**The historical and contemporary role of physical activity and sport for women: a study of netball in Scotland**

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**ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the area of female physical activity and competitive team sport, in particular, netball as a means to support lifelong female physical activity and participation in sport. This study is the first to investigate the historical and contemporary place of netball and therefore provides a new perspective on Scottish female physical activity and sports participation through netball.

The research underpinning this thesis used a mixed methods approach: self-completion survey questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. These methods are supplemented by a review of literature pertaining to the substantive themes that underpin this study (e.g.: sociological and historical aspects of women's sport; critical social and historical analysis of sport in Scotland; the development of netball in Scotland). This thesis also utilises important data collected via survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The survey questionnaires were completed by 143 women over 16 years of age who have played and/or coached netball. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 32 women to explore in greater depth individuals’ personal accounts of netball alongside a range of topics outlined in the survey questionnaire. In doing so, this study gives a voice to these women and uniquely provides a record of their experiences and insights.

The findings from this study offer insight into the role of primary school, family and friends and other social factors that influence these women’s desire to play netball. It is of significance that this study reveals that the traditionally accepted barriers to female participation do not appear significant to this group. Therefore, it may be inferred that the reasons for participation are more complex than traditionally assumed.