

Analysis of children's participation in physical activity and sport through figure...

[Family](#), [Children](#)



Sport and physical education is fundamental to the early development of children and youth. Through sport, children develop vital skills as well as emotional and social benefits. They experience character and leadership development through peer relations which in turn leads to an increase in confidence and a dramatic decrease in anxiety levels. It is estimated that approximately 87% of young people aged 9-11 participate in sport related physical activity. However, as adolescence evolves, participation in sport weakens by over 20%. A recent study conducted by the Australian Sports Commission has indicated that the best strategies to increase youth participation in sport is by having a good coach, a supportive school and home environment and a qualitative and innovative program design. Hillcrest Christian College is known for their profound basketball excellence program drawing in kids from all over the state. With 8 competing teams and 3 ongoing junior programs for primary school students with well over 200 students involved all together, Hillcrest by far has one of the best program designs in the country and supports their students to continue playing the game well into the future which is one of the main reasons why I participate in the program. Figueroa's framework was designed to examine the issues surrounding access, equity and equality in sport and physical activity. Peter Figueroa developed 5 levels: individual, interpersonal, institutional, structural and culture that determines various aspects in society that influence and drive a person's involvement and participation in sport. From joining the basketball program almost 5 years ago, many factors such as my family, peers and my genetic makeup have encouraged me to continue participating in the program.

The first exposure many children receive to sport or physical activity is through their parents. Moore et al. (2010) discovered that children between 4 and 7 years of age were 3.5 to 6 times more likely to be active when one or both parents were active than when both parents were inactive. From a very young age of 4 my parents put me into a local basketball team and encouraged me to participate as they had very strong views on sporting activities since they both had been involved and played at high levels almost their whole lives. Both my mum and dad had parents that encouraged them to partake in numerous sports as children which had a great effect on their lives as they found lifelong friends and obtained many valuable skills that they are still able to use to this day. Because of this, they wanted to instil the same values they had on to their own children which is why I am still participating at a high level today. It was not only my parents who encouraged me to play but also my sister. Watching her play from a very young age I was exposed to the game and wanted to follow in her footsteps. Growing up together, she has always supported me and taught me esteemed skills to become a better player. When coming to Hillcrest, she was already a big part of the basketball program which encouraged me to join the team. I am now in grade 11 and both my parents and older sister are still extremely supportive role models in my sporting endeavours and always want me to push myself to become a better player. This is one of the major reasons why I am still heavily involved in the program today.

There is no doubt that young people are highly influenced by their peers throughout their sporting activities. They not only play a significant role in

the type of sport an individual decides to participate in but it also presents children with a sense of belonging to play alongside their peers. My friends have heavily influenced me to partake in various sport and physical activity. Throughout my schooling years, I have been a part of many different sporting teams some of which I have only participated in purely due to the fact that my friends were playing. One of the main reasons for my involvement in the Hillcrest basketball excellence program is because some of my friends from my outside of school basketball teams were already partaking in the program who encouraged me to join the team. Almost 5 years later, my peers are still inspiring and pushing me to be my best. They teach me valuable lessons and help me pursue my dreams and achieve my goals. I definitely wouldn't be where I am without them, therefore making them one of the biggest influences in my life so far as I continue to represent my school in the program.

In most sports, having the right physique is a crucial part in depicting whether or not an athlete will succeed in the sport. Physiologists categorise body types into three different subdivisions: endomorph, ectomorph and mesomorph. Although having the perfect body shape for certain sports will not certify success, there are many individual stereotypes that are visible in each sport. For example; an ideal swimmer will most likely obtain broad shoulders, a thin waist, powerful legs, long torso and a large wingspan so the athlete needs fewer strokes to reach the end of the pool. Whilst gymnasts on the other hand are relatively short, flexible and are muscular all round. ' The genetic makeup of an individual can be referred to as the genotype. A

genotype is the genetic composition of an individual that has been passed down from their parents.' In my experience, I have come from a family whose background is majority sport related. My mum who played a winger in touch for Australia was fast and lean whilst my dad played A grade NRL and had very muscular legs. I have received both of these genetics which has helped me to continue to participate in basketball as you need to be fast to sprint the court whilst also having strong legs to jump for rebounds.

Although the Hillcrest excellence program has an immense reputation for being one of the best ranking basketball schools in the country there are so many ways the program can be improved to allow underdeveloped players to participate and learn the essential skills of the game. Upon asking many students who are not involved in the program why they do not partake in the game many of them respond in the way of ' you have to be really good to play', ' I'm intimidated to play because I am not good enough and I feel judged' and amongst many others. After listening to these responses, I have noticed that the staff and coaches only pick students to be involved in the program if they have a background of the game or have the physique of a basketball athlete. To improve this issue, there should be allocated teams for both boys and girls who have never played basketball before where they can develop a feel for the game and learn the basic skills. Personally, I think this would benefit the program immensely as this would increase the participation levels because students will no longer feel like they are not good enough but rather can now play with other students that are of the same ability.

In conclusion, the structural levels of Figueroa's framework have helped me identify why I participate in the Hillcrest basketball program and what individual and interpersonal characteristics have encouraged me to continue playing the game I love. Throughout the essay I have discussed the many reasons why kids of today's society partake or don't partake in physical activity and sport and how my family, peers, coaches and my genetic makeup has kept me playing the game for over 10 years. Using the theories in the previous paragraph, I believe that the Hillcrest basketball excellence program can be improved in simple ways to increase the participation of students who have never had the opportunity to play the game. These small enhancements will ensure the program will continue and thrive well into the future.