

**THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL VALUES ON
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AMONG
FEMALE ADOLESCENTS FROM
THE INDIAN DIASPORA**

by

Subha Ramanathan
B.Sc., University of Western Ontario, 2004

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

(Human Kinetics)

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

July 2006

© Subha Ramanathan, 2006

Abstract

This study investigated how physical activity (PA) patterns among female adolescents from the Indian diaspora have been influenced by Indian traditions, beliefs and values. This research was conceived from a model of adolescent PA from Welk, Wood and Morss (2003), who studied the role of parents on PA using Social Cognitive Theory, and from a set of cultural values from Unger, Ritt-Olsen, Teran, Huang, Hoffman and Palmer (2002), who studied health risk behaviours. As parents are generally the foremost educators of cultural knowledge, their potentially concurrent influence on PA was a key area of interest for this project. The main research question was: What role do personal, peer, parental and cultural attitudes towards PA have on actual PA behaviour among female adolescents in Canada from the Indian diaspora?

Six girls aged 15-18 participated in an individual interview followed by a focus group. While each one of them made distinct contributions to this research, there were shared experiences. PA was considered to be important for physical and mental health. Participants who felt strong affinity for Indian culture also linked PA to spiritual health; this theme of spirituality is a unique contribution to adolescent PA literature. Among all participants, PA was thought to strengthen relationships with family. Parents supported physical activities by playing games with their daughters and also provided encouragement and filled facilitative roles. When discussing Indian culture, participants indicated that males and females were raised to fulfill different roles: females were raised to become wives and mothers while males were taught to be independent. As expected, differentiated gender roles also emerged while discussing sporting behaviours. In general, boys were deemed more aggressive, assertive and competitive in PA; girls were perceived to promote fun-based learning environments. Popular media was cited as a major influence in differentially shaping boys' and girls' physiques. This study gave voice to a group of adolescent girls from the Indian diaspora while integrating existing literature on personal and parental attitudes towards physical activity with cultural values. Future research should address concepts of spiritual health and family values among adolescents from other diasporic subcultures in Canada.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Tables	v
Acknowledgements	vi
1.0 Introduction.....	1
1.1 PURPOSE AND FRAMEWORK	6
1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	7
1.3 INFLUENCES OF ADOLESCENT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	8
1.31 CULTURAL ATTITUDES	8
1.32 PARENTAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.....	11
1.33 PERSONAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.....	12
2.0 Review of Literature.....	13
2.1 PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	13
2.2 THE MANIFESTATION OF MACHISMO IN PATRIARCHAL SOCIETIES.....	19
2.3 THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AMONG ADULT FEMALES.....	22
2.4 SUMMARY	26
3.0 Methods.....	28
3.1 PARTICIPANTS	28
3.2 SUMMARY OF THEMES INVESTIGATED.....	29
3.3 PROCEDURES AND RATIONALE	31
3.31 RECRUITMENT SITE: SAI CENTRE	31
3.32 RECRUITMENT AND CONSENT PROCEDURES	34
3.33 DATA COLLECTION AND RATIONALE.....	35
3.4 DATA ANALYSIS.....	38
TABLE 1: INTERVIEW CODING SCHEME	40
TABLE 2: FOCUS GROUP CODING SCHEME	43
3.5 CHALLENGES OF QUALITATIVE INQUIRY: POSITIONING MYSELF AS A RESEARCHER	45
4.0 Results and Discussion.....	50
4.1 PARTICIPANT PROFILES AND FIRST IMPRESSIONS.....	50
4.11 SAMANTHA	50
4.12 SHEILA.....	58
4.13 NANDINI	62

4.13 VIDYA.....	68
4.15 RAMYA	73
4.16 PRIYA.....	81
4.2 THEMES ACROSS PARTICIPANTS: THE FOCUS GROUP	87
4.21 IMPRESSIONS OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES	87
4.22 IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.....	89
4.23 COMPARING BOYS AND GIRLS ENGAGED IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES.....	91
4.24 POSITIVE INFLUENCES ON EXERCISE BEHAVIOUR.....	93
4.25 INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA ON PHYSIQUES	94
4.26 PARENTAL INFLUENCE ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES	96
4.27 INDIAN CULTURE AND VALUE SYSTEMS.....	98
4.3 DISCUSSION: THEMES IN RELATION TO PREVIOUS LITERATURE	105
4.31 PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	105
4.32 COMPARING BOYS AND GIRLS.....	108
4.33 INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA IN 'SHAPING' ADOLESCENTS	111
4.34 IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.....	115
4.35 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PATTERNS.....	116
4.36 PARENTS, CULTURE AND VALUE SYSTEMS.....	118
5.0 Conclusion	124
Bibliography	127
Appendices.....	134
APPENDIX A: PERSONAL INTERVIEW GUIDE	134
APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP GUIDE.....	137
APPENDIX C: LETTER TO YOUTH GROUP LEADER	140
APPENDIX D: ANNOUNCEMENT	141
APPENDIX E: PARENTAL CONSENT FORM	142
APPENDIX F: PARTICIPANT ASSENT FORM.....	144
APPENDIX G: BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL	146

List of Tables

Table 1: Interview Coding Scheme.....	40
Table 2: Focus Group Coding Scheme.....	43

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Peter Crocker for supervising this thesis and encouraging me to challenge my assumptions. His interest in my Indian heritage during our initial meeting in September 2004 led me on a path of introspection that inspired this thesis project. I am also grateful to my committee members, Dr. Wendy Frisby and Dr. Whitney Sedgwick who taught me how to delve in to the world of qualitative inquiry and showed me how to formulate research questions and analyze my data using content analysis.

I owe big hugs and a special thanks to the HKIN crew and especially the ladies from the sport psych lab, Valerie Hadd, Meghan McDonough and Catherine Sabiston, who patiently answered my questions over the past two years and helped me to create realistic timelines for the completion of my master's degree.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge my father for modelling determination and success, my mother for modelling compassion and patience, and my brothers and extended family that have unconditionally supported my educational and personal endeavours. During my years at UBC, I have come to understand the subtle ways that you have all shaped my personality and influenced my life choices.

1.0 Introduction

Around the world, individuals partake in sporting activities and physical behaviours, though actual practices differ. While motivators for engaging in physical activity vary from person to person, adoption of a regular exercise regime is often linked to a general value of one's health and a belief in the relationship between exercise behaviour and health. Historically, beliefs and values about behaviour have been "shaped by the mythology and philosophy of [one's] country of origin" (Inman, Constantine, Ladany & Morano, 2001, p.17). Taking a quick look at spiritual texts (which reach large audiences and cross national borders) shows that from the Vedic scriptures written over 5000 years ago to the Bible and Koran written over 1000 years ago, physical activity (PA) practices exist and are encouraged in many forms including hunting, dance, sports and play. A spiritual approach to health (mind-body) explains that maintaining one's physical health will enable one to focus attention on spiritual and mental health, thereby optimizing one's wellness. In contrast, a medical approach to health (body) explains that PA will optimize physical health and prevent or offset diseased states. Using either approach, PA is important and a basic human need for functioning.

Presently in Canada, youth physical activity rates are low while inactivity-related diseased states are on the rise. "Data from national surveys in the United States and Canada as well as from smaller studies suggest a remarkable downward trend in the prevalence of participation in physical activity with increasingly older children" (Kohl & Hobbs, 1998). This negative association between age and regular physical activity is of concern when one considers the secondary complications of inactivity. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada (1999), the incidence of obesity and type II diabetes, two preventable chronic disease states, has dramatically increased among Canadian children and youth over the past decade. "Two thirds of Canadians have at least one modifiable risk factor for chronic disease [which includes] low

levels of physical activity [and] unhealthy eating habits” (CDPAC, 2005). The federal government has taken the initiative to promote PA among youth by creating policies that specifically target physical education (PE) classes, as this is the only opportunity many children have to exercise (Public Health Agency, 1999). An example of such an action plan was presented at the *National Summit on Sport* held in April of 2001. Canada recognized that “there are numerous demographic and socioeconomic environmental factors to take into consideration when trying to improve the health and well-being of Canadians through physical activity and sport” (Canadian Heritage, 2004), and signed the *International Charter of Physical Education and Sports*, which requires that schools allot 150 minutes per week to physical education (Canadian Heritage, 2004). Data to support whether or not this guideline is adhered to is unavailable; however, based on increasing trends for inactive youth in Canada, it is unlikely that this has been implemented across the nation.

In addition to implementing policies, the government of Canada has endeavoured to monitor and evaluate youth activity patterns by funding nation-wide research on physical activity. The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (CFLRI) conducts an annual nation-wide telephone survey called the Physical Activity Monitor. In 2003, CFLRI presented two key findings with respect to school-age children. The first finding was that three out of five parents reported that their children and youth aged 5-17 were not sufficiently active for health benefits. “Sufficiently active” refers to the following Canadian guidelines: “30 minutes of *moderate to vigorous* physical activity 4 days a week, or 60 minutes of activity, *everyday*, of *any* type of activity” (CFLRI, 2003, p.37). The second finding was that activity level appears to decrease with age. When actual activity patterns of Canadian youth was assessed, only 49% of grade-school children aged 5-12 and only 36% of teenagers aged 13-17 were considered sufficiently active for optimal growth and development (CFLRI, 2003). Furthermore, although the trend of decreasing activity level with age is common to both boys and girls, “the decline is

most apparent for older female adolescents” (CFLRI, 2003, p.58). While the Physical Activity Monitor describes activity trends among various populations, and outlines the importance of increasing physical activity patterns among all population groups, there is little indication as to why such trends of inactivity exist.

To better understand the patterns of activity and inactivity in Canada, one must look at a multitude of contributing social, cultural, and physical factors. In sport and exercise psychology literature, Social Cognitive Theory is one approach that has been applied to the understanding of adolescent PA patterns. Social Cognitive Theory posits that thoughts, behaviours and environment are all reciprocally related. Many models of adolescent PA stem from this bio-psycho-social theory and have investigated various influences on activity levels including sibling and peer PA levels (Kimiecik, Horn & Shurin, 1996), public school versus home school PE (Welk, Schaben, & Shelley, 2004), and PE structure and curriculum (McKenzie, Marshall, Sallis, & Conway, 2000). Parents are often studied as a primary influence of adolescent PA patterns because they can directly facilitate extra-curricular PA involvement. Welk, Wood & Morss (2003) focused on exercise behaviours in relation to an adolescent’s self-perceptions, perceptions of parental physical activity, and actual parental PA. They showed that parents who actively promote physical activity (either by role modeling or facilitation) raise children who have higher perceived competence with respect to PA, higher opportunities to be active and thus participate more actively in PE and extra-curricular activities. While these findings on parental influence were important, Welk et al. (2003) were unable to account for the large mean differences in PA levels observed between boys and girls. Differences in physical activity levels (frequency, duration and intensity) among boys and girls have also been found in countless other studies (i.e. Silverman & Subramaniam, 2002). This study proposed to look at culture and values transmitted through parents and communities to help explain PA patterns among female youth from the Indian diaspora.

According to the Encyclopedia of the Worlds Minorities (Duschinski, 2005), the Indian diaspora “refers to the dispersal over the past century of substantial numbers of people from the Indian subcontinent (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan) to various western and non-western countries worldwide.” There have been three major phases of migration from India abroad – the first phase was roughly from 1830-1920 and was a result of indentured and contract labour to British, French and Dutch colonies (which includes Fiji, Caribbean islands and East Africa); the second phase was during the post-world war II period of decolonisation (India achieved independence from Britain in 1947) and was characterized by migration to industrially developed countries; the third and final phase was the recent emigration to Western Asia as a result of the oil boom in the Gulf States (University of Hyderabad, 2005). While the third phase has not directly impacted Canada, the first two have significantly influenced the character of Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal – three major ports of entry. The first Indians to Canada arrived in British Columbia from the state of Punjab between 1900 and 1908 seeking opportunities for labour on the lumberyards and farmlands. In the decades to follow, legislative restrictions prevented Indians from migrating into Canada, thus it was not until the 1960s (second phase) that the immigration of Indians into Canada dramatically increased. The 1969 Immigration Policy of Canada preferentially granted entry to prosperous members of the professional classes (Duschinski, 2005). A similar phenomenon was concurrent in the neighbouring United States as a result of the Immigration and Nationality Reform Act of 1965 and was termed the “brain drain” of talent (Duschinski, 2005). Finally, in the 1970s, twice-migrants of Indian origin entered Canada as political refugees from former British colonies. As the immigration policies have continued to change since the 1980s, the rate of immigration for persons of Indian origin has been steady. According to the 2001 Census, 68% of newcomers were born in Asia, and 713 330 of Canadians classified themselves of Indian origin. Second only

to immigrants from China, the Indian diaspora has significantly influenced the diverse religious and cultural makeup of Canada.

Due to immigration trends and the resulting multicultural nature of this nation, an investigation of culture and values among persons of Indian origin is important in Canada. Within every major urban city, adolescents of different backgrounds interact daily with one another in school, in extracurricular activities, and in their neighbourhoods. As a result of these interactions, attitudes and beliefs from individuals outside of one's family may complement or oppose values originally acquired from family. This transmission of values through peer groups and non-related adult authority figures is an important source of social norms among adolescent populations (Unger, Ritt-Olson, Teran, Huang, Hoffman & Palmer, 2002). Previous studies have found that social norms for physical activities were differentiated by gender (Silverman & Subramaniam, 2002) and ethnicity (Henderson & Ainsworth, 2002; Eyler, Vest, Sanderson, Wilbur, Matson-Koffman, Evenson, Thompson, Wilcox, & Rohm Young, 2002; Vertinsky, Batth & Naidu, 1996). In North America, studies generally show that males and more acculturated individuals participate in more physical activities than females and first-generation individuals (Grey, 1992). Acculturated in this case refers to individuals who have adapted their behaviour (physical activity and otherwise) to North American trends and norms as a result of moving to either Canada or the United States (Dasgupta, 1998).

There are limited investigations that have looked at physical activity practices among women of colour, and none to my knowledge have investigated the influence of cultural beliefs on activity practices among adolescent girls of colour. While practices among women may not be directly applicable to practices among girls, they may be an indication of attitudes held by parents that may in turn influence daughters and also manifestations of gender socialization at various life stages. Thus, literature on activity practices of adult females will be discussed as a departure point for the current investigation. Two studies on culture and physical activity with

first and second-generation American females of colour showed that cultural beliefs and practices, in general, adversely affected PA behaviours. These visible minorities were from three specific populations: Hispanics, Native Americans (First Nations) and African Americans (Henderson & Ainsworth, 2002; Eyler et al., 2002). A subgroup of women with low levels of PA attributed their inactivity patterns to a lack of knowledge and exposure to health and PA information while growing up, a lack of time to exercise due to family obligations (caring for children, housework) or a lack of social support to become physically active. According to a select group of women studied by Eyler et al. (2002), females (and not males) in their respective cultures were discouraged from PA. These women also assumed that white females were inherently advantaged with respect to exercise and lived in physical cultures. In addition, a few women felt that PA was more important for white women because they experienced greater pressures to exercise for weight-control (as sculpted and lean bodies were more desirable in white North American culture), while heavier-set women were acceptable and even desired in their non-white cultures. Ultimately, women in Henderson and Ainsworth (2002) and Eyler et al. (2002) were aware that physical activity was integral to a healthy lifestyle but perceived a multitude of barriers to exercise and, as a result, self-described as being inactive.

Previous studies have shown both positive and negative relationships between different cultural groups, gender and PA. I was interested in exploring the relationships between cultural beliefs, gender and PA patterns among a subgroup of adolescents in Vancouver from the Indian diaspora to determine how this subgroup compared to previously studied groups of youth.

1.1 Purpose and Framework

For this thesis research program, I explored determinants of physical activity among female adolescents from the Indian diaspora. I formulated questions to address their experiences in physical education and physical activity, their perceived parental and peer influences, and also

encouraged them to share experiences about their respective cultural upbringing. This study proposed that adolescents with Indian heritage have been influenced by cultural traditions, beliefs and value systems. It was expected that cultural norms would be manifested through parents and peers, and would also directly influence physical activity behaviours.

This research was conceived from a model of adolescent physical activity from Welk, Wood and Morss (2003), who studied the role of parents on adolescent behaviours, and from a set of cultural values from Unger, Ritt-Olsen, Teran, Huang, Hoffman and Palmer (2002), who studied health risk behaviours among adolescents. As inactivity is another health risk behaviour, Unger et al.'s (2002) broadly defined value constructs were useful to guide the present investigation of culture and (in)activity behaviour. The constructs from the two projects cited above helped to formulate the research questions that guided the present investigation. As parents are generally the first and foremost educators of cultural knowledge and cultural values, their potentially concurrent influence on physical activity behaviours was a key area of interest for this project. In addition, determining the influence of culture on PA is particularly important in Canada because of the increasingly large number of first and second-generation Canadians from the Indian diaspora (Statistics Canada, 2004), and because inactivity among adolescents is linked to an increase in health risks in adulthood (Public Health Agency, 1999).

1.2 Research Questions

The two main research questions for this study were as follows:

- What role do personal, peer and parental attitudes towards PA have on actual PA behaviour among a sub-group of female adolescents in Canada from the Indian diaspora?
- What role does Indian culture have on PA behaviour among a sub-group of female adolescents in Canada from the Indian diaspora?

1.3 Influences of Adolescent Physical Activity

This investigation was guided by Welk et al.'s (2003) model of adolescent physical activity and Unger et al.'s (2002) Multiethnic Cultural Values Scales (MCVS; Unger et al., 2002). Both of these investigations were quantitative in nature and very useful in identifying factors that contributed to health behaviours in large populations of adolescents. In Welk et al.'s (2003) model, parents influenced adolescent PA through two primary mechanisms: role modeling and social support. Welk et al.'s model was based on the Youth Physical Activity Promotion model, which proposed that parents influenced adolescents both directly and indirectly through various reinforcement factors. Applying the values from MCVS, it was expected that cultural values may also influenced adolescent PA directly and indirectly. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) argue that "unique combinations of ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, and other physical and personal attributes undoubtedly create unique sets of [cultural] experiences" (p.174), which naturally must include PA experiences. As direct and indirect contribution of cultural attitudes on PA was expected to differentially affect males and females, the present study focussed exclusively on females.

Although both Welk et al. (2003) and Unger et al. (2002) use quantitative methods in their work, the present study instead addressed its research questions using qualitative methodology: semi-structured interviews followed by a focus group. These qualitative methods were chosen because they could capture a variety of perspectives unique to each individual. For more information on data collection and rationale see Section 3.33. Interview and focus group questions clustered into three main areas: cultural attitudes, parental attitudes and personal attitudes. A description of each of these areas follows.

1.31 Cultural Attitudes

Unger et al. (2002) developed **Multiethnic Cultural Values Scales (MCVS)** by adapting previous scales on *filial piety*, *familism*, *collectivism*, *machismo*, and *fatalism* published within

the realms of sociology, anthropology and cross-cultural psychology. These five cultural values were thought to be particularly associated with health-risk behaviours (like inactivity). Unger et al., (2002) explain that Values Scales play an important part in gaining “a more complete picture of the range of cultural values in the population” (p.262); however, the scales are inadequate to explore *how* cultural values, if any, specifically influence behaviour in regards to physical activity. Thus, semi-structured interview questions were designed to address these five values in lieu of a questionnaire.

The first value, *Filial piety*, is found in many Asian cultures and indicates obedience to parents, provision of financial and emotional support to parents and avoidance of any behaviour that would disgrace the family name. Adolescents who are high in filial piety and whose parents are highly supportive of PA are likely to engage in PA. Conversely, adolescents from families where PA is not integral to family identity are less likely to participate in sporting activities and exercise, and more likely to be inactive. Thus, it was necessary to determine if physical activities related to their respective family identities before filial piety was associated with their exercise behaviour.

Familism is evident in Latin American and other cultures and refers to a sense of obligation and connectedness with one's immediate family, extended family and “fictive kin” (i.e. members of one's community that are closely tied to but not related to one's family). If family obligations consume so much time that an adolescent does not have the opportunity to partake in PA, then familism will be negatively correlated with PA. However, if family obligations include or are conducive to physical activities, then adolescents high in familism would likely be active. Therefore, family obligations were discussed to determine if familism influenced physical activity participation.

Collectivism is characteristic of many Latin-American and Asian cultures and is “the tendency to view oneself in the context of one's social group, rather than focusing on one's

individual qualities and achievements” (Unger et al., 2002, p.259). Individualism is defined as the polar opposite of collectivism and is found in Westernized and Industrialized cultures where one distinguishes oneself from a group, seeks individual freedom, autonomy, self-sufficiency and fulfillment of personal needs. The influence of collectivism or individualism on PA is highly dependent upon an adolescent’s perception of societal norms based on intersections of various demographic factors including age, sex and culture. If the expectation is to be physically active, then adolescents high in collectivism will pursue physical activities, while adolescents high in individualism may rebel and find other means of occupying their time. However, if the expectation is to be inactive, then adolescents high in collectivism may conform and avoid physical activities, while adolescents high in individualism may rebel and partake in PA (if it suited their personal needs). In the present study, the participant’s personal needs and importance attributed to group or social norms were assessed before collectivism or individualism was related to their physical activity behaviours.

Fatalism is evident in many Hispanic and other cultures and is the belief that one’s destiny is beyond one’s control. This external locus of control “includes the belief that one’s behaviour cannot prevent disease if disease is destined to occur” (Unger et al., 2002, p.260). Adolescents high in fatalism may be unlikely to engage in physical activities for health benefits because if they are destined to develop health problems, nothing can be done to prevent them. While an adolescent may perceive an external locus of control with respect to their beliefs of destiny and the general future, they may have an internal locus of control with respect to their present health. Thus, even if they ultimately perceive their death as an externally controlled phenomenon, they may see their present health status as fully within their control. Fatalism was assessed with respect to the present and perceived future health statuses of the participants.

The final value, *machismo*, was expected to have the strongest influence on PA behaviours among the participants. Machismo is characteristic of Hispanic and other cultures and

prescribes differentiated gender roles where desirable qualities for males are dominance, sexual prowess, physical strength and honour, while desirable qualities for females (termed “marianismo” – emulating the Virgin Mary) are dependence on males, conformance to patriarchal values, care for family, provision of emotional support, and preservation of family traditions (Unger et al., 2002). Machismo manifests itself in both positive and negative ways. While the negative ways are obvious: womanizing, false bravado and subjugation of women, positive behaviours include the obligation to protect one’s family and to face adversity with courage. Males high in machismo are likely to be physically active to achieve strength, while females high in machismo are less likely to be active to avoid appearing tough or overly masculine. Interviewees were told to think about how they compared to boys their age and then were asked to describe behaviour typical of males and females.

1.32 Parental Attitudes Towards Physical Activity

It was important to assess participants’ perceived parental attitudes towards physical activity because parents are highly influential toward the development of identity and behaviour during childhood. Welk, Wood and Morss (2003) asserted that parents may influence adolescent physical activity participation in four distinct ways: role modelling, encouragement, involvement and facilitation. *Role modelling* included parent’s interest in PA and their own efforts to be physically active; *encouragement* referred to overt efforts of parents to encourage their son/daughter to be active; *involvement* was operationalized as an overt form of support like a parent engaging in activity with their son/daughter; and finally, *facilitation* referred to gatekeeper support of parents – mediating access and opportunities for physical activities. The present investigation explored how adolescents perceived their parents previous and current PA, as well as their support of PA.

1.33 Personal Attitudes Towards Physical Activity

While parental attitudes may directly contribute to adolescent physical activity patterns by the mechanisms suggested in the previous section, they may also indirectly shape their daughters' personal attitudes towards physical activity and ultimately affect their daughter's activity behaviour. As well, daughters' attitudes can be shaped by personal experiences and social environments.

Welk et al. (2003) investigated personal attitudes towards physical activity by looking at attraction to exercise and perceived competence in exercise. Attraction was captured by five constructs: liking of games, liking of exercise, liking of physical exertion, peer acceptance and importance of exercise (Brustad, 1993); perceived competence was operationalized as self esteem and athletic competence (Harter, 1988). As all of the constructs listed above have been shown to predict adolescent activity patterns, questions that addressed them were asked in the interview and focus group.

2.0 Review of Literature

This chapter situates the present study within bodies of literature on physical education, physical activity, gender socialization in sport and the influence of culture on physical activity.

2.1 Physical Education and Physical Activity

This section describes current PE practices within Canada, discusses the experiences of multi-ethnic adolescents in PE, and finally identifies determinants of PA among adolescent populations.

Education should be directed toward developing the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential, at the same time as fostering a respect for his or her parents, his or her own cultural identity, ...for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she originates, and for civilizations different from his or her own (Canada, April 2004, p.35).

Canada's (April 2004) vision (described above) to promote inclusive educational practices and learning environments was published in a document entitled, *A Canada Fit for Children*, written in response to a 2002 United Nations Special Session on Children. This vision describes ideal educational practices, and not the actual practices in Canada.

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC, 1999) explains that "minority groups often experience higher degrees of stress from a variety of sources, including ... social and personal isolation [and] negative attitudes" towards them. Physical education classrooms, in particular, have been identified as environments that may victimize visible minorities (Vertinsky et al., 1996); however, these classes may also be opportunities for social transformation if teachers foster a positive space for interactions between multicultural youth. Chung and Phillips (2002) argue that teachers are vital in the "process of attitude modification for students" (p.129), which includes attitudes towards other cultures and attitudes towards physical activity. Health Canada (2002) supports this notion of teachers fostering attitude modification within students, and specifically suggests that within health and physical activity, PE teachers have the opportunity to

“build physical activity thinking and behaviour into their classroom to help kids become aware of the need for physical activity” regardless of their cultural heritage.

In spite of the potential for teachers to promote physical activity (PA), many Canadian adolescents are not engaged in sufficient PA for health benefits (Health Canada, 2002). Existing research on physical activity patterns for Canadian youth identifies several factors that may affect participation. Data from the 1998 Cross-National Survey on Health Behaviours in School-Aged Children (HBSC) was analyzed along many variables (Ma & Zhang, 2002). Some of the major findings were as follows:

- Grade 9 students with a positive sense of belonging to the school were twice as likely to exercise every day versus their counterparts with a negative sense of belonging.
- Students who experienced alienation in school were more likely to engage in health-compromising behaviours.
- Grade 9 students in schools with negative peer environments were almost three times as likely to watch TV and play computer games versus students in positive environments.

Ma & Zhang’s analysis clearly shows that educational environments influence leisure activities for Canadian youth. As studies have established that visible minorities are often victims to stereotypes and marginalization, it is possible that they are particularly vulnerable to experiencing a negative sense of belonging to the school, and thus are less likely to exercise everyday, and more likely to engage in sedentary activities and other health-compromising behaviours.

Lynskyj (in DeSensi, 1995) suggests that visible minorities are especially vulnerable in PE classes because “sporting systems and practices still reflect and reinforce white, masculinist, heterosexist hegemony, and discrimination on the basis of social class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and (dis)ability persists” (p.23). Although this sporting hegemony is an insufficient explanation for current low levels of activity among all Canadian adolescents (visible minority or

not), it is area worthy of exploration. Vertinsky et al. (1996) studied Indo-Canadian PA participation and suggested that physical educators may actually reinforce stereotypes and prejudices in spite of their efforts to create an inclusive learning environment. By basing PE curriculum on popular team sports in Canada (basketball, soccer or volleyball, for instance), they may actually be alienating first-generation youth who may be more familiar with other activities popular in their motherland. This study highlighted the failure of the educational system to address multicultural needs and discussed how discriminatory practices come about through the persistence of dominant ideologies and dominant cultural values. Vertinsky et al.'s research draws upon British literature and a set of data from Canadian educational classes that suggests that South Asian girls are stereotyped as weak and passive such that PE "teachers too often assume they will not be interested in physical education and sport" (p.4). Vertinsky et al. argue that available literature on this particular minority group tends "to reproduce broad and sweeping generalizations about 'Indian' women and sport, the severe constraints of aspects of 'traditional' Indian cultures upon their physicality, and the 'controlling attitude' of the Indian male as if all Indian women had similar religious and cultural backgrounds" (p.5).

An important finding of this cross-sectional study was that there was a difference in Indo-Canadian females' attitudes towards PE between junior school and high school. While Indo-Canadian girls are "given the freedom to play and be physically active at young ages, [they] are often substantially constrained in space and activity at the onset of puberty" (Vertinsky et al., 1996, p.14). This finding underlined the need for interventions geared specifically to high school Indo-Canadian females as they may face greater challenges to be physically active than their younger counterparts. However, their cross-sectional sample came from a Khalsa school, where both students and teachers are of Indian heritage and primarily of the Sikh faith, thus, challenges with respect to physical activity may have been tied to religion rather than culture.

Vertinsky et al. (1996) point out that Indo-Canadians (and similar cultures) may face specific barriers to participation in physical education classes:

The issues for many Indo-Canadian families revolve around cultural traditions about the body and the closely related concepts of safety, protection and modesty...Rituals like wearing shorts or other body-revealing sportswear in public and exercising in mixed company are sometimes seen as contrary to the ideals of femininity that emphasize modesty (pp.9-10).

The authors suggest that the mode of exercise that is espoused in Canadian PE programs (uniforms; activities traditionally seen as "masculine") prompts cultural objections from parents, and this ultimately deters female Indo-Canadian youth from engaging in PA.

Another study on the role of one's ethnic heritage on physical activity behaviours was conducted in the United States. Grey (1992) studied PE classes and sport participation in a Kansas high school and like Vertinsky et al. (1996), he found that "immigrant and minority students had to fit in with the dominant system of values and game orientations, and this system was grounded in the experiences of Anglo-Americans. ...When immigrant students did not try out for football, basketball, baseball, and softball, they were seen as unwilling to become 'true Americans'" (p.260). Vertinsky et al. (1996) suggests that if physical activities popular in a minority group's native country were included in PE curriculum, that particular group would not be marginalized to the same degree. In addition, Coakley (2001) explains that experiences of minority groups in sport changes from generation to generation. Third and fourth-generation families generally experience less overt racism and marginalization within the realm of sport. "In fact, some [minority youth] have used sports to express their assimilation into U.S. culture and to reaffirm social relationships with peers" (Coakley, 2001, p.267). It is likely that a similar phenomenon occurs within a Canadian sport context, and among Indo-Canadians in particular.

Another cross-cultural study compared the relationship between physical education attitudes and leisure-time exercise for high school students in Taiwan and in the U.S. (Chung & Phillips, 2002). Chung and Phillips (2002) found that "teacher behaviour and content of the curriculum influenced students' attitude in positive or negative ways to physical education," and

theorized, “students who have disliked physical education may select to avoid participation in physical activity in their daily life” (p.126). Through supervised questionnaires, the study showed that males had more positive attitudes towards PE than females; Taiwanese youth had more positive attitudes than American; males – regardless of ethnicity – had higher leisure-time exercise scores than females; and American youth had higher leisure time scores than Taiwanese. The researchers suggested from these findings that the educational structures and family values in Taiwan might account for differences in leisure time between American and Taiwanese youth. “Education is a high priority in most Taiwanese families. ...Parents and teachers encourage students to focus on academic performances and not on physical activities or other non-examination courses” (p.129). This notion of parents and teachers streaming children towards academic classes and away from physical education classes is not unique to Taiwan, and has been suggested in Canada for Vietnamese and Chinese families (Maclear, 1994), and in India as well (Brijnath, 2004). As the U.S. youth from Chung & Phillips’ study comprised an ethnically diverse population, differences between American and Taiwanese activity patterns can only be attributed to national dominant ideologies and not ethnicities.

In 1996, a National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health was conducted in the U.S. (Gordon-Larsen, McMurray & Popkin, 2000). Adolescents were grouped by ethnicity, and an interaction was found between ethnicity and physical activity. Ethnicity was comprised of four categories: non-Hispanic blacks, non-Hispanic whites, Hispanics and Asians (Chinese, Filipino and other). Through a questionnaire on patterns of physical activity and inactivity for adolescents, researchers determined that there were relationships between activity, inactivity and socio-demographics among these ethnic populations. Moderate and vigorous physical activity was lower for non-Hispanic black and Hispanic adolescents in comparison to the Asians and non-Hispanic whites; non-Hispanic black and Hispanic adolescents participated less in PE programs than Asians and non-Hispanic whites; and PE participation among all youth decreased

with age. The finding that PE participation (and also physical activity participation) decreased with age was also found in Canada's Physical Activity Monitor (2003). Gordon-Larsen et al. (2000) concluded, "Physical activity and inactivity were associated with very different determinants. Although physical activity was most associated with environmental factors inactivity was most associated with socio demographic factors" (p.83).

In addition to ethnicity, previous research has also studied gender differences in physical activity patterns. Among students in Canada, "gender emerges as the single strongest predictor of leisure activities" (Ma & Zhang, 2002, p.13). Research conducted by the Public Health Agency in Canada (1999) supports that "boys are more likely to engage in physical activity, with adolescent boys spending about 50% more energy on their physical activities than adolescent girls". Gordon-Larsen et al. (2000) also found gender differences in general physical activity patterns as "more males were enrolled in PE classes and used community recreation centres than females" (p.85). This association between community recreation and total physical activity is important when one considers that the majority of adolescents enrolled in grade 10 and higher are not required to take physical education classes (Gordon-Larsen et al., 2000; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004). Overall, DeSensi (1995) supports that "access and opportunity for girls and women in physical education and sport continue to be critical issues in educational, sport, and recreational settings" (p.39).

In general, major findings from American and Canadian studies of ethnic minority youth and PA show that a positive sense of belonging with peer groups increases the adoption of healthy practices, and both gender and ethnicity (or culture) influence adolescent physical activity patterns. The influence of gender on PA and PE participation will be further explored in the following discussion of machismo and also in the final section of this literature review.

2.2 The Manifestation of Machismo in Patriarchal Societies

Of the five cultural values that will be investigated in this study, machismo is discussed most often. Machismo is studied in bodies of literature that span sport, exercise and feminist studies. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) describe machismo as “the cultural practice of objectifying female bodies ... to create, maintain, and express patriarchy” (p.177). In Canada and the U.S., “women’s bodies in particular, are held up to hyper-scrutiny both at a micro or private level and at a macro or a public level...How we experience ourselves and how we experience the contradictions within our feminisms is through our complex bodies” (Rezai-Rashti, 2005, p.69). Machismo is strongly reinforced by popular media, more than any of the other MCVS values (Unger et al., 2002), as scrutiny of female bodies is rampant on TV, in the movies, and in newspapers and magazines (Fouts & Burggraf, 1999, 2000). Previous research has shown that adolescent populations are particularly susceptible to media influences (Fouts & Burggraf, 1999) and vulnerable to perceiving differentiated gender roles in day-to-day tasks including those in sport and exercise.

Malszecki and Cavar (2005) discuss the persistence of machismo-like behaviour from historical times through to present-day Canada, though the actual term “machismo” is not specifically used. By analyzing sexist gender identities, they explain that “the patriarchal ideal dramatizes the success of strength [as] something that men embody and women cannot” (p.160). Although Malszecki and Cavar discuss strength, which is only one product of physical activity (others include agility, endurance, flexibility and power), their discussions of strength can be applied to any PA that elicits the sweat response, which is highly threatening to popular notions of femininity but also indicative of the minimum intensity to develop protective mechanisms against heart disease and other inactivity-related diseases (Canada, 2000).

Malszecki and Cavar (2005) explain that males (and not females) in North America are taught that they should demonstrate qualities congruent to machismo: toughness, invisibility,

aggression, determination and action. While Unger et al. (2002) describe machismo as characteristic of Hispanic cultures, Malszecki and Cavar root machismo, or male supremacy, in Western military thought. Overall, Malszecki and Cavar (2005) explain that an “insistent focus on manhood filters through the complicated lenses of culture, class, race, sexuality, and ethnicity” (p.164), and this emphasis on masculinity completely “denies the idea of strong [and physically active] women, especially ones who might equal or learn the traits, efforts, skills, and successes of men” (p.169).

Two recent scientific studies on adolescent PE report findings that suggest that male students are athletically gifted versus female students and further perpetuate differentiated gender roles in sport and physical activity. McKenzie, Marshall, Sallis, and Conway (2000) found that adolescent males participated in more moderate to vigorous PA than adolescent females. This finding was not surprising, as it was in accordance to many other studies with adolescents; however, their explanations for why males were more active than females were problematic. McKenzie et al. (2000) reported, “the increased gender differences in physical activity in middle school lessons may be due to a number of variables, including subject matter variations, student biological and motivational changes, societal (peer and teacher) expectations, and increased differences in skill development” (p.259). While curricular variations and motivational changes likely reflect societal expectations, there is no evidence to suggest that biological changes or differences in skill development exist to the extent that they would prevent females from participating in similar moderate to vigorous physical activities as their male peers.

Two authors from the previous study conducted another investigation to specifically gather information on adolescents in co-educational (males and females together) and single-sex PE classes. McKenzie, Prochaska, Sallis and LaMaster (2004) found that boys were more moderately and vigorously active than girls, boys were typically more physically active than girls in out-of-school environments, girls in co-educational classes were more active than girls in

single-sex classes, and finally, single-sex classes for girls spent more time performing sport drills while single-sex classes for boys had more “play” time. Once again, the findings themselves are not surprising; however, the explanations for these findings were highly problematic. McKenzie et al. (2004) led readers to believe that behavioural differences between activity patterns of males and females were innate and biologically determined. They asserted, “because girls generally have lower motor and sport skill levels at this age...allotting additional time for skill drills in girls-only classes may help meet skill development needs” (p.448). No data was provided to indicate that the girls were in fact less capable than boys in motor and sport skills. Thus, their report implied that males are physically endowed and built for sport while females are not. If females lack the biological requirements to be successful in skill performance against their age-matched male peers, it appears that there is no need to further investigate gender differences in adolescent PA patterns – males are more active simply because they are physically gifted! In the final section of this 2004 study, McKenzie et al. paid lip-service to social forces that may have led to gender differences in PA and concluded, “the complexities of gender issues and gender equity in physical education are enormous and include varying societal expectations for behaviours in different cultural environments” (p.449). However, their limited attention to social forces and dependence on biological explanatory schemes for physical activity behaviour is alarming and places female youth in a highly disadvantaged position.

The role of social forces like family, society, and culture, are starting to receive more attention in sport and exercise psychology, however, this is still an under-researched area. King et al. (1992) suggested that psychological-cultural-environmental understandings are absolutely necessary in addition to behavioural approaches if one wants to understand phenomena such as PA or leisure for any individual. To ignore these factors is to (arguably) ignore the strongest determinants of adolescents PA.

Of interest to this discussion is the Vindication of the Rights of Woman by Mary Wollstonecraft written in 1792. This publication was one of the first to suggest that females were not performing as well as males in physical activities simply because they weren't socialized to succeed in sports. Wollstonecraft believed that females were physically disabled by restrictive gender roles and females demonstrated diminished physical capacities versus their male counterparts because their PE (if any) was overly cautious, "women's weakness was cultivated instead of natural" (p.176, in Malszecki & Cavar, 2005). Furthermore, Wollstonecraft claimed that "until girls [are] raised to be strong, one [can] never know whether males [are] really stronger or not" (ibid).

Wollstonecraft's arguments are still relevant in Canada over two hundred years later. If females are engaging in less PA in and out of school, it may be because this behaviour is cultivated by omnipresent patriarchal or machismo-dominant culture(s). Females that are discouraged from PA are deprived of numerous physical and mental benefits, and are also denied the opportunity to nurture sport skills and excel in physical activities.

2.3 The Influence of Culture on Physical Activity among Adult Females

To better understand the complex interactions of cultural values and PA behaviours, this next section examines two recent studies from the U.S. on adult female populations. To my knowledge, no comparable studies exist in the Canadian context, thus the information presented will be applied to Canada whenever appropriate. Both studies investigated PA in the lives of women: the first among a group of African American, Latina, and American Indian women aged 20 to 50 years old (Eyler, Vest, Sanderson, Wilbur, Matson-Koffman, Evenson, Thompson, Wilcox, & Rohm Young, 2002); and the second among a group of African American and American Indian women over 40 years of age (Henderson & Ainsworth, 2001). Although both studies were conducted using primarily mothers and grandmothers, the findings are relevant to

the present investigation because parents (especially mothers) have been shown to influence belief systems of adolescent sons and daughters regarding PA and health practices (Gordon-Larsen, McMurray & Popkin, 2000). In both studies, women self-identified as African American, Latina, or American Indian (First Nations as termed in Canada), they were generally from low-income households, and many were deemed high risk for cardiovascular disease. Minority adolescents from low-income households in Canada are also at higher risk for cardiovascular disease and other health complications (Canada, April 2004). This section will focus on findings that reflect the meanings of PA and meanings of culture among these participants.

Henderson and Ainsworth (2001) explain that there is a “lack of [research] models, as well as a lack of culturally relevant information applied to leisure and physical activity for minority groups” (p.24). To investigate this under-researched area, Henderson and Ainsworth (2001) assembled a research team with diverse heritage to establish greater trust, relatability and openness between the researcher and participants during semi-structured interviews. In contrast, Eyler et al.’s (2002) investigation gathered information from multi-site focus groups, and guided participants to discussion areas with a goal to “add important information to the scarce body of literature on environmental, policy and cultural barriers to physical activity” (p.123).

Both studies reported that women were aware, and also believed, that PA was necessary for optimal functioning, but were not physically active on a regular basis or considered themselves to be “busy,” but not busy enough to improve their individual health statuses. Many women from these studies suggested that views of others (husbands and communities) greatly influenced their PA levels, and that opportunities to be active had not always existed for them due to various constraints including time consumed by childcare and experiences of marginalization (based on language, culture, etc.). These two responses directly related to values of familism and collectivism, as these women felt a sense of obligation to their families and

viewed themselves primarily within the context of their respective communities. Marginalization based on cultural stereotypes are likely to affect minority children, and may influence their opportunities for PA or attraction to PA, especially if they are witness to their mothers' exclusion.

Henderson and Ainsworth (2001) explain that there is an undeniable intersection of personal and cultural values that may be inscribed upon PA behaviours. In Eyler et al.'s (2002) study, when individuals were asked to provide their perceptions of cultural differences in PA levels between different races or ethnicities, nearly all women made comparisons between two groups: visible minorities and "white" women. Women from Henderson and Ainsworth's (2001) study were, on average, more educated and of higher socio-economic status than participants of Eyler et al.'s study and "had difficulty talking about the effect of their racial identity on their activity involvement" (p.29) and also "had difficulty articulating what race and ethnicity, and to some extent their culture, meant to them" (p.29). However, concepts of race, ethnicity and culture are ubiquitous in both American and Canadian societies because "communities themselves [are] constructed along certain identity designs of skin colour, history, language...and other cultural signifiers" (Bannerji, 1995, p.2); thus, any attempt to excavate underlying belief systems (even if they are founded on stereotypes) may greatly contribute to knowledge and dissemination of health practices (so long as they do not reinforce stereotypes).

The following paragraph discusses implications of the "white" / "other" binary from Eyler et al.'s (2002) study. Many participants in Eyler et al.'s (2002) study expressed feelings of disadvantage to engage in PA because they lacked prior experiences, while they felt that "white" women were not only "brought up" to exercise, but also "being thin and fit is more a part of the white culture than it is for women of colour" (p.126). Moreover, many African American, Latina, and American Indian women believed that they had far more obligations to their families (strong familism) than "white" women, which posed a substantial barrier to their PA. Cultural

barriers to PA identified in this study may be similar to barriers perceived by immigrant and second-generation Canadians. While challenges related to knowledge of and previous experiences with exercise may not be as applicable to second-generation adolescents who have taken PE in school, associating exercise with “whiteness,” and having time-consuming family obligations may deter participation in PA for them as well.

A final area of interest discussed by African American and American Indian women in Eyler et al.’s (2002) study was body size. African American and American Indian women indicated that larger body sizes were more acceptable in their culture than in “white” cultures; moreover, “white” women were “perceived as being ‘obsessed with thinness’” (p.126). What women in this study essentially described was the way in which “white” cultures objectify bodies, especially the female body. These views can be integrated within a framework of feminist literature called Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Objectification Theory posits that females who are raised in cultures that sexually objectify the female body learn to “internalize an observer’s perspective as a primary view of their physical selves” (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997, p.173). Sexual objectification of females by both females and males places males in positions of power while restricting females to dependent positions; thus, objectification of female bodies prescribes differentiated gender roles and is linked to machismo.

It is possible that women in Eyler et al.’s (2002) study reject specific forms of physical activity that are popular in North America. Activities that put the female body under scrutiny through exercise attire and body movements or lead to a sculpted and thin “white” ideal may deter them from participating. Bartky (1997) discusses the North American *ideal* female body and explains that disciplinary practices that “aim to produce a body of a certain size and general configuration...and those directed toward the display of this body as an ornamented surface...must be understood in the light of the modernization of patriarchal domination” (p.132). While North Americans are said to value individualism – “freedom, autonomy, and

fulfillment of personal needs” (Unger et al., p.259), the presentation of the female body in spandex and form-fitting clothing in popular North American physical activities can be linked to patriarchal power. Even though a group of women in Eyler et al.’s (2002) study believe that they are preserving their cultural values by avoiding the body obsession that is seemingly inseparable from physical activities (to them), they are ultimately compromising their health statuses. In spite of knowing the importance of PA, their lack of knowledge concerning alternate activities for health benefits (that would not conflict with their cultural values) may in fact be limiting their respective exercise behaviour. The views that perpetuated a myth of a fit, thin, “white” culture in Eyler et al.’s (2002) study were *not* reported in Henderson and Ainsworth’s (2001) study; thus, their viewpoints may not be transferable to other women of colour but are likely present in a subset. Furthermore, stereotypes of “white,” fit, cultures may help to explain some underlying beliefs found at the intersections of personal and cultural values among Canadian adolescents.

2.4 Summary

Categories of “ethnicity”, “race”, and “gender” all shape cultural attitudes towards physical education, physical activity and health. By conducting research with a group of females adolescents from the Indian diaspora, I will attempt to identify how culture and value systems transmitted through peers and families can shape physical activity patterns.

Because PA is undeniably related to health and health is associated with an optimal quality of life, it is important for everyone, including adolescents, to engage in regular PA. Olneck (1990) explains that cultural differences are not wilful, biologically determined or immutable; thus, a physically inactive culture is also malleable. This knowledge is empowering and indicates that all of us, independent of cultural heritage, gender or other potentially limiting circumstances, can endeavour to engage in practices that promote health.

To my understanding, few studies have looked at internalized value systems like culture with respect to PA among adolescent youth. I propose that there is an intersection of cultural values and social processes (e.g. those resulting from the family environment) that lead to PA preferences. Previous literature suggests that cultural values and social processes differentially influence males and females. As few studies have looked at concepts of culture, parental influence, and personal attitudes, this study focuses specifically on females in Canada from the Indian diaspora in attempt to give voice to this under-researched population, and to start filling this knowledge gap.

3.0 Methods

3.1 Participants

Female adolescents from the Indian diaspora between the ages of 15-18 years were selected to participate in this study. All participants came from middle to upper class families. Adolescents aged 15-18 were chosen to ensure that all participants had taken physical education within the past 3 years, or would presently be enrolled in grade-nine physical education. Exposure to physical education (PE) in high school was important because during the interview and focus group, participants were asked to discriminate between activity in PE class and general physical activity, and structured and unstructured activities.

Six female participants with a working knowledge of the English language were first interviewed and then brought together for a group discussion. The decision to interview a sample of six participants twice, once through an individual interview followed by a focus-group, was based on research by Kvale (1996) who suggested that “the number of subjects necessary depends on a study’s purpose” (p.102). Kvale (1996) further explained, “If the purpose is to test hypotheses about the different attitudes of boys and girls toward [a given subject], the necessary sample may be as small as three boys and three girls” (p.102). As the present study aimed to obtain general knowledge on cultural values and physical activity behaviours among participants from the Indian diaspora, focussing on six case studies for individual interviews followed by a focus group allowed for thoughtful discussion. Moreover, these two methods of data collection are “fundamentally [ways] of listening to people and learning from them” (Morgan, 1998, p.9). Focus-group guidelines also suggest that holding a discussion with six participants who have similar backgrounds and interest in the issues at-hand “should produce very useful insights into what matters to them the most” (Morgan, 1998, p.5). Thus, for several reasons, the current study was based on interviews and a focus group with *six* participants.

3.2 Summary of Themes Investigated

As previously mentioned, interview and focus group questions were inspired by an integrated model of physical activity and culture based on the work of Welk, Wood and Morss (2003) and Unger, Ritt-Olsen, Teran, Huang, Hoffman and Palmer (2002). This qualitative thesis project complemented these two previous investigations by facilitating discussion around these factors to determine if they were relevant among a group of girls from the Indian diaspora. This project also allowed for contributing factors to physical activity not identified by previous quantitative research to be explored and addressed. This study generated discussion around the following constructs: attraction to physical activity (Brustad, 1993), perceived athletic and physical competence (Harter, 1988), physical activity behaviour (Kowalski, Crocker & Faulkner, 1997), parental influence (Welk et al., 2003), and cultural values (Unger et al., 2002).

Attraction to PA was investigated by questions designed with the five components of the Children's Attraction to Physical Activity (CAPA) scale in mind: liking of games, liking of exercise, liking of physical exertion, peer acceptance, and importance of exercise (Brustad, 1993). Questions on perceived athletic and physical competence were included in the interview to address Harter's (1998) notion that self-perception of athletic competence is a significant influence on physical activity behaviour. Harter's (1998) Self-Perception Profile for Adolescence – Athletic Competence Subscale has been included in numerous quantitative investigations and has helped to explain PA patterns among adolescent groups around the world (Welk et al., 2003). In general, adolescents with higher perceived competence in physical activities engage in more physical activity than those with low perceived competence. Finally, PA information was probed using the time periods specified within the Physical Activity Questionnaire for Adolescents (PAQ-A; Kowalski, Crocker & Faulkner, 1997): lunchtime, after school, evenings and

weekends. Discussing physical activity with respect to specific time-periods has been shown to be a useful technique to help adolescents to recall their physical activity in the past seven days.

During the interviews and focus group, parental influence was assessed by probing two specific mechanisms: parental role modelling – the interest of parents in PA and actual efforts of parents to be physically active, and social support – overt efforts of parents to encourage their son or daughter to be active, overt forms of support like engaging in activity with their son or daughter, and facilitative roles like providing access or opportunities for play.

The final overarching theme investigated in the interview and focus group was culture and values linked to physical activity. I was particularly interested in the ways that my participants viewed and described Indian culture via identifying values and discussing family experiences. In addition to explicit questions about value systems and culture, I also subtly inquired about their perceptions towards the five value constructs in Unger et al., (2002): *filial piety*, *familism*, *collectivism*, *fatalism* and *machismo*. For example, to inquire about the participant's views on machismo within Indian culture, they were asked, "*What do your parents want you to be like as a female who has been raised in this background? Is this different from how a male would be raised?*"

The interview concluded with basic demographic questions. I inquired about each participant's age, where they were born, how long they had lived in Canada, family environment – whether or not they live with their parents and/or grandparents, and where their parents were born. The final question in the demographics section assessed family economic status by asking the participant to choose one of three categories to describe their family: very wealthy, wealthy, or not very wealthy. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2005), "the gap between low income rates for immigrants and Canadians has increased over the past 20 years... [and as well,] the low income rate varies for the immigrant population depending on their length of stay in Canada". An estimate of perceived family wealth (socio-economic status) is important in a

study of physical activity among girls from the Indian diaspora, because the perceived costs of exercise may significantly affect participation, especially among families that have recently immigrated to Canada. Just as *perceptions* of parental influence and *perceptions* of cultural views were assessed within the main sections of the interview, it was more important to find out the participant's *perceived* "wealth status" rather than actual status. If family wealth or costs of exercise was a barrier to a given participant's exercise adoption, it could be revealed in the final demographic question or else within the first section, specifically, "*Would you like to be more active?* and *What, if anything, may prevent you from participating in more physical activities?*"

3.3 Procedures and Rationale

3.31 Recruitment Site: Sai Centre

All participants were recruited from the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centre located at 1659 East 10th Avenue in Vancouver, British Columbia. Sri Sathya Sai Baba, affectionately known as *Baba* or *Swami*, is an acclaimed spiritual leader from India who encourages everyone to seek Truth in God. According to the International Sai Organization (2005), Baba's "timeless and universal teachings, along with the manner in which he leads his own life, are attracting seekers of Truth from all the religions of the world...Since [1940], he has daily exhibited in practical and concrete terms the highest ideals of *truth, right conduct, peace, love, and non-violence*". There are established Sai Centres spanning the globe and in the Lower Mainland alone, there are 5 different Centres: Vancouver, North Vancouver, Richmond, Abbotsford and Surrey. Swami describes the purpose of these Centres as follows:

The main objective of the Sathya Sai Organization – which you must always keep before you – is to help man recognize the divinity that is inherent in him. So, your duty is to emphasize the One, to experience the One in all you do or speak. Do not give any importance to differences of religion or sect or status or color. Have the feeling of one-ness permeate every act of yours.
Sathya Sai Speaks IX, 35, 187-188 (old edition). Retrieved from (Sathya Sai Organization, 2005).

Swami particularly emphasizes the importance of education for youth populations and explains that "the end of education is character" (Sathya Sai Organization, 2005). In India,

Swami has established educational institutions for elementary through to university students and admits applicants from all races and religions. Students are not charged any fees, and in addition to the standardized curriculum, all students take specially designed courses on morality and spirituality, and regularly volunteer within their communities (volunteer work is known as *seva*). The Youth Programs that run in various Centres borrow from Sai school curriculum. The Sri Sathya Sai Organization of Canada (2005) explains that its Youth Programs aim “To create a holistic environment for youth to develop their talents and abilities for spiritual transformation and future leadership,” and also “To learn and understand other religions and promote unity of faiths.”

At the Vancouver Centre, the main hall is one large room with a graduated step-altar devoted to Baba at the front, and images and symbols of six major religions along the side walls (Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Zoroastrianism and Judaism). Each symbol is also superimposed on the petals of a lotus flower in *Baba's Universal Symbol of Unity of Religions*, or *Sarva Dharma Symbol*, which represents the unity of faiths.

While the Sai Centre in Vancouver celebrates festivals of India (including Deepavali) and auspicious days from different religions (including Christmas), *bhajans* are held every week on Thursday evenings and Sunday mornings. Bhajans are a form of prayer through music, and a cornerstone of devotion within the Sai Centres. Sai bhajans are lyrically and melodically simple and sung line-by-line in a lead-and-follow format filled with repetition of the divine name and minor embellishments. Every week at the Vancouver Centre, Youth are encouraged to lead bhajans. During festivals, the Youth are also encouraged to apply their knowledge and make special presentations for the entire Sai congregation. For example, on Shivarathri, a festival celebrating the Hindu deity Shiva that took place in March, 2006, the Youth Group presented a skit on Lord Shiva and explained the significance of each of His symbols (e.g. crescent moon

and the Ganges River flowing from his locks). The Youth at the Vancouver Sai Centre play an active and important role in weekly bhajans, festivals and in seva (volunteer) activities.

In addition to spiritual and religious teachings, one also learns elements of Indian culture by attending events at the Vancouver Sai Centre. The congregation sits cross-legged on the floor during bhajans and is separated by sex – males are seated on the right and females are on the left. Chairs are provided at the back of the hall for the elderly and for those unable to sit on the ground. The purpose of sitting cross-legged during prayer comes from yogic philosophy developed over 5000 years ago in India. Cross-legged and lotus positions allow for the alignment of one's spine, and consequently one's chakras (seven energy centres that compose our consciousness) so that the mind and body are receptive to cosmic energy. The practice of separating males and females during prayer is an Indian custom to help one remain focused on God. This custom is observed in Baba's ashram located in Southern India and is therefore observed in Sai Centres in Canada as well. In terms of attire, all "devotees are expected to dress modestly, in clean and sober clothing, as befits a place of worship...wearing of shorts or sleeveless shirts is strictly prohibited. Women are required to dress to their ankles. Tight-fitting or diaphanous dresses are not permitted" in the prayer venue (Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, 2006). In general, female devotees at the Vancouver Sai Centre (both Indian and non-Indian) don traditional Indian dresses like saris or shalwars because they are loose-fitting and appropriately drape down to the ankles. Many female devotees also wear a bindi (a dot) between their eyebrows to indicate the point at which the third eye, or the spiritual eye, opens. At the conclusion of each bhajan, a pinch of vibuthi powder (sacred ash) is distributed to everyone (both male and female) in the congregation so that they may place it at the opening of the third eye. Swami says:

Only vibuthi remains unchanged, as it is the final result of the five elements of creation. Our desires have to be reduced to ashes and vibuthi is symbolic of this detachment and renunciation. One's mind has to become desireless and detached like the ashes in which everything is burnt out. It is that kind of pure mind that has to be offered to God. (SaiBaba, 2004).

3.32 Recruitment and Consent Procedures

I used active consent procedures to recruit participants for this research. Parental consent and participant assent were required from all interested participants as per the guidelines of the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board.

The Sai Centre of Vancouver was an ideal site to recruit participants because it had a Youth Group that met my selection criteria: 1. Culture – participants were of Indian heritage; 2. Age – the youth group educational classes were targeted for high school students; 3. Familiarity – participants would know each other (this was especially critical for the focus group); and 4. Cultural Affinity – all participants were involved in events associated with Indian culture (if not outside of the Sai Centre, at least within). Although it should be noted that there were many Chinese, Japanese and Caucasian members who attended the Vancouver Sai Centre, the majority of the families were from the Indian diaspora.

The first step in the recruitment process was an email to the Coordinator at the Vancouver Centre. In this email, I introduced myself, briefly explained my project, and attached copies of my UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board approved *Letter to Youth Group Leader* (see section 6.3) and *Announcement* (see section 6.4) documents. Within a week, the Coordinator responded to my email, extended an invitation to the weekly bhajans, and indicated that it was necessary to contact the Regional Coordinator (via email) to obtain permission for recruiting participants and approval on any research-related documents. Parental Consent (see section 6.5) and Participant Assent (see section 6.6) forms were promptly sent via email.

While the forms were being reviewed by the Regional Coordinator, I accepted the invitation to the bhajans and set out to make myself a familiar face at the Vancouver Sai Centre. Within qualitative research, specifically interview and focus group techniques, it is known that building rapport between the researcher and the researched is important for gleaned personal and sensitive information. Attending bhajans and meeting people at the Center as a member of

the congregation before introducing myself as a researcher helped to build rapport and enabled me to informally meet previous and current members of the Youth Group.

The Coordinator was integral in the rapport-building phase by introducing me to the Sai Spiritual Educational Leader who teaches the Youth Classes on Sunday mornings. Once permission was granted by the Regional Coordinator, the Leader permitted me to attend the beginning of Sunday classes, introduce myself and my project, and distribute parental consent forms to any interested participants. From this point onwards, the Leader, rather than the Coordinator, became my primary contact.

Over the course of two months, the Leader helped to identify potential participants and spoke to a few parents on my behalf. Two participants were successfully recruited via the Leader. The remaining four participants were recruited via a former Youth participant who had graduated from the Sunday Educational program three years ago. On my second trip to the Centre, I met this aforementioned Youth participant who took great interest in my project but was unable to sign up to be interviewed because she was beyond the age-range for the study. She was, however, keen to help with the recruitment process and alerted me to two individuals who had just graduated from the Educational program the year before and two individuals who had stopped attending Youth activities earlier that year. The latter pair fortunately attended the Bi-yearly Youth Sai Bhajan in March, 2006, where my Youth contact seized the opportunity and introduced me to them as her "friend" who needed "help for a school project." This insider-status gained through a personal introduction from a regular Sai member finalized the recruitment process for my thesis project.

3.33 Data Collection and Rationale

After obtaining signed consent from parents, individual semi-structured interviews of approximately 45 minutes in duration were scheduled at times and locations convenient to

parents and participants. At the directive of participants, four interviews were conducted in participant homes and the remaining two in coffee shops. Allowing participants to choose the interview venue fostered a comfortable interview setting and encouraged the girls to be forthcoming with their thoughts and feelings towards the research topics. Following the interviews, a focus group, one and a half hours in duration, was held at a participant home. The focus group allowed responses from individual interviews to be addressed and explored for further clarification.

Interviewing was chosen as the method of data collection for the present study because it “is one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings” and can focus specifically on the “*hows*” of human behaviour, rather than the “*whats*” (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p.645). The interviews were held prior to the focus group because of the potential for group dynamics to alter individual perceptions. In addition, Morgan (1998) explains, “during the discussions in a focus group, you learn a great deal about the range of experiences and opinions in the group. You do not, however, learn all that much about each specific individual” (p.32). My rationale for holding the focus group after individual interviews was to first allow participants to share personal information and attitudes (which they may not be comfortable voicing in a group setting), to give them the opportunity to think about the interview topics without being influenced by others, and to allow them to retract or revise statements from the interview during the focus group. This lag-time between the interview and focus group also permitted participants to ruminate over the topics, develop their ideas, and think of examples to illustrate their views.

During the interview, the participant was given a brief secondary introduction to the study followed by verbal clarification that they could withdraw at any time without reprisal. All participants were assured that any information collected was completely confidential and anonymous. The assent form was then given to the participant to read over and sign before the

interview commenced. The interview began with simple questions about previous or present experiences in physical education classes (PE) in order to (re)build rapport with the participant. Throughout the interview process, I was aware that each participant's level of comfort with me would affect the quality of answers. Fontana and Frey (2000) explain that "each interview context is one of interaction and relation; the result is as much a product of this social dynamic as it is a product of accurate accounts and replies" (p.647). Beginning the interviews with simple questions helped to ease each participant into the interview process so that she was comfortable and willing to answer more challenging questions about her physical activity patterns and culture later on.

Throughout each interview, probes listed in the interview guide (see section 6.1) were used to "clarify meanings, to extend the range and quality of replies, to examine consistency, to give encouragement and to reduce anxiety" (Keats, 2001, p.11). During both the interview and focus group discussion, I kept field notes and tape-recorded participant responses. Taking notes served a similar function as the probes and allowed me to summarize and clarify participant responses at the end of each set of questions. The recorded interviews and focus group discussion were transcribed verbatim using a standard cassette voice processor.

The focus group took place in the beginning of April, 2006, in a participant home. Although all six participants were expected to attend the group discussion, because of school commitments, only four were present; thus, a limitation to this study was that the two participants who were born in India were not present for the focus group. To appropriately delimit the group discussion and make it relevant to all participants, all individual interviews were transcribed and summarized before the focus group was scheduled. Focus group questions were based on interview questions, challenged and explored the six sets of responses in order to extend my understanding of the data. Thus, the group discussion was structured by emergent themes from all of the interviews.

Meeting (most of) the participants for a second session also assisted in validating the data and empowered participants with the opportunity to revise any responses that were not reflective of their views towards a given topic. The group discussion was also used for its potential to “aid respondents’ recall of specific events or to stimulate embellished descriptions of events...or experiences shared by members of a group” (Fontana & Fray, 2000, p.651). In addition, the focus group produced rich data, and also provided a stimulating interactive experience for respondents. Madriz (2000) explains that “the interaction among group participants often decreases the amount of interaction between the facilitator and the individual members of the group. This gives more weight to the participants’ opinions, decreasing the influence the researcher has over the interview process” (p.837). The focus group followed a similar format as the interviews, field notes were taken, and participants’ responses were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

3.4 Data Analysis

The goal of this research was to give voice to the cultural perspectives of female adolescents of the Indian diaspora, which are often not included in physical activity research. This study used content analysis to analyze all transcripts. As suggested by Willms et al. (1990) and Miles and Huberman (1994), content analysis will “start with some general themes derived from reading the literature and [then] add more themes and subthemes” as they emerge (in Ryan & Russell Bernard, 2000, p.781). Content analysis was the most appropriate qualitative analytical method to identify the strength of apriori themes (personal attitudes, family attitudes, and cultural influence) and to also allow the emergence of themes previously not identified in the literature. Content analysis was chosen rather than a grounded-theory approach (another prominent qualitative analytical method) because of the guiding model of influences on physical activity (see section 1.3) and semi-structured interview and focus group guides.

In the first step of analysis, I wrote a page of *first impressions* immediately after each interview (but before transcribing the interview recording) in order to capture all major themes that resonated throughout the interview. These major themes (most of which were apriori) were used to develop a coding scheme that was compiled into a list (see table below). My *first impressions* addressed some of the following questions:

Activity Levels: What is the participant's general activity level – what activities do they enjoy? What motivates them to engage in activity? What prevents them from engaging in regular physical activity?

Personal Attitudes: Does she believe that it is important to be active? Why? Does she believe that physical activity is related to health?

Family Attitudes: In what ways do her parents influence her activity levels? Did siblings influence her activity levels? Cousins?

Culture: How does she describe her background? What words did she consistently use in reference to her culture? What values did she associate to this culture? Does she believe that her culture is related in any way to her physical activity levels?

Next, field notes (notes on participant's demeanour, flow of conversation, major points of view, etc.) were consolidated with the page of *first impressions* to further develop the coding scheme. The third step was transcribing the interviews followed by reading and re-reading the transcripts and rigorous analysis. Any additional themes that emerged from the transcripts were added to the master table of codes and I noted in a column if multiple participants voiced similar views (themes). Quotes relating to emergent themes were highlighted in the transcripts and inserted into the *first impressions* wherever appropriate. Quotes from individual interviews were chosen based on the following criteria:

- i) they were good illustrations of the data and consequently the major themes and sub-themes;
- ii) they showed a range of responses including those that were less frequently mentioned but captured the individual personalities and experiences of each participant and thus warranted further exploration.

Thematic categories were noted on printed copies of the transcripts after each highlighted quote using subscripts, e.g. 'Importance of PA' to signify a quote that described why a given participant thought physical activity was important to them.

Table 1: Interview Coding Scheme
Major themes that Emerged from the Interviews

Physical Education Class

Participant	Impressions
All	Enjoyed activities
All	Enjoyed social opportunities
N	Break from academic classes
R	Motivation from friends to be active

Importance of Physical Activity

Participant	Domains Related to Physical Activity
Sa, V, R	Enhance spiritual health
Sa, N, V, R, P	Enhance mental health
Sa, Sh, R	Weight control: avoid body fat
Sa	Acceptance into dominant society
Sh	Help achieve life aspirations
Sh, N, V, R, P	Disease prevention
N	Fun, enjoyment
N, V, R	Enhance physical health
N	Increase energy, stamina
R, P	Help deal with preset ailments

Comparing Boys and Girls Engaged in Physical Activities

Participant	Boys	Girls
Sa, P	More interested in sports	Less interested in sports
Sa, P	Regular sports participation	Occasional sports participation
Sa	Hardcore games: football, soccer	Softer games: tennis, badminton, basketball
Sh, N	Interested in winning	Interested in having fun
Sh, N, R	Competitive, aggressive	
Sh	Ego-driven	Low perceived competence in sports
N	Talented in sport	
Sh		Boys discourage girls from playing
V	Enjoy spending time playing games with friends	
V, R		Interested in impressing/attracting the opposite sex
V	Interested in impressing/attracting the opposite sex	
V, R	Want to be buff/muscular	Want to be slim/thin
V	Leisure time spent in sedentary activities	Leisure time spent shopping
V	Similar activity levels	
R, P	Boys and girls can work together as a group to achieve a goal	
P	If boys or girls want to be active, they will be	

Positive Influences on Exercise Behaviour

Participant	Influential person
Sh, N, V, R, P	Self-motivated to exercise
All	Father
All	Mother
Sa	Grandparents
Sa, Sh, N, R	Brother
P	Sister
Sa, Sh, N	Cousins
Sh, N	Female friends

Role of the Media

Participant	Influential Messages
Sa	(+) Eat healthy and exercise
Sa	(+) Fitness leads to moral goodness
Sa, V	(-) Excessive focus on external physique: body fat is undesirable

Culture

Participant	Cultural Description
Sa	Indian
Sa, N, P	Must preserve one's heritage
Sa, Sh, R, P	Boys and girls raised differently
Sa	Canadians have loose cultural ties
Sa	Canadians lack religious practices
Sa, Sh	Drugs and crime in Canada
Sa	Educational opportunities/Importance of education in Canada
Sh, N, R, P	Fijian Indian
Sh, N	Brown Person
Sh, N, R, P	Reference to diet
Sh, N, R, P	Importance of celebrations and traditions
N, R	Canadian
All	Reference to religion (Hindu or Christian)
Sa, S, R, P, N	Reference to an Indian language

Value Systems

Participant	Values
All	Importance of religion, prayer
Sa	Importance of family
All	Respecting elders
V	Peace
V	Righteousness
V	Truth
V	Importance of spirituality
Sa, V	Importance of cultural connections with others bearing Indian heritage

Note. Sa = Samantha; Sh = Sheila; N = Nandini; V = Vidya; R = Ramya; P = Priya

The interview guide, coding scheme and illustrative quotes directed the structure of the focus group guide (see section 6.2). Analysis of the focus group transcript was conducted similarly to the interview analyses described above. Responses were clustered into major themes and significant quotes were highlighted in the transcript with accompanying subscripts. In addition to the two criteria listed above, quotes were chosen so that:

- (iii) the voices of as many participants as possible were heard;
- (iv) the reader could see how ideas developed within the group and determine who fell into leadership roles during the focus group.

Whenever appropriate, points raised by the two absent participants (based on interview transcripts) were incorporated into the focus group analysis. Similar to the interview analysis, emergent themes were summarized and included illustrative quotes. The focus group transcript

and all interview transcripts were read once again to ensure that all major within-participant and between-participant themes were captured.

Table 2: Focus Group Coding Scheme

Revised Coding Scheme based on Focus Group

Importance of Physical Activity

Participant	Domains Related to Physical Activity
Sa, V, R	Enhance spiritual health
Sa, N, V, R, P	Enhance mental health: stress relief*
Sa, Sh, R, N	Enhance appearance: weight control, avoid body fat, acceptance into society*
Sh	Help achieve life aspirations
N	Fun, enjoyment*
N, V, R	Enhance physical health*
N	Increase energy, stamina*
R	Strengthen relationships with friends/family**
Sh, N, V, R, P	Disease prevention
R, P	Help deal with preset ailments

Physical Education Class

Participant	Impressions
All	Enjoyed activities*
All	Enjoyed social opportunities*
N	Break from academic classes
R	Motivation from friends to be active*
P	Enrolment restricted to girls**
P, N, R	Disliked some activities, marking scheme**

Comparing Boys and Girls Engaged in Physical Activities

Participant	Boys	Girls
Sa, P	More interested in sports	Less interested in sports
Sa, P	Regular sports participation	Occasional sports participation
Sa	Hardcore games: football, soccer	Softer games: tennis, badminton, basketball
Sh, N, R	Interested in winning*	Interested in having fun*
Sh, N, R	Competitive, aggressive*	
Sh, R	Ego-driven*	Low perceived competence in sports
N	Talented in sport	
Sh		Boys discourage girls from playing
V	Enjoy spending time playing games with friends	
V, R		Interested in impressing/attracting the opposite sex*
V, R	Interested in impressing/attracting the opposite sex*	
V, R, P	Want to be buff/muscular*	Want to be slim/thin*
V	Leisure time spent in sedentary activities	Leisure time spent shopping
V	Similar activity levels	
R, P	Boys and girls can work together as a group to achieve a goal	
P, N	If boys or girls want to be active, they will be*	

Positive Influences on Exercise Behaviour

Participant	Influence
Sh, N, V, R, P	Self-motivated to exercise*
All	Father*
All	Mother*
Sa	Grandparents
Sa, Sh, N, R	Brother*
P	Sister
Sa, Sh, N	Cousins*
Sh, N, P	Female friends*
N, Sh	External rewards and recognition**

Role of the Media

Participant	Influential Messages
Sa	(+) Eat healthy and exercise
Sa	(+) Fitness leads to moral goodness
Sa, V, P, N	(-) Excessive focus on external physique: body fat is undesirable*

Culture

Participant	Cultural Description
Sa	Indian
Sa, N, P	Must preserve one's heritage*
Sa, Sh, R, P, N	Boys and girls raised differently*
Sa	Canadians have loose cultural ties
Sa	Canadians lack religious practices
Sa, Sh	Drugs and crime in Canada
Sa	Educational opportunities/Importance of education in Canada
Sh, N, R, P	Fijian Indian
Sh, N	Brown Person*
Sh, N, R, P	Reference to diet*
Sh, N, R, P	Importance of celebrations and traditions*
N, R	Canadian*
All	Reference to religion (Hindu or Christian)*
Sa, S, R, P, N	Reference to an Indian language*
P, N, Sh, R	Reference to traditional attire **
Sh	Reference to movies**

Value Systems

Participant	Values
All	Importance of religion, prayer*
Sa	Importance of family*
All	Respecting elders*
V	Peace
V	Righteousness
V	Truth
V	Importance of spirituality
Sa, V, R	Importance of cultural connections with others bearing Indian heritage*

Note. Sa = Samantha; Sh = Sheila; N = Nandini; V = Vidya; R = Ramya; P = Priya

* = Theme raised in focus group as well as interviews

** = Theme raised in focus group only

3.5 Challenges of Qualitative Inquiry: Positioning Myself as a Researcher

Due to the nature of data collection in this project using qualitative inquiry, my impact on the research process was inevitable. Throughout the interview process, I tried to remain reflexive and aware of my personal attitudes towards physical activity and Indian culture. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), "the orientations of researchers [is] shaped by their socio-historical locations, including the values and interests that these locations confer upon them" (p.44). I recognized that my opinions and behaviours have been shaped by the intersections of my middle-class, Hindu-orthodox upbringing in a family with two older brothers, and made a

conscious effort to reserve judgement on participant views while conducting the interviews. McCall (2005) discusses researcher-orientation under the term intersectionality, which refers to “the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations” (p.1771). I was raised in a traditional Hindu family and took part in many cultural activities throughout my childhood. While my parents felt that it was important to provide their children with strong ties to Indian and Hindu heritage, they also placed importance on participation on extra-curricular activities including music lessons, community service and athletics. My views on health and physical activity have been shaped by (generally) positive experiences throughout my life. Although my cultural community did not necessarily encourage physical activities for females, other than classical dance, my parents always supported my endeavours through facilitative roles (e.g. paying for athletic uniforms and driving me to sport practices). Thus, even though my status as a female living in Canada from the Indian diaspora places me in a safe and familiar position with participants in this study, my predominately positive and numerous experiences in sport and health education may have led to a power-differential between myself and the participants. By remaining reflexive of these potential arenas for distance, I endeavoured to honour the participants’ views.

One strategy that I used to foster an insider status and rapport with my participants was to conduct the interviews in an environment familiar to them (e.g. their homes or a coffee shop). I attempted to validate statements they offered by summarizing their views on each topic and by asking for verification or clarification before moving onto the next topic. Throughout data collection, it was also important for me to recognize that many adolescents, in general, do not critically think about their physical activity behaviours, let alone their behaviours in relation to their upbringing within an Indian culture. It was important to be aware that individuals, regardless of their membership to Indian culture by virtue of their lineage, did not necessarily identify with Indian heritage; some girls perceived their behaviours in and out of physical

activity to be similar their peers, independent of their background. By recruiting girls who were members of the Sai Youth Group, it was hoped that they would identify with their Indian heritage and communities at least within the Sai Centre, but this was not always the case, as will be described in the *Results* section.

During the focus-group discussion, I tried to remain aware of three concerns outlined by Fontana and Fray (2000, p.652):

1. The interviewer must keep one person or small coalition of persons from dominating the group
2. The interviewer must encourage recalcitrant respondents to participate
3. The interviewer must obtain responses from the entire group to ensure the fullest coverage of the topic

During the introduction to the focus group, I emphasized the value of all contributions and ended every topic of discussion with a “roundtable” where each participant had the opportunity to voice any related thoughts or concerns before we moved on to the next topic. Fortunately, the three focus-group concerns listed above were minimal in this particular study because participants were familiar with each other, frequently interacted at the Centre, and thus appeared to be supportive and respectful of each other’s views.

Finally, I was aware of how I was perceived by various people involved in the research process. As per the guidelines of qualitative inquiry, I tried to position myself in various ways to best “fit” whomever I was interacting with. When communicating with the Coordinator and Educational Leader, I presented myself as a mature university student who was very involved in the South Indian community during my childhood. I addressed them using terms of respect (Uncle or Aunty), and prefaced every email and face-to-face communication with the specific greeting of all Sai devotees, “Sai Ram”. For communications with potential participants, I revised my language and demeanour appropriate to a teenager. I described my project as a “casual and friendly conversation about what physical activities” that would be followed by a “fun chat with everyone as a group so that we can share our ideas.” It was also important for me

to preface the distribution of the parental consent forms by saying, "This is a form for your parents to sign to make sure that they know you will be chatting with me and that they are ok with it." This informal description of the consent forms helped to diffuse the intimidating and academic jargon regarding "potential risk" for participants that was included to appease the Behavioural Research Ethics Board.

Although not confirmed, circumstances have led me to believe that the language used on the parental consent form was too formal and intimidated at least one set of parents to the extent that they did not want their daughter to be involved in the project. Their daughter was initially enthusiastic about participating in the project and called me within a week of hearing about it to schedule the interview. Once the date, time and location were chosen, I reminded her to bring the signed parental consent form with her to the interview. The day that we were to meet, she called to cancel because she hadn't shown the form to her parents until that day, and her father was not comfortable with her participating in my project. Since that girl was initially looking forward to taking part in the interview, I can only assume that there was something within the parental consent form that led to his refusal of consent. Thus, irrespective of how I positioned myself as a researcher or attempted to build rapport with potential participants, I believe that the consent forms created a divide and likely contributed to my initial difficulties in recruiting participants at the Vancouver Sai Centre.

Within the actual interviews and focus group, I endeavoured to create an open atmosphere. As a second-year graduate student, I was at least six years older than any of the girls that I interviewed. I de-emphasized my age by wearing T-shirts and jeans and by adapting my language to match my participant's. To foster an open dialogue during data collection, I made it clear to the participant that she could withdraw at any point in the interview, or pass on any question that caused her discomfort. I also emphasized that there were no right answers and that all viewpoints were important. In spite of my efforts to minimize my influence on the

participant's responses, I was aware that my impact on the research process was inevitable. Within this section I outlined several areas where I positioned and re-positioned myself to address the challenges that I faced in doing qualitative inquiry with youth. In spite of these challenges, this project was successful in generating discussions on activity behaviour and culture with female adolescents from the Indian diaspora.

4.0 Results and Discussion

To discuss the themes that emerged from the six interviews and single focus group, this section will begin with *First Impressions*, which includes a basic introduction to each participant followed by a summary of major themes from her interview. Later, themes that emerged across participants are explained with reference to the focus group transcript. Finally, the Discussion (section 4.3) will relate or contrast major themes that emerged from interviews or focus group to existing literature. Please note that all participants have been assigned pseudonyms to preserve confidentiality and anonymity.

4.1 Participant Profiles and First Impressions

4.1.1 Samantha

	Name	Age	Childhood	Parents' Birthplaces
#1	Samantha	18	16 years in India 2 years in Canada	Mother – India Father – India

My interview with Samantha flowed well and was 40 minutes in duration. We met at a coffee shop close to her house, chatted for a few minutes and slowly eased into the interview process.

Samantha grew up in the state of Assam in India and recently moved to Canada two years ago. She was enrolled in a physical education class during her last year in India and listed yoga, meditation and stretching exercises as her favourite activities within the curriculum. She perceives her present activity level as “medium” and is pleased with this level of participation. Her activities include Bharathanatyam classes (classical Indian dancing) once a week for two hours and an occasional run around a park. Bharathanatyam is form of prayer that involves facial expressions, hand gestures and moderate to vigorous physical movements set to Carnatic classical music. Samantha has a part time job to help her parents pay for the dance classes.

When we discussed a possible physical activity-health connect, Samantha outlined a few areas and placed particular importance on spiritual health and meditation:

Samantha: Physical activity and health is all related. Because if you are doing physical activity, then you are healthy. Like you're mind is healthy, your body is healthy, so I think there is a connection to that.

Interviewer: Ok, what happens when your activity level increases? What happens to your body? You mentioned that when you are active, then you are healthy. Can you tell me more?

Samantha: Your brain is more sharp, and then if you do meditation, you feel control, you feel peace, and then everything at school that you study, you memorize it, you get to the answers very quick, so that is important, yeah.

She talked about exercise giving her a clear mind, putting her at peace, as well as energizing her.

Samantha also described how physical activities could be used as a mechanism for weight control, *"Yeah, if you are doing physical education, you become healthy by your weight, you watch your weight, you become quite good, you know, not too chubby, not too thin. So that is important, yeah."* Later on in the interview she alluded to the effect of physical activity on her mood. After exercising, she said that she felt *"good in the mind."* When asked if one was more important than the other, spiritual health or physical health, she hesitated and finally decided that *"both"* was the best answer.

Samantha felt that being physically active was necessary in order to be a member of society, *"I think every, nowadays, people have to be active. You have to eat healthy to remain fit, and it is a part of society. You want to be in the society; you don't want to be left out."* This fear of becoming an outsider was very real for Samantha and manifested throughout our interview. Because her family moved to Canada only two years ago, Samantha was still in the process of becoming a member of Canadian society; being fit and healthy would help to prevent her from being *"left out"*.

Samantha pointed out several differences between physical activities chosen by girls and boys:

Samantha: Boys are more into sports, and they get to do physical education all the time, more than girls do. Because girls are, I think girls too are interested in physical education, like sports and stuff, volleyball, so yeah, yeah. There is a difference.

Interviewer: I'm not quite clear in that. You said there is a difference with what they are interested in? Or what did you mean?

Samantha: I think girls and boys have a different perspective of being physically active and everything. So, boys get to, are more interested in, like my brother, he's interested in sports. Girls I think generally are not too much involved, so they are less, maybe, inclined to doing everyday sports, but boys are regular with that. So that's the difference.

...

Samantha: Boys might be interested in hardcore games and sports like football and soccer. Girls are interested too, um, it's my opinion. Generally I think girls play a little softer games like tennis, maybe, or badminton, all those different kinds of games, volleyball, and yeah, basketball. Yeah.

...

Samantha: Um, I think that um, to um, ok. How can I say this? I think I am more interested in soft games like badminton and stuff. I am also interested in soccer because I love soccer a lot.

The passages above show an interesting use of language. Samantha twice mentioned that boys "get to" do more sports and take part in physical education more than girls do. She claimed that boys like "hardcore" games while girls preferred "softer" games. She deemed football and soccer as boys' sports (though she likes soccer herself and used to play it regularly in India) while tennis, badminton and basketball were girls' activities (which makes one wonder if basketball is played in a non-aggressive and non-contact manner in India). She also thought that boys engaged in physical activities on a regular basis, while girls were not as inclined to do so. Samantha contradicted herself in the end by saying "*boys are generally speaking very, a little bit, different in sports than girls*" and then countered, "*I think they are different.*" It appeared that she did not want to commit to saying that there were significant differences between how girls and boys participated, but at the same time, had to admit that she had experienced at least a few.

Samantha also spent a substantial portion of the interview talking about the ways that media influenced her health:

Samantha: Um, [how do I] encourage myself to be healthy? Cause I see television, I see the papers, magazines. My parents, TV and everything. And then I realize that you have to be fit. Because if you don't have your health, you can't do anything else. Like you lose your...you can't go to school, you can't, say if you don't have your health, you don't have a job...so that is very important to me. I think to be healthy, yep, it is an important part of me, my life.

Samantha was fatalistic and indicated that it was necessary to be fit to be healthy, and also necessary to have your health or else your future would be compromised. She pointed to print, TV and radio forms of media and discussed them as potentially positive or negative influences on one's health. In terms of negative influences, she specifically talked about how "*typical*" it

was for girls to develop eating disorders in order to strive towards the ideal physique as prescribed by society:

We hear that, uh, becoming fat is, not good in society, because you have to be skinny and pretty and physical.... When you see that, you have to work hard to be skinny, and that.... and that has bad effects too because some girls, they have those diseases like anorexia and bulimia. That's quite typical. But I'm not! (Laughter). So, yeah. Yeah, that has that effect too. I think so. You need to eat healthy, eat small portions, and exercise better to be healthy.

Samantha made it clear that she was not a victim to society's negative messages, she did not engage in disordered eating. In terms of positive influences, she talked about how girls in particular could learn how to be healthy, popular, and pretty based on what they see, hear, and read in the media, but could not think of any examples to illustrate exactly how this works. Samantha also attached the value of "goodness" to those who are physically active but failed to indicate why she felt this was so:

Just teen magazines, when you watch, I mean when you see them and read. Stuff about celebrities, because that is quite influencing you to be active and be good.

...
Um, like generally speaking, girls see the magazines and they get influenced by how they want to be more popular, more good looking, and all those things, because they get inspired by that, the magazines and celebrities. Stuff like that, yeah. Somehow.

Overall, she appeared to be critical of a superficial and material approach to living and talked about how trying to physically "fit" into society could lead to diseases like anorexia and bulimia, but then also thought that girls could be "inspired" by magazines and celebrities.

As her most important sources of PA information, she cited her parents and later mentioned her grandparents. Her father, in particular, was a source of verbal encouragement for her physical activities, though her mother also offered her support:

My father, he tells me that "you need to be fit" because nowadays you don't see people, children my age, getting physical education too much, as in a regular basis. Like he inspires me to do physical education, and be fit, and my mother [does] too.

It seemed that Samantha played a lot more games -- indoor and outdoor -- when she was living in India, and this was directly related to her upbringing in a joint-family with lots of cousins to play with. When asked what games she played with her parents, Samantha said, *"Um, they play carom with me, indoor games. ...But I don't have it here right now. I used to have it back there*

in India. We used to play a lot, like at home indoor games. Cause our family was altogether. Like a, how do you call it, how do you say it, joint families?" Although it has been two years since her family moved to Canada, she mentioned experiencing isolation and is still searching for a core group of friends to spend time with outside of school and the Sai Centre. She spoke fondly of her time in India and indicated that because *"everyone [was] together, ... we used to have a lot of fun"* and continued, *"but here it is different. Here we are alone, because we don't have anybody here."* Later in our discussion about her community, she explained, *"I think my uh, my friends, people from India form my community because we get to, we are more comfortable within our community."* Samantha indicated she was more comfortable with individuals with Indian heritage, regardless of where they were from (or how far removed they were from India) and added, *"but then, I am interested in knowing other people's cultures too, like different countries. I like to know about their cultures too, not just to know our own people."*

When we started to talk about values and culture, one of the strongest themes she identified was the concept of being true to oneself, preserving one's heritage and not forgetting where one came from. Samantha was very protective and proud of her Indian heritage and told me, *"I am from India. From the northeast part, that is, Assam. So, Assam, we people are called Asmese, so because we speak Asmese language,"* and later added, *"I hold on to my religion, my language, my culture, my background, my family, my...uh, everything, which is my family and my relatives. I cannot leave that. That is important to me. And my [Hindu] religion too."* As she sorted through her thoughts of living in Canada, she began to make comparisons between what she as an Indian did and what Canadians do. Samantha believed that in Canada,

Generally speaking here, it is um, theirs is not a cultural hold. You do not hold everything together. Here it is pretty loose. People don't care much about ... their culture, their background, they don't care much about it. But, I think it is very important to be, um, like you have your own individual, you have to be that individual. You have to, uh, be a part of your own background. You can't leave that, because that's the part of being himself or herself. You cannot leave that. You go around, wherever you go, it shows you everywhere. You can't decide "you want to be this" and the next day, "I want to be this," you can't leave that, because that is what you are.

Belonging to the Hindu religion was a significant aspect of her self-identity and she explained that her family prays every morning and before each meal. She believed that the general “style” of living was different in Canada mainly due to the lack of religious practices. Samantha was quick to clarify that Canada is multicultural and that she enjoys learning about other cultures, but also emphasized that she needs to preserve her Asamese heritage: *“Here it is good because there is so much multiculturalism and different kinds of people around. It is good, but, I have my own culture from India, and my own principles, and I cannot forget that.”* When asked how her parents have raised her as a female with Indian heritage, she told me that she has been raised to be independent and to explore her individuality while being a good person with a good character and leading a life that is grounded in her background.

Samantha struggled to describe how her younger brother was raised in comparison to how she was raised, but eventually she indicated that as a female, she would join another family after marriage, while her brother would always be with her parents. This view reflects her upbringing and childhood in India; it is a traditional Indian way of perceiving a male and female child’s life-course.

My brother, because he is a male, maybe he has to be a little bit different. Same thing, sticking with the background, being a good person who is happy with individuality and everything, but...because Indian people, because our culture has this um thing, uh like, boys have to be more, like more – they have to work hard. Girls have to too. But boys stay with their parents, because girls are married to other families, so they go away, but then boys have to look after the parents when they get old. Girls too.

Samantha was very cautious in describing how males and females are raised in India and wanted to make sure that I did not misunderstand her. Although she felt that males have to work hard, she added *“Girls have to too;”* while she felt that males were in charge of caring for the parents in their old age, she indicated that girls could play a secondary role.

We talked about values that were linked to her culture and Samantha once again made comparisons between life in Canada and life in India. The values that Samantha spoke of were

those that would help her to resist the negative temptations that she perceived to be rampant in Canadian society. She explained,

[My parents] have taught me to be, to take all of the good things from this society, not to take the bad ones ... Like drugs like our age children, like drugs, alcohol, all those different kinds of bad things, like smuggling, drug trafficking, getting jailed. That we should avoid! And stay away from those things. And get a good education. Because here university and other schools, they are so good here, so, we should take the good things, and get a good job, but we shouldn't leave our own culture. My parents have taught me that.

She echoed her earlier statements that her parents had raised her to be independent (and successfully resist falling into drugs and alcohol) in order to remain true to her Indian culture. It became clear that her parents were concerned about raising her in a society where (they perceived) students her age abused various substances and got into trouble, but were willing to take this risk because of educational and career opportunities. Samantha's parents taught her that by preserving her culture and staying true to her values, she could resist the perceived ills of Canadian society.

In general, the social activities that Samantha and her family participate in are linked to religion and spirituality. Samantha said, *"In our community we go to Sai Centre. So, we pray, sing bhajans, go to a temple, like there is an Iscon temple here, Krishna temple. Maybe go there, maybe go Lakshmanarayan temple, and in our community."* Because she still considers herself to be new to Canada, going to temples and being involved in Sai Centre activities are important for her to meet new people.

Summary of Major Themes: Samantha

Importance of Physical Activity

- Vehicle to enhance one's spiritual health (meditation, Bharathanatyam)
- Connection to mental health: boost scholastic performance (concentration, memorizing)
- Weight control
- Acceptance into dominant society (necessary to be "fit" and "healthy")

Comparing Boys and Girls Engaged in Physical Activities

Boys	Girls
More interested in sports	Less interested in sports
Regular sports participation	Occasional sports participation
Hardcore games: football, soccer	Softer games: tennis, badminton, basketball

* only differences mentioned

Positive Influences on Exercise Behaviour

- Father – her strongest supporter, verbal encouragement, facilitation, involvement
- Mother – facilitative role, involvement
- Grandparents – taught her games when she was younger
- Brother – role modeling
- Cousins – involvement

Role of the Media

Positive influence:

- Necessary to work hard to be skinny – eat small portions of healthy foods, engage in exercise
- Fitness leads to moral "goodness"
- Media as inspiration for physical activity

Negative influence:

- Emphasis on avoiding body fat – may lead to eating disorders

Culture

- Indian-Asmese
- Preserve heritage: be true to yourself, culture is what you are, who you are
- Boys raised to work hard, take care of the family; Girls raised to become wives, join another family after marriage
- Canadians: loose cultural ties, lack of religious practices, negative aspects (drugs, alcohol, crime); however, Canada has many educational opportunities

Value Systems

- Importance of religion, prayer
- Importance of family
- Respecting elders

4.12 Sheila

	Name	Age	Childhood	Parents' Birthplaces
#2	Sheila	15	Born and raised in Canada	Mother – Fiji Moved to Canada at age 5 Father – Fiji Moved to Canada at age 18

Sheila and I met at her cousin's house (I interviewed her cousin next) and it was challenging to build rapport with her perhaps because she was the youngest, quietest and most soft-spoken participant in this project. My attempts at probing for more information were somewhat successful, but it was easier for her to state her behaviours and opinions rather than provide explanations and examples to illustrate how and why they came about. The interview with Sheila lasted just 25 minutes.

Sheila is an accomplished hip-hop singer who has won several singing competitions and has a passion for instrumental music (guitar and piano) as well. As someone who wishes to make singing a career, she believed that she must also learn how to dance to be a well-rounded performer and so she is enrolled in weekly dance lessons:

Sheila: I've always liked dance, since I was little. And then I started taking dance lessons, and then I started liking them more...I started off singing, and it kinda branched off into other things, like dance.

Interviewer: But you got in it, not for a professional purpose, but because you like it?

Sheila: No, because I knew that I would need it in singing.

She made a point of explaining that she practices dance every single morning for at least an hour to strive towards becoming a hip-hop artist, and not necessarily for the sake of physical activity. I noted, however, that Sheila is a slim and petite girl who (at present) does not need to be physically active to achieve a "hip-hop" or "rap-video" body.

Her physical activity (aside from dancing) is quite low. Sheila does, however, believe that there is great value in engaging in physical activities because "*to be fitter is more healthy,*" exercising can help you "*so you don't get fat*" and "*it's good to be active, cause it's fun.*" As she explored the physical activity-health connect, she discussed the importance of being fit and physically active now in order to control one's weight so that later in life, one could still be

active. Sheila explained that though she is not interested in regularly playing intramural physical activities, if someone signs her up for a game at lunch-time, she will attend and fully participate while some of her other friends would not. Her friends sometimes discourage her from being active by not participating themselves. Sheila said, *"When they say no, that they don't want to play, then I wouldn't go either. Right? Cause I don't want to go by myself."*

She used to be involved in a soccer league, but no longer plays due to her music and extra-curricular commitments. Her younger brother plays softball and she helps him to practice in their backyard when she has time. Sheila is more active in the summer because when the weather is nice, she gets together with her cousins to go on bike rides, to play soccer, and for family picnics. During the school year she divides her time between schoolwork and music-related activities. Her mother and father are actively involved in Sheila and her brother's life. They drive them to their various activities, make sure that they are practicing for whatever it is that they have signed up for, and will participate whenever parents are invited to (for example, a parent-child softball game that took place last year). Overall, Sheila felt that her personal *"motivation to pursue something"* was the largest factor in determining her activity patterns.

Sheila perceives major differences between the ways that boys and girls participate in physical activities. She believes boys are more competitive and aggressive, while girls just want to play and have fun. Sheila explained, *"when I am in PE class, usually the boys are always about winning and girls are doing it just to have fun, so that would be a difference. And guys are really aggressive in sport from what I've seen."* She cited the following example about a face-off in the ball-hockey unit of gym class to illustrate aggressive behaviour towards her by a male student:

We were going [for the ball], and then I was at the net, and I was about to, like try to score, and then he came and hit me with the stick, and I was like, "Oh my God! What are you doing?" (laughter). He was like, "Yeah, I needed to do something, to prevent you from getting to the net." I was like, "Ok, so hitting me wasn't an option there!"

She added that boys' competitive and aggressive drive deters girls in her class from playing with them, especially girls who have low perceived competence in sporting activities.

She had great difficulty in answering questions about her culture and community. Her mother grew up in Canada, while her father primarily grew up in Fiji (till the age of 18). She claims that her mother is more "modern" than her father in terms of her attire and behaviour, and she speaks without an accent. As someone whose great grandparents hail from India, she does not necessarily feel connected to Indian culture, though she indicated that her parents speak Hindi, her family follows Hindu practices (*"we have to not eat meat on Mondays and Thursdays...because those are prayer days,"*) and they celebrate Indian festivals like Deepavali. Sheila was formerly involved in the Sai Educational classes and when I asked if there was anything else to describe about her background, she mentioned, *"we eat curry, like everyday."*

When discussing values, Sheila indicated that respecting elders was important in her culture, but had trouble articulating other values. When I asked Sheila who she considered to be in her community, she was stumped: *"I'm so confused though. What do you mean, community, as in like the things I would take part in?"* My attempts to explain what a community might refer to were unsuccessful, so we moved on to how she may describe her background or culture. Sheila referred to herself as a "brown person" and upon further probing, she said that at times she refers to herself as Indian, but then clarified that she is Fijian Indian. In the questions that followed, I asked her what her parents wanted her to be like as someone raised with that background and she offered the following insights:

Sheila: Um, they want me to have a good job; they want me to get married, not at like when I'm 30 either. Like it has to be in the 20s or whatever.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Sheila: I don't know, it's just all brown people are like that. Don't you think so?

Sheila reasoned that males in her culture were not pressured in the same way as females to get married. Although it was expected that she would be married during her 20s, her parents discouraged her from fraternizing with boys at school: *"you're never supposed to talk to guys*

ever. Like it's like a sin to talk to other guys." When asked why this was the case, she answered in exasperation, "I don't know! It's one of those brown-people things again!" I wondered if her parents were trying to protect her and keep her safe by cautioning her from hanging out with boys and Sheila replied, "Yeah, it could be protection. Yeah, it could be safety too. You know how all brown people are drug dealers now? You should see my school, it is like the worst school to be in!" Sheila considered her parent's perspective and then suggested that her parents were fearful that she could end up hanging around with "shady" people (boys).

Summary of Major Themes: Sheila

Importance of Physical Activity

- Help achieve life aspirations of becoming a hip hop artist (dancing + singing)
- Weight control, avoid body fat
- Help prevent diseased states later in life

Comparing Boys and Girls Engaged in Physical Activities

Boys	Girls
Interested in winning	Interested in having fun
Competitive, aggressive	Boys' behaviour discourages girls from participating in sports
Ego-driven to play sports	Low perceived competence in sports

*only differences mentioned

Positive Influences on Exercise Behaviour

- Self-motivated to dance, naturally athletic
- Mother and Father – role modelling, facilitative support, involvement
- Brother – involvement (softball)
- Cousins – involvement (play together in the summer months)
- Female friends – involvement - will play a game if her friends are doing so

Culture

- Fijian Indian, speaks Hindi
- Brown Person
- Dietary Practices – eat curry
- Importance of Indian celebrations – Deepavali
- Boys not pressured as much as girls
- Girls raised to get good jobs; be married in their 20s; avoid fraternizing with boys who may be involved in drugs, crime

Value Systems

- Importance of religion and prayer, though she doesn't practice Hinduism herself
- Respecting elders

4.13 Nandini

	Name	Age	Childhood	Parents' Birthplaces
#3	Nandini	16	Born and raised in Canada	Mother – Fiji Moved to Canada at age 14 Father – Fiji Moved to Canada at age 25

Nandini was very articulate, introspective and easy to build rapport with for our 37-minute interview. She was very apt at stating her influences to exercise with examples to illustrate each area without being probed. Nandini appeared to know exactly why she chose to exercise and who her major influences were. She told me that she was very self-motivated to play sports because she likes being active and is competent in various activities though she lacks confidence in some team settings (like basketball). She explained that she is working on this deficiency with the help of her former basketball coach and hopes to play for the school team next year as well.

We began the interview by discussing her physical education classes and Nandini had only positive things to say:

I've always been really active, so PE is just a good way to get exercise. You're outside and having fun kinda thing, and usually we do stuff that I like to play, right? Like we play basketball, and I'm really interested in basketball, so you know, it is interesting and a break from all your other classes. All my other classes are academic.

She enjoyed the specific activities that they played in PE class and also appreciated the break from classroom-based learning. Nandini seemed very athletic and she told me that she regularly participates in many different sports – she was on the basketball team in first term and plans to join the track team in the spring. In terms of activities that she pursues on her own, she explained, *“I don't go out for runs, but I go out for random walks, like in the summertime. Cause now, it's like cold. But in the summertime, I'll go for walks sometimes whenever I feel like it [or] I'll just go out and shoot some basketball.”* In terms of exercise motivation, Nandini perceived a direct connection between physical activity and health and outlined several ways that physical activity can enhance one's health: exercise contributes to strengthening the heart, increasing

flexibility, increasing one's energy and strengthening ones muscles. She felt that it was important to be physically active for several reasons:

It's fun, for one, and it gets my mind off things, like I notice that if I am playing basketball or something like that, I don't have my mind on anything else, right? Even like school work, homework, it'll take your mind off a lot of things, and you can just kind of relax. Even though it's hard, right, it's hard work, but you're relaxed at the same time. So, it's good for you.

...

Uh, it keeps you healthy. It keeps your heart rate up, it keeps you going, it gives you energy. It takes energy, but it gives energy, keeps your stamina up, and everything.

...

In the long run, it keeps you from getting sick. Keeping your heart rate up grows your heart, you get a stronger heart. It keeps you healthy, keeps you going.

Nandini believed that exercise was enjoyable, could help her to clear her thoughts, relax, energize her, increase her stamina and finally, prevent illness. Later, she mentioned that by being physically active, it could help strengthen your muscles and bones and by specifically doing stretching exercises, you could become more flexible and thus less vulnerable to pain during these physical activities.

When we talked about how boys and girls participate in physical activities, Nandini felt that boys were more aggressive and implied that her own style of playing was closer to a boy's than it was to a girl's:

So, like, if you were to play soccer or something, I just kinda, guys are a lot more aggressive, right? They're a LOT more aggressive than I am, right, but, at times, I can be really aggressive and I could match that, some of the guys. But in general, I think they are more aggressive, and more determined to win, than actually just playing the sport.

Nandini sensed that some girls in her gym class might *"have enough drive [and] determination and the talent to match a guy's, but a lot of girls don't. Some might, some don't show it."* In general, she felt that males her age were more active than females and believed that differences between activity patterns of males and females *"start to even out a little"* after they graduate from high school. No explanation was offered for this perceived phenomenon.

Nandini's female friends play a part in encouraging her to be active. She is more likely to play sports or participate in a game if her friends are also doing so: *If I don't really want to play*

a sport or join a sport but one of my friends do and they say they'll come with me, ... I'm more for it than if I was by myself."

In terms of physical activity influences, she suggested that her brother played the biggest part in getting her involved in sport. Nandini explained,

[My brother] plays basketball a lot. Ever since I was little, we always had a basketball hoop, so I'd always play, and he'd always teach me, or we'd play hockey on the streets, or soccer in the backyard. So, you know, he'd always get me to come outside, and we'd always play together.

Now that she knows that she is competent in a variety of sporting activities, she is self-motivated to pursue them. Although she is aware that her parents are active themselves, she was very clear that this did not impact her decisions to pursue physical activities. Nandini could recall situations where her parents had encouraged her to be active, but pointed out, *"they don't really have to because I do it on my own."* Her parents engage in more activities with her during the summer holidays. As a family, they go on long bike rides, to the park to play soccer and go swimming.

At first, Nandini had a bit of trouble articulating her values and beliefs related to her culture, but once asked to describe what people of her culture do that is unique from other cultures, she provided a wealth of information. She feels that her cultural heritage cannot be captured by a survey with a checklist: *"At school if somebody says, 'Are you Fijian?' I won't say 'no, I'm not.' I am, right, but you know, if I am filling out a form, right, I wouldn't say I'm Fijian, I'd say I'm East Indian, because it's usually classified as East Indian."* She is simultaneously Fijian and Indian; Hindu and Canadian. Her great grandparents were from India and spoke Tamil, Telugu and Hindi, and Nandini's mother tongue was Hindi. Nandini said that she has been raised to be proud of her culture and explained, *"we celebrate festivals, a lot of festivals, like Holi and Deepavali and... um, religious festivals, a whole bunch of those... Hindu. There's a lot of Gods, so there's a lot of festivals for a lot of Gods."* I asked her how her parents have raised her as someone with Indian heritage and she answered as follows:

They've raised me to be Hindu, go to the temple, ... respect the Gods, respect the elders. That's a big part of our culture. There's not a specific way they should act, right, you can do what you want to do, but I guess by different people, there are different ways one should act. Right, like a girl shouldn't go out at night, shouldn't do this, shouldn't do that. They should...some people say they should stay at home, others think they should be able to live a little, do their own thing. It depends. It depends on how you were raised.

Nandini identified herself as a "brown person" and also countered that she was aware of how "brown" people are stereotyped, and more specifically, how "brown" females are stereotyped. She made comparisons between "brown people" and "white people" but was quick to point out that these were stereotypes, and that there is much variation in how such families raise their children. While the stereotype is for brown females to be raised in a protective, restrictive environment, she was aware that there were white families with daughters raised this way as well. Ultimately, she believed that it depended on how a given set of parents, white or brown, chose to raise their daughters:

The reality is that...I don't know. It depends. I think it just depends on the parents. It depends on...you know, white people just as much as brown people, I know a lot of brown people whose parents will let them do their thing, go out, they don't care, right, and some brown people will be like, "You know what? You can't". You have to have some boundaries. And that is with white people too, there are a lot of parents who raise their kids so that they have to have boundaries, they have certain limitations and whatnot, so I think it does depend on the parents as well.

The same reasoning was applied to the concepts of house-rules. While brown families are often characterized by strict rules, especially for daughters, this occurs in other families as well. I asked her to consider how she was raised and how her brother was raised and then if possible, relate this to her cultural upbringing. The following dialogue shows Nandini's understanding of how parenting styles change over each generation:

Me and my brother have the same rules and boundaries, but I think that a stereotype, people who see that guys should have more freedom than girls, because girls can't protect themselves, yeah, a lot of older people [in our culture] will see it like that, cause that's how they were brought up, so again, it goes back to their parents and how they were raised, and then, they just, they carry on with what they know, right? Because they don't know past that. But I think with me and my brother, it's um, it's the same. We both have rules. He'll go out more, he's older, he's much older than me, so there's differences there, but other than that, I think, when he was 16, now that I am 16, that our boundaries and stuff are the same.

The main value that Nandini associated with Indian culture was respecting elders and respecting one's culture. Nandini spoke of demonstrating her pride for Indian culture by participating in Hindu festivals, attending major functions at the Sai Centre, and by striving to

learn about the Hindu Gods. According to Nandini, *“understanding the festivals is a good way to show that you respect it, you understand it, and you know where you come from. I think that’s a big thing, respecting it is knowing who you are, where you came from, and how you got there.”*

When I asked Nandini who she considered to be in her community, she was unable to delimit her answer to a specific group and instead included anyone that she interacts with on a regular basis.

In the end, Nandini did not feel that her exercise or activity participation was influenced by her values or her parents’ values, although it was clear that both she and her family value physical activity for the purposes of health and enjoyment. Nandini claimed, *“I don’t really know if they have anything to do with each other. Like my values, how I was raised, has nothing to do with fitness or physical activities.”* When asked what she felt was the strongest influence on her fitness practices, she offered the following thought, *“it’s if you want to do it, if you want to be in it.”* For Nandini, the choice to be physically active was personal, and if she had to choose a primary influence, it was her brother: *“To get me started, and get the ball rolling, it was my brother.”*

Summary of Major Themes: Nandini

Importance of Physical Activity

- Having fun, break from academic classes
- Enhance physical health: strengthen the heart and muscles, increase flexibility
- Increase energy, stamina
- Connection to mental health: clear one's thoughts, help one to relax
- Help prevent diseased states later in life

Comparing Boys and Girls Engaged in Physical Activities

Boys	Girls
Interested in winning	Interested in having fun
Competitive, aggressive	Can also be competitive and aggressive
Talented in sport	May also be talented in sport

*differences and similarities mentioned

Positive Influences on Exercise Behaviour

- Self-motivated to exercise, naturally athletic
- Mother and Father – role modelling, facilitative support
- Brother – involvement (basketball, soccer, street hockey)
- Cousins – involvement (play together in the summer months)
- Female friends – involvement, will play a game if her friends are doing so

Culture

- Fijian, East Indian, Canadian, speaks Hindi
- Brown Person
- Dietary Practices – eat curry
- Importance of Indian celebrations – Deepavali, Holi
- Preserve one's heritage: endeavour to learn about festivals, deities
- Stereotypes for "brown" females: should not go out at night, should stay at home; raised in a protective/restrictive environment
- Stereotypes for "brown" males: more freedom, can protect themselves

Value Systems

- Respecting elders
- Importance of religion and prayer

4.13 Vidya

	Name	Age	Childhood	Parents' Birthplaces
#4	Vidya	18	9 years in Oman 3 years in Dubai 6 years in Canada	Mother – India Father – India

My interview with Vidya took place in her home. Although the interview was a mere 27-minutes, her responses were honest, detailed and very informative.

Vidya's level of PA involvement is medium. Her major barrier to participation is time as she is in her first year of university. Vidya told me, "*[On] weekends, I'm very busy. Weekdays I am also very busy.*" She doesn't consider herself to be athletic with respect to running or basketball, but enjoys playing ping-pong, tennis and badminton with her father. She is an only child. Her father is the most influential to her in terms of active games, and her mother encourages her to practice yoga and breathing exercises. Vidya explained, "*[My Mom] always tells me to do breathing exercises and yoga and stuff. And she likes to meditate. ... Then my dad is the one who wants me to run a lot, and play games. So it is a nice balance between them.*" Her favourite activity is Bharatanatyam, which she practices daily for 30 minutes for her personal satisfaction. She played on the school basketball team back in grade seven but decided not to join for the following years because she didn't like it very much and stated she wasn't very good at it. She takes walks with her mother and plays active games with her father regularly. She equally attributes her exercise behaviour to the positive influence of her mother and father and stands firm that parents must role model positive behaviours so that their children can learn them:

Parents are the most important. If the parents do it, that's the only way the children can learn. Otherwise, they're just preaching with no sense of what they are doing. Cause if they do it themselves, they know that their child will see it. It brings us closer together to do this sort of thing, to take walks, to play badminton.

She sees a strong connection between activity and health – both physical and mental aspects. Vidya said, "*I like to stay healthy and eat right, exercise right, make sure that I am not stressed out, so that I can do well in school too, right, and get involved in the [Indian] community more often than I do, so physical activity really helps me.*" She also explained that

when she exercises, her brain functions better and therefore her body functions better. She highlighted the importance of exercise in helping to regulate sleep patterns and assisting her brain function (focus) during academic pursuits. When we later discussed the activity levels of her parents, Vidya claimed, *"they also want to make sure that they are alert, and don't deteriorate...we eat right a lot. We don't eat junk food. [My Mom] makes good food for us."*

When discussing similarities between how males and females participate in physical activities, she offered the following views, *"I'd say that we're pretty similar, girls and boys. Boys used to be more active, actually, but now that video games, and you know, all that kind of stuff that makes you sit down [exists], there are many ways of getting entertainment without actually going out and playing a game."* As boys and girls got older, she talked about boys sitting in front of the computer and television, while *"girls prefer shopping in the mall"* in their leisure time. Overall, she thought that boys and girls were quite similar in their activity levels, but just chose different activities: *Girls just like to hang out together, they like to do stuff together. They do homework together, they go shopping together. Um, and boys do the same thing, I'm sure they do. So I'd say that we're pretty similar."*

When discussing differences between males and females, she first talked about differences in motivation and later pointed to the pervasive influence of the media. In terms of motivation, Vidya considered, *"boys might want to join the gym or something, to build themselves up, to look good, I don't know. And girls just basically want to stay fit and slim and they have all those media outlooks on how they should look."* She thought that music videos, in particular, were responsible for many of the attitudes and behaviours exhibited by both males and females. Vidya claimed that males want to look buff in the 'hip hop' style, while females want to be desired by males and thus wear revealing clothes and makeup. She problematized the "act" that some males and females engage in to attract each other, and said that this leads to personal discomfort, especially when they are acting in ways that are not true to their character.

In terms of physical activity behaviour, she perceives little difference between males and females, other than the physiques that they were trying to achieve. She emphasized that it is up to the individual how he or she engages in sport or physical activities and with respect to herself indicated, *"I'm the only one who has control over how much [and what] physical activity I do."*

When we discussed her upbringing in an Indian culture, she indicated, *"It is very rich in traditions, in values"* and stressed the role of spirituality. Her father is a practicing Hindu while her mother is a practicing Christian. Her parents exposed her to both religions and fostered an open-perspective when it came to God. Vidya explained, *"I used to go to the church as well as the temple, so it is a good outlook on life altogether. Really good outlook. I don't feel the need to choose."* Vidya was brought up to believe that there is value in all religions, in all forms of devotion, and her parents support any path that will help her to get closer to God and *"feel closer to [her] spiritual self."* In terms of values associated with Indian culture, she mentioned peace, truth and righteousness (values from Swami's Universal Symbol), and felt that *"respect is a big cornerstone in our culture. We are all the same. We all have the same needs."*

Vidya is very involved and feels intimately connected to the Indian community. Vidya is an accomplished Bharathanatyam dancer, she teaches Balvikas (Sai Educational) classes to the children (5-12 year olds) at the Centre, and performs at Telegu (another Indian culture) shows. She indicated that the past six years of living in Canada has had a significant impact on her cultural affinity. Vidya had obviously given this topic significant thought, because she immediately articulated **why** moving to Canada had strengthened her cultural beliefs and suspected that this was the case for other immigrant families: *"Some parents, when they, like mine, when they come to Canada, they feel sort of left out. They don't feel like they belong anywhere, so they get even closer to their community, their culture, and so they have a circle of friends within their culture."* Her family is closely connected to the Indian community as a direct result of immigrating to Canada. As she explained, when her family lived in Oman and Dubai,

they weren't necessarily involved in any cultural activities, though their family friends were primarily of Indian descent. Within the first year of living in Vancouver, however, her family felt estranged from their cultural roots and thus actively sought out to connect with an Indian community.

I was born in the Middle East. At that point I was not very much active within the community. But when we came to Canada, we felt sort of estranged from the community. So, we set out to join it. And we met with the Sai Centre people, we met with the Balvikas. I joined that.... So now I am very much joined with the community.

In her younger years, Vidya was merely adhering to the rituals of attending church and visiting temples: "*[My parents] made me go at first, when I was young and not very into going to temples and praying, no child is, they'd rather play outside.*" In Vancouver, however, she transformed into an active agent who learned about Indian festivals and Hindu traditions on her own. Now, when she goes to the Sai Centre or the temple, she enjoys her experiences. Throughout her teenage years in Canada, Vidya has cultivated herself an identity that is deeply rooted in Indian traditions.

Summary of Major Themes: Vidya

Importance of Physical Activity

- Physical health: body functions better
- Enhances mental health: stress relief, boost scholastic performance, brain functions better
- Enhances spiritual health: meditation, yoga
- Help prevent diseased states later in life

Comparing Boys and Girls Engaged in Physical Activities

Boys	Girls
More active when they were younger	Similar activity levels as boys in high school
Leisure time spent watching TV, playing video games	Leisure time spent shopping at a mall
Enjoy spending time with friends	
Tailor physical appearances to impress the opposite sex (males = muscular; females = slim)	

*similarities and differences mentioned

Positive Influences on Exercise Behaviour

- Self-motivated to exercise (Bharathanatyam)
- Father – role modelling, facilitative support, encouragement and involvement (active sports)
- Mother – facilitative support, encouragement (breathing exercises, yoga)

Role of the Media

- Media responsible for attitudes towards appearance and health practices for males and females
- Hip-Hop Videos: Males want to look buff to impress females
 - Females wear revealing clothing and makeup to impress males

Culture

- Indian
- Rich in traditions, values
- Christian and Hindu

Value Systems

- Importance of spirituality, religion and prayer
- Respect
- Peace
- Truth
- Righteousness

4.15 Ramya

	Name	Age	Childhood	Parents' Birthplaces
#5	Ramya	19	Born in Fiji 18 years in Canada	Mother – Fiji Father – Fiji

The interview with Ramya took place in her home and lasted for 55 minutes. She was a very talkative person who seemed happy to share personal information about her physical activities and upbringing. She took great interest in the process of my research and after the interview she asked me a series of questions about obtaining approval from the Research Ethics Board and the Sai Centre.

Ramya attributes her knowledge of physical activities mostly to her older brother but also to the experiences from high school:

I like to play badminton, I was the assistant coach for the badminton team at our high school. And I played on the tennis team too. Yeah, I really liked sport. When I was a kid, I used to play all the time with my brother.

From a young age, she was involved in many formal and informal competitive sport settings, and grew accustomed to taking on aggressive sporting roles and “holding her own” with her brother and his friends. Ramya said, *“I’m one of those types of people that likes to compete. And when I know that I can succeed in that area, I push myself to work harder.”* She explained that because physical activity was a significant part of her life growing up, she felt like an outsider among female peer-groups, a tomboy. The excerpt below illustrates Ramya’s struggle to fit in with the girls in high school:

[Girls] were too involved in their makeup, their hair and their clothes, and I was really like, “Let’s play some football!” I was more into that, and more into studying and stuff. So I really had that problem with trying to fit in, into what crowd I wanted to go into. Cause I didn’t want to stay with the boys, because then I’d be living like a guys life!

She noted that some of the girls back in high school were not very comfortable playing games in co-ed PE classes and felt that it was because they did not have the opportunity to play with boys growing up (as she did with her brother). Ramya explained, *“[My brother and I] used to play sports and stuff, and he was the one who taught me how to play all those sports. So when I got to*

school and everything, I didn't have a problem playing with the guys, and all the other girls did." In spite of her struggles as an outsider with females in sport-settings, her enjoyment of PE class was strong and she enrolled in them for all four years of high school.

Ramya offered two main differences between how males and females participate in physical activities. Though she identified with masculine ways of playing sport, she felt that boys were generally more competitive and rough compared to girls. She said, *"I think the way that boys play are that, the way that they play physical activities are very competitive. I really like that though, because as I said before, I'm really competitive. And, sometimes they can be physically rough."* Ramya felt that some girls did not want to be competitive as a precaution against appearing less attractive to boys, *"some girls did not want to be competitive, they just wanted to get guys to like them...[they] were very fragile...They didn't want to have their hairdo messed up, or their makeup smeared or something like that."* Ramya criticized some of the girls in her gym classes and deemed them very self-centred as they worried *"about themselves and their looks rather than just [being] involved in the game."* Overall, she provided the following assessment for how girls and boys engaged in physical activities:

There [were] a few girls who were competitive like me, which was good, because I could compete against them too! So it was fun. But I don't think it is always the roughness that [boys] have, or how competitive they are. It is also about how girls' mentality is towards how they appear in front of guys. They're worried about how they look, and how they act, and they want to be more ladylike, I think. I wouldn't generalize it to [all] girls; I would say a few girls that I knew back in high school [were like this].

In comparison to how easily Ramya generated differences between boys and girls engaging in physical activities, she had trouble identifying some similarities. She thought back to her years in high school and suggested, *"I think that there is one thing that I can say that is similar between boys and girls when they play physical activities, [if] they want to work as a group, they work as a group. ...When I went to high school, I was in a group of girls who wanted to play against a group of guys, we had guys versus girls things. We were dedicated to do well,*

so were the guys though.” Ramya realized, “when you’re competing against the opposite sex, I guess there are similarities because you’re both just trying to win.”

When I asked Ramya whether her involvement in physical activities has changed the way she sees herself, she admitted that her sense of self has indeed been influenced by her physique as well as her physical activity competence. She said, *“I guess it is harder for me to concentrate on other things if you’re thinking just about what you look like, and what other people think of you.”* Although in her statement above, Ramya started off referring to herself (“me”), in the second-half she distanced herself (“you’re” and “you”). In high school, she felt like she was unattractive, overweight and undesirable. She told me a story about overcoming her struggle to complete the two-kilometre run in gym class. She recognized that another student in the class was slow and having trouble with the run, and so they banded together and helped to motivate each other throughout the two-kilometre course.

I was always one of the slower kids. And there was this other slower kid, right, and we used to encourage each other. Because everyone used to make fun of him, and I felt really bad. He was kinda like, a more bigger guy, and he was taller too, and he had trouble running. And I said, “come on, Alex, you can do it. Who cares what anyone says?” I’m like, “even if you come in last, you can feel better that you can do a two-kilometre run. It might take you longer, but you can still do it.” And we used to encourage each other.

Although Ramya was directing her statements at her other student, I suspected that these positive affirmations were also beneficial for her own self-esteem and motivation to run.

Ramya believes that physical activity is important for both mental and physical benefits. In terms of mental benefits, she mentioned walking as an opportunity to de-stress, re-focus her thoughts and meditate. Ramya told me that she experiences heightened alertness and mental stimulation following physical activities like walking because it is an opportunity for her to meditate and park her negative thoughts. She said, *“You’d think walking would make you tired, for like an hour or so, but no, it actually keeps you awake, and it actually makes me look forward to the day.”* In terms of physical benefits, Ramya first mentioned using exercise to offset diseased states and later cited weight control and increases in physical strength through exercise.

According to Ramya, *“if you do physical activity, it should reduce several medical problems, such as heart attacks, obesity and keep you healthy.”* She thought that exercise was especially important for her due to unspecified existing medical problems and thought that the benefits of physical activity translated into other areas of her life. Ramya explained, *“if you’re physically active, it can help you with how you think, how you look, how you feel, how you come about doing things in a certain way. How you live your life, basically.”*

At the present time, Ramya is not as active as she would like to be. She is a first-year university student with classes three days a week and has a part-time job for two or three shifts every week. Ramya does not feel like she has control over her activity participation due to these responsibilities and household duties. She described a typical day as follows, *“When I come home from work, it is not like I sit down and watch TV. I have to wash the dishes, clean the house, make the food if there’s no food, cause my mom is always working. Do the laundry, clean my room, there’s always something else that I have to do!”* In the summer, she hopes to be more active. Ramya also listed physical ailments like arthritis in her wrists and exercise-induced asthma as barriers to her exercise participation.

Ramya provided a detailed description of her culture and how it was a blend Fijian and Indian elements. She explained that she speaks Fijian-Hindi, and described this as a mixture of Malayalam, Tamil, Bengali and Telugu (four major languages from India) as a result of the South Indians who first arrived in Fiji. Ramya told me, *“if someone were to ask me exactly what I am, I would say, I am Fiji-Indian. Because I do have Indian ancestry, but my family is from Fiji. But I am currently living in Canada, so that makes me Fiji-Indian-Canadian.”* She distinguished Fijian-Indians from Fijian-natives and labelled herself as a Fiji-Indian-Canadian who eats similar foods as Indians from India but with a Fijian flair. As she was explaining the culture that she identified with, she said, *“I would say that I am living the Indian culture. As a Fijian, we do have aspects of the culture that are different from India. Like what we eat, what*

sort of foods we eat, it is not always the same as what Indians from India eat." Ramya suggested that the single unifying factor between Indians from Fiji, those from India, and anyone else with Indian ancestry, is a strong belief in religion. She was aware that there are individuals with Indian heritage who are atheist, but believes that the majority with Indian descent actively pursue ways of getting closer to God:

In terms of culture, Ramya did not feel that there was a connection between her physical activity involvement and her upbringing or values. Overall, Ramya asserted that her decision to participate in physical activities is a personal one: *"I think it is more a personal choice. I think that my values and my morality have influenced me in other things, like school, work, whatever, but [in] physical activity [it] hasn't."* Her parents were supportive of any form of recreation that she chose during her childhood (so long as it did not interfere with her household chores). Ramya did, however, point out differences in how she was raised and how her older brother was raised. While they were both taught to *"respect someone no matter what background they are from,"* there were definite role-differences assigned to them based on sex. Her brother was given more freedom and was not required to do household work as much as she was.

Indian culture is like, your daughter must be very well mannered.

...
I should be very lady-like, so hair nicely done, if guests come over, nice clothes, um, very polite, no rudeness. Talk respectfully to people. Elders – address them in the proper way. Make the guests feel welcome, ...serve everyone before you serve yourself. That is how my parents have always raised me. Not just serving guests and everything, but learning things, actually cooking more, getting into that mentality that I am going to become a wife of somebody else. A house should be like clean, living should be proper. They're really strict on us.

Ramya felt that her parents were preparing her for marriage: teaching her how to cook and take care of a household, while in contrast, her brother was permitted to be "lazy" and skip chores and they certainly *"never taught him how to cook"*. It was assumed that her brother would get eventually grow up, get a job and have a wife to take care of those duties for him. According to Ramya, her perceived fate is to serve her husband; her parents have conditioned this within her

from early adolescence and reinforce it when they ask her things like, “*What are you going to do when you get married? What are you going to cook your husband?*”

When asked if her mother and father’s parenting style was as a result of their culture, she considered this, but replied,

I think it may have to do with the Indian culture, but I know that people that are in different cultures experience that, especially females, because as society has seen females as more inferior to males, it is harder for females to make themselves look as strong and more physically ready, and appear as well as they look like they can do anything that they want to do.

Ramya reasoned that children in any family may experience differential treatment based on their sex, and that in her case it may be due to the generation gap, rather than the cultural gap between her and her parents. She articulated this challenge in the following passage:

But when your parents are there, they were raised in a different generation from you, it is difficult for them to try to see your generation, because your generation is more advanced, and more modern, and you always have a different mentality from your parents! And since they were raised from a different generation, they always bring their values with them. So, I think these are kind of the problems that I guess, Fijian-Indian-Canadian girls have, but not only them. Indians and other cultures, women too, they have that problem with their parents, where the parents bring in those values.

Ramya did, however, feel that there were differences between how Canadians lived their lives and how those with Indian heritage lived their lives. She felt that “*Canadians have more freedom...they are a very peaceful society. And very open-minded too. Very liberal.*” At the same time, she felt that preferential treatment of males was not restricted to Indian cultures, it was also rampant in Canadian society. Ramya did not offer a sport-specific example, but instead pointed to inequity and inequality in the workforce and spoke of the predominance of male leaders in the business world: “*There are still areas, like the CEO’s in major corporations are still (pause) there’s more men than women that are CEO’s of major corporations.*”

The final topic that we explored was her sense of community. At first, she started off broadly defining her community and later specifically referred to people at the Sai Centre.

I know the community for me is who I know. I don't think it is the people that live around me. When I am thinking about my own personal beliefs, it is the people that I know, the networks that I am involved in. Networking with people, friends, family. Um, the temple, work, school, are all in my network, of who I know.

...

I'm part of the youth group [at the Sai Centre], so sometimes it is really hard though, to get involved in the sort of things that they're doing. It is a constant struggle. But they are people that you rarely meet in your life, but yet, you are so close to them that they could be, basically like your blood-brother, or your blood-sister or something like that.

...

I think we share the same mentality of how we look at our religion, and other religions. And how we were taught to look at other people.

Although friends from work and school were included within her community (or "*network*", as she referred to it), when asked what activities she engages in with them, she exclusively talked about spending time with and wanting to spend even more time with people from the Sai Centre. She spoke of their closeness and likened them to family related through bloodlines. Ramya expressed an intimate connection with people from the Sai Centre because of their shared views of religion (and God).

Summary of Major Themes: Ramya

Importance of Physical Activity

- Enhance physical health: body function better
- Weight control, avoid body fat
- Connection to mental health: stress relief, brain functioning
- Connection to spiritual health: meditation, help focus thoughts
- Help prevent diseased states later in life (heart attacks, obesity)
- Help deal with present ailments (unspecified)

Comparing Boys and Girls Engaged in Physical Activities

Boys	Girls
Enjoy sport	
Competitive, rough, focussed on the game	Interested in impressing boys: focussed on acting fragile, self-centred; too involved with their makeup, clothes
Will work together as a group to achieve a goal	

*differences and similarities mentioned

Positive Influences on Exercise Behaviour

- Self-motivated to exercise, enjoys sport and competition
- Brother – involvement; taught her how to play sports from a young age
- Mother and Father – verbal encouragement, facilitation; supportive of physical activities so long as they do not interfere with household chores

Culture

- Fijian Indian Canadian, speaks Fijian Hindi
- Rich in traditions, values
- Dietary Practices similar to those from India
- Boys (her brother) – given more freedom, less household work
 - Will eventually have a wife to take care of domestic duties
- Girls (herself) – must act ladylike, present herself well (appearance), learn domestic duties
 - Prepared for marriage: learn how to serve a husband

Value Systems

- Importance of religion and prayer; Hinduism
- Respect

4.16 Priya

	Name	Age	Childhood	Parents' Birthplaces
#6	Priya	17	Born and raised in Canada	Mother – Fiji Moved to Canada at age 21 Father – Fiji Moved to Canada at age 9

Priya and I met in a coffee shop and immediately fell into a comfortable discussion that lasted just over an hour. This was by far the longest interview that I conducted, due in large part to Priya's elaborate tales of previous ailments:

I get sick a lot. I get sick...um, I've been getting sick lately every month, and so, and I just got over a really bad illness. When I was in grade 6 I suffered from migraines, and I was actually hospitalized. And I was in the hospital for about 4 months. And I was actually paralyzed too. I was in a wheelchair. The third day into being at the hospital at Childrens, I was in the playroom, and we were playing Bingo with some other kids, and the nurse came to give me my medication, it was around 4 o' clock, but it wasn't recorded that she gave me my medication, so when the nurses switched, I ended up getting the same medication later that night. At that point my blood pressure went up to 165, and I couldn't see for about 10 minutes. I can pop out all of my sockets now. I used to play soccer too back in the day, and now if I were to do that, there is a chance of my knee popping out or my hip popping out.

Priya indicated at various points in the interview that the laxity of her joints is of real concern to her and her parents, and prevents her from participating in certain physical activities. She also discussed the role of activity in preventing immediate and future illness and helping to manage sickness in the winter: *"I think I have a very weak immune system, and if I were to be out there, working, working out more, I could build some more physical strength, and then when I get sick, I wouldn't just be like a vegetable, I'd be able to manage."* This focus on illness is most likely due to her history of extended hospital visits and poor immune system. The fragility of her body was a consistent theme throughout our discussion of physical activity. She mentioned an accident while tobogganing that has made her wary of winter sports in general. Her parents help perpetuate her fears of injury by cautioning her from participating in several activities including swimming, skiing, tobogganing and snowboarding.

Priya feels that there is great value in engaging in physical activities. Her favourite activities are basketball, badminton and yoga. She discussed exercise as a stress reliever: *"When you are doing a sport or something, it could take away from like, your worrying about*

something. When you worry, you can get sick ...it can relieve some of your stress when you are active." Even though Priya felt that there was a direct and positive correlation between physical activity and health and highlighted the importance of activity for her, she engages in what she feels is a "low" level of activity, a 5/10 compared to her friends. At first she suggested that she was lazy or a victim of procrastination and didn't make time for physical activity, but the more we talked, it became clear that she has a part time job, commitments on the Grad Committee at school, and commitments to take care of her younger cousins and visit her grandparents. In addition to these commitments, she attends school and must complete school-related work. She is in her final year of high school and thus is preparing for provincial exams and class presentations.

I asked Priya to think about how she compared to boys her age and to tell me if there were any similarities between how boys and girls participated in physical activities. Priya compared herself to a male cousin of the same age and talked about how they had a different focus in their lives:

I have one prime example. I have a cousin and he's the same age as me, but I'd say we are both opposites. Cause for him, it's more...he loves golf to death, that's what he wants to do in his life, and that's where he is concentrated. And so, I can see, like when we talk, I'll be talking about school, and he'll be talking about golf. He is very physically active, goes out to the gym, works out all the time, he's my exact opposite. But we get along very well at the same time.

Priya made it clear that although their levels of and focus on physical activity were different, she did not perceive this to be a barrier to her relationship with this cousin. I asked if she could think of any similarities between the ways that they participated and after some thought she answered:

I'd say we both would do it for the same reason, just to relieve our mind off of like, other problems.

...

There's always that drive, like that goal that you want to accomplish. They think. Both boys and girls do have that drive.

...

It is not just that boys are more active than girls. Cause I know a lot of girls in my school and it is the same thing for them, it's all about playing sports, it's all about volleyball, basketball, so I think that both boys and girls, it doesn't matter which gender you are, it is a personal thing. If you want to do it, you do it.

Priya made it apparent that she was at one extreme of physical activity (low) and her cousin was at the other (high), but this did not imply that all girls are less active than all boys. She also made a note that time may be a barrier for her friends as well: "*[My friends] are busy too. And I'm busy. So it's just about having time, cause I'm sure if we all had time, we'd do something [active].*" Ultimately, she felt that physical activity was a personal choice, independent of sex.

In terms of influences to be physically active, she mentioned that both of her parents are active, and that the three of them used to take turns using the treadmill in their house. While her parents still exercise on the treadmill, Priya no longer does. She spoke fondly of her former physical activities when she said, "*In grade 9 I was quite the runner, I loved it, and I'd do it on my own time as well. I'd go to the track with my Dad and we'd just race each other, go around.*" Priya indicated that she regretted not participating anymore. Priya has an older sister who recently got married and currently lives abroad with her husband. When her sister still lived with her family, she effected positive changes in Priya's physical activity participation:

We used to just shoot hoops. We have a school in front of our house, and so, we'd go to the back, to the basketball court and just play with each other. We'd take the dog for a walk together.

...

She played soccer for quite a bit, and so that's another thing that wanted me to play. When she started, my dad asked the both of us, I was like, "no, I don't want to play soccer, that's a boy's sport." I was such a small girl, right, and my sister started playing it, and I saw how much she liked it, and my dad asked me again, "Do you want to play" and I said, "Ok."

It is noteworthy that when Priya was growing up, she thought that soccer was only for boys, but after seeing her sister play she realized that girls could play too, and asked her father to sign her up. Priya also talked about playing active games with her father, and engaging in less active pursuits with her mother, like going on walks in the summertime.

Priya had some difficulty articulating her heritage, culture or background. Priya did not see herself as embedded in any community. Her circle of friends is comprised mainly of her parents and extended family (many of whom are in Canada). She began answering questions on

her background by describing her religious beliefs. She identified the country where her family hails from and finally spoke about her cultural upbringing.

Well, I was born in like, I guess, my family is Hindu. But that is not something that constricts me in believing in other religions, I do actually. I may not know much about it, but I won't close the door, like there is no such thing, that's wrong.

...
I'm from Fiji. Um, I have a huge family.

...
[I'm] Indian. So like, my family may be from Fiji, but our values I guess you could say are still from India. Like we do similar prayers that they would do in India. When it comes to dressing in traditional clothing, it is similar to that of India. Food is similar to that of India.

Priya knows that her parents want her to hold onto and stay true to their traditions, but could not explain exactly what traditions these were or how she was to address them:

Priya: [My parents] don't want me to leave behind...just because they were born in Fiji and I was born here, they don't want me to leave behind those important traditions that they were taught because I am in a Western country, born here.

Interviewer: And what are these traditions?

Priya: I never know, but they always say, "Don't forget your traditions!" and I ask them, "What??" and I never get a direct explanation!

Priya indicated that she has asked her parents for clarification about these traditions on several occasions but regrets that they have not supplied her with answers, and instead have passed on that responsibility onto her paternal grandparents. Priya was, however, able to identify two values associated with Indian culture. She highlighted the need "*to respect your elders*" and "*to be honest with your parents*". As the conversation about culture progressed, Priya had a moment of enlightenment. Though her parents hadn't specified what traditions she was to hold onto, she suspected that it was related to the "*simple life*" in Fiji and voiced her suspicions:

I don't know. [My parents] think that kind of like, the more simple life they lived back there [in Fiji], is what I should be like following under, instead of all these materialistic things that you are faced with here in Canada, there's so much. But in Fiji, it is low-key, kind of country, small country. So...and cause, I don't know how to manage my money at all, and so I'll get paid and it'll be gone, and back then, they always say, "Back in my day we never had these privileges, you should be happy that you can go out at this time." They want, they just want me to appreciate that.

Priya felt that her parents wanted her to appreciate the privileged life that she leads, but to live according to a simple lifestyle like they had in Fiji. Priya spoke of her frustrations with her parents constantly comparing her life to their childhood. She felt that the comparison was inappropriate because of the different circumstances and cultures in which they were raised. She

felt that Fiji was very strict while “*in Canada, you can just grow into yourself, do what you want, there is so much more freedom to do this and that here.*” What is interesting is that the very next question I asked her yielded a response in contradiction to the statement above:

Interviewer: Is there anything else that your parents want you to be like because you are a *female* being raised in this background?

Priya: Um...well, the only difference is when it comes to boys and girls in my culture. Like, [my male cousin] can just go out and do something at this time. Oh, he can do it because he is a boy. He can stay out late, because he is a boy. He knows how to take care of himself because he is a boy. But then if a girl wants to go out, oh – what if someone kidnaps you, what if someone stabs you? There is more worry for girls in my culture than there is for boys.

Even though Priya felt that growing up in Canada provided her with greater freedom than if she was raised in Fiji, she experienced less freedom than male counterparts because of her Indian culture. According to Priya’s statements, freedom must be on a continuum with girls raised in Fiji at one extreme, and boys raised in Canada at the other. The subject of freedom appeared once again at the end of the interview, when she explained that her parents had an arranged marriage. In spite of her earlier statements about having selective freedom Priya explained that her parents did not want her to have an arranged marriage, and instead “*they think I should have the freedom to choose.*” It appears that Priya’s parents are conservative and traditional on some issues, and liberal or “Western” on others.

Summary of Major Themes: Priya

Importance of Physical Activity

- Enhance mental health: stress relief
- Help prevent diseased states later in life
- Help deal with present ailments – enhance immune system (vs. colds, general sickness)
- Enhance physical health: strengthen muscles

Comparing Boys and Girls Engaged in Physical Activities

Boys	Girls
High levels of physical activity	May also have high levels of activity
Likely to have a sport-centred focus in life	May also be interested in sports
Engage in physical activity to relieve stress	
Possess an internal drive to accomplish a goal	
If they want to be active, they will be	

*differences and similarities mentioned

Positive Influences on Exercise Behaviour

- Self-motivated to exercise, enjoys sport and competition
- Mother and Father – involvement in sports with her, facilitative roles, role modelling
- Sister – role modelling of sport, involvement in sport with her

Culture

- Fijian Indian, speaks Fijian Hindi
- Rich in traditions, values
- Must preserve (unidentified) traditions
- Dietary Practices similar to those from India
- More freedom in Canada; Canada fosters individualism
- Boys (her cousin) – given more freedom, can stay out late
- Girls (herself) – parents are worried about her safety

* Priya indicated that her parents are conservative in many aspects, but liberal with respect to marriage: they do not want her to have an arranged marriage; they want her to choose her life partner

Value Systems

- Importance of religion and prayer; Hinduism
- Respecting elders
- Honesty
- Resist temptations of materialism in Canada; perpetuate the simple (Fijian Indian) life

4.2 Themes across Participants: The Focus Group

The focus group took place at the beginning of April in one of the participants' homes. Of the six girls whom I had interviewed, only four were able to attend: Priya, Ramya, Nandini and Sheila. Samantha and Vidya could not attend due to school-commitments and exam preparation, respectively. The meeting was originally scheduled for an hour, but because the four girls who attended were friends, our 'focussed' discussion was combined with numerous side-stories, plenty of laughter and lasted an hour and a half. It was, however, a very productive and honest discussion of physical activity and culture and led to interesting findings that are outlined below.

The focus group served to validate major themes (see Table 1) that emerged from the interviews and allowed me to share my preliminary analyses with the participants; thus, outlining the progression of the focus group lends well to this discussion of major themes and sub-themes that emerged across participants. Whenever appropriate, I have supplemented the discussion from the focus group with quotes from individual interviews, especially those voiced by Samantha and Vidya who were absent from the group discussion. The first section entitled *Impressions of Physical Education Classes* will be used as a platform to introduce the participants and their affinity to physical activities and also alludes to perceived gender roles that will be discussed further in section

4.21 Impressions of Physical Education Classes

Within the interviews, all of the girls indicated that they enjoyed PE classes for several reasons – they enjoyed certain activities within the curriculum, the social aspects of playing games with their friends, and welcomed the break from more “academic” classes. In the focus group, Ramya suggested that she was more active as a result of being in a PE class with her friends: “*Being with your friends allows you to be more active than when you are without your*

friends, because you know them. If you play a sport that you like, it is more fun if you have your friends with you.”

Priya indicated that she liked her PE classes because enrolment was restricted to girls. The dialogue below illustrates Priya’s view and also demonstrates the fluid nature of the focus group conversation, specifically how the girls contributed to each other’s ideas. Not surprisingly, Sheila was the most reserved one in the group and usually participated with head nods or smiles not captured within the transcript. The following example also alludes to another theme that will be discussed within the next section, perceived differences between how males and females participate in physical activities.

Priya: I liked my [PE] classes because it was just girls.

Interviewer: Why did you like it being just girls?

Priya: You know how girls are!

Interviewer: Tell me....

Priya: We support each other, and when guys are there, we’re like...

Nandini: [Girls are] More open I think.

Priya: Yes, more open with girls.

Nandini: If there were guys in the class, they wouldn’t be that active!

Interviewer: Why is that?

Priya: Guys hog the ball.

Nandini: That too! And that discourages you from playing.

Priya: Sometimes they play a little rough, and girls are like... “Don’t hurt me!”

Ramya: Sometimes I think that females feel inferior to men.

Nandini: When it comes to sports...

Ramya: Yeah, when it comes to sports.

As we continued to discuss the curriculum from physical education classes, I asked if there were any aspects of PE that they did not enjoy. During the individual interview, Sheila had indicated that she enjoyed all aspects of the class; she stood by this during the focus group. In response to my question about elements of PE classes that were not enjoyable, Priya, Nandini and Ramya simultaneously referred to the two-kilometre run – an activity commonly used in PE classes to gauge students’ fitness levels against a standard. Sheila disagreed with the three others and said, *“I love doing it! It is awesome! ... I like running!”* I probed further to identify what exactly about the two-kilometre run distressed the other girls, and they eventually agreed that it really wasn’t that physically strenuous (as they had exaggerated), and certainly did not affect

their overall enjoyment of physical education classes. If anything, they would revise the standardized marking scheme associated with the two-kilometre run and other PE tests:

Interviewer: Do you think you would enjoy PE class more if you had more choice in what you were doing and how it was being evaluated?

Priya: Maybe how it was evaluated.

Nandini: But then I really enjoyed PE class

Sheila: I did too.

Priya: It was still fun. It's just the marking thing, other than that, it was fun.

Ramya: But then if you compare PE to like, other classes, you get marked on things you wish you wouldn't get marked on, like tests, so it is pretty much the same.

Nandini: It is still a class.

Overall, the girls agreed that fitness tests like the two-kilometre run were necessary in physical education because it was a class and all students had to be graded one way or another.

4.22 Importance of Physical Activity

All of the participants during the individual interviews and focus group were in agreement that it is important to be physically active and cited various reasons. In the focus group, I challenged everyone as a collective to generate a list of five reasons that speak to the importance of physical activity in their lives and the conversation transpired as follows:

Interviewer: So all of you think that it is important to be physically active. Can you think of five different reasons for you to be active? The importance of activity?

Sheila: Health.

Nandini: Obviously your health, right?

Ramya: As I mentioned in the interview, it can help you to be mentally and physically strong.

Nandini: Makes you feel good.

...

Sheila: You can have fun doing it too.

Ramya: It can create bonds too, bonds with people

Nandini: You feel good if you were able to do that.

(laughter)

Nandini: When you exercise, you look good, and when you look good, you feel good.

...

Priya: You feel more energized, if you don't [exercise] you feel lazy.

Ramya: Not only that, say you guys play soccer with your cousins, or I play soccer with my cousins, it makes your like relationship stronger.

Nandini: Stronger.

Interviewer: Ok, so you've got a couple of things here, health, mental and physical strength, you feel good, it's fun, it'll energize you, various social reasons, to look good. Which of those things do you think is THE most important?

All: health.

The list above did not include a major theme that was mentioned in almost all of the interviews – the importance of physical activity to prevent injury and illness. I troubled the absence of this

theme within the focus group in order to enhance my understanding of the participants' views. I was also intrigued that seemingly healthy teenaged girls were so concerned with potential illness or injury:

Interviewer: [During the Interview,] why do you think that injury was the first thing that came to mind when I asked, "How is physical activity connected to health?"

Nandini: I didn't say that.

Interviewer: But a lot of you thought of injury first... It'll keep you from deteriorating; it'll keep you from getting sick...

Ramya: Because I think that motivates us to be healthy or exercise or engage in physical activity. We don't want to end up like that in the future.

Interviewer: And you think that is a very real scare or concern ...?

Ramya: I think it is realistic.

Nandini: I do too.

Interviewer: Do you think that is always the case?

Priya: No, I think some people just love to exercise because they have fun.

Nandini: Some people just do it because they want to feel healthier.

Ramya: Sometimes it is just a habit for them, it's just part of the way they live, their lifestyle.

Interviewer: Ok, then do you think, when you guys were telling me that injury prevention was really important and the first thing that came to mind, do you think that is because that is how it is for YOU or...do you think that people were thinking about those close to them? Were people worried that *they* were going to get injured, or were they thinking of grandparents, parents...

Nandini: A little bit of both.

Ramya: I really think that family puts a lot of influence on how we live our lives. Especially when it comes to exercise, or uncle or aunts or whatever. Having problems that are physical, heart attacks or whatever, I think that makes us realize that if we don't...

Nandini: If we don't do something about it now, we're going to end up like that.

Interviewer: So do you all know someone personally who has been injured or needs to be physically active because they are sick in some way?

All: Yeah.

Priya: Could be passed on, right, say, if our grandparents have something, it could be passed on.

Interviewer: Like what?

Priya: High blood pressure, diabetes...

Nandini: I think half of our family has high blood pressure.

Ramya: And these can be passed on, right? So....we don't want that.

Overall, the girls are aware of multiple benefits of physical activity – social benefits, physical benefits, mental benefits, as well as the possibility of personal enjoyment via exercise. Although many of the interviewees had stressed the importance of injury and illness prevention within the individual interviews, it is significant that this did not come up in the focus group discussion until I had addressed it. This indicates that although the girls are aware of some physical benefits of exercise (offsetting potential diseased states), they also give attention and importance to other motivators including enjoyment of activity, the calming or energizing effect of activity, and the opportunities for social interaction via sport or exercise.

4.23 Comparing Boys and Girls Engaged in Physical Activities

The second section of the individual interviews and subsequent focus group concerned similarities and differences between how boys and girls participate in physical activities. Although I attempted to begin the discussion with *similarities* between the ways that both sexes engage in exercise, each interviewee first stated differences. Within the focus group context, I challenged this dependence on differential schemes for exercise based on sex:

Interviewer: Why do you think that the first thing that came to your mind was how males and females are **different** rather than similar?

Sheila: It is easier to find differences because there are so many of them!

Ramya: I think that it is because we are two different genders, we think differently. Females look at physical activity from a different aspect, and males look at it from a different aspect too.

Interviewer: Ok, what do you mean by a 'different' aspect?

Ramya: Well, males they're like, more into like, "oh, I want to be tough, I want to be strong," and women are like...

Priya: [Men] are into their muscles, while women are more into losing weight.

Nandini: I think, yeah...

Ramya: Losing weight, looking good, being attractive....I'm not saying, I'm not generalizing. I'm not saying that every woman is doing that, but...

Priya: There's some women that tone up and stuff...

Throughout this section of the discussion, the girls wanted to be clear that there were variations *within* girls and boys in how they participated, but more striking differences *between* girls and boys in why they engaged in physical activities. The girls believed that males wanted to sculpt muscular bodies and become stronger while women wanted to maintain slim bodies by losing weight; if women were to lift weights, they were trying to "tone up" rather than build muscles. Vidya also suggested this focus on prescribed body types for males and females in her interview. She explained that boys and girls are influenced by music videos – boys want to be buff to attract girls while girls want to be thin to attract boys. In order to stimulate a discussion and generate some examples, I presented my findings of *differences* between male and female activity patterns from the interviews and asked if anyone had other ideas to contribute to the list. The dominant themes of difference that arose from the interviews were that males (in general) were more aggressive, more competitive, and needed to win while girls (in general) wanted to enjoy the game or sport. In the focus group, Ramya agreed that these differences were pervasive in PE and

offered an example of how some differences manifested while choosing teams in her co-educational gym class:

Ramya: When we were in PE, we used to have captains for each team, and there would be a line of us, and they'd pick which ones they wanted. First [male captains would] pick all the guys, then they would go pick the girls, because the guys would be the ones to win on their team.

Interviewer: And if a girl was a captain, who would she choose first?

Ramya: She would probably choose her friends

Interviewer: Ok, so then is that a similarity or a difference? Boys choosing boys and girls choosing girls?

Ramya: Well, she wouldn't only choose her friends; she'd choose the guys too. I think she would even it out.

Priya: Guys choose [guys] who are better at playing the sport, and girls...

Nandini: Girls don't care as much. They don't care as much. They want their friends on their team.

Priya: Guys are more competitive. And girls are like, hey, we're going to have fun. We're not going to cry if we lose.

Interviewer: Ok, so then a girl might choose another girl on their team, even if they don't think she would help them win.

Nandini: Yes. The fact that they'd be playing together would make it fun.

Priya, Ramya: Yeah

Ramya had the perception that girls in her gym classes would try and create teams with their friends even if they were poorly skilled in the game in order to ensure an enjoyable match. In contrast, she perceived boys to be "*egoistic when they are playing on co-ed teams*" and motivated to play for the sole purpose of winning. Priya and Nandini agreed with Ramya (Sheila abstained from commenting) and suggested that merely playing with your friends would make an activity enjoyable regardless of the outcome.

While the girls effortlessly generated differences between boys and girls engaged in physical activity, it was challenging for them to think of similarities. When asked if they thought it was harder to come up with similarities between sexes in a physical activity context, Nandini and Ramya emphatically agreed, but they were also capable of provoking a thoughtful discussion with the rest of the group.

Interviewer: ... if you had to come up with [similarities] right now, what would they be?

Nandini: I think it would be for fun...

Ramya: They both kind of do it in a way to look good. Girls want to do it to tone up their body, guys want to do it to have muscles bigger, so they can attract girls better.

...

Nandini: For themselves.

Ramya: And with looking good, it builds their confidence too. I think that is another similarity

Within a short period of time, Ramya and Nandini had identified four motivators of physical activity common to males and females –both genders participate in physical activities to have fun, to alter their appearances, for self satisfaction, and to build their confidence by meeting their ideal physiques. Similarities between the two sexes with respect to PA behaviour that emerged from individual interviews included the drive and general enjoyment of play, opportunities for social interaction – girls and boys will play if their friends want to play, and personal choice – the interviewees felt that each person actively chooses whether or not to participate regardless of their sex.

4.24 Positive Influences on Exercise Behaviour

In the focus group, we discussed how friends and peers could positively influence one's PA patterns. I encouraged the girls to think of someone in their life who had positively impacted their participation in PA and exercise. With this person in mind, I challenged them to identify characteristics about them that distinguished them from others in their life. Ramya talked about her brother as her role-model for exercise, *"I think the fact that for me, my brother is physically active, like he's got his own soccer team and everything. And because he is so active, when we were growing up, we've always played sports and all that."* Nandini referred to a friend of hers from school who would motivate her to exercise by verbally encouraging her and by joining her in a given activity: *"I guess in a way, my friend, she...if there is something to go to, and I don't want to, she'll get me going...I have someone to do it with and they're also like, 'You can do it, [Nandini].'"* Priya agreed with Nandini and added, *"It's just good to have a person to go with, cause you just have fun with them."*

Ramya suggested that her brother's knowledge of sport and patience in teaching her sport skills and rules contributed to her positive outlook on exercise participation. She noted that whenever you play a sport with someone who is proficient in it, *"it is also a learning experience."*

If you don't know how to play a sport properly [and] the other person that you are playing with knows how to, they can teach you." In Sheila's family, she is the oldest child with one younger brother who plays baseball. Just as Ramya's brother helped her to improve her sport-specific skills, Sheila talked about assisting her brother with his baseball training: *"I guess my brother might influence me a little bit, because he needs somebody to practice with, so I'll be the one to practice with him."* Although the other girls teased her that she was actually being taught how to play by her younger brother, I was led to believe that Sheila is indeed a source of knowledge and support for her younger brother because she was firm that she *chooses* to practice with him, and also cited this baseball example in the previously conducted personal interview.

The final mechanism presented through which friends and peers influenced the participants' physical activity patterns was through external rewards and recognition. Nandini indicated that while running the two-kilometre run in gym class, it may be motivational to have someone *"give you something after you finish."* Sheila considered Nandini's response and added, *"Sometimes other peoples' marks might motivate you. Like I look at...we had a PE block and there were grade 12s and stuff, and they would get like, extremely high times for the 2K and their times would motivate me to run faster."* Nandini explained that her desire for competition versus older students helped her to run the two-kilometres faster, thus achieving a higher grade for that section.

4.25 Influence of the Media on Physiques

Immediately following the discussion of positive influences on activity patterns, I introduced the topic of self-worth and one's sense of self and asked if one's level of fitness or athleticism could change the way that someone perceived himself or herself. At first, the girls presented hypothetical scenarios where one's fitness may be linked to self-worth. Ramya suggested that someone may believe that by exercising more, they could effect positive changes

in their appearance: *"People can be like, 'I don't think I look that great. If I work harder, I'll look better'"*. Priya countered that someone may be pleased with their appearance even if they did not fit into the societal norm: *"They can be really happy about themselves, cause they're different."* Ramya considered this view and modified her original statement to include two extremes, *"If they looked good and that kind of thing, they'd probably be like, conceited, right? And if they felt like, 'Oh, I'm too fat, I'm too this, I'm too that,' then they would be insecure."*

Rather than focus on specific levels of fitness or athletic skills, as alluded to above, the conversation routed to a discussion of one particular product of fitness – changes in physical appearance. This shift to physical appearance was accompanied by the introduction of a new theme, the role of the media on body image. Priya was critical of this particular source of social norms and hypothesized that it preferentially affected females: *"I think the media has a lot to do with this. Like the models and all that stuff, how other girls want to look like them."* Ramya was uncomfortable with Priya's emphasis on girls but had to agree that popular culture was influential and favoured females. Ramya articulated her view of the media's influence as follows, *"I don't think [the media] influences all of them, all females, but there's some that will see a movie and be like, 'Angelina Jolie, she's got the curves!' And they'll want to be like her. And there's other girls who are totally comfortable with what they look like, and they don't care. They don't want to be a stupid model, they'd rather be average."*

As the moderator, I wondered whether the focus group participants considered male perspectives with respect to the media. I lured Nandini into the discussion but was unsuccessful in sparking Sheila's interest and did not want to single her out.

Interviewer: A lot of you [in the interviews] talked about different forms of media affecting girls in particular. Do you think it affects boys?

Nandini: I don't think it does

Interviewer: Why?

Nandini: Just because they don't.

Ramya: I think girls are supposed to do things in certain ways.

Nandini: Yeah, I think girls have a more specific way of looking.

Priya: Girls get hurt easily, they're very sensitive. And guys are, they...either they [don't care], or they're good at hiding it.

Ramya: If you think about it, the family always pressures the guys to be more of the, "man of the house" and the girls are the women who cook and clean...

Priya: Girls have a different side

Interviewer: If girls are taught to cook and clean, why is it important for them to be slim?

Ramya: I just think that within our culture...

Nandini: Being thin, and whatever, looking presentable...

Ramya: I guess some people see it as kind of more...Western.

Nandini, Ramya and Priya seemed to agree that the influence of the media was more powerful on girls than on boys because girls were allegedly more vulnerable (or sensitive) to ("*Western*") societal norms for being thin and "*presentable*". There was incongruence between Ramya's interpretation of the physical ideal for women and women's role in the family. It was unclear why women who are pressured to be skilled in domestic duties should necessarily be thin. When I troubled this discrepancy in the focus group, both Nandini and Ramya were unable to make sense of it and Ramya simply said that it was a "*Western*" ideal. This discrepancy may exist because the pressures to be skilled in the home come from their Indian upbringing, while the pressures to be thin come from their exposure to North American media.

The role of the media on body image and physical habits also appeared in the personal interviews with Samantha and Vidya. As previously mentioned, Samantha believed that media could have both positive (relay health information) and negative (eating disorders) influence on one's physique and health, and Vidya believed that boys and girls were *both* vulnerable to messages on attire and physique from music videos.

4.26 Parental Influence on Physical Activities

Since the interviews had teased out various ways that parents may influence their daughters' physical activity habits, in the third section of the focus group, I summarized the main findings and presented two scenarios. When interviewed, all of the participants had indicated that their parents were physically active in their childhood, and most were continuing to be active throughout adulthood. Vidya and Samantha, who were absent from the focus group, had previously indicated that their parents were their most important sources of physical activity

information and encouraged them to play outside. Vidya's and Samantha's parents served as their respective role models for physical activity by engaging in activity themselves. During the interviews, Ramya, Priya, Nandini and Sheila instead referred to siblings as most influential on their previous and current physical activity patterns. Ramya, Nandini and Sheila talked about their brothers while Priya talked about her sister. Irrespective of the extent of their influence, all participants shared information to indicate that their parents served as a source of social support through encouragement (e.g. verbal affirmations), facilitation (e.g. buying or access to sports equipment) and involvement (engaging in activity with them, at least during the summer holidays).

During the focus group, I asked the girls, "*If your parents had never been involved [in] or been exposed to [physical] activities, would this have made any impact on the way that you had joined activities?*" All four participants did not think that this would have impacted their PA patterns because they were raised in Canada, which meant that they would have been exposed to exercise by virtue of living here and taking PE classes in school. Ramya thought that her parents would be supportive of her activities regardless of their own (lack of) exposure because "*part of being a parent is to support your children.*"

As a side note, Priya and Nandini also believed that their parents were naturally more active at their age than they are at the present time, simply due to their living circumstances:

Priya: But they worked so much, that they got all the physical activity.

Nandini: They walked like uphill, barefoot to school

Priya: Their school was such a distance from their house, nowadays...like my school is right across the house.

Nandini: And we'd get a ride.

Priya: They used to walk [in] bare feet....

Sheila had trouble relating to these statements, because her parents essentially grew up in Canada, though they were born in Fiji.

4.27 Indian Culture and Value Systems

The final section of the interview and focus group concerned how the participants were raised as girls from the Indian diaspora living in Canada. In the interviews, all of the participants felt that prayer was a cornerstone of Indian culture. When asked to describe their culture within their interviews, Samantha, Sheila, Nandini, Ramya and Priya identified as Hindu and referred to various behavioural guidelines related to Hinduism including dietary practices (refrain from eating meat on auspicious days), celebrating festivals for specific deities, and regular prayer either in their homes or in temples. Vidya did not associate a specific religion with Indian culture because of her upbringing in a Hindu-Christian household. Although she believed that worship and prayer formed the foundation of her culture, she used the phrase, *"staying close to our spiritual self"* to characterize Indian culture in lieu of identifying a specific religion.

The girls in the focus group described Indian culture using the following words and phrases: strict, religious, accepting of other cultures or religions (Priya claimed, *"You don't need to come into our culture and be baptized. You can come into our religion and [belong to] another, you know"*), and finally, family-centred. The girls felt that Indian culture was rich in traditions and Ramya offered, *"Not only our traditions, I think our parents influence us here. And our relatives ..."* and Priya added, *"just how they raised us, like the discipline, and our teachings, you know it because it was how you were raised."* Sheila offered the term, "brown" as a cultural descriptor in both the interview and focus group, and while the other girls admitted to having used it in the past to describe themselves, they reasoned that it might be location-specific and not the best term for their background outside of Canada:

Ramya: I was talking to one of my friends from Houston [Texas] and said, "We're brown" and his Mexican friends were like, "But I'm brown!" and they were talking about their skin colour and I was referring to my background ... the Indian background.

...

Priya: It's just a way, it's just slang.

Sheila: It's slang, yeah. That's why if you go to Houston or whatever, it is not as applicable there.

Nandini: Yeah. They don't get it.

...

Nandini: No but like, if you go to Edmonton and somebody asks you, "what are you" and you say you're brown, they know what you are talking about, right?
Priya: It's Canadian. We're brown.

More important than how they described their culture, I was interested in what it meant for them to belong to Indian culture and whether or not this was a significant part of them. All of the girls agreed with Priya's claim of cultural affinity: "*I'm a proud Brown person.*" Ramya felt that her culture helped to shape her personality and character and Nandini tied this into religious practices and value systems.

Ramya: Personality is connected to culture, background...

Nandini: There are so many things that go into being brown, like our language, culture.

Ramya: Religion.

Nandini: Religion kinda helps mold who you are in a way, cause [of] your values ...

Priya, Ramya and Nandini later indicated that they maintained this cultural connection by spending time with family, going to prayer-sessions and attending religious ceremonies. Having established their impressions and affinity for Indian culture, I wondered how they portrayed it or how it was interpreted by their friends who were outsiders (all of the girls indicated that they had some friends outside of the Indian diaspora). The conversation began with negative aspects of their culture like strict rules and negative impressions of arranged marriages and shifted to positive (but superficial) aspects including traditional attire, music and movies.

Interviewer: What do [your friends] know about this part of you, if it is so significant in who you are?

Sheila: The brown part?

Interviewer: Yes.

Sheila: Ok, some of my friends, well, my white friends, they go out, and they're allowed to go out a lot, so when I can't go, they realize it is because I'm brown.

Ramya: Sometimes they're not accepting of it, they'd be like, "Oh, how can your parents are so lame..."

Priya: Like arranged marriages, none of them would have that.

...

Nandini: Yeah, they hear about all of that stuff, they're just like...

Ramya: The dowry and everything....

Interviewer: It sounds like they know about a....

Ramya: Lot of negative things.

...

Priya: And our clothing.

Nandini: Yeah, our clothing....that's a good thing! They love our clothing.

...

Nandini: Well, they know about the positives, like the clothes and stuff, right? Clothes, jewellery.

Ramya: Henna.

Sheila: What about music? They like our music too.

...

Sheila: And in the movies, right? They like the guys that are in the movies!

Ramya: Yeah, they actually think that Indian guys are attractive.

Nandini: Yeah, like Shah Rukh Khan.

Ramya: They actually are very appreciative of our culture.

Sheila: Yeah.

Ramya: They are very accepting.

The dissonance between the descriptors of Indian culture that the girls had generated and their impressions of outsider perspectives was surprising. Not once was prayer, religion, festivals, language or values mentioned. When I pointed this out, Nandini answered, "*Well our friends also know about the prayers and the language and the food and all that...*" as if it was obvious, and Ramya voiced a "yeah" in agreement. Sheila and Priya had nothing else to add, and so this incongruence was not explored any further.

Our next topic of conversation was the concept of "community". During the interviews, the three participants who were born in Canada: Sheila, Nandini and Priya did not understand what I was referring to when I asked them about their "community," while those born elsewhere, Samantha (India), Vidya (Oman), and Ramya (Fiji) referred to individuals who participated in Indian cultural activities as members of their community. In the focus group I asked the girls for their thoughts on why questions related to community may have been challenging for those born in Canada. The excerpt below illustrates how the girls worked through their ideas:

Interviewer: Why do you think it was harder for those born in Canada to identify a community?

Nandini: Because for us our community is not only the Indian culture.

...

Nandini: I think for us, it doesn't have to be just people who are a part of the Indian culture to be part of our community, because people who are our friends and our family, just people who we come into contact with everyday can be part of our community.

Interviewer: Ok, anything else to add to that Sheila? Any ideas?

(silence)

Ramya: She's looking at you to answer!

Sheila: I don't know still!

Ramya: Can I ask a question?

Interviewer: Sure.

Ramya: Was it because you grew up here and you didn't experience...

Priya: I think people who came from India were looking for a community, looking for people that they could relate to and be in that part of their community. But for us, because we were born here, we already felt like we were part of the community. So whoever we came in contact with *was* our community.

Sheila: I still don't know!

Ramya: For me, I wasn't born here, in Canada, but when I came here I was only like a baby, so....I don't know. When you say that people are looking for people to relate to, I don't know how my situation is with that, because I wasn't looking for people to relate to.

Nandini: Well, you were a baby, your parents found them, because you couldn't!

Ramya: Well, [perhaps]. When I went to school, I didn't know anyone. Like even in pre-school, I wanted to relate to someone, and the first friend that I had was Indian.

Nandini: You kind of look for people with similarities.

Ramya: So it is easier for you to communicate with them.

The sense of belonging that Ramya felt with her Indian friend in pre-school corresponds with Vidya's and Samantha's descriptions of their families seeking out Indian communities upon arriving in Canada. Vidya described her family's sense of belonging within an Indian community in the following quote: "*When we came to Canada, we felt sort of estranged from the [Indian] community, so we set out to join it and we met with the Sai Centre people.*" Nandini and Priya agreed that their communities were more broad-based and not exclusive to Indians because they were born in Canada. They considered anyone who they were in regular contact with as members of their community, thus when I asked them questions about their community immediately following a discussion of culture and values, they had trouble articulating their thoughts. Sheila refrained from taking a position and insisted that she still had no thoughts on the term "community," and this was likely due to a combination of factors. Sheila was the youngest participant and may not have spent as much time critically thinking about her culture. She was also naturally shy and conservative with voicing her opinions throughout the interview and focus group. I was also led to believe that because her parents grew up in Canada, Sheila might not have been exposed to Indian culture to the extent that the other girls had been. Sheila depicted her parents as more "liberal" and "modern" and less connected to the Indian community in comparison to the other girls' parents. For example, Sheila claimed, "*I would be allowed to go [play physical activities] with guy friends!*" while the other girls indicated that their parents would not be pleased with this; she thought that her parents raised her and her brother with the same set of rules, while the other girls in the focus group insisted that males and females were raised differently in their culture; finally, when the girls were talking about belonging to the Hindu subset within the Indian culture, Ramya said, "*we are expected to know prayers*" to which Sheila replied, "*I'm not!*". It was only after Nandini pointed out, "*Because we went to Balvikas*"

that Sheila considered this and agreed, “*Yeah. We went to Balvikas.*” Balvikas is another name for the Educational Classes at the Sai Centre.

The last topic of the focus group was values associated with Indian culture and how this translates to the way that males and females are raised. When interviewed, all six participants highlighted ‘respecting elders’ as a value characteristic of the Indian culture. Within the focus group, the girls also emphasized respect for elders and indicated that being honest and polite was important. Just before wrapping up the group discussion, I asked if there was anything else valued within the Indian culture and Priya mentioned, “*Cooking and cleaning.*” I was intrigued by this suggestion, because earlier in the discussion, the girls had indicated that being skilled in domestic duties was valued for daughters but not necessarily for sons. My follow-up question sought clarification for this:

Interviewer: So domestic duties are important. Is this for males and females?

All: No!

Ramya: I think when my brother was younger, when I was a little kid, he was forced to like, vacuum and take out the garbage, and I think that is all he did around the house. But as I grew up, I was asked to vacuum, wash the dishes, do the laundry, start learning how to cook, making roti or whatever. And on top of that, you have to do well in school. If you don’t do well in school, they’ll lecture you and take away your freedom. Like, as much as we have.

Nandini: The little that we have, they’d take it away!

Priya: Yeah

All four participants made it clear by responding “no” in unison that taking care of domestic duties was more important for females than it was for males in Indian culture. Ramya explained that she and her brother had both been given responsibilities around the house when they were younger, but as they got older, the brunt of household labour fell upon her. She also alluded to two other areas – the importance of academics and the concept of freedom – that were not explored but readily accepted by Nandini and Priya. Because of the stream of thought that led to these two areas, I was led to believe that not doing well in school *and* not fulfilling one’s domestic duties may lead to the same punishment, having one’s freedom “taken away”. In any case, it was clear that at least three of the four participants (Nandini, Ramya and Priya) felt that their parents’ expectations of them were unreasonable but also that they had very little to “lose”

since their sense of freedom was limited to begin with. Dialogue that took place earlier in the focus group supports this view that females and males face different challenges and that limited freedom is provided for females within the Indian culture:

Interviewer: Do you think it makes a difference that you are female? Have your parents raised you any differently because you're female?

Ramya: I think in our culture it does

Priya: Yeah

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Ramya: There is more pressure on us...

Priya: They're very overprotective of females

Nandini: Until we're more experienced.

...

Priya: Boys get more freedom, get to go out and stuff...but what are we supposed to do in our house?

Ramya: If you want to like go out with your friends....

Priya: They're more strict on girls

Ramya: Yeah, like go to the movies...and my mom's like, "Oh no, you can't, you've got other things to do." And I'm like, "My brother can, why can't I go out?"

Priya: "Because he's a guy!"

Ramya: Yeah, exactly. "He's a boy"...

All: "There's a difference!"

It was clear that when the participants simultaneously said, "*There's a difference*," this was an argument that they had all heard from their parents or relatives to justify why their male counterparts were permitted to do something that they (as females) were not. Distinct gender roles had evidently been created within their families overtime, and they struggled to understand why their parents were *over*protective of them. I asked the girls why they thought males and females were raised differently, and Ramya took the lead to answer:

Ramya: I think as females we are trained to be mothers

Interviewer: And do you all feel that way?

Sheila: Yeah

Interviewer: Oh, so is that different from how your brother is raised then?

Sheila: Well, obviously he is not trained to be a mother. He's also little though...

Ramya: I think your parents aren't instilling those values in him yet....

Sheila: Yeah, I never had to cook [or do] anything when I was 5, 8, 9 [years old]

Although Sheila had previously stated that her brother was raised the same as she was raised, it was only at the very end of the focus group that she realized that her parents did indeed treat her and her brother differently. As shown above, Sheila was the only member of the focus group to explicitly agree with Ramya when she said, "*As females we are trained to be mothers*." As future mothers it was implied that they were to learn how to cook (Indian food), clean and take care of

the household. Ramya reasoned with Sheila that because her brother was so much younger than her, it would be a few more years until Sheila could truly observe differences between how she was raised and how her brother was raised. In the end, Sheila consented to the perspective that girls with Indian heritage were groomed to eventually take care of a family. Though not to the same extent as the three others in the focus group, Sheila indicated that she also did chores around her house by later saying, *"oh, like the cleaning and stuff...yeah, not too much, but yeah."*

As a final note, Ramya hypothesized that within Indian culture parents' insistence on domestic duties could compromise one's time and opportunities for physical activity:

Ramya: I don't think as females we are [encouraged] to go out a lot. I think we are supposed to stay home in our culture, and obviously do the domestic duties. I think that people in our culture see that women in our culture that are doing the duties don't have the time to go out and be physically active with other people.

Nandini: And if they have the time, it means that something wasn't done right!
(laughter)

Although Nandini had chimed in at the end and had made a joke that having extra time (for exercise) must indicate that one's chores were not completed properly, none of the focus group participants had previously mentioned their household chores as a barrier to exercise. It is misleading to think that culturally-prescribed chores (for females) was an actual barrier for the participants of this study, however, it is possible that Ramya's hypothesis is a reality for some girls of Indian heritage. In the end, the participants of this study felt that their parents and siblings encouraged and exposed them to physical activities independent of their status as females from the Indian diaspora.

4.3 Discussion: Themes in Relation to Previous Literature

As a result of the semi-structured interview and focus group guides, major themes that emerged within and across participants clustered within five major areas:

- Physical Education and Physical Activity
- Comparing Boys and Girls
- Influence of the Media in 'Shaping' Adolescents
- Importance of Physical Activity and Activity Patterns
- Parents, Culture and Value Systems

Each section will discuss participant's views from the interviews and focus group alongside various bodies of literature in these five areas.

4.3.1 Physical Education and Physical Activity

Participants enjoyed various physical activities including those that were within their high school physical education curriculum. Their motivation to participate and enjoy PE and physical activity converged into one major theme: physical activity as an opportunity for social interactions with friends and family. Smith (1999) supports that "peers contribute to enjoyment of physical activity through recognition of accomplishments, companionship and esteem support" (p.330). Five participants (Sheila, Nandini, Vidya, Ramya and Priya) cited playing with friends (or companionship) as a major source of their motivation to participate and enroll in PE classes. When interacting with their peers and relatives in game situations, all of the girls also felt that their friendships and relationships were strengthened.

Participants indicated that when they were playing sports and games with friends, they were more active and motivated to participate than if their friends were not there. This is consistent with the work of Smith (1999) who explains, "peers are important contributors to motivational processes in the physical domain" (p.344) and also, "friends influence an adolescent's attraction to sports and games, physical exertion, and vigorous exercise" (p.344). Sheila cited an example where a friend of hers had signed both of them up for an intramural

game without her consent. Initially Sheila wasn't interested in participating, but she reconsidered because she always had fun playing with this friend. Sheila took part in the game, and as expected, had a great time. Nandini mentioned trying out for sports teams because her friends wanted to, and not necessarily because she was skilled in the given sport. This theme of playing sport and games as quality time with friends is persistent in physical education and physical activity literature (Smith, 1999; Smith, 2003).

Social interactions and time with friends is accounted for in many theories of exercise motivation including Social Cognitive Theory (friends contribute to one's social environment) and the body of literature within Self Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2002). When applied to physical education, SDT explains that among other variables, one's perception of relatedness to others will predict enjoyment and can influence intrinsic motivation to exercise. In her interview, Ramya shared a story about running the two-kilometre course alongside her friend Alex in PE class. This story provides a good example of how perceptions of relatedness can exert a positive influence on exercise behaviour. Ramya felt a strong sense of relatedness to Alex because they were at similar fitness levels, and they were both outsiders from the dominant culture in PE due to their low competence in running and physically larger bodies. Their shared struggles during the run and words of encouragement passed back and forth empowered each other to complete the test without stopping to walk. Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) explains that Alex was a part of Ramya's environment and positively influenced her thoughts and self-efficacy in running and this in turn enhanced her persistence and exercise behaviour. As all relationships in SCT are reciprocal, one can also see how Ramya's success in completing the test also exerted a positive influence on her thought patterns and Alex and Ramya served as role models for each other. Revisiting the model of activity behaviour proposed by Welk et al., (2003), Ramya's perceived competence in her abilities to finish the two-kilometre course increased as a result of the social support provided by her friend. As well, if Alex is substituted under parental influence,

he provided her with verbal encouragement, role modeling and was involved in the activity with her. Harter's (1988) research on motivated behaviour would also suggest that Alex's positive regard for Ramya increased her perceptions of self-worth and athletic competence, which in turn, influenced her motivation to participate and complete the run.

Other studies have also shown that peer groups via social interactions can enhance participation in physical education and physical activities. Smith (2003) studied peer relationships in physical activity contexts and purported, "it is well established that social agents contribute to the quality of youth physical activity experiences" (p.25). Ma and Zhang (2002) looked at physical activity in and out of school and found that students with a positive sense of belonging to the school (and by extension PE class) were twice as likely to exercise every day versus their counterparts with a negative sense of belonging. It is clear that the theme of enjoyment of PE due to its inherent opportunities for social interactions with peers is not unique to this study and has been shown in various activity settings.

In addition to enjoyment, all of the participants indicated that playing sports and games helped them to build and strengthen relationships with their immediate and extended families. It soon became clear that they all experienced a strong sense of familism (Unger et al., 2002) as they told me stories about learning how to play sports from family members. Samantha fondly recalled her time in India where she lived in a joint family and had daily opportunities to play games with her cousins and learned how to play games from her grandparents. Sheila spoke about filling her summer holidays with sporting games with her cousins. Nandini and Ramya idolized their brothers and explained the central role of their brothers in teaching them sport skills. Vidya described how physical activities provide her with opportunities to bond with her parents – she plays active games with her father and takes long walks with her mother. Priya cited her sister as the major socializing agent that exposed her to the world of soccer (and showed that it was acceptable for females to participate). While previous research has shown that

significant others influence activity patterns (Smith, 2003), it was difficult to find research that supports the phenomenon described here – the influence of physical activity on relationships with significant others. When one considers that Indian cultures are family-centered, it seems natural that this theme emerged within every single interview and also in the focus group. It would be interesting to explore physical activity as a vehicle to strengthen relationships in other cultures high in familism.

Additionally, it is interesting to note that male figures – brothers and fathers – significantly influenced the athletic domains of many participants. As previously mentioned, Nandini and Ramya were taught how to play sports by their older brothers; Sheila also cited engaging in physical activity with her brother, however as the older sibling, she was assisting in his training. Samantha indicated that her father was her primary source of verbal encouragement. Priya explained that now that her older sister is married and has moved out of the house, her father is the one that motivates her by running with her or playing games with her. Finally, Vidya pointed to her father as the major influence on her fitness level by engaging in vigorous physical activities with her. While mothers and sisters also influenced participants' physical activity patterns, it was clear that the primary influence was afforded to male figures.

4.32 Comparing Boys and Girls

As a result of their diverse experiences in physical activities with males and females at home, it is not surprising that some of the participants also distinguished between playing games with males and females at school. Priya indicated that she particularly enjoyed PE because enrollment was restricted to girls. On special days where boys and girls classes were combined, Priya explained that she did not enjoy PE as much because the boys took ownership of the sports equipment, were more aggressive, and commanded the games so much that many of the girls were forced into auxiliary roles. Students' preference for same sex instead of co-educational PE

classes has been shown in previous studies (McKenzie, Prochaska, Sallis & LaMaster, 2004). Findings that support girls' preference for all-girls classes posit that such classes can provide learning environments supportive of building motor and sports skills. In contrast, combined boys and girls classes generally spend more time in game-play, which places less-skilled individuals (usually girls) at disadvantaged positions. Lenskyj (1995) explains that there is "extensive research evidence to show that the majority of girls and women rank the fun and friendship outcomes of physical activity more highly than competition and winning, which are the dominant values among boys and men" (p.223). McKenzie et al. (2004) suggested, "some educational needs of adolescent girls might be better addressed in girls-only physical education" (p.448), and concluded, "teachers should help ensure that physical education lesson context and instruction strategies are designed to address the physical activity, skill, and emotional needs of boys and girls" (p.448).

Priya's assertion that boys were more aggressive than girls in PE and physical activities was shared by all of the participants with the exception of Vidya. Vidya was also the only participant who felt that boys and girls were similar in their exercise practices and was able to generate examples of these similarities. Some of these similarities will be explored in the following section on the role of the media. All other participants had considerable difficulty brainstorming attributes that were common to boys and girls and any examples that were cited gave possession of the attribute to boys ("*boys are aggressive*"; "*boys are competitive*"; "*boys like to win*") while less-definitive language was used to link that attribute with girls ("*girls may also be aggressive*"; "*girls may also be competitive*"; "*girls may also like to win*"). Ramya and Nandini echoed Priya's assertion that boys commanded the games during coeducational classes. This compromised PE experience as a result of male peers has been shown in other studies as a result of males taunting less-skilled peers, and males showing reluctance to pass to female teammates in game situations (Lirgg, 1993). Ramya and Nandini explained in the focus group

that during team games in PE, male captains chose competitive and skilled males first, while female captains chose their friends first in order to foster a fun environment. In accordance to Ramya's and Nandini's views of team selection by boys, Evans (in Evans & Roberts, 1987) found that in boys-only classes, highly skilled boys served as captains or were among the first chosen to play and also commanded the games by dictating who else would play and what positions they would hold. Boys of lower sport abilities were most often put in minor roles. This relates back to Priya's position that girls-only gym classes were more enjoyable for her because only then did she have the opportunity to participate fully in the games and fill important roles.

While the girls consistently used the term "aggressive" to describe the behaviour of males, from their illustrations it is clear that they are referring to what sport psychologists term *assertive* behaviour (Dorsch, Paskevich, & Loughead, 2007) or simply *competitiveness* (Sedgwick, Crocker, 2007). While aggressive behaviours are characterized by the intention to harm another, assertive refers to "those actions that are forceful, vigorous, and legitimate" (Dorsch, Paskevich, & Loughead, 2007, p.158). Sheila offered the only true example of aggressive behaviour in her interview. Sheila described a scenario from PE class where a male student prevented her from a scoring opportunity during ball-hockey by deliberately making physical contact with her instead of going after the ball. This male student's behaviour is clearly aggressive because he intended to hit Sheila. Competitive, rather than aggressive, is a more suitable term to describe the boys in other examples because it "involves how motivated one is toward achievement" (Sedgwick & Crocker, 2007, p.64). In the previous illustration of team selection, it is clear that male captains in Nandini and Ramya's PE classes were fostering a competitive environment, while female captains were instead fostering a friendly and cooperative environment. This distinction in sporting climates promoted by males and females is not surprising as Gill and Deeter (1988) found males to score higher than females on competitiveness, win-orientation and goal-orientation. It must also be noted that Priya disliked

coeducational classes because of differences in game disposition between her and her male peers, however, Ramya *preferred* to play with boys because her win-orientation and competitive nature was better suited to the sporting behaviours and style of play typical of her male peers. Overall, most of the participants felt that it was easier to contrast physical activity behaviours of males and females than make comparisons between them because personality traits (e.g. assertiveness, competitiveness, win-orientation) were exacerbated in sporting arenas.

4.33 Influence of the Media in 'Shaping' Adolescents

In addition to social opportunities and peer influences previously mentioned, a theme that persisted in our discussions of physical activity was the role of the media in 'shaping' the body. As mentioned earlier, Vidya was the only participant to provide similarities between boys and girls activity behaviours. Vidya thoughtfully suggested that males and females are equally impressionable to images of "ideal" bodies in popular media. She felt that boys and girls were willing to alter their appearances to match those modeled by celebrities in order to attract one another. Boys were most often building their muscles to appear tough and strong while females were engaging in physical activity and dietary practices to achieve slender bodies. In Ramya's interview, she did not specifically point to the influence of media, but supported Vidya that girls appeared "*fragile*" (her synonym for thin, slim) in hopes of attracting boys. Samantha agreed that girls strived towards thinness and suggested that this was sometimes at the expense of their health and resulted in disordered eating patterns. In support of Vidya, Ramya and Samantha, Fouts and Burggraf (1999) provide evidence from television sit-coms that "young viewers not only observe the modeling of thin female characters, but also observe their success in receiving positive comments from males" (p. 479). This sends the message to girls, especially during the vulnerable years of adolescence, that being thinner is more socially accepted, and males desire thin bodies. This phenomenon of females disciplining their bodies to please others is explained

by Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). This theory “posits that girls and women are typically acculturated to internalize an observer’s perspective as a primary view of their physical selves [such that] this perspective on self can lead to habitual body monitoring” (p.173) through various mechanisms including diet and exercise. Although adolescents, just as adults, are active agents and may exist and behave independent of social norms, they are bombarded by messages through popular media and must continually negotiate where they “fit” in their immediate social worlds.

Samantha felt that media (magazines, television, radio) influenced girls but did not allude to any effect on boys. In the focus group, Nandini explicitly stated that popular media did *not* influence boys’ appearances because she felt only girls were prescribed a specific way of looking. Priya supported that girls were generally more emotional and sensitive compared to boys, thus more vulnerable to media, while boys either disregarded mainstream messages or else its effects were subtler. Fouts and Burggraf (1999) studied female body images on television and suggested that “compared with the general population, below average central female characters were over-represented in situation comedies; above average weight characters were under-represented” (p. 473). In addition, male characters were placed in positions of power – thinner female characters received more positive comments from males than heavier characters did. Fouts and Burggraf (1999) explained that the message for females was that “the way to elicit approval is by achieving a low weight” (p.478) while the message to males was that “it is acceptable to differentially respond to women according to their body weights, and especially to withhold positive comments from heavier women” (p.478). This supports Nandini’s position that only girls have specified bodies to achieve and Ramya’s position that the effects on males is not as visible because it is linked to power relations instead of outward appearances.

Vidya specifically cited hip-hop videos as a major socializing agent among adolescents and discussed the music-video culture of portraying females as sexy, scantily clad objects and

males as powerful, authoritative figures in baggy clothing. This is an example of machismo (Unger et al., 2002) on television, as women are placed in roles that are subservient to men. Sommers-Flanagan, Sommers-Flanagan and Davis (1993) analyzed music videos for gender role based content and found results in accordance to Vidya's hip-hop example. "Males exhibited significantly more dominant and implicitly aggressive behaviour than females [and] in contrast, females were significantly more likely to engage in implicitly sexual and subservient behaviour" (p. 750). Although they did not explicitly describe the types of bodies that appeared in the videos, "aggressive and dominant" is readily associated with muscularity (strong) while "subservient" can be linked to slimness (weak). It is also not surprising that women in music videos are highly sexualized. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) trouble the objectifying gaze that has infused North American culture and contend that mainstream media "spotlights bodies and body parts and seamlessly align viewers with an implicit sexualizing gaze" (p.176). They provide numerous examples to show that this physique-obsessed portrayal of men and women is not limited to music videos but is also shown in mainstream film, television programming, visual arts, magazines, advertisements and sports photography.

As Vidya stated, previous literature has shown that issues related to body image and media depictions are not limited to females, though they may be perceived as more detrimental to them. Stevens, Gammage and Waddell (2007) explain, "Popular magazines have contributed to the heightened attention afforded the physique. ...The search for the perfect body may go to the extreme and result in serious physical, psychological and social consequences" (p.325). These consequences include disordered eating patterns as cited by Samantha and supported by Stevens et al. (2007). Furthermore, Stevens et al. (2007) discuss pressures in sport and resulting body disciplining practices and assert that females are preferentially affected by a drive for thinness while males are preferentially affected by a drive for muscularity. While their discussion

concerned athletes, these aesthetical pressures do indeed extend to the general population, as Vidya and Sommers-Flanagan et al. (1993) have pointed out.

Although Samantha was critical of the negative messages in popular media (e.g. leading to eating disorders), she pointed out that various forms of media have provided her with inspiration (or motivation) to exercise as well as easy access to health information. Marketers of health information are well aware of the increasing trend for media consumption by youth (Harrison, 2006) and have concentrated efforts on Internet and television campaigns to target this population. Glantz and Mandel (2005) conducted research on tobacco prevention programs and found that North American anti-smoking campaigns that “combined aggressive media with youth-empowerment programs...led to substantial and rapid decreases in youth smoking” (Glantz and Mandel, 2005, p.158). Health Canada has also created national informational campaigns aimed at youth using Internet, television, radio and printed pamphlets. Their website offers easy access to all printed guides including *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* (1997), *Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Youth* (2002), and the most recent addition, *Canada's Guide to Healthy Eating and Physical Activity* (2004) which complements the two previous guides. Health Canada's most successful national campaign for health awareness was ParticipACTION that ran year-round from 1971 – 2000 and extensively used television, radio and print featuring athletes and prominent leaders in Canada (ParticipACTION Project Archives, 2006). Body Break was a series of 90-second television commercials hosted by national athletes, Hal Johnson and Joanne McLeod, and these segments aired from 1989-1991 in partnership with ParticipACTION and continues to run on television today solely under their trademark name (Body Break, n.d.).

Overall, it is apparent that messages received through mass media may have a detrimental effect on adolescents' sense of self and body image (Harrison, 2006; Fouts & Burgraff, 1999); however, one must also consider that adolescents are active agents and may filter through and

glean information that motivates healthy and balanced behaviours (ParticipACTION Project Archives, 2006). Adolescents' levels of self-awareness, knowledge of health and integration into mainstream society are all factors that may impact how they interpret and internalize health information.

4.34 Importance of Physical Activity

Factors that may help adolescents in deciding whether to adopt or reject a given behaviour are individual perceptions of the reliability of information attributed to a source and importance of a given source. What generally distinguishes a reliable health source from that which is unreliable is the author or organization behind the message. While music videos and television sit-coms may fall into the 'unreliable' category, information from family, school and health organizations is often granted more importance. All six participants claimed that it was important for them to be physically active as a part of a healthy lifestyle. They indicated that they had learned this from their parents and that it had been reinforced at school (e.g. in PE class). They also explained that they engaged in physical activities and exercise because it provided opportunities for social interaction, it strengthened relationships with family, energized their bodies and cleared their minds. These themes were consistent throughout the interviews and focus group.

A theme that emerged from the interviews but did not surface in the focus group was the use of physical activity (or exercise) to prevent and/or manage illness. The girls were very low on fatalism (Unger et al., 2002), as they felt that illness could be alleviated even if it was destined to occur (e.g. via genetics). It was clear that the girls were operating under the medicalized model of the body during the interviews because many of them felt that physical activity was necessary to avoid heart attacks, obesity, diabetes, manage day-to-day ailments and boost their immune systems. These views are not surprising when one recognizes that health-

related media produced by the Canadian government operates under the medicalized model, especially since the recent increases in childhood obesity and secondary complications (Public Health Agency, 1999). Kohl and Hobbs (1998) assert that “physical activity is to be encouraged among children and adolescents based largely on the assumption that the behaviour will become part of the person’s life and carry into adulthood, where it will help lower the risk of several chronic diseases as well as of premature mortality” (p.549). When specifically asked in the focus group why so many participants had discussed exercise as a strategy for illness prevention in the interviews, Ramya, Nandini and Priya suggested that it was because members of their family had previously experienced or were currently managing illnesses. The participants were aware that they may be genetically predisposed to some diseased states like high blood pressure and diabetes, but were also conscious that medical research has advocated regular exercise as an effective health management tool. Thus, even though all of the participants indicated that they are physically active for various reasons including enjoyment of games and sports, and even though most of them are presently healthy, they are well aware of the role of exercise in preventative care.

4.35 Physical Activity Patterns

In addition to the influence of physical activity on health status, we discussed general patterns of activity. In terms of exercise frequency, most of the participants indicated that they were more active during the summer holidays because the weather is more conducive to outdoor play and because they had more leisure time. This seasonal change in activity is supported by Kohl and Hobbs (1998) who explain, “seasonal and geographic influences likely play a large role in determining physical activity behaviours” (p.551), especially among adolescents. The National Children and Youth Fitness Survey (Brandt & McGinnis, 1985) showed that physical activity levels were highest in the summer, declined throughout the fall, dropped significantly in

the winter and rose once again during the spring months. This is consistent with the patterns described by the girls.

In terms of participants' physical activity patterns throughout childhood, most of them (Samantha, Nandini, Vidya, Ramya, and Priya) indicated that they were more active when they were younger. This trend of decreasing activity with age is cited in the literature (Kohl & Hobbs, 1998; CFLRI, 2003; Sallis, Prochaska & Taylor, 2000) and is of particular concern among females (Sallis, Prochaska and Taylor, 2000). Among the participants of this study, primary reasons offered for decreasing activity levels with age were increasing scholastic demands, job demands and household demands. Of the three listed above, household demands is likely the barrier most closely linked to the girls' upbringing in Indian culture, though also present in other cultures. When explicitly asked, everyone with the exceptions of Samantha and Vidya denied any connection between culture and activity levels (Samantha and Vidya felt that Indian culture had been conducive to her activities); however, it became apparent in both the interviews and focus group that this was simply not the case. The topic of marriage spontaneously arose within the focus group and all of the girls agreed that as females, they were being prepared for marriage – taught to cook, and given more household chores and less freedom than their male counterparts – and this considerably reduced their leisure time for exercise and play. Farver, Bhadha and Narang (2002) concur that differential role expectancies exist for males and females within traditional Indian societies: "Typically males are permitted greater independence and personal autonomy ... whereas females are fairly restrained" (p. 13). Dasgupta (1998) further supports that "Asian Indian immigrants have transplanted old-world gender ideologies and clearly dichotomized gender roles in their adopted country of residence" (p. 956). Such gender ideologies are manifested from a machismo-centered frame of thought (Unger et al., 2002). Even Sheila who previously suggested that her parents raised her no differently than her younger brother admitted that as a female, she was encouraged to get married in her early twenties while

her brother would likely never be pressured to settle down with a wife. In the end, all of the girls in the focus group felt that they could rise above these restrictive expectancies, though none indicated how they would do so. Presumably, they'd assert their individualism and deal with any barriers to physical activity so long it was a priority for them. All participants felt that they had the ultimate choice in whether to be active irrespective of their parents or chores.

4.36 Parents, Culture and Value Systems

This final section explores intersections of cultural values and activity behaviour among participants of this study. The participants were of varying degrees of exposure and acculturation to Indian and Canadian cultures though they all felt that being Indian was an important part of their identities. Sheila, Nandini, Ramya and Priya self-described their ancestry as Fijian-Indian; Samantha self-described as Asamese (a specific culture in India); and Vidya self-described as Indian. All participants indicated that they were Hindu and Vidya was also identified as Christian. Among the girls that were Fijian-Indian, their grandparents (Ramya) or great-grandparents (Sheila, Nandini, Priya) hailed from India. Each of them explained that some aspects of their culture (food and language) were influenced by Fiji; however, the core traditions, religion and values remained connected to India. These perceptions are echoed by Levinson (1994) who explains, "although there is variation over time and from place to place, Indians maintain extensive ties with India, or more particularly with the homeland region or community" (p.58). Eriksen (2002) explores practices among Fijian Indians and explains that Indian ethnic identity developed in Fiji because indentured labourers "were free to form their own communities after migrating [and] as a result, important cultural practices were retained in their new worlds" (p.83). Dasgupta (1998) studied Indian immigrants in Canada and the United states and indicated that "although immigrants from India have adapted significantly to their environment, they have retained their taste for traditional food, along with their values

concerning home, family, children, religion, and marriage” (p. 956). Therefore the discussions of Indian culture in the interviews and focus groups were interesting to moderate as participants provided an array of perspectives.

In the interviews and focus group, prayer was cited the cornerstone of Indian culture, and the importance of traditional food, language, music and attire were other themes that emerged. Levinson (1994) asserts, “contact with India is also maintained through Indian entertainers and religious leaders” (p.58); the leader common to all participants was Sri Sathya Sai Baba as all of the girls were at one-point members of the Sai Centre. Samantha, Vidya, Ramya and Priya are still active members who attend weekly bhajans and Educational classes. Religious or spiritual centres are clearly important venues for their cultural connections because they don traditional Indian attire, engage in prayer and celebrate Indian festivals at the Sai Centre or else at a temple. Though Sheila and Nandini no longer attend Educational classes, they mentioned that they do visit the Sai Centre with their parents for major festivals like Deepavali and Baba’s Birthday. Dasgupta (1998) explains that such festivals are especially important for adolescents from the Indian diaspora because “cultural celebrations and communal festivals that used to serve as avenues to assuage immigrant nostalgia have now taken on the added purpose of familiarizing the next generation with their Indian heritage and traditions” (p. 954). As Nandini mentioned in the interview, learning about traditions is one of the key ways of showing her parents and family that she is proud of her Indian heritage.

I observed that those who had the strongest affinity for Indian culture, as exhibited by self-directed involvement in cultural events, were born outside of Canada: Samantha, Vidya and Ramya. It is also important to note that Sheila, Nandini and Priya’s parents moved to Canada by age 25 while Samantha, Vidya and Ramya’s parents immigrated only after their children were born and were a minimum of 30 years old. In their interviews, Sheila, Nandini and Priya felt that their parents were similar to other Canadian parents and explained that this was because they

received some level of education in Canada (varying from elementary school to higher learning). It is not surprising that these girls thought their parents were highly familiar with Canadian culture because Grey (1992) explains that "schools are often viewed as important agencies for the assimilation of immigrants and minorities" (p.255). Extending this argument to Samantha and Vidya, it becomes obvious that their time in Canadian schools (two and six years respectively) has been limited compared to the other participants; thus, Samantha and Vidya have the strongest cultural ties to India of all the girls, and both actively sought to join Indian communities when they arrived in Vancouver.

An interesting theme that emerged amongst the girls who were born outside of Canada was that of physical activity as a means to enhance spiritual health. Although Nandini and Priya listed de-stressing as a benefit of engaging in physical activities, stress relief is more appropriately categorized under mental health rather than spiritual health. It is probable that the theme of exercise for spiritual health did *not* emerge in the focus group because Samantha and Vidya were absent from the discussion and Ramya's reference to this domain was subtler. Samantha and Vidya cited and stressed the importance of spiritual health and referred to their participation in Bharathanatyam dance (a form of prayer) and regular practice of yoga as ways of enhancing this domain. Ramya alluded to the positive effects of walking on her spiritual health though she did not specifically use the label 'spiritual'. Ramya described her hour-long walks as opportunities for her to meditate and clear her thoughts.

Yoga and meditation are two methods of transcending the body with the aim of reaching a higher state of consciousness; consequently yoga and meditation assist in developing spiritual health. The practice of yoga arose in India and is linked to Hinduism and spirituality; however, as a result of exposure to the Western world, yoga has been transformed and marketed in fitness centres as a physical activity and relaxation technique that uses a series of body contortions (Matthew, 2001). It was obvious that both Samantha and Vidya referred to the practice of yoga

in its true sense, physical postures and breathing exercises in efforts to reach higher states, because they both specifically indicated meditation as the end-goal. Overall, it is not surprising that spiritual health did not emerge among those Canadian by birth, because they have stronger ties with Canadian culture, where the emphasis is instead on physical health (Health Canada, 2004).

A manifestation of Indian culture evident across all participants was the central role of the family. As discussed earlier, all participants displayed high levels familism throughout our interviews and focus group discussions. Collectivism, however, did not emerge as a significant theme within either the interviews or the focus group. Although Samantha and Priya indicated that their parents wanted them to be individuals, one would not say that they put themselves before their families and subscribed to individualism. Conversely, though all of the participants felt closely connected to their families and sometimes communities, it would not be appropriate to label them as collectivists either. While collectivism refers to the view of oneself in relation to any community or group, familism specifies that the group must necessarily be one's family. It was not the case of the participants thinking of themselves within the context of a group, or thinking of themselves independent of a group; rather, participants highly valued their parents and siblings and engaged in behaviour to honour their families. Thus it was not useful to apply the collectivism-individualism value continuum to this study. In terms of their Indian culture, all of the girls felt that it was important to be respectful, especially of elders. Filial piety (Unger et al., 2002), in contrast to familism, emerged later on when we discussed how girls and boys are raised in Indian culture. Even though the girls in the focus group joked that their parents were highly restrictive of them while they granted freedom and autonomy to male counterparts, there was a strong sense that the girls wanted to please their parents, and were therefore compliant. In the focus group, Ramya articulated that she knew her parents wanted the best for her and because of this, she was willing to learn domestic duties even if her brother wasn't required to. Priya

indicated that her parents want her to hold onto her Indian heritage and also mentioned that she regularly attends the Sai Educational classes. Although she did not necessarily say that she attends the Sai Centre *only* to please her parents, this is another example of filial piety. Samantha, Sheila and Vidya explained that they were close to their parents and their parents were very involved in their lives, thus they were respectful of any rules their parents imposed upon them. Overall, it appears that familism and filial piety play a strong role in the lives of these girls.

As females with Indian heritage, the participants felt that they had the responsibility to serve their parents more so than males. Farver et al. (2002) argue, "historically, females have been responsible for preserving Indian cultural traditions" (p. 13). Furthermore, Dasgupta (1998) discusses families in the U.S. and claims that "as the keepers of South Asian culture and heritage, ...the roles of second-generation daughters are therefore monitored more strictly than those of sons. Fears of cultural obliteration by 'Americanization' and exogamy have played a large role in imposing such constructions on the female gender role" (p.957). If this holds true within this sample of participants in Canada, it becomes apparent parents are protective of daughters and place pressures on them unique from males in order to preserve cultural ties with the motherland.

Samantha and Sheila also suggested that their parents were protective of them and imposed curfews because they did not want them to indulge in drugs and crime like some other students their age. In addition, Samantha added that her parents advocated for her to hold onto her Indian heritage to as a means to resist these negative elements. Since religion and culture are closely linked among Indian cultures previous research by Nuru Dennis (2005) is relevant. They claimed that religious institutions could be effective in discouraging deviance and criminal activity among youth (Nuru Dennis, 2005). "Through regular attendance, religious institutions can influence youth by doing their part in delinquency prevention and setting forth moral, ethical

and spiritual values" (p. 95). Whether their involvement in Indian traditions was to hold onto their Indian cultures or to assist in avoiding ills present in Canada, all of the girls felt that their Indian heritage was an important part of who they were. In accordance with their heritage, they respected their parents and valued their respect and therefore complied with their wishes even if they did not fully agree with their parents' reasoning.

5.0 Conclusion

The participants in this project offered a wealth of information in their interviews and in the focus group. While each one of them made unique contributions to the discussions, there were shared experiences by virtue of their sex, age and Indian heritage. Within the theme of physical education and physical activity, they indicated that opportunities for social interactions were significant determinants of participation. Participants had high attraction to exercise and high-perceived competence in at least a few activities and were therefore physically active when time permitted (e.g. in the summer holidays). The positive role of parents and siblings on attitudes towards physical activity were highlighted, and physical activity as a means for strengthening relationships emerged concurrently with the values of familism and filial piety. Parents supported physical activities by playing sports and games with their daughters, and also provided encouragement and filled facilitative roles. It should be noted that all of the participants were from middle to upper-class families, and their positive experiences with respect to physical activities were likely tied to their socio-economic status (SES). Adolescent females from Indian diasporic families of lower SES may not have such high levels of parental support and as easy access sporting equipment as the participants of this study. Moreover, displays of familism in low SES families may include part-time jobs and more household responsibilities, especially for females, and this may significantly impact leisure time and physical activity choices.

When discussing the importance of physical activity, the theme of health was brought to the forefront while enjoyment, positive effects on spiritual health, and stress management were also mentioned. The emphasis on spiritual health by some of the adolescent participants was in large part due to their affinity to Indian culture. This theme of spirituality is a unique contribution to the adolescent physical activity literature and warrants further exploration. Many of the participants also felt that physical activity could increase one's health status by boosting

the immune system and helping to prevent illness and ailments later in life. This medicalized framework of thought indicated that the majority of the girls were low on fatalism, as they perceived an internal locus of control over their health status.

As a result of their upbringing in families that were rich in Indian culture, many of the girls had been socialized to associate distinct roles with males and females, i.e. machismo. Participants felt that more restrictions were placed upon them, and more domestic responsibilities fell upon them compared to male counterparts. Some participants also felt that they experienced more restrictions versus "white" Canadian counterparts both male and female. It was noted that all of the girls remained highly obedient to their parents and felt that as parents, they were looking out for their best interests. Although some of the girls alluded to the presence of gender roles in mainstream Canadian society as well, they still felt that their experiences were unique as a result of being Indian.

Differentiated gender roles also emerged in discussions on sporting arenas. In general, boys were afforded more involvement and deemed more aggressive, assertive and competitive in physical activities. Girls were thought to promote fun-based learning environments. Media was cited as a major player in reinforcing gender roles and stereotypes. Although media wasn't specifically associated with the behaviours listed above for males and females, its influence is unquestionable; however, the role of popular media that did emerge in interviews and focus group was its effect on shaping boys' and girls' physiques.

The results of this qualitative exploration point to several implications for practice. As familism and filial piety were strong among the participants, physical activity interventions based out of the Sai Centre that promote spending time with the family are likely to be successful. For example, if yoga classes are tied to bhajan sessions, participants and their families could exercise together and thus concurrently develop spiritual health and strengthen familism. During the winter months, Sai Centre seva (volunteer) activities could include playing

active games with children in local orphanages or organizing indoor games for children in underprivileged areas in addition to the established food bank volunteer sessions and clothing drives. Another possible health intervention is to hold physical activity and wellness information sessions at the Sai Centre immediately after bhajan and prayer sessions. Such sessions could be designed to address the specific needs of members of the congregation (i.e. tips on maintaining a balanced Hindu vegetarian diet, how to effectively perform the yoga asanas (positions) in addition to meditation, and how to prepare reduced fat and sugar versions of festive foods).

School-based interventions could include physical education classes devoted to learning Indian cultural and religious forms of physical activity (i.e. traditional dances) and physical activities popular in nations around the world. Schools could also hold "family fun days" where parents and siblings are invited to the school on an evening or weekend to participate in group games and activities. Finally, adolescent students could be encouraged in social studies classes to learn about physical activities in relation to historical or religious practices and to challenge gender norms often associated with leisure time (e.g. cricket was popularized in India as a result of British colonialism and is still exclusively played at the professional level by males). These are just a few ways that the results of this study could inform physical activity programming at school or at the Sai Centre; any other interventions that promote family time or help adolescents learn about their cultural heritage and other cultures may also be effective in strengthening familism and filial piety.

Many areas concerning cultural milieus and physical activity behaviours are yet to be explored. This study was an attempt to give voice to a group of adolescent girls from the Indian diaspora while integrating existing literature on personal attitudes and parental attitudes towards physical activity with cultural beliefs. Future areas of exploration may include the influence of familism on physical activity involvement, and the influence of physical activities on spiritual health among other diasporic subcultures in Canada.

Bibliography

- Bannerji, H. (1995, October). Insider-outside of the nation: 'race', gender and the construction of Canada. Conference Proceedings In *Race, Gender and the Construction of Canada. Volume 1*.
- Bartky, S.L. (1997). Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power. In Conboy, K., Medina, N., and Stanbury, S. (Eds.). *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory* (pp.129-154). Columbia Press: NY.
- Body Break. (n.d). *Behind the Scenes: Production Background*. Retrieved June 15, 2006 from <http://bodybreak.com/B03.html>
- Brandt, E.N., & McGinnis, J.M. (1985). The National Children and Youth Fitness Survey. *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Public Health Reports, 100*, 1-3.
- Brijnath, R. (2004, June 9). Why doesn't India shine at Olympics?. *BBC News*, Retrieved November 15, 2004 from http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/south_asia/3776545.stm
- Brustad, R.J. (1993). Who will go out and play – parental and psychological influences on childrens attraction to physical activity. *Pediatric Exercise Science, 5*(3), 210-223.
- Brustad, R.J. (1996). Attraction to physical activity in urban schoolchildren: parental socialization and gender influences. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 67*(3), 316-323.
- Canada. (2004, April). *A Canada Fit for Children: Canada's Plan of Action in Response to the May 2002 United Nations Special Session on Children*. Retrieved November 25, 2004, from http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/publications/ncd-jna/canada_fit_for_children.pdf
- Canada. (2000, October). *The Opportunity of Adolescence: The Health Sector Contribution - Federal/Provincial/Territorial Advisory Committee on Population Health*. Retrieved November 25, 2004, from http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/publications/pdf/acph_adolescents_e.pdf
- Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute. (2003). *2003 Physical Activity Monitor*. Retrieved November 22, 2004, from <http://www.cflri.ca/pdf/e/2003pam.pdf>
- Canadian Heritage. (2004). *Department of Canadian Heritage: Mission and Strategic Objectives; Sport Canada Policy on Women in Sport; The National Summit on Sport*. Retrieved November 22, 2004, from http://www.pch.gc.ca/pc-ch/org/mission/index_e.cfm
- Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada. (2005). *The Case for Change*. Retrieved January 9, 2005, from http://www.cdpac.ca/content/case_for_change/case_for_change.asp

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2005, January). *Low Income Trends among Immigrants – The Monitor, Fall 2004*. Retrieved Nov 8, 2005 from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/monitor/issue07/06-feature.html>
- Chung, M., & Phillips, D.A. (2002). The relationship between attitude toward physical education and leisure-time exercise in high school students. *Physical Educator*, 59(3), 126-139.
- Coakley, J. (2001). Asian Americans and Sport Participation. In J. Coakley (Ed.), *Sport In Society: Issues and Controversies* (pp. 266-267). Toronto, ON: McGraw Hill.
- Dasgupta, S.D. (1998). Gender roles and cultural continuity in the Asian Indian immigrant community in the U.S. *Sex Roles*, 38(11/12), 953-974.
- Deci, E.L., & R.M. Ryan. (2002). *Handbook of Self-Determination Research*. Rochester, NY: The University of Rochester Press.
- DeSensi, J. (1995). Understanding multiculturalism and valuing diversity: A theoretical perspective. *Quest*, 47, 34-43.
- Dorsch, K.D., Paskevich, D.M. & Loughhead, T.M. (2007). Chapter 7: Aggression in Sport. In Crocker, P.R.E (Ed.), *Sport Psychology: A Canadian Perspective* (pp. 155-183). Toronto, ON: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Duschinski, H. (2004). Indian Diaspora Capsule Summary. *Encyclopedia of the Worlds Minorities*. Retrieved February 2, 2006 from <http://www.routledge-ny.com/ref/minorities/indian.html>
- Evans, J., & Roberts, G.C. (1987). Physical competence and the development of children's peer relations. *Quest*, 39, 23-35.
- Eriksen, T.H. (2002). Chapter 5: Ethnicity in History. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*, (pp. 78-93). Sterling, VA: Pluto Press.
- Eyler, A.A., Vest, J.R., Sanderson, B., Wilbur, J., Matson-Koffman, D., Evenson, K.R., Thompson, J.L., Wilcox, S., & Rohm Young, D. (2002). Environmental, policy, and cultural factors related to physical activity in a diverse sample of women. *Women & Health*, 36(2), 17-29.
- Farver, J.M., Bhadha, B.R., & Narang, S.K. (2002). Acculturation and Psychological Functioning in Asian Indian Adolescents. *Social Development*, 11(1), 12-27.
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J.H. (2000). Chapter 24: The Interview – From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text. In Denzin, N.K, and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd Edition, Y.S. (pp. 645 – 672). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Fouts, G. & Burggraf, K. (2000). Television situation comedies: female weight, male negative comments, and audience reactions. *Sex Roles*, 42(9/10), 925-933.

- Fouts, G. & Burggraf, K. (1999). Television situation comedies: female body images and verbal reinforcements. *Sex Roles*, 40(516), 473-482.
- Fredrickson, B.L. & Roberts, T. (1997). Objectification Theory: toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 21, 173-206.
- Gill, D.L., & Deeter, T.E. (1988). Development of the sport orientation questionnaire. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 59, 191-202.
- Godin, G. & Shephard, R.J. (1985). *A Simple Method to Assess Exercise Behaviour in the Community*. Canadian Journal of Sport Sciences, 10, 141-146.
- Gordon-Larsen, P., McMurray, R.G., & Popkin, B.M. (2000). Determinants of Adolescent Physical Activity and Inactivity Patterns, *Pediatrics*, 105(6), 83-91.
- Grey, M.A. (1992). Sports and Immigrant, Minority and Anglo Relations in Garden-City (Kansas) High School. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 9(3), 255-270.
- Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (1995). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Harrison, K. (2006). Scope of Self: Toward a Model of Television's Effects on Self-Complexity in Adolescence. *Communication Theory*, 16, p.251-279.
- Harter, S. (1988). Manual for the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents. Denver, CO: University of Denver.
- Health Canada (2004). *Health Care*. Retrieved January 9, 2005, from <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/care/>
- Health Canada. (2002). *Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Living: Gotta Move! Magazine for Children 6-9 yrs of age*. Retrieved November 25, 2004, from http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide/child_youth/pdf/KidsGottaMoveMagEnFINAL.pdf
- Henderson, K.A., & Ainsworth, B.E. (2001). Researching leisure and physical activity with women of color: issues and emerging questions. *Leisure Sciences*, 23(1), 21-34.
- Inman, A.G., Constantine, M.G., Ladany, N., & Morano, C.K. (2001). Development and preliminary validation of the cultural values conflict scale for South Asian women. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 48(1), 17-27.
- Keats, D.M. (2001). *Interviewing: A Practical Guide for Students and Professionals*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Kimiecik, J.C., Horn, T.S., & Shurin, C.S. (1996). Relationships among children's beliefs, perceptions of their parents' beliefs, and their moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 67(3), 324-336.

- Kohl, H.W. & Hobbs, K.E. (1998). Development of Physical Activity Behaviours Among Children and Adolescents. *Pediatrics*, 101, 549-554.
- Kvale, S. (1996). Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Levinson, D. (1994). Diaspora: Indian Diaspora. *Ethnic Relations: A Cross-Cultural Encyclopedia*, (pp. 56-58). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc.
- Liebertson, S. (1985). Stereotypes: Their Consequences for Race and Ethnic Interaction. *Research in Race and Ethnic Relations*, 4, 113-137.
- Lirgg, C.D. (1993). Effects of same sex versus coeducational physical education on the self perceptions of middle and high school students. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 64, 324-335.
- Loomba, A. (1990). The Indian Women's Movement: An Overview. *Women: A Cultural Review*, 1(1), 29-34.
- Lull, J. (2000). 'Introduction', 'Ideology and consciousness', 'Hegemony', and 'Culture'. *Media, communication, culture: A global approach* (Chapters 1-3, 6). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Ma, X., & Zhang, Y. (2002). A National Assessment of Effects of School Experiences on Health Outcomes and Behaviours of Children. Retrieved November 24, 2004 from http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/publications/pdf/schobc-esrcscj_e.pdf
- Maclear, K. (1994). The myth of the model minority. Re-thinking the education of Asian-Canadians. *Our Schools, Our Selves*, July, 54-76.
- Madriz, E. (2000). Chapter 32: Focus Groups in Feminist Research. In Denzin, N.K, and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd Edition, Y.S. (pp. 835 – 850). Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Malszecki, G., & Cavar, T. (2005). Chapter 7: Men, Masculinities, War, and Sport. In Mandell, N. (Ed.). *Feminist Issues: Race, Class, and Sexuality – Fourth Edition* (pp.160-187). Toronto, ON: Pearson Education Canada.
- Matthew, R.J. (2001). *The True Path: Western Science and the Quest for Yoga*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing.
- McCall, L. (2005). The Complexity of Intersectionality. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 30(3), 1771-1800.
- McKenzie, T.L, Prochaska, J.J., Sallis, J.F., & LaMaster, K.J. (2004). Coeducational and single-sex physical education in middle schools: impact on physical activity. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 75(4), 446-449.

- McKenzie, T.L., Marshall, S.J., Sallis, J.F., & Conway, T.L. (2000). Student activity levels, lesson context, and teacher behaviour during middle school physical education. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 71(3), 249-261.
- Nuru Dennis, K. (2005). The impact of religiosity on deviance and criminal activity in youth and young adults. In Dennis, R. (Ed), *Marginality, Power, and Social Structure: Issues in Race, Class, and Gender Research in Race and Ethnic Relations, Volume 12*, pp. 93-130. Toronto, ON: Elsevier Ltd.
- Olneck, M.R. (1990). The Recurring Dream: Symbolism and Ideology in Intercultural and Multicultural Education. *American Journal of Education*, 98(2), 147-174.
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2004). *Health and Physical Education*. Retrieved November 11, 2004, from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/secondary/health/healful.html>
- Parliament of Canada. (2002). *Bill C-54: An Act to Promote Physical Activity and Sport*. Retrieved November 22, 2004, from http://www.parl.gc.ca/37/1/parlbus/chambus/house/bills/government/C-54/C-54_3/C-54_cover-E.html
- ParticipACTION Archive Project. University of Saskatchewan Archives. Retrieved June 15, 2006, from <http://www.usask.ca/archives/participaction/english/home.html>
- Public Health Agency of Canada (2003). *An Integrated Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy: A Discussion Document for the Healthy Living Symposium June 2003 Toronto, Ontario, Canada Draft for Discussion*. Retrieved January 9, 2005, from http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hl-vs-strat/symposium/symp_june_e.html#12
- Rezai-Rashti, G. (2005). Chapter Four: Unessentialist Women: A discussion of race, class, and gender and their implications in education. In Mandell, N. (Ed.). *Feminist Issues: Race, Class, and Sexuality – Fourth Edition* (pp.83-100). Toronto, ON: Pearson Education Canada.
- Ryan, G.W., & Russell Bernard, H. (2000). Chapter 29: Data Management and Analysis Methods. In Denzin, N.K, and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research, 2nd Edition*, Y.S. (pp. 769 – 802). Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Sai Baba. (2004). *Swami clarifies our common doubts*. Retrieved May 6, 2006 from <http://www.saibaba.ws/teachings/swamiclarifies.htm>
- Sallis, J.F., Prochaska, J.J., & Taylor, W.C. (2000). A review of correlates of physical activity of children and adolescents. *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, 32(5), 963-975.
- Sedgwick, W.A. & Crocker, P.R.E. (2007). Chapter 3: Personality in Sport. In Crocker, P.R.E (Ed.), *Sport Psychology: A Canadian Perspective* (pp. 47-71). Toronto, ON: Pearson Prentice Hall.

- Shephard, R.J. & Trudeau, F. (2000). The legacy of physical education: influences on adult lifestyle. *Pediatric Exercise Science*, 12, 34-50.
- Silverman, S. & Subramaniam, P.R. (1999). Student attitude toward physical education and physical activity: a review of measurement issues and outcomes. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 19, 97-125.
- Smith, A.L. (2003). Peer relationships in physical activity contexts: a road less traveled in youth sport and exercise psychology research. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 4, 25-39.
- Smith, A.L. (1999). Perceptions of Peer Relationships and Physical Activity Participation in Early Adolescence. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 21, 329-350.
- Sommers-Flanagan, R., Sommers-Flanagan, J., & Davis, B. (1993). What's Happening on Music Television – A Gender-Role Content-Analysis. *Sex Roles*, 28, 745-753.
- Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust – Prashanti Niliyam. (April 24, 2006) *Ashram Information – Brindavan*. Retrieved May 6, 2006, from <http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/Pages/AshramInfo/Brindavan.htm>
- Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organization. (2005). *Bhagavan Sri Satya Sai Baba*. Retrieved November 20, 2005 from <http://www.sathyasai.org/intro/message.htm>
- Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organization of Canada (2005). *What are the Objectives of the Youth Program?* Retrieved May 5, 2006, from <http://www.sathyasai.ca/Content/Data/Organization/Youth/Objectives.asp>
- Standage, M., Duda, J.L., & Ntoumanis, N. (2006). Students' motivational processes and their relationship to teacher ratings in school physical education: a self-determination theory approach. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 77, 100-111.
- Statistics Canada. (2004). *Characteristics of Canada's newest immigrants; Asia and Europe are the leading sources of new immigrants; Ethnic Diversity Survey; Population by selected ethnic origins, by census metropolitan areas (2001, 1996 Census)*. Retrieved November 11, 2004, from <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-611-XIE/character.htm>
- Stevens, D.E., Gammage, K.L., and Waddell, L. (2007). Chapter 13: Female Athletes and Gender Issues. In Crocker, P.R.E. (Ed.), *Sport Psychology: A Canadian Perspective* (pp. 315-343). Toronto, ON: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Unger, J.B., Ritt-Olson, A., Teran, L., Huang, T., Hoffman, B.R., & Palmer, P. (2002). Cultural values and substance use in a multiethnic sample of California adolescents. *Addiction Research & Theory*, 10(3), 257-279.
- University of Hyderabad. (2005). Centre for the Study of Indian Diaspora. Retrieved February 5, 2006 from http://www.uohyd.ernet.in/ss/indian_diaspora/Indian.html
- Vertinsky, P., Batth, I., & Naidu, M. (1996). *Racism in Motion: Sport, Physical Activity and the Indo-Canadian Female*. *AVANTE*, 2(3), 1-23.

Welk, G.J., Schaben, J.A., & Shelley, M. (2004). Physical activity and physical fitness in children schooled at home and children attending public schools. *Pediatric Exercise Science, 16*, 310-323.

Welk, G.J., Wood, K., & Morss, G. (2003). Parental influences on physical activity in children: an exploration of potential mechanisms. *Pediatric Exercise Science, 15*, 19-33.

Appendices

Appendix A: Personal Interview Guide

- Purpose: My interest in doing this interview is to gather some of your thoughts and feelings about how your family and cultural values may influence your participation in physical activities
- Procedure: I will ask you some questions, but you are encouraged to include anything that you feel is relevant. There are no right or wrong answers.
- The interview will be audio taped and will take approximately 45 minutes.
- The interview is confidential and results will be reported anonymously by assigning you a code number. Only trained researchers will have access to the coded data. All information will remain confidential.
- You have the right to choose not to answer a question, and/or to withdraw from the interview at any point.
- Do you have any questions before we begin?

Let's begin with a couple of general questions:

1. Physical Activity Enjoyment, Involvement, Importance, Fatalism

- Are you currently enrolled in PE class?
 - If you are, how many days a week?
 - Are there only girls in your class?
 - If not, when was the last time you took PE?
- Do/did you enjoy PE classes?
 - Can you tell me more about this?
- Outside of PE class, do you currently participate in any *structured/organized* physical activities? If so, which ones?
 - lunch/after school/evening/weekend?
- Outside of PE class, do you participate in any *unstructured* physical activities? If so, which ones?
 - lunch/after school/evening/weekend?
- Would you rate your general physical activity level as high, medium or low?
 - Compared to others, how active do you think you are?
- What, if any, physical activities do you enjoy outside of school?
- Do you think you have control over your physical activity participation?
- Would you like to be more active? Why or why not?
 - What, if anything, may prevent you from participating in more physical activities?
- Is it important for you to be physically active in your life? Why or why not?
 - Is there a connection between physical activity and your health? Tell me more.

2. Machismo, Peer Influence (collectivism), Peer Acceptance, Perceived Competence, Self-Efficacy in exercise/sport

Think about how you compare to boys your age...

- What, if any, similarities are there in the way that you participate in physical activities in comparison to boys your age?
 - Can you tell me more about this? Can you give me any examples?
- What, if any, differences are there in the way that you participate in physical activities in comparison to boys your age?
 - Can you tell me more about this? Can you give me any examples?
- Do other students your age influence whether or not you are physically active?
 - If so, who are they and how do they influence you? Can you give me any examples?
- Do you feel capable of participating in physical activities? How about in athletics?
- How would you rate your general fitness in comparison to your peers?
 - Does your fitness level change the way you see yourself? Why or why not?
- How would you rate your athletic skills in comparison to your peers?
 - Do your athletic skills change the way you see yourself? Why or why not?

3. Parental Influence; filial piety

- Were your parents/guardians physically active when they were younger?
 - If so, what activities did they do?
- Are your parents physically active now?
 - If so, what activities do they do? If not, why do you think that they are not active?
 - Has your parents' involvement, or lack of involvement in physical activity influenced your participation? If so, in what ways?
- Do you think that your parents want you to be physically active? How do you know this?
 - Do they say things that encourage you to be active? If so, what do they say?
 - Do they say things that discourage you to be active? If so, what do they say?
 - Have they bought you sporting or exercise equipment? If so, what? When?
 - Have they enrolled you in any after-school activities? If so, what? When?
 - Do they directly participate in any activities with you? If so, what? When?
 - Are there any other ways that they may influence your physical activity?
Transportation/volunteer/fundraising/coach

4. Culture and values; collectivism; family influence

The next few questions are about your relationships with other people.

- How would you describe your background, ethnic heritage or culture to a stranger?
 - What do your parents want you to be like as someone who has been raised in this background?
 - What do your parents want you to be like as a *female* who has been raised in this background? Is this different from how a male would be raised?
 - What values, if any, are tied to your upbringing in this background, ethnicity or culture?

- What kinds of things do you do with your family on evenings or weekends?
 - Who, if anyone, do you consider to be in your community?
 - What kinds of things do you do with your community on evenings or weekends?
 - Who, if anyone, do you hang out with from the Sai Centre?
 - What, if any, activities do you do together?
 - Have your values or the values of your family or community influenced your participation in physical activities? How?
 - If so, who has influenced you? How have they influenced you?
 - If not, what has primarily influenced your activity participation, or lack thereof?
5. Is there anything else you would like to add about what or who influences your physical activity experiences?

Demographics

1. Age? _____
2. Do you live with your mother/female guardian? ○ Yes ○ No
3. Do you live with your father/male guardian? ○ Yes ○ No
4. Do you live with any of your grandparents? ○ Yes ○ No
5. In which country were you born?
6. How long have you lived in Canada?
7. In which country was your father born?
8. In which country was your mother born?
9. In Canada, do you consider your family to be 1) very wealthy, 2) wealthy or 3) not very wealthy?

Appendix B: Focus Group Guide

- Procedure: As a group, I will ask you some questions, but I want you to include anything that you feel is relevant. There are no right or wrong answers.
- The focus group will be audio taped and will take approximately 45 minutes.
- Due to the nature of the focus group, confidentiality is limited, however, you are asked to be respectful of others' views and to refrain from disclosing information from the group discussion to others, with the exception of your parents.
- You all have the right to choose not to answer a question, and/or to withdraw from the focus group at any point.
- Do any of you have any questions before we begin?

Let's have an open discussion about your influences on physical activity. Feel free to jump into the discussion at any time and add to each other's ideas.

1. Physical Activity Enjoyment, Involvement, Importance, Fatalism

- During the interviews, we discussed your enjoyment or lack thereof in PE classes. As a group, let's talk about your experiences in PE. Overall, most of you indicated that you enjoyed PE because of the types of activities that you did (yoga, basketball, softball, soccer)
 - Can anyone think of an experience in PE class that was NOT enjoyable?
 - What took place? Did it happen often?
- Outside of PE class, most of you said that you currently participate in *structured* and *unstructured* physical activities, but mostly in the summertime. Some of you mentioned going on bike rides, taking walks with friends or family members, playing outdoor/active games and racquet sports.
 - Would it be possible to do these activities throughout the year?
 - What stops you from doing these at other times?
- When we talked about physical activities in general, you all indicated that you enjoy them, depending on what it is, and who you are playing with.
 - Can you think of someone close to you who does not enjoy physical activities?
- All but one of you indicated that you have control over your PA participation, and also, all but one wanted to be more active. Does anyone have ideas on how they can increase their physical activity in the future?
 - How can we deal with the lack of time for PA? School commitments?
- Every one of you believes that it is important to be physically active. Let's try to come up with a list of 5 reasons for YOU to be active.
 - Which of these is the most important for you?
 - All of you believe that physical activity is connected to health...what aspects of health can physical activity influence? (muscles, heart, brain, alertness, mood, injury prevention, higher QOL later in life)

2. Machismo

- In the second section of the interview, we talked about similarities and differences between how males and females in your peer group participate in physical activities.
 - The first question was about similarities, but instead ALL of you came up with examples of differences in how males and females participate. Why do you think it is easier to come up with differences than it is to come up with similarities?
 - *Differences*: more aggressive, more competitive, need to win while girls want to enjoy the game/sport
 - *Similarities*: drive/general motivation to play, social aspects – will play if friends are playing, personal choice – depends on the individual
 - Of your peers, who, if anyone, has the greatest influence on whether or not you will participate in physical activities?
- Do you think that someone's level of fitness or level of athleticism *can* change the way that they see themselves?
 - Do you think that there is any connection between self-image, self-esteem and levels of fitness/athleticism?
 - What is it that prevents you from experiencing this?

3. Parental Influence; filial piety

- In the third section, we talked about the physical activities that your parents do. Even though only a few of you indicated that your parents' involvement in activity has influenced your participation, all of you mentioned that at some point in their lives both your mother and father were active.
 - If your parents had *never* been involved in or exposed to physical activities, do any of you think that this would have made any impact in what activities you had done growing up/do now?
 - Can you think of anyone who is in this situation?
 - Would it make a difference if they were male or female?
- Overall, every one of you indicated in one way or the other that your parents are supportive of your physical activities and have bought you sporting equipment, have played games/sports with you, have verbally encouraged you, enrolled you in activities or have driven you to and from some class/practice.
 - Do you think that this is the case for everyone with parents of Indian heritage?

4. Culture and values

- Let's think of five words that describe your background or culture. (Share them).
 - In the interviews when we talked about your background/ethnicity/culture, these were the words that you had come up with: Brown, Hindu, Indian, Fijian, Canadian
- What does it mean to be a part of this background/ethnicity/culture?
 - Prayers, follow traditions, stay true to yourself,
 - Is this a significant part of you who you are?
 - What do your friends, who are not a part of your background/ethnicity/culture, know about this part of you?
 - Have you ever talked about it?

- What kinds of things do you do with your family on evenings or weekends that maintains this cultural connection?
- When we talked about the concept of “community,” those that were born in Canada had trouble in trying to identify who this referred to, while the others quickly indicated friends and family and most often others connected to the Indian culture.
 - Why do you think it was harder for those born in Canada to answer this question?
- What values are associated with the Indian culture? Is there anything specific for Hindus that would be different for other religions?
 - In general, how do you think *females* are raised within this culture?
 - How are *males* raised?
 - How might this impact physical activity practices?
 - Why do you think that none of you felt like there was a connection between PA and how *females* are raised in the Indian culture?
- Who or what was the strongest influence in why you have participated in physical activities?
 - Examples cited: Brother, parents, best friend living close by, cousins
- 5. Does anyone have anything else to add about what influences your physical activity experiences?