In the spring issue of the BJTPE (Answer Back – P45) I said my aim in Inclusive PE and Sport* is to bridge the gap between theory and practice. In the sessions I have been running through this consultancy I have found that practical solutions are of paramount importance to over-worked and under-resourced PE teachers. I have also found that teachers need ideas that are adaptable to the unique circumstances of their own schools eg. type of student intake, facilities and specialisms available and so on. In this report I provide a very brief outline of an ‘innovation’ that uses the theories developed in my research (Cockburn 2001a, 2001b, 2001c; Cockburn and Clarke forthcoming) in a way that is accessible and applicable to PE teachers at the chalk-face. It is a project which is not without its problems, but which could arguably be developed along the same lines as I describe below and put into practice in any UK secondary school.

“I put on clubs every day of the week … the sports hall doors are open lunchtimes and after school … but they just don’t come!” a colleague exclaimed just the other day. It is a familiar cry in PE staff rooms all over the UK. So what are we doing wrong? It has been argued at length that traditional sporting structures in the UK are exclusive (eg. Choi 2000; Mason 1995) particularly with regard to teenage girls and that these structures include not only curricular PE but also extra curricular provision of physical activity (Sport England 1999).

The traditional menu of extra curricular provision is largely built around selective school representation in traditional activities. The traditional menu of extra curricular provision is largely built around selective school representation in traditional activities. This structure is arguably elitist and excludes any girls who are not good enough to make the squad, who would prefer to do an activity they feel is more relevant to them, or who simply prefer recreational situations to competitive ones.

In many schools colleagues have been making efforts to increase participation by challenging these exclusive traditions, for instance girls' football teams, recreational badminton sessions or aerobics classes. However, returning to teaching after full time research I was reminded of the restraints we face with regard to innovation in this area such as bias (in expectations, commitments, and time and facility allocation) towards traditional representative team games. There is a lot of weight carried by the argument: 'That's the way we've always done it'.
Nevertheless, with the support of like-minded colleagues I decided to have a go at challenging the traditions myself and set up an action research project at the school where I teach. The challenge was to put into practice the theory from which Inclusive PE and Sport has grown (Cockburn 2001a, 2001b, 2001c; Cockburn and Clarke forthcoming).

**THE ‘FIZZICAL FUN CLUB’**

The aim of the project was to explore an alternative form of school-based extra-curricular provision; in the first instance, for girls. My research questions were several** but the one I discuss here is quite simply to explore the possibility that an ‘alternative’ club format might attract girls who do not otherwise participate in school-based extra-curricular physical activities. The overall philosophy of the club, by now known as the ‘Fizzical Fun Club’, was one of inclusivity. The hope was to create something different from the traditional clubs on offer. The ‘Fizzical Fun Club’ was launched on the following bases:

- **No boys** or male members of staff to be involved in order to provide a less threatening sporting environment for the girls, where they could just be themselves without any of the hassle of image maintenance, verbal abuse, facility domination and so on.
- Girls from **all year groups** could attend in order to break down barriers of ‘what is for whom’ and ‘who does what with whom’.
- **Any activity** (that could be provided on the school site and by myself and a helper); again in order to challenge ideas of ‘who does what’ and thereby allow girls to try things they may not otherwise have had the opportunity or the courage to do or allow them to choose traditionally ‘feminine’ activities safe from ridicule.
- **Any format** of that activity ie. recreational, instructional, competitive, etc. in order to challenge the traditional notion that sport has to involve the continual learning of skills, or can only be enjoyed in a competitive format, whilst still being prepared to provide these formats where the girls ask for it.
- **Any role** can be played by the girls ie. they could play, coach, officiate, score-keep, or spectate, in order to demonstrate that sport can offer involvement to all sorts of people in all sorts of roles and to challenge the norm that the role of performer is all important.
- **Any pattern of attendance** ie. they could stay for just the first 1/2 hour of the club or for the whole hour, neither would they be penalised if they could not attend regularly due to other commitments such as looking after younger siblings. (Attendance is still rewarded: firstly with a big smile!; secondly with a commendation sticker; thirdly with a signature on their ‘Girls in Sport’ participation card and eventually with a self-designed Fizzical Fun Club t-shirt as well as end of term trips to the local bowling alley or ice skating rink.
- **Any kit** allowed – as long as it could be deemed safe, the girls could wear what they liked. This decision was made in the light of overwhelming evidence that one of girls’ main reasons for disliking school PE is the compulsory kit (Aldridge 1998; Shilling 1993). It was hoped that this
would allow them not only to feel safe and secure as far as their bodies are concerned but also to encourage some self expression in an otherwise uniformed school day. I also stated that this kit could be left in the PE office for the day or even all week if it helped them with their organisation and/or problems with overloaded school bags – another common reason for not participating in extra curricular physical activities.

- The girls themselves would have a voice in the running of the club eg. requests of certain one-off activities, the design of a club t-shirt, dispute resolution and so on. This was aimed at encouraging ‘self-ownership’ of their activity and thereby a feeling of self worth and autonomy but also responsibility to the club and its participants and staff.

- A supportive, open and relaxed atmosphere where the teacher/student boundary could take on a slightly different form - we try to be more flexible than usual, posing the question 'why not?' as often as possible!

**A PROGRESS REPORT: TWO TERMS ON Negativity and oppression**

There has been a distinct atmosphere of disapproval amongst some members of staff including refusal to help with publicity and a concern that their clubs’ students would never have the right kit on match days because Fizzical Fun Club did not insist on school uniform kit. Suspicion was also shown in the form of fear that I would be poaching their already low numbers of clientele and the consequence would be a worse turnout for the clubs already set up. Oppression has taken various forms, for instance, right from the beginning it was argued that I should have taken on two netball teams in that slot. In a similar vein, the low status of the Fizzical Fun Club in some colleagues’ eyes has been illustrated by the presumption that, with 21 girls (already in kit), we should lose our indoor facility (with no prior notice) to a netball match (in fine weather) because "… fixtures take priority don't they"!

**Numbers**

The initial turnout was very low (just 3 or 4 students each week). But interestingly they were from all year groups (7 to 11) and different individuals each week. This made me curious as to their motivations and reasons for not returning the following week. But what really kept me going were some of the early comments from the girls:

"No boys? ... great!"

"... that is so good."

“It’s good ‘cause you can do all different sports.”

“My friend wants to try football but isn’t very good – so she can come and try it!”
The last four weeks have seen attendance figures of 17, 18, 19 and 21 respectively and I’m excited about the prospect of needing to recruit more help.

‘In the club’
I’ve been a bit uncomfortable about the term ‘club’ and realise it’s rather exclusive connotations. However, there is much sound writing on ‘… our irreducible need to belong’ (Cockburn 1998:216) and how this is especially crucial to teenagers who are in the midst of the difficult process of identity formation (Rutherford 1990). So due to the Fizzical Fun Club’s open door policy and the fact that anyone (female) can ‘belong’ I feel it may be a positive term. Indeed, building on this theme of identity and belonging the girls are currently designing a t-shirt – the next dilemma is how to decide on a design!

CONCLUSIONS
There is still much to do. I look forward to making a positive push to pass students on to other activities and clubs; to continuing to develop the club; and to consulting girls who still do no extra curricular physical activity. I also feel more work is needed to encourage girls from years 10 – 13 perhaps it will have to involve a separate club? It would also be a positive move to try a Fizzical Fun Club for certain boys who feel excluded as many would benefit I am sure. It is still early days but I am hopeful that this small piece of research may have been worthwhile. It has certainly been an experience in learning to argue my case continuously, to break down barriers and to think on my feet! As the Fizzical Fun Club changes shape over the weeks I feel I am learning a lot from these young women and hope that through dissemination of such projects through conferences, article publications or consultancy work I can encourage others to find the energy and courage to benefit young people through more inclusive physical activities. I would like to close with two quotes from Margaret Talbot in order to encourage others in such work

‘… there are few examples of attempts by sport organisations to change their cultures or to address the long-held value systems which remain inherently exclusive … organisations find it difficult to ‘own’ the problem.” But also that

‘It has to be recognised that innovative programmes and provision necessarily entail risk – risk of failure; risk of being labelled as ‘bad practice’ simply because they are different; risk of not being properly funded … Similarly, the people who lead or drive such innovations run the risk themselves of being labelled – as people whose ideas do not ‘fit’ dominant thinking; or as deviant because they provide the unusual … The leaders of these schemes represent real courage and commitment - without which, change is rarely achieved.’ (Talbot 2001: 10)
BIBLIOGRAPHY


