07.12.1999

Simpson, Paul	Women's Alliance Representative and member of FA Women's Committee	09.09.1999
Smith, Kelly	England player on a scholarship in the USA	11.01.2000
Smith, Sue	England player	03.02.1999
Thompson, Kate	Ex-Leicester City Ladies	19.01.1999
Triance, Grace	Ex-South East London Ladies	26.11.1999
Vanderpool, Steve	VP Communications, WWC '99	30.06.1999
Vecsey, George	<i>New York Times</i> journalist	07.07.1999
Waite, Gill	Leicester Girls League, referee and member of County FA	03.09.1998
Whitehead, Linda	Ex-WFA Administrator	07.12.1999
Wilkinson, Dean	Youth Sports Development Officer East Hertfordshire Council	21.01.1999
Yankey, Rachel	England player	03.02.1999

Appendix II

Questionnaires

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