CENTERING THE VOICES FROM THE MARGINS:
Indo-Canadian Girls' Sport and Physical Activity Experiences
in Private and Public Schools

by

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ABSTRACT

As 'visible minorities', physically active Indo-Canadian girls are misrepresented, marginalized and rendered 'invisible' by the dominant society. There is no Canadian literature to address such misrepresentations or to challenge the stereotypes that continue to label Indo-Canadian girls as passive, frail, tradition bound, submissive and victimized (Razack, 1995; Jiwani, 1992a,b, 1996). Such popular stereotypes are reified within the sport and education system (Lovell 1991; Hargreaves 1994; Razack 1995), falsely distorting Indo-Canadian girls' interests in sport.

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand how Indo-Canadian girls interpret their experiences of physical education in separate and public school systems. Research questions included: What are their sport and physical activity experiences in grade 10 and 11? What are their perceptions of gender and race in their varied experiences? Do the various school settings make a difference?

What was lacking in the Canadian literature was an adequate analysis of gender, race and sport that includes Indo-Canadian girls and women. Although some British researchers have made significant contributions, others tended to adopt a cultural deficit approach (Hoover, 1990; Stanley, 1995) which 'blames' Indian culture and the family for girls' participation rates without addressing the impact of institutionalized racism and sexism (Raval, 1989). The issue of co-ed versus segregated physical education classes is an ongoing debate which rarely discusses the fact that girls are not a homogeneous group or that the 'traditional' Eurocentric, male defined norms, standards and conditions of sport settings continue to be perpetuated. Issues of voice, silence and representation were also central to this study.

The research methodology employed hermeneutic interpretation and five ethnographic techniques which included observations, focus group interviews, one-on-one semi-focused interviews, document analysis and field notes. This study included three schools in the Lower Mainland, a private Sikh Punjabi school and two public schools. Following observations and focus groups with grade 10 girls at the private school, 4 girls were subsequently selected for further in-depth interviews and observations in grade 11 at the public schools.
This study illuminated the importance of voice, silence, representation, gender, race and physical activity. What was most surprising in this study was that the girls' voices concentrated significantly on the male referent point, the white referent point, and the impact of male domination in their experiences of sport, even though the majority of their experiences were in segregated PE classes rather than co-ed classes.

The major contributions of this study include: the importance of understanding the nuances and interpretations of silence; the problems of sport settings which continue to be biased and exclusionary; the importance of debunking the cultural deficit model and generalizing stereotypes about Indo-Canadian girls, families and cultures, and; how gender and race are integrated and interlocking so that they cannot be analyzed as separate variables.

This study recommends that the experiences of Indo-Canadian girls be contextualized within the dynamic and coexisting influences of peers, families and culture, teachers and curriculum, and systems and structures. It also recommends that we pay more attention to how we know rather than primarily to what we know (Razack, 1993).
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SILENCE
Too many women
in too many countries
speak the same language
of silence.
My grandmother was always silent -
always aggrieved -
only her husband had the cosmic right
(or so it was said)
to speak and to be heard.

They say it is different now
(After all, I am always vocal
and my grandmother thinks
I talk too much).
But sometimes, I wonder.

When a woman gives her love,
as most women do, generously -
it is accepted.
When a woman shares her thoughts,
as some women do, graciously -
it is allowed.
When a woman fights for power,
as all women would like to,
quietly or loudly
it is questioned.

And yet, there must be freedom -
if we are to speak.
And yes, there must be power -
if we are to be heard.
And when we have both
(freedom and power)
let us not be misunderstood.

We seek only to give words
to those who cannot speak
(too many women
in too many countries).
I seek only to forget the sorrows
of my grandmother’s
silence.

Anasuya Sengupta
Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi
IDENTITY IN MOTION: RACISM & ASSIMILATION

I once had an accent and then I assimilated.

My point of entry towards assimilation, began with giving up my accent; my British accent, that is.

Fitting in; disassociating.

I was made to feel shame, shame about my dress, food, values and beliefs; I became racist about/towards my own cultural heritage.

I tried to run away from myself; I disassociated from my true self, my true identity.

I altered my dress, food, lifestyle, values, beliefs, attitudes - my culture; I fooled myself, no one else into believing that I was ‘white.’

the racist ‘70’s made me feel unworthy.

the ‘white referent point’; I felt I was nothing without it.

I feel lost.

no grounding in my culture; I ran away from it, remember! the patriarchy, the sexism.

no grounding in the white western world; I am not white no matter how I dress or talk; no matter what I eat or believe;

the white western world is also patriarchal and sexist; And, it is racist.

my body, you look, but you don’t see or understand or inquire; do you care?

Based on the color of my body, you think, without inquiring, that I once had an accent - an India/n accent, you think.

yes, I gave up an accent; I could not have given up an India/n accent; I never had an India/n accent; I cannot give up what I never had.

I gave up a British accent; Ironic that I would give up a British accent; aren’t the British the perpetrators of the ‘white referent point’?

Wouldn’t my British accent; have been a ‘valued’ colonized commodity? - if only I had known!

running away from my India/ness; how does one run away from ones self?

I’ve stopped running; the confusion has begun to settle in; Who am I? How did I get here?

... indy batth November, 1995
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

'We rarely encounter accounts of what the persecuted themselves felt, thought, wished to do, and actually did or failed to do; what meanings they attached to their thoughts and actions' (Keibo Oiwa in her introduction to a history of Japanese Canadians in Canada, 1991, p. 15).

Based on my own personal observations and where I move about in my everyday life, I see Indo-Canadian girls being more active than ever before. This is evident in many of the school gymnasiums in cities and townships, such as Surrey, where large populations of Indo-Canadians reside. Despite this anecdotal evidence, educational, sport and recreational institutions are still slow in shifting from traditional programming and curricular models to accommodate to a more diverse range of needs. Programming and curriculum development tends to remain in the hands of those who have power and control, namely the dominant majority who are white, European, and male. Many of those who have power and control often have a tendency to continue to stereotype Indo-Canadian girls and women as passive, frail, immigrants, foreigners, tradition bound, exotic others, submissive and victimized (Razack 1995; Jiwani 1992a,b, 1996). Such popular stereotypes are reified within the sport and education system (Lovell 1991; Hargreaves 1994; Razack 1995), falsely distorting Indo-Canadian girls' and women's interests in sport.

When popular myths and stereotypes are perpetuated, Indo-Canadian girls and women continue to be marginalized. According to bell hooks (1984), "to be in the margin is to be
part of the whole but outside the main body” (p. ix). In spite of the increased physical activity levels of Indo-Canadian girls and women, they/we remain in the margins, rendered invisible in the gaze of the dominant society. How we see the world around us depends on where we look and on our perceptions. What we see or don’t see, is limited, not only by where we look, but also by how others and the media, for example, present the world to us. Razack (1993) claims that “we all have only partial knowledge, that we come from different subject positions” (p. 91) which inform our own perspectives and knowledge of the world around us. Based on these different positions, I believe we also have a partial vision which is defined and limited by such positions. If society and institutions are structured around the perspectives, voices, needs and interests of those with the power, control and dominance, the positional knowledge and vision of this particular group will likely not include those in the margins. Indo-Canadian girls’ position “outside the main body” (hooks, 1984, p. ix) is invisible, their voices often unheard or silenced.

Based on the color of our skin, Indo-Canadian women are visible. In terms of being represented as physically active women, however, we tend to be rendered invisible. “High visibility together with [an] almost total lack of voice” has been characterized as a problem for women of color in the public sphere and popular media (Wallace, 1990, p. 5). We are in a state of ‘constant facelessness’, visually and socially invisible except as visual images of the mind - stereotypes (Bannerji, 1993). This places us in a “socially marginalized position that does not grant a public hearing of [our] experience, strength, or knowledge” (Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan, 1995, p. 18).
Unless they are portrayed as exotics, in the "Golden Age" of television, visible minority women are invisible (Jiwani, 1989). "The continuing absence of people of color in the dominant media signifies their invisibility and non-status within the symbolic social order" (Jiwani, 1996, p. 9). Such absences communicate a discourse of race, "as absence is often predicated on exclusion or a strategy to conceal a racist intent" (Stam & Spence, 1985; van Dijk, 1993). The Indo-Canadian community is one of many ethnic groups in Canada who experience this kind of exclusion and racist intent.

The voices, experiences, perspectives and needs of the marginalized often remain excluded, on the fringes of society, rarely heard and seldom considered or included in program or policy initiatives. It is likely that many sport and recreation programmers and administrators attend diversity workshops with the intention of working towards change and developing inclusive practices. However, the status quo continues to remain unchanged, unchallenged. The question remains. Who is acting and responding to new information, to different perspectives, to the voices of the marginalized? What kinds of creative and effective program or policy initiatives are being developed in order to respond to the needs of those on the fringes of dominant mainstream society? In addition to the willingness to listen, programmers and administrators must also be willing to act.

Indo-Canadian girls' diverse sport and physical activity needs, interests and experiences remain marginalized, on the fringes of society. In a diverse country like Canada, they/we are socially constructed and characterized as belonging to a homogeneous group,
reflecting a history of colonial discourse, appropriation and domination from the standpoint of the West. Through this colonial and racist process they/we are relegated to the margins as “Other.” The damaging impact of marginalization, colonialism and the ensuing myths and stereotypes about Indo-Canadian girls and women continue to be prevalent in the 1990’s (Vertinsky, Batth & Naidu, 1996). In order to critically address such issues in this study, I will be using the following interpretive indicators of racism: difference, inferiorization, ‘Othering’, assimilation, exclusion, marginalization, silencing, male and white referent points, normal/abnormal, hegemony, lack of representation, deviance, homogeneity, and trivialization.

Although the status of Indo-Canadian communities across Canada has seen some improvement and justice over the past few decades, they/we have been dealing with overt and systemic racism, discrimination and issues of identity, and issues of fair legislation and minority status since the beginning of the century when the earliest settlers arrived in Canada. For this reason, it is important to acknowledge this history regardless of the fact that the perspectives are based on male experiences and the only sport and physical activity stories highlighted also focus on men.

**Immigration History of Indo-Canadians: Colonial Domination Continued**

The immigration of Indians to Canada in the early 1900’s is a history of mixed emotions full of hope, frustration and joy. It is a history of pioneers with courage and strength who gave up extended families and familiar cultures in an effort to find a new life in Canada. They uprooted, journeyed across the ocean and attempted to integrate and fit in with
Canadians. Although they faced discrimination from all levels of Canadian society, they persevered and were determined to keep their dreams alive.

There is an abundance of literature detailing the story of Indians immigrating to Canada. However, the focus of this literature is primarily based on male experiences and stories with very little focus on female perspectives or voices. The arrival of the Indian women and children to Canada was critical to the future of Indian culture in Canada, without which, perhaps, the dominant Canadian society would have succeeded in keeping the Canadian soil from being ‘defiled’ by the ‘dirty old hindoos’ (Jagpal, 1994). Without the significant role of women within the Indian community, the history of Indians in Canada may itself have been limited. Regardless of the patriarchal perspective, this history is important to acknowledge; for without our Indian pioneers paving the way, today’s Indo-Canadian community could not have evolved into the strong, proud and established community that it has become.

**Gender, Race, Physical Education and Sport in a Multicultural Society**

Current statistics show that the population of visible minorities in Canada is expanding rapidly. One quarter of the South Asians in Canada are residents of British Columbia and they constitute the second largest ethnic community in British Columbia. Seventy-five percent of the community resides in the Vancouver area (Source: South Asians in Canada; Census 1991; Statistics Canada, June 1993). These changing demographics of Canadian society makes it imperative that physical educators be able to understand, educate and assist each individual so that everyone has the opportunity to reach her or his full potential
(DeSensi, 1995). However, school systems and physical education curriculum continue to be biased. The Ministry of Education in Ontario (1993), for example, acknowledges that sexism and racism is embedded in the individual and institutional practices of schools and that systemic inequalities limit Aboriginal and ethnocultural minorities’ opportunities to fulfill their potentials (Ministry of Education, Ontario, 1993).

As socially constructed sites, school cultures are a microcosm of the dominant society and reflect its’ white middle-class biases, norms and standards. Similarly, the general school curriculum also reflects the norms, values, ideas, perspectives and traditions of the dominant society. In the physical education curriculum, the values of male-oriented Western team sports that emphasize strength, power, competition and contact are deeply ingrained (Humbert, 1995; Vertinsky, 1992), and deny role models to Indo-Canadian girls. Sport and physical education continues to be gendered and racialized, denying equitable access, opportunities and conditions for Indo-Canadian girls.

The debate of co-ed versus ‘girls only’ physical education classes continues, often with both sides arguing for and emphasizing the importance of equal access, opportunities and treatment of all students. Regardless of the gender mix of the class, equal access and opportunity is problematic and insufficient since such an approach often means access to a biased system based on traditionally male defined norms and standards. Within such a system, everyone is treated the same and differences are denied or downplayed. The equal opportunity approach rarely challenges the oppressive conditions and hierarchical structures within the classroom (Miles & Middleton, 1990; Dewar, 1993). Co-ed classes
have been shown to produce problems of participation levels and confidence for girls, resulting in negative experiences of sport and a negative impact on retention (Thomas, 1991; Scranton, 1989; Evans et al, 1987; Wright, 1993). Segregated ‘girls only’ classes, on the other hand, give girls the confidence, experience, space and time to develop their potential without the influence of boys’ discriminating and controlling behavior (Thomas, 1991). However, in both cases, as long as the physical education curriculum continues to be based on Western, male traditions, values and norms, Indo-Canadian girls will be denied equitable experiences and benefits of physical activity.

It appears that physical educators, school systems and decision makers know little about the realities of Indo-Canadian girls, their families or their cultures. In the literature dealing with physical education, recreation and sport, there is little mention of Indo-Canadian girls and women, and in voluminous studies on ‘race’ and racism in education, there is little mention of physical education. The marginalization of physical education in education, and the marginalization of ethnicity in physical education, creates a simultaneity of oppressive structures. As a result, unrealistic stereotypes and beliefs about Indo-Canadian girls and physical activity remain uninvestigated and undispelled and the school system prevails as a site of oppression.

In attempting to address gender, race and sport - specifically, Indo-Canadian girls and women and sport - I discovered that literature focusing on gender & sport (Lenskyj, 1991; Dewar, 1991; Scranton, 1992; Hargreaves, 1994) and race & sport (Birrell, 1989, 1990; Dewar, 1993; Smith, 1992), which was sometimes presented in the guise of
multiculturalism and sport (Figueroa, 1993; DeSensi, 1995; Stanley, 1995), was readily available. What was lacking is an adequate analysis of gender, race and sport that includes Indo-Canadian girls and women. Although Canadian research is sadly lacking, some British researchers have looked at Indo-Canadian women and sport (Carrington, Chivers & Williams, 1987; Carroll, 1993). However, they have tended to adopt a cultural deficit approach (Hoover, 1990; Stanley, 1995), where family and the Indian culture are ‘blamed’ for low participation rates, and the impact of institutionalized racism and sexism are overlooked (Raval, 1989). According to Hargreaves (1994),

the British sport system reflects traditions that can be traced back to the nineteenth century - and many of its values and practices are inappropriate for a modern, multiracial society. British sports policies reflect ‘white’ culture and codes of thinking which celebrate individualism and promote a spurious sense of free will. That is why the discourse of racism in women’s sports has to a large extent been repressed (p. 260).

Sexist and racist discourse stereotypes Indo-Canadian women as passive, frail and not being interested in sport (Lovell, 1991; Hargreaves, 1994; Razack, 1995). According to Birrell (1990), race continues to be treated as a variable rather than symbolizing a relationship of power. Doing so obscures and reduces diversity in sport by equating ‘race’ with Black and by equating Black athlete with Black male athlete. Gender and race cannot be treated as variables or as “addititives”. Doing so would be like treating them as separate colors in a braid. “But if racism is yellow and sexism is red, the experience of them together is something different than striped. It is more like orange” (Findlay, 1991, p. 11). Race, class and gender, however, continue to be used as ways to carve up the world, to divide and rule, to separate and never unite (Jiwani, 1993). Within a
reductionist strategy of variables, additives, and divisions, women, especially Indo-Canadian women, are invisible and marginalized.

Because there has been so much emphasis on popular myths and stereotypes which leave Indo-Canadian girls marginalized and invisible, we know very little about how they interpret their experiences in physical activity and sport, particularly, in physical education classrooms. These girls have rarely been participants of study or been provided opportunities to voice their experiences. This study will address Indo-Canadian girls’ sport and physical activity experiences in private and public school settings. The predominant focus will be on the girls’ experiences while in Grade 10 in a segregated Indian (Sikh Punjabi) school. This particular school and the participants have been chosen because the Indo-Canadian girls participate in a ‘girls only’ physical education setting in which they have the opportunity to participate without the influence of boys or non-Indo-Canadian girls. Thus, the class is segregated along gender and race lines. The girls’ experiences in grade 11 in the public school setting will also be emphasized in order to address their experiences within a gender and race integrated environment. The segregated and integrated school settings offer ideal sites for exploring the girls’ perceptions and experiences of gender, race and sport.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand how Indo-Canadian girls interpret their experiences of physical education in private and public school systems.
The specific objectives for this study were: (1) to gain insight into the diverse range of physical education and sport interests and experiences of young Indo-Canadian girls in specific school settings and, (2) to give voice and meaning to young Indo-Canadian girls’ varied experiences in physical education and sport.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions for the purposes of this study were posed in two areas:

1. Indo-Canadian girls in physical education

What are the sport and physical activity experiences of young Indo-Canadian girls in Grade 10 and 11 as experienced by the girls themselves? What are their perceptions of gender and race in their varied experiences? How do they describe their experiences in ‘girls only’ settings? In co-ed settings? In mixed race settings?

2. School Culture(s)

How does the segregated school culture versus the public school culture affect the girls' physical education experiences? What are their experiences of physical education at the segregated school? At the public school? Do the various school settings make a difference?

DEFINITION OF TERMS

I use the terms Indian and Indo-Canadian to refer to people from both the country “India” and the diaspora. The term ‘Indian’ is not to be confused with First Nations people. I use the term Indo-Canadian to acknowledge Indian heritage as well as Canadian rights and citizenship. Other terms such as Asian and South Asian will be used when
included in the work of other authors. Unless it is used by others, the term ‘East Indian’ will not be included since there is no such place as ‘East India’ and also because it is a remnant of Indian colonialism that I feel needs to be dismantled and discontinued.

**Race** is a socially defined and constructed category that historically “classifie[d] groups of people into typology (for instance, a popular typology is “Negroid, Caucasoid, and Mongoloid”) on the basis of ancestry or descent, in addition to certain general physical and biological characteristics such as skin color or facial features” (Fleras & Elliot, 1992, p. 318). Currently, “race is generally regarded as having no empirical validity or scientific merit. It exists instead as a social construction which is manipulated to define, structure, and organize relations between dominant and subordinate groups” (Elliot & Fleras, 1992, p. 334). It is important to recognize the social effects of “race,” despite its’ lack of scientific basis. “The concept of race is central to anti-racism discourse as a tool for community and academic political organizing for social change. There are powerful social meanings to race which are anchored, particularly, in the lived experiences of minority groups in white-dominated societies” (Dei, 1996, p. 27). Race is important as an analytical tool also, as Troyna (1994) argues, because at times there is a deliberate omission in texts of the implications of race and ethnicity and, “more importantly, [an omission of] racism from the interpretive and analytical frames found in academic discourses” (p. 326).

**Institutional racism** refers to “the way the society, or particular institutions within it, such as the school, function to disadvantage certain groups or to advantage others by
operating within the terms of the racist frame of reference, or by simply failing to take account of the relevant specific needs and rights of those defined as belonging to a different ‘race’” (Figueroa, 1993, p. 93). Institutional racism can be extreme and formal such as the racist laws of apartheid. It can also be more subtle, unintentional and insidious even when there is no overt prejudice or racism (Figueroa, 1993).

According to Elliot & Fleras (1992), *ethnicity* can refer to “a principle which explains how people are defined, differentiated, organized, and entitled to group membership on the basis of certain physical or cultural characteristics held in common.” It can also consist of “a consciously shared system of beliefs, values, loyalties, and practices that pertain to members of a group who regard themselves as different and apart. The salient feature of ethnicity is the attachment that a person or group has to a common cultural heritage” (Elliot & Fleras, 1992, p. 332).

*Culture* embraces all that a group of people have together realized and pass on as part of their heritage. It refers especially to shared symbolic and cognitive systems, to language, beliefs, values, religion, way of life, and social institutions or patterns (Figueroa, 1993). Thus, as Banks (1981, p. 52) has pointed out, culture is a very broad term referring to all the ‘human made components of society’.

*Mainstream / dominant culture* refers to those in society who hold the most power and privilege, in this case, those that are white, male, heterosexual, middle-class and/or able-bodied.
I use the term *colonized gaze* to refer to my perspective or outlook that is based on and filtered through a colonial, western lens. Although the challenge of deconstructing my experiences of assimilation and colonialism is ongoing, I feel it is imperative to acknowledge my current positioning and experience of the subtle but insidious nature of colonialism.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The first section of the literature review frames the study by highlighting feminist perspectives. It begins with the contributions made by gender equity advocates for sport, the biases of 'traditional' feminist theory and its neglect of race, and concludes with a review of South Asian feminist literature which puts into perspective the 'white middle class bias' of feminist theory. The next section focuses on organizational and school culture, physical education and the hidden curriculum, and physical education settings (co-ed versus segregated). Indian women and sport, the damaging stereotypes and the pathologizing and blaming of the culture are discussed next in order to highlight the problems with strategies used in institutions and in the existing literature. Finally, the complex issues of voice, representation and identity are highlighted in order to understand and position the realities of Indian women within a racist, colonial and patriarchal society.

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

Gender Equity Advocates For Sport

According to Acker (1990), the world we live in is gendered, meaning that “advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine” (p. 146). Similarly, the sport system is also gendered. Girls and women often do not participate fully nor benefit from physical activity and sport since they are not afforded equitable access and the same opportunity as boys and men. Many girls and women are denied these experiences within our existing sport and education system which
covertly discriminates by race, class, sexuality, religion and gender (Birrell, 1990; Vertinsky, 1990; Dewar, 1991; Cahn, 1994). Relative to male representation, the current reality is that girls and women are under-represented at all levels of sport in Canada - in participation rates, in positions of power and influence, and in public recognition (CAAWS, 1993).

The traditional image of the 'ladylike' sportswoman continues to be pervasive in our society today (Hargreaves, 1994), and prevents equitable access to positions of power, influence, recognition and representation. Until recently, the "ideals of femininity have perpetuated and restricted the form and nature" of women's involvement in sport (Lovell, 1991, p. 60). According to Lovell (1991), women are socialized to personify grace and agility, not strength, power and aggression. They are encouraged to participate in non-contact sports and in activities such as aerobics in order to achieve the 'perfect', slim feminine physique. When female athletes transcend such 'feminine' qualities they are often considered freaks, unnatural, 'butch' and abnormally masculine (Hargreaves, 1989).

In many respects, the existing sport system continues to reflect and reinforce white, masculinist, heterosexist hegemony and discrimination based on gender, race, class, sexuality and (dis)ability (Dewar, 1991). Girls and women have been expected to catch up to boys and men, and to model their participation in sport by the values and traditions of male sport (Hargreaves, 1994). The challenge then, is to expand the definitions, norms and values of sport in order to meet the unique and diverse needs of all girls and women, regardless of race, class, sexuality, disability, and age. In order to do this, we must
address the inequities, biases, assumptions and privileges that exist within sport as well as those that exist within society at large.

Hoffman (1995) argues that we still face formidable challenges, regardless of the recent gains and efforts of the involvement of girls and women in all aspects of sport and physical education. She goes on to say that,

"the preferred strategy for bringing about change for girls and women has focused primarily on sport and the sport system. It seems, however, that better understanding of the links between the society is needed if we are to understand gender inequality in sport. We must act on that understanding. If we want to make changes in sport and physical activity, we have to extend our horizons well beyond the domain of sport and take into consideration the social and economic status of women ..." (p. 77).

We must take into consideration the gendered nature of society in general. According to Dorothy Smith (1987), “we must begin from the everyday experience of women and analyse how the everyday world of women is structured and embedded in the power relations of society” (p. 110). We cannot simply identify women and girls’ non-participation in physical activity as a ‘problem’ since this ignores the discriminatory structural factors that prevent women from being physically active (Flintoff, 1990). Frisby (1992) suggests that we raise serious questions regarding the allocation of financial and other resources for girls and womens’ sport programs since decision makers will support programs that reflect their own interests and values. She suggests that organizations adopt a more woman centered approach to address the role of the family and its impact on the economic and social issues, and that systemic changes be made to adequately represent the reality of women’s lives.
White Middle Class Bias & Its Neglect of Race

A broader, more inclusive approach that considers the specific needs and realities of girls and women needs to acknowledge that girls and women are not a homogeneous group.

According to Hargreaves (1994),

“generalizations based upon women as a supposedly homogeneous group assume a spurious notion of consensus and ignore discriminatory practices and competing interests. They tend to mask the essentially historical nature of the ‘needs of women’, the varied and contradictory features of sports for women and the wielding of power, not only between men and women, but between different groups of women and different groups of men as well” (p. 10).

Since the social world we live in is structured around hierarchical power relations of gender, race, class and sexuality, it would be too simplistic to suggest that individuals fit into one category as an oppressor or the oppressed. According to Dei (1996), “one can be the oppressed and an oppressor at the same time and at different times” (p. 61).

Dewar (1993) argues for a different way of theorizing as feminists since “white feminist sport sociologists have been, and continue to be, reluctant to develop ways of thinking and acting that allow us to work against the racist formations that exist not only in sport but also in our analyses of the sporting world” (p. 236). Women’s experiences of sexism are different although, as Spelman (1988) argues,

... the “problem of difference” for feminist theory has never been a general one about how to weigh the importance of our differences. To put it that way hides two crucial facts: First, the description of what we have in common “as women” has almost always been a description of white, middle class women. Second, the “difference” of this group of women - that is, their being white and middle class - has never had to be “brought into” feminist theory. To bring in “difference” is to bring in women who aren’t white and middle class (p. 4).
“Mainstream (white, middle-class) feminists have critiqued the power dynamics that exist within male-dominated epistemology, but other oppressed groups, like women from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, have exposed similar hierarchies of power within feminist theories and practices (hooks 1984, 1988). Findlay (1991) argues that within the framework of a race analysis, white middle class women must acknowledge their privilege and their role as oppressors. They must be challenged in the same way in which they have challenged men since it is “destructive to fight against one form of oppression while using patterns of another to do so” (Dei, 1996, p. 56). Society will not be transformed by removing only one form of oppression (Dei, 1996).

Regardless of the inroads made for girls and women in sport and physical activity, ‘traditional’ feminist theory and gender equity advocates for sport have worked with a white middle class bias and failed to consider the impact and influence of race and class on access and opportunities for participation. Nor have Canadian feminist physical educators and sportswriters paid serious attention to the matter of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ in women’s sport and physical activity (see the special edition of Canadian Woman Studies on “Women and Girls in Sport and Physical Activity,” 1995). Girls and women have been treated as a homogeneous group with similar motivations and barriers to their participation. This notion of ‘false universalism’ is an analysis which discusses the experiences and subordination of all girls and women regardless of other structural relations such as ethnicity, class and age. Such a notion is highly problematic since
perceived differences such as 'race' and 'ethnicity' are believed to have a tremendous influence on the physical activity patterns of girls and women in Canada (Scranton, 1992).

Due to the tendency for the white middle class bias of mainstream feminism, girls and women from diverse ethnic groups have historically been denied active agency as subjects of history and effectively silenced in society and sport. As a consequence, little research has been completed on their unique social histories and experiences (Scranton, 1992; Lovell, 1991; Smith, 1992). Rather, social practices use visible physical differences and discursive strategies to signify all women of color as "immigrant" and "other" regardless of their citizenship status (Lee, 1993). Much of what is written about "minority" groups implies that they are both homogeneous and inferior and that their health and exercise patterns are determined by an individual choice of lifestyles or ethnically grounded traditions or stereotypes. The structural conditions and the burden of racism and sexism that is endemic to Canadian society is often overlooked or excluded from analysis.

Within the social and cultural arena, there is a clear exclusion and absence of racialized girls and women. For example, Indo-Canadian girls and women, the focus of this study, are often stereotyped and perceived as weak and passive. However, they are stereotyped in this way through their exclusion in sport. Although some researchers have suggested that Indian girls are considered weak, passive and not interested in sport (Lovell, 1991), it is important to clarify that these are popular stereotypes of Indian girls and women in general. They are not necessarily stereotypes of their participation, since in sport, there is a clear absence or invisibility of Indo-Canadian girls and women. The popular stereotypes
have simply been imposed on Indo-Canadian girls' sport and physical activity participation.

Invariably, the unique and varied social histories and physical activity interests of Indo-Canadian girls and women are not considered and they are expected to fit within the dominant white, middle class male-defined notions of sport. The issue of racism within the narrow definitions of sport must be raised, however, the topic of racism has often been pushed to the background or omitted altogether. “Racism is what most educators and many other people are either afraid to talk about or continually and conveniently choose to ignore” (Dei, 1996, p. 67).

Although white middle class feminists may not consciously believe that their race is superior to any other, they are often plagued by a form of “white solipsism” - thinking, imagining, and speaking “as if whiteness described the world,” resulting in “a tunnel-vision which simply does not see non-white experiences or existence as precious or significant” (Rich, 1979, p. 306). Thus, mainstream feminism has been criticized by many Asian and black feminists, not only for being dominated by white, middle class women, but also for its silence on racism (Amos & Parmar, 1984; Davis, 1982; hooks, 1981).

Most recently, feminist scholars have begun to advocate a “feminist cultural studies” approach (Cole & Birrell, 1986) which would effectively highlight not only class and gender relations, but racial relations as well (Birrell, 1990). The neglect of race is a serious criticism leveled at scholars in all fields, not just those in sport. Carby (1982a)
argues that intellectual discourse, as well as our stereotypes, too often suggest that race means black and gender means woman. Birrell (1990) echoes a similar critique and points out that race continues to be treated as a variable rather than a relationship of power. This obscures and reduces diversity in sport by equating ‘race’ with Black and by equating Black athlete with Black male athlete (Birrell, 1990). Within this reductionist approach, women, including Indo-Canadian women, are invisible.

South Asian Feminists Respond

During the 1980’s, white, middle class feminists acknowledged but ignored their own race and class biases. However, in the early 1990’s, the mantra of ‘race, class, and gender’ was repeated routinely giving the impression that the problem of bias in mainstream feminism was resolved. But, “feminists from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean contend that attempts to deal with the problems stopped at the point of acknowledging the biases” (Agnew, 1996, p. 3). Mainstream feminists have contributed little work to address race and class biases and limited knowledge has been constructed about the ways in which race, gender and class intersect (Agnew, 1996).

In discussing Japanese-Canadians, Oiwa (1991) points out that what is often missing are the voices and feelings of the ‘persecuted’ themselves, their thoughts, wishes, what they actually did or failed to do and what meanings they attached to their thoughts and actions. Similarly, literature suggests that women of color have been silenced by being suppressed, excluded and misrepresented at every level of social interaction and have been placed at the margins by the dominant culture and sport (Douglas, 1988; Gates, 1990).
For South Asian feminists and other ‘women of color’, sexism and racism are equally salient and must be addressed as such. Diversities of experiences of these women have to be taken into account to identify and address issues of concern. Women of color, before allying themselves with men of their ethnic group to combat racism, must make sure that sexism is part of the agenda. They must also make sure that racism is on the feminist agenda before they ally themselves with white women to combat sexism (Dhruvrajan, 1990).

Black feminist criticism has enabled South Asian women to engage in the process of naming the sources of their oppression and understanding their systemic nature. Many South Asian women “have organized themselves and through community-based struggles are seeking greater access to the economic and social resources of Canadian society” (Agnew, 1990). In her latest work, Agnew (1996) “opens up the possibility of fuller cooperation among feminists across lines of race and class and suggests fresh insights into the further development of feminist theories and methodologies” (p. 5). Although we do not need to agree on everything, we do need to be able to challenge each other from the assumption that change is possible (Bunch, 1990, p.55). “Consciousness of the views of others is a necessary step in building antiracist feminist theories and practices” (Agnew, 1996 p 5). It is through such cooperation, understanding, acknowledging and giving voice that feminists can “preserve all women in their role as ‘knowers and actors’” (Smith, 1987, p. 105) and thereby attempt to avoid discrimination and damaging stereotypes based on race, gender and class. It is important that the education system broaden its’ notions of
who has knowledge, and that students of diverse backgrounds play a central role as
'knowers and actors' who can contribute to the evolution of the education system.

ORGANIZATIONAL / SCHOOL CULTURE

The organizational culture of schools impacts on the everyday lives of students and is an
important concept to be considered in understanding and interpreting Indo-Canadian girls'
experiences of sport and physical activity within the school system. Schein (1991) defines
organizational culture as:

"a pattern of shared basic assumptions; invented, discovered, or developed by a
given group; as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and
internal integration; that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and,
therefore; is to be taught to new members of the group as the; correct way to
perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (p. 247).

One of the weaknesses of this definition is that the organizational culture is viewed as a
homogeneous entity when multiple sub-cultures can exist within any organization (Meek,
1992). A more specific definition of school culture suggests that,

culture is about people in the organizational setting and is characterized by
behavior - what people say and do; relationships - how they work with and
through each other; attitudes and values - how assumptions, beliefs and prejudices
affect the formal and informal working of the organization (Whitaker, 1993, p.
92).

Within the context of gender and race, school cultures are socially constructed and are a
microcosm within the social structures of society. According to Rizvi (1992),

the organizational culture of schools in the United States is Anglo, conformist,
gendered and middle class and this often creates a social distance between teachers
and families of minorities (p. 207).
Morgan (1986) links culture, politics, power and difference when he suggests that “we can analyze organizational politics in a systematic way by focusing on relations between interests, conflict, and power. Organizational politics arise when people think differently and want to act differently. This diversity creates a tension that must be resolved through political means” (p. 148). Included in the framework of school culture, is the school curriculum, which has its own tensions, biases and differences that must also be addressed and resolved within the framework of politics and a critical analysis.

CURRICULUM

School curriculum is one highly significant form of social representation, and arguments over the curriculum must also be seen as arguments over who we perceive ourselves to be as Canadians (Pinar, 1993) within the broader social structures of the world we live in. As researchers and practitioners, we need to ask why the norms, values, ideas, perspectives and traditions of one social group should be adopted as standard by the institutions of society (Dei, 1996, p. 29).

In an article co-authored by myself and two colleagues (Vertinsky, Batth & Naidu, 1996), the issues of a biased pedagogy point to the silence of most school curricula, especially physical education curricula, about “Indianness” which allows for, and even encourages the perpetuation of popular disempowering stereotypes. Observations of physical education classes suggest that the values of male-oriented Western team sports and an emphasis on strength, power, competition and contact are still deeply ingrained in the school tradition and in the psyche of those who implement curricula (Humbert, 1995;
Vertinsky, 1992). Such curricula function to deny role models to Indo-Canadian girls as well as white female students. Many curricula consist of sexist and racist texts that perpetuate gender-insensitivities as well as culturally-insensitive programs.

Too many of us have come out of a system feeling like we were alienated while we were there ... and we’re having to try to figure this out in our adult life (“Bindi,” quoted in Naidu, 1996). (Vertinsky, Batth & Naidu, 1996, p. 9).

Racism is embedded in the individual and institutional practices of schools. According to the Ministry of Education in Ontario,

there is growing recognition that the educational structure, policies and programs have been mainly European in perspective and have failed to take into account the viewpoints, experiences, and needs of Aboriginal people, and many racial ethnocultural minorities. As a result, systemic inequalities exist in the school system that limit the opportunities for Aboriginal and other students and staff members of racial and ethnocultural minorities to fulfill their potentials. Educators, therefore, need to identify and change institutional policies that are racist in their impacts, if not in intent. In this regard, anti-racist and ethnocultural equity education goes beyond multicultural education, which focuses on teaching about cultures and traditions of diverse groups (1993, p. 45).

Although there seems to be an increase in the level of activity as it relates to anti-racist policy development, “little in the way of concrete, measurable programs and organizational change has taken place” (Tator & Henry, 1991, p. 117-118). Translating well meaning policy documents into concrete action plans is difficult due to the absence of appropriate guidelines and because accountability for these issues has often been left to the discretion of individual school boards or school principals (Dei, 1996). In addition to such a lack of accountability and the limitations of government-sponsored policies, “anti-racism [policies are] devoid of gender and class connotations in the official discourses in the same ways that class and gender were glaringly absent in the official discourses of the old multicultural education policies” (Rezai-Rashti, 1995b, p. 90).
According to Rezai-Rashti (1995b), many school principals, teachers and counselors are still very much influenced by the ideology of colonization and a strong belief in western superiority. Girls and women from ‘third world’ countries continue to be stereotyped as oppressed, powerless, submissive, and “as victims who must be rescued from the oppressive influences of their families and culture” (p. 90). As a result, they are expected to assimilate to the western way of life.

It is clear that the official education program which includes a whole range of learning in relation to cognitions, skills, emotions and attitudes, is biased. In addition, the hidden curriculum, “that form of learning for which we have some feeling, but for which we often find articulation difficult” (Seddon, 1983) is also biased and is just as significant for students. “It must be mastered if they are to make their way satisfactorily” (Kirk, 1992, p. 37). Seddon (1983) defines the hidden curriculum as the learning of knowledge, attitudes, norms, beliefs, values and assumptions which are communicated unintentionally, unconsciously, and unavoidably. It can be said that the hidden curriculum of the traditional Eurocentric, male-defined physical education curriculum is often unavoidable because it is communicated unconsciously. Students learn the hidden curriculum as an unavoidable and unintentional consequence of participating in the formal, routine activities of the school.
Co-ed or Separate Physical Education Setting?

Since most public schools in British Columbia are gender integrated and include students from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, the emphasis on gender integration or segregation in the physical education class is central. Issues of gender and race segregation in some private school settings are relevant topics which will discussed further on in this section. In the public school system, the current ongoing debate focuses on whether physical education classes should be gender segregated or separate. Are female only programs beneficial to girls? Practitioners and policies continue to be divided on this issue arguing over the meaning and practical implications of equal access and opportunity for girls and women. What is rarely discussed is the fact that girls are not a homogeneous group and that some may enjoy co-ed classes and others may not, or that such choices may be dependent on various circumstances and social conditions.

In the U.S., Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 prohibits the segregation of physical education by gender on the basis of providing equal opportunity for both girls and boys. The assumption that mixed-sex groupings automatically equate with equality of opportunity is limited in its understanding of how gender is conceptualized by teachers,
pupils, and the wider society (Talbot, 1990). The same activities, schedules, teachers and instructional strategies for both girls and boys does not mean sex stereotyping does not occur within these integrated classes (Griffin, 1981). Co-ed or mixed-sex physical education promotes a liberal notion of equal opportunities, stressing the importance of equal access. Such liberal statements are insufficient since “they leave untouched the hierarchical structures within which the sexes operate” (Miles & Middleton, 1990, p. 189).

Dewar (1993) points to the importance of exploring the ways in which notions of equal opportunity can reproduce rather than challenge and change oppression in sport. She stresses that gaining access to sport is not enough. Understanding the conditions under which access is achieved is critical. Arguments for equal opportunity that insist on the necessity of treating everyone the same mask the fact that in reality “equal treatment” often means treating all people as if they were white, middle-class, heterosexual, and male. Thus, being integrated into sport under these conditions means being assimilated into a system in which one has to deny or down play the existence of any “differences” in the name of developing “human” values, which in reality are the values of those in power (white, middle-class, heterosexual men) (Dewar, 1993, p. 231). Scranton (1986) supports this view suggesting that equal opportunity, in practice, often means equal access to the ‘male domain’. In such an assimilationist model, where the norm used is male, girls would be ‘co-opted into a male sphere of activity’ (Hargreaves, 1990, p. 302) where they would be required to ‘catch up’, ‘shape up’, and ‘measure up’ to male standards (Thomas, 1991, p. 62). Such a ‘masculinist elitist competitive norm of participation pervades classes so that less competitive and less skilled participants, girls and boys, including Indo-
Canadian girls, are shunted to the side as more aggressive students are allowed to dominate class games’ (Griffin, 1989, p. 227).

**Co-ed Classes**

The consequences of mixed-sex groupings support the notion that girls may indeed ‘lose out’ and that such groupings may be a negative and battering experience for girls (Thomas, 1991; Scranton, 1989; Evans et al, 1987; Wright, 1993). Co-ed classes also have been known to have a negative impact on the retention of girls in physical education in some parts of the Vancouver area which means that “instead of increasing opportunities for girls (the initial objective) the classes actually reduce opportunity and subject some girls to unfair evaluation and humiliation” (Wright, 1993, p. 30).

In co-ed classes, according to Solomon (1976), the unequal student participation patterns create a situation where the rich (highly skilled girls and boys) were getting richer and the poor (girls and low skilled boys) were getting poorer. Girls are often verbally and physically hassled by boys who control the behavior and dominate active participation of girls (Bain, 1990; Gilroy et al, 1985; Mahoney, 1985; Evans, 1989). Boys tend to leave girls out of game interactions while girls tend to give away scoring opportunities to the boys (Solomon, 1976). Boys appear to receive more attention than girls from teachers (Turvey & Laws, 1988) in most categories of interaction including instruction, praise, control, management and criticism (Allard, 1979; Brophy & Good, 1970; Evertson, Brophy & Good, 1973; Martin, 1972; Sikes, 1971). Finally, physical education teachers often have been known to have different expectations for boys and girls. Boys are praised
for performance while girls are praised for effort (Solomon, 1976). Thus, co-ed classes 
can produce problems of participation levels and confidence (Scranton cited in Turvey & 
Laws, 1988, p. 254) in which girls lose out.

In Orenstein’s (1994) description of minority students’ experience of school, she writes 
that “these kids aren’t dropping out - they’re being pushed out. We have to stop pointing 
at them and start pointing at ourselves” (p. 173). Perhaps the inequity issues of gender, 
race and sport are more about administration than about the students (Orenstein, 1994). 
Institutional and systemic influences are often overlooked in addressing inequities and 
biases. Similarly, we must ask if Indo-Canadian girls are being pushed or kept out of sport 
and physical activity, and what role educational institutions and systemic biases play in 
doing so.

**Separate Classes & Programs for Girls & Women**

As a strategy, segregation “does not have to compromise the principle of equality of 
opportunity, particularly when based on educational principles underpinned by the ultimate 
aim of integrating pupils” (Thomas, 1991, p. 67). For example, teaching girls-only 
football could be educationally justified by giving girls the confidence, experience, space 
and time to develop their potential, bearing in mind their previously limited experience of 
the game, and therefore, their comparative disadvantage in relation to boys (Thomas, 
1991). The provision of a segregated ‘closed space’ may provide many girls and women 
the opportunity to develop the confidence and motivation to participate and enjoy physical 
activity. A female-only philosophy may also offer the potential of a ‘liberating experience’
of sport by giving girls and women control over their own bodies, and as a means of accessing female companionship in a relatively safe environment (Lovell, 1991). In addition, such a philosophy can enable girls and women to escape from domination by boys and men and from experiences of sexism and discrimination. According to Hargreaves (1994), many girls and women benefit from and enjoy a collective, social experience which is sensitive, caring, encouraging, private and scheduled with girls and women in mind. She points out that the most successful community programs for women, are those that do not separate the sport from the social experience and opportunity.

A good example of a 'girls only' program is 'On The Move', an initiative designed to encourage non-active teenage girls to participate in a fun-filled, supportive, low skill level, team recreational activity. Based on research about the lack of sport activity programs designed specifically for girls, combined with the overwhelming successes of the initial 'On The Move' projects implemented in Ottawa and Port Coquitlam, Sport Canada was convinced to further develop the 'On The Move' concept. Subsequently, Promotion Plus: The BC Organization for Girls and Women in Sport was contracted to implement an ‘On The Move’ pilot project in B.C. Sport and recreation organizations from the Lower Mainland, Northern BC, and Vancouver Island participated in the pilot project and as a result contributed to the development of a comprehensive handbook that shares these valuable and practical experiences (Fenton, Kopelow & Viviani, 1994). Programmers continue to develop the program’s concept by creating market driven initiatives that meet the unique needs and interests of their communities. “The mandate of this program is to distribute information so that others will have the tools to be empowered to make a
difference in their communities for girls and women in physical activity and sport” (Fenton, et al, 1994). Although some of the ‘On The Move’ initiatives include First Nations girls, additional support, encouragement and tools to include girls from various race, class and disability backgrounds are required. Additional questions must be posed. Which girls are participating? Which ones are not participating? What biases and assumptions are reflected in the resources and by program leaders? How are program leaders privileged and how are such privileges reflected in the participants?

The major weaknesses in and criticisms of the separatist model are not only that it tends to reaffirm gender stereotypes and perpetuate myths but also perpetuates the domination of stronger girls. For example, girls who are highly skilled and more confident in their athletic abilities may dominate activities, receive more attention from teachers or have their interests and opinions heard more often. Race, class, sexuality and (dis)ability issues can also potentially get played out in such an environment. Marginalized girls’ varied voices, interests and needs many not be represented accurately within the dominant Eurocentric culture and sport. Consequently, separatism and exclusionist strategies do not lie easily with educational principles of integration and cooperation where pupils respect and value differences in order to share their learning (Thomas, 1991, p. 67). However, the concept of integration is highly controversial and the question, ‘integrate into whose values, norms, and standards?’ must be posed. Cooperation, respect and valuing of differences are not widely practiced, accepted or understood in society as a whole. Respect and valuing differences based on gender, race, and class in a dominant white, middle-class male society is an ongoing struggle.
According to West (1993), segregation or what he calls ‘arrogant group insularity’ has a limited function. As a transitional activity its purpose is “to preserve one’s sanity and sense of self as one copes with the mainstream” (p. 21). As a permanent option though, it is a self-defeating strategy since it “reinforces the very inferiority complexes promoted by the subtly racist mainstream” (p. 20). Others would disagree with this and support separate programs or facilities suggesting the importance of rebalancing power imbalances, maintaining equity, dignity, a sense of self or identity and to preserve group values. Since one of the research sites for this study is a segregated Sikh Punjabi school, it is important to contextualize and to consider separate ethnic schools as a variable.

Parallel or separate educational facilities are premised on the belief that genuine equality rests on the allocation of equal power and dignity among all cultural groups (Magsino, 1985). Special treatment over and above what is accorded to others through exposure to the regular curriculum as well as to special cultural retention classes (e.g. “Black Studies”), heritage language programs, and language immersion classes in some cases is critical for minority students in order to achieve equality in education (Fleras & Elliot, 1992). According to Fleras & Elliot (1992), the short-term goal of this perspective is protection of a student’s identity. The long-term goal is the establishment of separate educational streams that ostensibly discourage cultural interaction, but facilitate the transmission of group values and positive minority identities (p. 194).
Separate schools for Muslim students, for example, have received much support since acculturation and assimilation may be seen as eroding Muslim traditions, values, parental and community rights (Carroll & Hollinshead, 1993). Since both racial and sexual harassment are rampant, Muslim minorities understandably view segregation as the only way to provide a positive educational environment for Muslim girls (Troyna & Carrington, 1986). Racist attacks, economic recession and loss of jobs only serve to reinforce the solidarity of the Muslim community and a desire for separatism in many spheres including education and leisure (Carroll & Hollinshead, 1993). Some girls themselves are relieved at the freedom from racial and sexual harassment in a segregated educational environment (Haw, 1991).

INDIAN WOMEN & SPORT

Damaging Stereotypes

As a group, Asians are stereotyped as immigrants, foreigners, tradition bound, submissive, weak and victimized (Razack, 1995; Jiwani, 1992a,b, 1996). In the mass media of the dominant society, Asians are branded as terrorists, illegal refugees, hordes, exotic others, aliens, and corrupt peoples (Jiwani, 1992a). Some researchers (Razack, 1995; Hargreaves, 1994; Lovell, 1991) have adequately and critically addressed and responded to issues of gender and race in sport and the education system, however, stereotypes of Indian girls and women in sport continue to surface in British educational research and reflect the institutionalized racism within British society (Trivedi, 1984). Indian girls and women continue to be targeted because of so-called low participation rates and negative
attitudes, and are stereotyped as passive, shy, weak, frail and therefore not interested in sport.

When Indo-Canadian women are marginalized in this way, they are treated as 'different' from the 'norm' with a tendency to look at 'problems of being Asian' rather than 'problems of gender and relations between gender and ethnicity' (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 255). In addition, researchers, rarely ask about the risks for Asian girls of challenging the stereotype, for when they do they are dealt with more severely than their counterparts (Razack, 1995). "An uncritical focus on cultural differences encourages researchers to simply accept at face value the responses of their research subjects without attempting to understand their various histories or social contexts" (Razack, 1995, p. 72). A critical analysis based on the voices of Indo-Canadian girls and women as well as South Asian feminist philosophy is essential for debunking myths, stereotypes and the 'adamant' efforts of some British researchers to pathologize Indian culture and families.

Pathologizing & Blaming the Culture

A deficiency philosophy (Hoover, 1990) or cultural deficit model (Stanley, 1995) has been applied to a great deal of British research about Indian women and physical activity. The limited amount of research that investigates Indian women and physical education has tended to concentrate on a cultural deficit approach (Carrington, Chivers & Williams, 1987; Carrington & Williams, 1988; Carroll, 1993). This work is problematic because it, supports the view that the genes, language, history, and/or cultures of Black and most other people of color are deficient in some way due to cognitive deficit, inferior genes, childlike intelligence, worthless ethos/worldview, dialect/language
simplicity, low self-concepts and attitudes, nonsubstantive ideas, lack of ability to think for themselves, or exotically different, almost nonhuman folkways or learning styles (Hoover, 1990, p. 251).

How gender differences in school physical education and community leisure activities may be heightened by ethnicity (Scranton, 1992) seems to be the focus in most of this literature. The cultural deficit model (Stanley, 1995) suggests and places the fault and the responsibility on the individual or on the home life. This is a very seductive and dangerous approach which only serves to divert attention away from a critical analysis of the institutional structures of formal education and attributing causal priority for “failure” to factors within the individuals themselves (Dei, 1996). It shifts attention away from the social conditions, placing the burden of change on the individual, thus, relieving the larger society and institutions of responsibility for addressing inequities of gender, race and class.

Similarly, according to criticism from Raval (1989), the cultural deficit model as exemplified in Carrington’s work, is based on a Eurocentric framework and employs definitions which fail to grasp the leisure and sport experience of Asian women or to address the racism of British society. An adequate analysis of the impact of institutionalized sexism and racism or the social or institutional response to Indian women and girls is completely overlooked (Raval, 1989). As Brah and Minhas (1985) point out, researchers on Asian girls “rarely start from a structural perspective.” Instead, “the twin notions of ‘cultural clash’ and ‘intergenerational conflict’” construct the Asian family as the source of the problem even though evidence suggests that Asian and white girls experience of intergenerational conflict and oppressive family life was no different (p. 16-17). According to Brah (1992),
there is no evidence to suggest that conflicts among South Asian families are much
different from those in white families. Asian parents tend to be portrayed as
"authoritarian," "conservative," and supposedly "opposed to the liberating
influences of schools." Yet there is as much variation among Asian parents on
issues concerning the education of their children as can be expected in any group
of parents (p. 74).

They have thus failed to critically identify and locate the racist practices, power inequities
and the real conflicts which Asian students and girls face.

By applying such deficiency philosophies and models to Asian cultures and family, they are
pathologized by emphasizing their incompatibility with mainstream culture. In such
instances, talk about cultural differences serves to mask the process of domination and
subordination (Razack, 1995). Mukherjee (1992) states that "culture is not the issue -
racist thought, ideology and practices are" (p. 157). Razack (1995), though, points out
that "culture is very much the issue in an environment of culturalized racism; it is the
explanation of choice for the underachievement of racial minorities" (p. 78).

The assumption that Asian culture oppresses women is based on the cultural deficit model.
Asian women when asked about their low participation rates, however, point to examples
of institutionalized racism as the main problem rather than their culture (Hargreaves,
1994). In some cases, though, students themselves have internalized the cultural deficit
view of their teachers as evidenced by their criticism of their parents (Carroll &
Hollinshead, 1993).
Few scholars pose questions about how educational policies are developed under “the sign of culture” rather than “the terrain of racism” (Rattansi, 1992, p. 14), and question research that denigrates Asian cultures and families while leaving the school system and social structures entirely unexamined (Razack, 1995). The popular myth is that individuals fail schools but schools do not fail individuals. According to McLaren (1993), denying and/or shifting responsibility for school failures avoids a critical interrogation of students’ experiences of school. What happens in schools and why? How do students experience schools and why? How does this experience affect their learning outcomes and/or conventional definitions of school “success” and “failure”? For Asian populations, the deficit paradigm focuses on culture, family and the individual. If Asians do well in school, it is because of their unique cultural characteristics; in a classic double bind, culture also explains dysfunction, most often failure to “acculturate” (Razack, 1995, p. 70).

The work of British researcher Paul Ghuman (1994) is an excellent example of the use of the cultural deficit model. His research “focuses on Asian culture and family to the almost complete exclusion of any structural, historical and social factors that affect schools and schooling outcomes” (Razack, 1995, p. 70). His use of the term “host society” to mean the dominant society suggests a hierarchical relationship and power differential between the dominant white British society and minority ‘others’. When culture and acculturation are the frameworks for the exploration of schooling, the focus is shifted away from “the host” and on to the “foreigners”. Their foreignness thus becomes the problem to be solved. From this perspective, the dominant culture represents
civilization, Asian cultures the intruders from less advanced societies (Razack, 1995). As we near the 21st century, the forces and adversities of colonialism continue, albeit, wearing a different mask.

VOICE, REPRESENTATION & IDENTITY

_These girls may speak, but since no one listens to them, they are still silenced. That may be why in Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America, black girls report that, although they speak up readily, they nonetheless feel a strong sense of hiddenness, that people “don't know the real me”_ (Orenstein, 1994, p. 183).

An individual can be silenced even when present. My representation at a boardroom table or in a sport program doesn’t necessarily mean my interests, needs, perspectives or experiences will be considered. Even the most well intentioned efforts to create equitable access and opportunity to sport and physical activity will not lead to a positive outcome without first developing a clear understanding of the complex issues of voice and representation. According to Taylor et al (1995),

_... girls for the most part are not heard in public, or if heard are generally spoken about in the third person. These girls have voices, they are perfectly capable of first-person speech, but as they will say repeatedly, nobody listens, nobody cares, nobody asks what they are feeling and thinking_ (p. 1).

Listening is a complex task that requires a questioning of not only “Who is speaking” but also “Who is listening” since there are deep psychological and political implications of this joining (Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan, 1995). The former reflects the voice of the speaker or, in this case, the girls participating in this study and their particular class and cultural locations. The latter focuses on me as the researcher, my class and culture as well as similarities and differences across class and culture. The importance of creating an
audience who is willing and able to listen and hear across differences based on race and
gender is critical in shifting the focus as is the willingness to take action. In order to
effectively work towards change and to develop inclusive practices, we must begin to
question 'who is speaking, who is listening and who is taking action?' In the sport and
physical activity literature, Indo-Canadian girls have been the objects of a one-way gaze,
namely the gaze of mostly white researchers, who have tended to objectify them without
creating spaces for listening and hearing their unique and varied voices. Creating spaces
for marginalized voices, however, often leads to additional problematic issues, namely the
appropriation of voice. Women of color can be further marginalized and rendered
invisible when their voices are appropriated, misconstrued and stereotyped. What
opportunities are they given to represent themselves without their voices being
appropriated by others for their own purposes? In addition to the appropriation of voice,
the issue of appropriation of silence must also be understood and questioned.

Listening to, hearing and acting on girls’ voices is just as important as listening for the
unspoken - “places where there is no voice or where girls may have silenced their
experience or have simply not been heard ... ” (Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan, 1995, p. 14).
Listening for subtleties and for what’s not said allows researchers to get to the deeper,
hidden layers of what girls are thinking. In the presence of racial and ethnic differences,
the difference between political resistance - not telling - and psychological dissociation -
not knowing - becomes more complex (Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan, 1995) and dependent
on trust, safety, survival and resistance strategies. In the presence of a sexist, racist and
colonial context, girls will often “commit adultery of the brain” (Woolf, 1938) by
changing their voices to blend in or harmonize with the prevailing key and by giving up their questions in order not to jeopardize their social positions (Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan, 1995). In the sport and physical activity arena, the voices of Indo-Canadian girls are either missing, inadequately represented or appropriated. An anti-racism discourse calls for “creating spaces for everyone, but particularly for marginal voices to be heard. It calls for dominant groups in society to listen to the voices of subordinated groups” (Dei, 1996, p. 30), to take action, and to provide opportunities for accurate representations.

CONCLUSION

“The darkened eye restored ... ’tis woman’s strongest vindication for speaking that the world needs to hear her voice ... The world has had to limp along with the wobbling gait and the one-sided hesitancy of a man with one eye. Suddenly the bandage is removed from the other eye and the whole body is filled with light. It sees a circle where before it saw a segment. The darkened eye restored, every member rejoices with it.”

--- Anna Julia Cooper, 1892 (quoted in Tavris, 1992).

The analogy of the “darkened eye, wobbling gait and one-sided hesitancy that permits only a partial vision of the whole” is effective in describing the problem of viewing the world not only from the male perspective but also from the white western Eurocentric perspective. Physical educators, for example, continue to have a ‘partial vision of the whole’ since many of them view the world through the ‘darkened eye’. Many are resistant to looking beyond the partial vision, some are hesitant and fear the unknown while others lack the knowledge or ability to look past their comfortable and familiar locations to the whole of society. As Razack (1995b) notes,

“paying attention to race and ethnicity cannot continue to mean that the dominant culture is at the center and all other cultures are relegated to the margins. The
challenge is to find ways to build critical skills in this arena, even though mainstream groups can feel that the nation itself is at stake ... “ (p. 79).
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

A hunter, strolling through the forest in quest of game, came across a grove of trees, many of which had targets painted on their bark ... and in the bull's eye - right in the dead centre - of each target an arrow was lodged. A person, whom the hunter correctly took to be the archer, was sitting against one of the trees. “You must be the greatest archer in the nation!” exclaimed the hunter. “No. Just average.” responded the archer humbly. “Average archers could never plant their arrows in the centers of each of these targets?” protested the hunter. “They could if they shot the arrow and constructed the target in the right sequence,” the archer responded.

Author unknown

This study employed hermeneutic sensibilities and five ethnographic techniques to address the research questions and to interpret and give meaning to the data. The purpose of ethnography is “to describe and interpret cultural behavior” (Wolcott, 1985) and the purpose of hermeneutics is to interpret, mediate and create meaning (Smith, 1991). The ethnographic techniques used included observations, focus group interviews, one-on-one semi-focused interviews, document analysis and field notes.

Ethnography

Cultural interpretation is the essence of ethnographic endeavor. Ethnographies are analytical descriptions or reconstructions of intact cultural scenes and groups which delineate the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge and behaviors of some people (Fetterman, 1984). Clifford Geertz (1973) offers a textbook definition of “doing ethnography” as “establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary, and so on” (p. 6) Producing an ethnography, on the other hand, is the result of rigorous analysis and paying riveted
attention to field notes. “Being there” (Geertz, 1988) and then portraying a different life
in the context of a specific culture - conveying the insider’s sense-making view - is the
essence of ethnography. Ethnographers might well echo Louis Armstrong’s sentiments
when he was asked to define jazz, and responded, “I know it when I hear it” (quoted in
Ayers, 1989, p. 11).

**Hermeneutics**

Eighteenth century philosophers were full of optimism that life in general could be
systematically brought under the control of correct logical procedure. It is *that*
assumption, of truth being ultimately a methodological affair, that much of contemporary
hermeneutics wishes to challenge (Smith, 1991). Since the nineteenth century, three
themes of hermeneutic inquiry have been present: the inherent creativity of interpretation,
the pivotal role of language in human understanding, and the interplay of part and whole in
the process of interpretation. Thus, the 4 requirements of hermeneutics research are:

- to develop a deep attentiveness to language itself since we all use it differently
- a deepening of one’s sense of the basic interpretability of life itself (a matter of
taking up the interpretive task for oneself rather than simply receiving the
delivered goods as bearing the final word).
- to rescue the specificities of our lives from the burden of their everydayness to
  show how they echo within a grander scheme of things
- inherent creativity. Hermeneutics is about creating meaning, not simply
  reporting on it.

Good interpretive research demonstrates an *understanding of what it is that is being
investigated*. It is a way of thinking and acting that is *acutely aware of the storied nature*
of human experience (Smith, 1991). By paying close attention to the storied nature of the
girls' sport and physical activity experiences, “meaning is made rather than found” (Taylor
et al, 1995, p. 29) and interpretation of the girls' voices and experiences will vary
depending on the gender, race and class of the listener. Everyone will not hear the same
thing because we do not leave our various histories at the door when we enter a room.

Autobiography: The Researcher's Role

According to Collins (1990), “women of color, particularly those in academe, have a
unique vantage point, a marginal status in society, that can be designated as the ‘outsider-
within’” (p. 229). Razack (1995) also suggests that ethnic researchers may be better
positioned to respect cultural differences although such differences can be viewed
uncritically and taken as a given. My insider/outside/both/within roles have advantages
and disadvantages. As a physically active Indo-Canadian woman researching Indo-
Canadian girls' sport experiences, thus an insider, I believe I have a better understanding
of the total complexity of the system in which I plan to conduct my research (Wolcott,
1985). The disadvantages of being an insider, according to Wolcott (1985), is being
‘familiar with’ and ‘at home’ within the environment of the Indian school and other
Indians and, thus, potentially taking for granted aspects of the culture which may be
relevant to the study.

As an Indo-Canadian woman who has grown up in an assimilationist society, I am the
assimilated “I”/eye, the outsider in relation to the Indo-Canadian girls and lacking a
genuine tie to my Indian culture, values and beliefs. Being caught between both the Indian
culture and the western culture locates me in 'the hyphen', between insider-outsider and self-other (Fine, 1994). As a border worker, moving back and forth between both sides, I hope to 'work the hyphen' and engage in social struggles with those who have been exploited and subjugated. By 'working the hyphen', Fine (1994) suggests that “researchers probe how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations” (p. 72). By doing so, she claims that we reveal far more about ourselves and about the structures of Othering.

SELECTION OF SITES AND PARTICIPANTS

This section begins by explaining the reasons for selecting the school sites in this study. This is followed by a discussion of the culture and organization of each school. I begin by highlighting Bimini School, the private school that I first visited, and how I specifically gained access to the school and selected the four participants for this study. Finally, I explain how I gained access to the two public schools, Preston Secondary and Timmer Secondary schools, and illustrate the girls' connections to each school.

Pseudonyms are used for all schools, staff, and participants. Of the four girls, three of them chose their own pseudonyms, while the fourth did not care if her real name was used, thus, I chose a pseudonym for her. Pseudonyms are used because the girls felt more comfortable, and although I would have liked to have named the schools, I felt that I should treat all individuals and schools alike by maintaining confidentiality and anonymity.
Site Selection

This study includes three sites (Bimini School, Preston Secondary School, and, Timmer Secondary School) for the following reasons. In order to elicit information specific to the purpose of this study, I decided to select Bimini School, a Kindergarten to grade 10, segregated, Sikh Punjabi school, as the primary research site for a variety of reasons. The large population of Indo-Canadian students at this school enabled me to select participants with a wide range of interests, skill levels and family backgrounds. Within this environment, the grade 10 girls participated in an ‘all girls’ PE class. This gender and race segregated setting was important since it allowed me to explore and identify the girls’ voices and experiences as ‘Indo-Canadian females’ in segregated PE classes.

The other two schools, Preston Secondary and Timmer Secondary, were chosen for a variety of reasons. Both of the schools were in close proximity to each other and to Bimini School. Three of the four girls that I was interested in following and interviewing were planning to attend them as they moved to grades 11 and 12. Finally, both of the schools had a student population of diverse racial backgrounds. Of the four girls that were chosen for in-depth study, one of them transferred to Preston School. Two of the girls transferred to Timmer School and planned to take PE 11. The fourth girl transferred to a school in Vancouver.

Access to Bimini School

This school is a private Sikh Punjabi school located in the Newton area of Surrey. I originally visited the school in the fall of 1995, to do an observation and interview
assignment for an ethnography course. During this visit, I observed the grade 10 girls' PE class play floor hockey and interviewed the PE teacher. The high level of enthusiasm, skill and participation of the girls in this class dispelled many myths and stereotypes about Indo-Canadian girls' participation in sport and physical activity and left me with many questions regarding their experiences and the school context within the broader mainstream Eurocentric society.

Access to the school was established easily beginning with consent to do the ethnographic class assignment. Based on this initial visit to the school, a trusting relationship was developed between myself and the girls' grade 10 PE teacher. Before I even spoke to her about choosing Bimini School as a potential site for my research, she offered me her support. A formal letter of introduction, outline of the research proposal, and a letter of intent were submitted and approved by the school. Ethical approval from UBC and the Surrey School Board was also secured. Although I had been introduced to the principal, some of the staff and receptionists, I interacted primarily with the grade 10 girls' PE teacher who acted as the liaison between myself and the school administrators when securing formal approval for the study. I believe my role as an "insider" made entry to the research site relatively easy.

**Selection of Participants from Bimini School**

The grade 10 girls PE class at Bimini School consisted of 19 girls. From this class, four girls were chosen for in-depth study which allowed me to explore the selected issues with a focus on *depth* rather than *breadth*. This number was manageable and I was able to
gather rich data based on in-depth data collection. Because generalizability was not the aim, the small group size provided "an opportunity to develop our understanding of and our approach to working with difference. This method also stands for us as a model for individual attention and sustained listening to girls that is possible outside a research relationship" (Taylor et al, 1995, p. 19).

Following focus group interviews with all the girls who were at school on the day of the interviews and who had parental consent (N=14), four girls were chosen for in-depth study in consultation with their grade 10 PE teacher. The primary selection criteria was willingness and approval of the girls and their parents to participate in the study. Originally, I had a specific selection criteria which included diversity of articulation abilities, athletic skills, confidence and interest in taking grade 11 PE at the public school. It was also important that the four girls planned to transfer to the same public school in grade 11. However, as I got to know the girls, I realized that my criteria would have to be more flexible. Guided by my intuition and the following reasons, I knew which girls I wanted to include in my study. For example, as an exceptional athlete, Tina had been given 'the most valuable player' award for the past few years. Most of her responses to my questions, whether they were related to sport or not, invariably revolved around sport. Because she was so passionate about sport, I felt it was imperative to select her. The second girl, Sukhi, was very outspoken, feisty and president of the student body. As a leader and a risk taker, I felt I had to include her in the study. The third girl, Amy, was also a good athlete, and in fact, was given 'the most valuable player' award at the end of grade 10 over Tina. Although Amy was a good athlete, she seemed to stand apart from
the other two girls because of her calmness, articulation abilities and intelligence. She seemed to place just as much importance and interest in PE as on her other courses. The fourth girl, Jasmin, was chosen, because, again, she seemed to offer something different from the other girls. Although she enjoyed and participated in sports, she wasn’t as skilled as the other three girls or as confident as them. She also came across as somewhat shy. She was the only one of the four who had a short, styled hair cut which, in the context of Sikh culture, is significant since orthodox Sikh’s do not cut their hair. I felt it was critical to include the first three girls in the study because they stood apart from the rest of the class in terms of their interest in physical education and sport. Jasmin didn’t stand out in the same way as the other three but she had other qualities that added to the diversity of the criteria.

At this point, I also realized that selecting four girls who would be attending the same public school in grade 11 was not feasible. Tina, Sukhi and Amy were planning on attending three separate schools. Sukhi would be in Vancouver, and the other two in Surrey at Timmer and Preston. Fortunately, Jasmin and Amy were planning to attend Timmer School. Of the four, Amy, Jasmin and Tina were planning on taking grade 11 PE. However, only Amy and Jasmin actually did take PE 11. Tina wasn’t able to register due to PE conflicting with required courses and Sukhi wasn’t interested in the formal PE setting and had no intention of registering.
Access to Preston & Timmer Schools

Compared to the ease with which I gained access and consent at Bimini School, both Preston and Timmer schools presented some minor barriers, likely due to school board policy. At Timmer School my primary contact was with the principal, who advised me not to have any contact with the girls until they brought in signed consent forms from their parents. Amy brought her consent form in immediately, while Jasmin took a little longer. However, I was not permitted to contact Jasmin to remind her. Rather, I was advised to ask Amy to remind Jasmin to bring in her consent form. At Preston School, I was assigned to one of the counselors who acted as my official contact and who directed me to the girls’ various classrooms to distribute and collect consent forms.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data collection for my study utilized a combination of ethnographic techniques - focus group interviews, one-on-one interviews and observations - because I believed that they would provide the kind of information that would assist me in understanding the participants and allow me to ‘hear’ their voices. Data collection was broken up into two phases. Phase 1 of the data collection process took place at Bimini School in the Spring of 1996, beginning with broad based observations of PE classes and the general school culture, followed by focus group interviews with most of the grade 10 girls. The first set of one-on-one interviews were conducted at this time with the four girls that were selected for in-depth participation in the study. Phase 2 of the data collection process took place after the girls had transferred to grade 11, during the fall of 1996 and winter of 1997 at the two public schools. This stage of the process focused primarily on
observations of the two girls taking grade 11 PE. The second set of one-on-one interviews, with all four of the girls, took place at this time, and concluded the data collection process. Document analysis and the taking of fieldnotes were ongoing throughout the study.

**Observations**

Denzin (1989) suggests that “all observation notational records should contain explicit reference to participants, interactions, routines, rituals, temporal elements, interpretations, and social organization.” In the early stages of my research, I engaged in broad based observations of PE classes and the general school culture “to discover the recurring patterns of behavior and relationships” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 79) underlying the meanings, values and experiences of physical activity. The goal of observation in my study was to address both areas of my research questions - the girls’ experiences of physical activity and the role of the segregated and the public school system.

**Phase One Observations - Spring 1996:** During the first phase of the study in May and June of 1996, observations took place at Bimini School at which time I observed four PE classes. Unfortunately, observations were cut short because of various special events and year end exams for senior students. As a result, the focus group interviews and the one-on-one interviews took precedence during this phase.

On my first visit to the school, I was introduced to the grade 10 girls during their PE class at which time I described the study and distributed parental consent forms (Appendix A).
The data collection process began with broad based observations of the PE classes and the school culture to gain rapport with the participants and to become familiar with the school environment and routines. Eventually, as I settled into the research process and into my role as a researcher and visitor to the school, my observations became more focused. Descriptions included the gym layout, the participants, their roles as participants, interactions between each other, conversations and discussions, the sequence of events during the class, the role of the physical education instructor and how she interacted with the students.

**Phase Two Observations - Fall 1996:** The four girls transferred to three different schools, one which was in Vancouver and the other two in Surrey. The two girls at Timmer School in Surrey were the only ones taking PE 11. I attended five of their classes in October and November. I had hoped to conduct some observations at Preston School where one of the other girls was playing varsity basketball. Due to conflicting information and schedules, however, I was unable to attend basketball practices. At this point I decided that I would limit any further observations to the two students in their PE classes at Timmer School. Observations of this co-ed PE class focused on gender and race dynamics, conversations and discussions, the girls behavior and body language, their interactions with each other and other students, the role of the white male physical education instructor and his interactions with the students.

Observations were time consuming. This became a limitation as I was spending a great deal of time observing the PE classes at Timmer School even though a few times the girls
did not show up when expected. The research design, process and timeline were adjusted and there were no further observations. One-on-one interviews were scheduled with the four girls as the final data collection tool.

**Focus Group Interviews**

The focus group interview method assumes that an individual's attitudes and beliefs do not form in a vacuum since people often form their own opinions by listening to others (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). This method is socially oriented, less expensive than questionnaire surveys and enables the researcher to explore why people feel the way they do about an issue (Bernard, 1994). This method addressed both areas of my research questions - the girl's experiences and the school culture.

The focus group interviews were conducted during phase 1 of the data collection process in the spring of 1996 while at Bimini School. Of the nineteen grade 10 girls invited to the focus group interviews, 14 participated. On the day of the interviews, some of the girls were away and others were not interested in participating and did not give consent. Of the four girls chosen for in-depth study, only three were available for the focus group interviews. Although consent was given, the fourth girl was absent on the day of the interviews. Because I had expected more of the girls to participate in the focus groups, I had divided up the 19 girls and planned and scheduled 3 focus groups. On the day of the interviews, I shuffled the schedule and implemented 2 focus groups. The first focus group included six girls and the second one, eight girls. Each focus group took 1-1.5 hours to implement. A focus group interview guide (Appendix B) was prepared in advance and
permission to use the tape recorder during the focus group interviews and potential one-on-one interviews was requested and granted.

One-on-One, Semi-Focused Interviews

One-on-one interviews are a useful way to obtain individual experiences and meanings, how individuals conceive of their world and how they explain or 'make sense' of the important events in their lives (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993, p. 423). My aim was to facilitate the participant’s sharing of their perspectives about physical activity and sport by allowing the perspectives to unfold as the participants view them, not as I view them. The interviews addressed all areas of my research questions.

Two sets of one hour interviews were conducted with all four girls. The first set of interviews took place during Phase 1 in June 1996 at Bimini School while the girls were in grade 10. The second set of interviews were implemented during Phase 2 in February 1997 when the girls were in grade 11 at various public schools. The interview questions (Appendix C) were semi-focused with open-ended questions and probes for guidance.

Document Analysis

Documents, reports, policy manuals, administrative procedures, mission statements, belief statements, yearbooks, and anti-racism documents (Appendix D) were collected and reviewed to provide background information on the three schools. These documents provided a useful starting point and helped to frame the social context and the school culture.
Fieldnotes

Fieldnotes consisted of elaborate descriptions of events and interactions as well as **scratch notes** (key words, quotes of conversations, feelings) and **head notes** (impressions, questions, concerns, feelings, and 'follow-up' reminders). In addition to fieldnotes, a journal was maintained to serve as a personal account of the research process and of self reflections on my role as a researcher.

DATA ANALYSIS

"The data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 111). This process was facilitated by the use of the qualitative software program, **Q.S.R. NUD.IST**. In addition, inductive analysis was the approach taken in order to allow the patterns to emerge during the research and analysis phases rather than the patterns being imposed on the data prior to data collection. The process of analysis involved organizing the data, generating categories, themes and patterns, testing the emerging themes against the data, and searching for alternative explanations of the data (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Huberman & Miles, 1994).

The data analysis began by transcribing the interviews, focus groups and observations into raw data which was then converted and transported into the Q.S.R. NUD.IST software program. Q.S.R. NUD.IST enabled me to efficiently organize the data into summaries, themes and stories with the use of coding and clustering (Huberman and Miles, 1994). Order, structure and meaning were brought to the data collected by searching for general
statements about relationships among categories of data (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Further categories, themes and patterns were generated to focus the data and to find significant classes of things, persons and events and the properties which characterize them (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). At this stage the data was displayed in an organized way. The compressed information permitted me to organize my conclusions in the form of structured summaries, synopses, and vignettes (Huberman and Miles, 1994).

The Q.S.R. NUDIST program helped facilitate the data analysis process, in particular, the discovery, definition and development of emerging themes and patterns. I ensured that the interpretation of the data was based on the information from the girls, thus, on the data itself, rather than on my perspectives or hunches. For example, one of the girls spoke at length about sport as a deterrent to getting involved in drugs and alcohol. When all the data was searched, however, there was no other mention of this issue, thus, I was unable to include this as a theme in the analysis. Finally, data analysis involved seeking alternative explanations for the findings, thereby verifying the data obtained. This was done when a theme or a pattern was identified in an attempt to confirm or qualify a finding (Huberman and Miles, 1994).

RECIPROCITY

Students and staff gave generously of their time to be interviewed. School staff assisted with scheduling of interviews, observations and general access to the school and the girls. In appreciation for their time and assistance, I reciprocated with appropriate gestures (Marshall & Rossmen, 1989) such as donated water bottles, wrist bands, etc. for students
and 'women and sport' t-shirts for staff who were key to the research process.

Reciprocity fit within the constraints of research, personal ethics and my role as a researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). A copy of the research results will also be given to the schools who would like them. I am also prepared to share research results as well as my time and personal experiences with the girls if they indicate an interest.

**TIME LINE**

The data collection took place over two time periods. Phase 1 of the study took place at the Sikh Punjabi school in the Spring of 1996 while the girls were in Grade 10. Phase 2 took place at the public school in the fall of 1996 with the final interviews being conducted in February 1997 when the girls were in grade 11. The observations and interviews were conducted over two months at each phase of the study for a total of four months of data collection. This ensured that more of an accurate representation of the girls' experiences was obtained by allowing some time between observations and interviews. Each interview took between 1-1.5 hours in length. Data analysis continued for approximately three months following the data collection which allowed me a chance to further reflect on the emerging themes and patterns.

**ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

**Institutional Approval:** Ethical approval was received from the UBC Ethics Committee (Appendix E) and the Surrey School Board. Informed consent was also obtained from all three schools that participated in the study.
Consent from participants: Informed consent forms were prepared and distributed to participants requesting their participation in the study. The forms fully described the study, its goals and methodology. A statement describing the research aims and methodology was given to all participants and I made myself available to answer further questions. The participants and parents of participants were asked to sign the consent forms to give permission to observe, interview and to conduct focus groups.

Confidentiality and anonymity was ensured to protect participant privacy. I was sensitive, respectful and sincere with the participants and staff. Anonymity was maintained by using pseudonyms. Data has only been used for thesis and publication and/or for purposes agreed upon by the participant and organizations involved.

Freedom from harm: Participants and schools were not asked to share information that they were uncomfortable sharing or that would harm them in any way. Their participation was strictly voluntary. Participants were told that they were free to discontinue their involvement at any time if they chose.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In order to highlight the voices of the girls in this study regarding their particular experiences in private and public schools, this chapter is separated into two sections. The first section, 'contextualizing the research sites', is a comprehensive discussion situating the three research sites/schools in their social context. The second section, 'voices, silences & experiences of participants', begins with a profile of the girls in the study who symbolically represent threads central to the fabric of this study. This sets the stage for an exploration of the girls' sport and physical activity experiences, voices and silences within the education system. A tapestry of their experiences will be woven through a discussion of themes and patterns that emerged throughout the study.

Pseudonyms were used for all schools, staff, and the girls. Of the four girls, three of the girls chose their own pseudonyms while the fourth did not care if her real name was used, thus, I chose a pseudonym for her. Pseudonyms were used because the girls felt more comfortable and although I would have liked to have named the schools, I felt that I should treat all individuals and schools alike by maintaining confidentiality and anonymity.

A. Contextualizing the Research Sites

1. BIMINI SCHOOL

Bimini School has two locations. The Vancouver location is a K-7 school, while the research site for this study is a K-10 school located in the Newton area of Surrey. According to Statistics Canada, this area has the largest number of single families living in
poverty. Because of the ethno-religious specificity of the school, students at the Surrey location commute from all over the mainland, from Vancouver to Abbotsford. A fleet of buses owned by the school provide transportation for many of these students.

Bimini School is a Sikh Punjabi school, run by a board of trustees, which receives 50% of its funding from the provincial government and the remainder from parents through monthly tuition fees. The purpose of the school is to establish and operate the Bimini School using the provincial schools’ curriculum and also to teach Punjabi, Sikh history, Sikh religion, gurbani, kirtan, Sikh culture (Yearbook, 1996). Because of these additional courses, the school day is extended and the course load heavy. Each school day begins with kiertan (prayer) in the ‘in house’ gurdwara (temple) from 8:30-9:12am. This is followed by three classes before lunch (11:33 - 12:18) and then four classes after lunch. The school day ends at 3:25pm.

The school first opened in 1986 with about 70 students. By 1996/97, there were 750 students. According to the schools’ mission statement, Bimini School,

"is a learning institution that is unique in following the values and traditions of the Sikh way of life handed down nearly 500 years ago. We encourage our students to strive to foster both academic and religious development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, a sense of self-worth and self-reliance that enable them to meet the challenge of the future. We encourage students towards the development of: a positive self-image; the capacity to think critically, creatively, and to adapt to change; well developed communication skills in a variety of ways and means; a sense of personal and social responsibility; the ability to be self-motivated and self-directed; the capacity to work constructively with others; respect for all people and a tolerance for different points of view; and, the capacity to be innovative and to be adaptable problem solvers (Mission Statement, Policy Manual, Draft, 1996)."
The philosophy of the school is to:

provide [an] environment which supports and encourages each student to maintain a Khalsa identity and to have a high self-esteem and self-confidence while living in North America. The Bimini Schools provide a challenge for each child to achieve the highest level of performance in body, mind and spirit in coordination with the school, home and the Sikh religion and philosophy (1996 Yearbook).

In August 1995, I had my first contact with Bimini School through personal communication with the now retired vice-principal, Richard Crompton. At that time there were 734 students in grades K-10. According to Crompton, homework begins in grade one and when students from this school go on to grade 11 in other schools, they do very well academically, although they are required to adjust to a new environment - usually going from a very small school system to a much larger one in senior secondary.

At Bimini School, physical education classes were based on the BC Physical Education curriculum and were co-ed up to grade 6, after which the girls and boys were segregated. In September of 1995, two PE instructors were hired, an Indo-Canadian woman assigned to teach the girls and a White man assigned to the boys classes. The female teacher was the first female and Indo-Canadian to teach PE at Bimini School. She recently graduated with a BA in Geography and B.ED (intermediate) with a specialty in grades 4-7, although she was qualified to teach K-10. The white male teacher graduated in the spring with an M.Ed. Since its inception, the school administrators have defined priorities to respond to changing needs and demands. The development of a religious education program, academics and a new building (in 1992) were priorities that have already been met. In
1995, when some of the parents pushed for a stronger sport program, the physical education program became a new focus at the school (Interview with female PE teacher, November 1995). As a result, at the time of this study, the PE program at this school was still very new.

2. PRESTON SECONDARY SCHOOL

Located within a few miles of Bimini School, Preston Secondary School is an inner city school with an ethnically diverse student population. In 1996, the school had a student population of 1050 representing over 37 cultures in that student population. The Indo-Canadian population in the school had increased over the past six years reflecting the changes in the neighborhood. Over 55% of the school's population was Indo-Canadian.

In the 1991-92 school year, racial tensions in the community and the school began to increase as Preston School expanded from a junior to a senior secondary school. "What was once a majority 'white' student population became a majority ethnic population" (Preston School administrator, informal meeting, Oct. 16/96). According to the administrators at the school, white students became angry and defensive when they became the minorities in the school.

"They couldn't cope with the change since many of them had deeply ingrained attitudes regarding superiority. Many of them come from poor, dysfunctional homes with single parents. They were angry at everything - students, teachers, Indo-Canadians. The Indo-Canadians also harbored a great deal of anger. Once they became a majority, the tables were turned and it was their opportunity to 'get even'" (Preston School administrator, informal meeting, Nov. 6/96).
As a result of the transition from a junior to a senior secondary school and the racial conflicts and tensions, proactive initiatives were taken by the school. They embarked on a program to promote cooperation, tolerance and respect. Initiatives such as the creation of a Charter of Student Rights and Responsibilities, peer mediation, leadership councils, drama and art projects, and the Kids at Risk program were launched to augment the main thrust which was a multicultural camp. In the 1994/95 school year the Rotary Club of Surrey was approached to sponsor one of these camps. The Rotary Club, in fact, agreed to sponsor five camps for the 1995/96 year. The reason for the camps was that if 40 students could undergo a transformation in the way they viewed other cultures and races, there was a hope that attitudinal change would be carried over from the school into the community.

While it is unknown how the students, parents and the general community felt about the results, the school administrators believed the camps have been both encouraging and sustained. “The acceptance of mediation in solving disagreements is beginning to be adopted as an alternative to physical conflict. The feedback from parents in the community is that the school is definitely changing” (Document: ‘From Trouble to Tolerance to Understanding: Making a Difference at Preston). While it is beyond the scope of this study, a critical analysis of the initiatives and documents may prove to be enlightening and useful in addressing the effectiveness of race relations policies and practices within the school system.
3. TIMMER SECONDARY SCHOOL

Timmer Secondary is located just a few miles away from Preston Secondary School and Bimini School. In 1996-97, their 3rd year as a senior secondary school, the student population was over 1500 in a school built for 1150 students. Forty percent of the student population were visible minorities, 80% of whom were Indo-Canadian. About 30 different languages were represented. Even though Statistics Canada considers this area as having the largest number of single families living in poverty, one of the administrators at the school did not consider the school to be an inner-city school. "Most of the students are in the middle and upper class status with some from lower class levels, but they manage to dress in a way that they fit in" (Timmer School administrator, Oct. 30/96). Not only was dress being used to assume a particular social status but the complexity of class and the lived experience of students of various social classes did not appear to be fully understood or acknowledged.

The administrator that I spoke with seemed to have adopted a gatekeeper role and often reacted to my presence at the school in a polite but defensive manner with regards to issues of race and gender. Because he was aware of my interest in such issues, he often provided opinions and anecdotes that he thought might be relevant. He felt that most of the 'problems' at the school have been from 'outside', using as an example a group of Indo-Canadian girls from another school getting into fights with Indo-Canadian girls from Timmer. Although he admitted that the school has had its share of internal problems, the administrator believed that they could not be labeled as 'racial' since "all schools have students who have problems and differences with each other. Often the problem starts out
as ‘non-racial’ and then become ‘racially divided’” (Timmer School administrator, Oct. 9/96). Based on these comments, gender, race and class issues seemed to remain relatively unacknowledged.

B. Voices, Silences & Experiences of Participants - The Tapestry

“... girls have voices, they are perfectly capable of first-person speech, but as they will say repeatedly, nobody listens, nobody cares, nobody asks what they are feeling and thinking” (Taylor, et al, 1995, p. 1).

As the threads of a tapestry or fabric are interwoven throughout, so are the girls voices, silences and experiences interwoven throughout this study. At times, the threads are bold and visible, while at other times, they are more subtle or hidden. This section begins with a brief introduction of the girls, the threads central to this tapestry, who were the focus of this study. All four of the girls came from middle-class families and were 16 years old when this study took place. In-depth information and descriptors for the girls are provided in Appendix (A).

The introduction to the girls, titled ‘threads central to the tapestry - profile of the girls’ - is then followed by three sections which address the purpose and research questions. These include: (i) individual threads - gender & race dynamics and the framing of experiences in relation to others; (ii) systemic threads - gender, race and the education system; and, (iii) personal threads - the Indo-Canadian community and the diversity within.
Threads Central to the Tapestry - Profile of the Girls

AMY, born in Calgary, Alberta, is a tall, thin girl with long, straight black hair usually pulled back in a ponytail. When I first met her she gave the impression of being quiet and reserved. However, as I got to know her I realized that her polite and respectful manner covered up a sense of confidence in herself and her abilities. She liked being physically active and was motivated to do so because it kept her ‘hyper’, it brought out her personality, and made her feel better when she was having a bad day. She had the privilege of having parents who encouraged and supported her in sports. She was very confident in her athletic abilities and was awarded the ‘most valuable player’ in grade 10 for her participation and involvement in PE classes, intramurals and tournaments. In grade 11, she transferred to Timmer Secondary School where she enrolled in grade 11 PE. She was uncomfortable in the co-ed PE 11 class at first because she was the only Indo-Canadian girl, but felt more comfortable once Jasmin joined the class as well. She claimed to be an advocate of what she called ‘equalism’ and believed that she could achieve the same goals as boys if she wanted to. Although her family was religious, she did not consider herself religious and had not decided whether she would choose to be baptized as a Sikh or not.

JASMIN was born in Fort Nelson. She is of a medium build and height with short, thick black/brown hair. She claimed to enjoy being physically active and participated in PE at a moderate skill level. She had the support and encouragement of her parents as long as her grades in other courses did not slide. When I first met her, she seemed to be reluctant to say anything to me that might have been interpreted as negative or not the “right” answer.
As a result, her responses to questions were often truncated. She seemed somewhat introverted but once we got comfortable with each other, she was more open and honest about some of her thoughts, opinions and feelings. She also transferred to Timmer School and registered in PE 11 only because Amy was in the class. She claimed that her family was 'not that religious, but they are. They're in between.'

TINA was born and raised in Vancouver. She is tall with an athletic muscular build and she has long, straight black hair. She seemed to be well known and highly regarded by her friends and teachers at the school for her athletic skills and abilities. Sport and physical education were extremely important to her as was recognition for her athletic abilities. She had been awarded the most valuable player in her class for quite a few years in a row, so at the end of the grade 10 school year, when Amy was given this award over her, she was emotionally devastated and spoke to me about it in great detail. She told me that she wanted to become a police officer and believed that being physically active was important in reaching this goal. After completing grade 10 at Bimini School, she transferred to Preston Secondary School where she was unable to register in PE 11 because it conflicted with required courses. Instead, she joined the girls basketball team. However, once at the public school, her confidence seemed to have diminished - she stopped attending basketball practice because she believed that 'the other girls are harshly good. I didn't want to waste my time.' I spoke with her coach and was told that she was much needed on the team. She eventually returned to the team. She had a great deal of support from her parents, especially her mother, for participation in sports. Although she rarely spoke about her religious beliefs, it wasn't until we got to know each other better that she
conveyed to me the importance of religion. She claimed to value sports and religion equally and attempted to manage a balance between the two.

SUKHI was born in Langley and has lived in the lower mainland all of her life. She is a tall, thin girl who, as a baptized Sikh, wears a turban and a kirpan (sword). Because she lived in Vancouver, she was bused to Bimini School in Surrey. She had attended a public school in grade 7 and 9, and transferred to this same school in Vancouver in grade 11, where she chose not to take PE 11 because of her dislike of public school PE. She was a very good athlete and was very sure of herself and what she wanted. She was feisty and not afraid to speak out and let others know what she thought. As the most outspoken of the four girls, Sukhi seemed to have a reputation for someone not to be messed with. On a number of occasions she told me that ‘even the boys don’t criticize me because they’re afraid of me’.

A Tapestry of The Girls’ Experiences
The themes and patterns that emerged in this study are primarily based on the girls’ varied and diverse personal experiences and voices, their thoughts, ideas, perspectives, meanings and even at times, their stereotypes. As the researcher, I attempted to look through their lenses and from within the diverse social and historical context of their lives. My interpretations of their voices and silences are based on my gaze, my role as the researcher and my gender, race and class. Although the participants and I share similar gender, race and class positions, we cannot be perceived as a homogeneous group. In this chapter, the girls multiple and varied voices are clear, and contradictory voices are validated. This is
for providing evidence that there is as much diversity within a social group as there is between groups.

Thus, what emerged in this study is based on a combination of the girls’ lived experiences as well as my own lived experiences, and what is most salient for me as a middle class, Indo-Canadian woman with educational privilege. I wear a particular lens as a marginalized minority, the assimilated “I”/eye, advocating for social change and resistance to dominant ideology and discourse. I clearly acknowledge that my interpretations are guided by this positioning. Thus, I acknowledge and account for my “conceptual baggage” (Kirby & McKenna, 1989), that is, information about the researcher which places her in relation to the research question and research process in an immediate and central way.

My interpretation of the girls’ varied experiences as gendered, racialized and stereotyped individuals is interwoven throughout this section and discussed within the framework of three major headings or themes: (1) intersecting threads - gender & race dynamics in physical education and the framing of experiences in relation to others; (2) systemic threads - gender, race and the physical education system, and; (3) personal threads - influences of the Indo-Canadian community and the diversity within.

The first theme addresses the first research question and highlights the girls’ experiences and perspectives of participating in sport with ‘others’ (boys and white girls), regardless of the fact that their grade 10 PE class was gender and race segregated. The inter-
relationship question figured prominently and emerged clearly. The girls' voices concentrated significantly on the male referent point and the white referent point, and the impact of male domination in their experiences of sport. This focus led to a discussion of the girls' preference for 'girls only' PE.

The second theme addresses the second research question which focuses on the systemic nature of the education system. Specifically, the girls' diverse experiences and preferences for different teachers, various PE settings and participation interests are explored. Although the third theme doesn't address my specific research questions directly, it is included in order to demonstrate the importance and influence of the family and culture on Indo-Canadian girls' experiences with sport and physical activity. The diversity of the girls' family backgrounds and levels of support and encouragement for participation in sport and physical activity are important for understanding and helping to debunk the myth of the oppressive parent and the homogeneity of the community and the culture.

Finally, it is important to clarify a few critical points. Since race is an important aspect of this research project, I had hoped to hear a great deal more from the girls about race issues and was disappointed when this did not occur. However, in retrospect, I believe it is critical to acknowledge the silences and to interpret what was not said. When analysing the data, it is important to listen for the unspoken and to uncover the hidden layers of what the girls may have been thinking. It is important to read between the lines, to look for and interpret the silences, omissions and subtleties in order to uncover what the girls may have been attempting to articulate but were unable to do so, or chose not to do so.
And, based on the emerging process of the research design, it is important to point out that the data reflects that I spent more time at Bimini School, which enabled me to gather more information, and that the interviews and focus groups are by far the best techniques to get data regarding race. As a result, the observations became less important.

SECTION 1: Intersecting Threads - Gender & Race Dynamics and the Framing of Experiences in Relation to Others

This section addresses the research purpose and the first research question area. In discussions with the girls about their experiences and perceptions of gender, race, and stereotypes in physical activity, what was surprising was the consistent emphasis which girls placed on their relationships with others. During the first phase of the study, when the girls were in grade 10, they participated in a ‘girls only’ PE class within the context of an all Indo-Canadian school environment. Many of them were also involved in intramurals and tournaments, some of which were co-ed. During the second phase, two of the girls were taking grade 11 PE in a mixed gender and race setting. However, regardless of the context, and the race and gender mix in the PE classroom, gender relations were a pervading influencing factor. The girls often framed their experiences in relation to the boys and how the boys affected their participation in physical activity. As a result, there was a significant amount of data pertaining to issues of male hegemony and the ensuing preference for ‘girls only’ physical education classes. This reflected experiences with boys that are common to a lot of other girls’ experiences regardless of race and culture. The girls’ voices validated and confirmed the ongoing issue of male hegemony in sport.

Similarly, in discussions regarding racial experiences, the girls compared and seemed to be
affected a great deal by their perceptions and stereotypes of white girls and physical activity.

**The Male Referent Point**

My first contact with the grade 10 girls occurred during a visit to Bimini School for a methodology course assignment when I observed the grade 10 girls PE class playing floor hockey.

They all seem to be participating equally vigorously. I don’t notice any girls ‘holding back’ or lacking any enthusiasm or motivation to play (Observation, Nov. 8/95).

Many of the girls seemed to play with talent and skill. When I interviewed the girls’ grade 10 PE teacher, an Indo-Canadian woman, she confirmed my thoughts about the girls participation in physical activity and stated that in her experience of teaching co-ed PE at a public school and ‘girls only’ PE at Bimini School, she noticed that the girls at Bimini School participated more than the girls in the co-ed classes at the public school. She pointed out that the girls at Bimini School ‘definitely are not shy girls and they don’t like sitting on the bench ... they don’t need any encouragement ... they’re very eager’. At the public school with co-ed PE classes, she said that ‘it was hard to get the girls to play. They would rather just sit on the bench. They don’t compete with the boys and felt they just weren’t skilled enough’ (interview, Nov. 10/95). She continued to state that the girls in her grade 10 class at Bimini School were ‘excellent athletes’ and that many of them ‘participate in recreational and sports activities outside of school such as soccer and martial arts’.
Many of the grade 10 girls, including the four girls selected for in-depth participation in this study, were skilled and motivated to participate in sport and physical activity. Regardless of this, they continued to frame their opinions and experiences in relation to others. For example, they believed that in order for them to get access and opportunities to participate in co-ed intramural or drop-in sport/athletic events, they had to prove that they knew how to play first. They believed that the same rules did not necessarily apply to many of the boys, that the boys often assumed that they have a ‘natural’ athletic ability. Thus, the boys were perceived to have the ability ‘naturally’, and have to prove themselves at times, but only to maintain their ‘natural’ status while girls, on the other hand, were presumed to ‘naturally’ not have athletic abilities and must prove themselves before they could participate.

... guys didn’t think girls could do stuff like that so but then after now they’re trying to prove to them that they can achieve. (Amy, interview 1)

The girls seemed to compare themselves to the boys a great deal, positioning them as the ‘norm’, the ‘standard’ of what it means to be athletic and skilled. Thus, they felt that they had to prove that they were good enough.

... I wanted to be better. Makes you feel good though. You’re better than guys. Yeah. And when you prove it to them they get pissed and you feel, you know, better ... I’m proud of it. (Focus group 2).

As one of the most athletic girls in grade 10, Tina enjoyed playing with the boys and, in fact, believed it was important to play with boys just so she could prove that she was just
as capable as them. She made a very good point about stereotypes and emphasized that ‘girls do play, not all girls don’t’.

*Tina: I’m actually glad I get a chance to play with guys so they’ll know that yeah girls could play. So I can prove myself and prove for other girls too, yeah, girls can play, girls can do the same thing as guys.*

*Indy: So, it’s important to you to um prove to the guys that ...*

*Tina: yeah, that girls do play, not all girls don’t.*

Tina, interview 1

There seemed to be a great deal of focus on how the boys responded and reacted to the girls participation. When the girls did prove their athleticism, it seemed that their description of the boys reactions was significant, as though their masculinity or their assumed superior status within the realm of sport was being threatened.

... *and when you prove it to them, it’s like, you know, like ‘you suck’ ... and it’s like, ‘you want me to prove it to you?’ and then you beat them and they get mad.* (Focus group 2).

At times, some of the girls chose to purposely play competitively rather than for fun just so they could create opportunities to prove themselves to the boys.

*No, I’ll play in a competitive [way] because I want to show the guys that girls could play too. Harshly, I don’t play just for fun, I play competitive too. I think they’ll play it too - competitive when I play. I think they wanna show like, ‘yeah, we’re still good, we’re still gonna dominate you’. I think they play harsh competitive too so I start playing it like that too.* (Tina, interview 1).

It seems that at times, their need to prove themselves was so strong that some of the girls imposed their own experiences and interests onto other girls. In the second interview with Sukhi, she spoke about some girls not actively participating in volleyball, and rationalized
the boys’ dominating behavior. In a co-ed volleyball situation, for example, she explained why the boys dominated and took over the game.

... if you guys aren’t going to hit it then obviously they’re going to take the ball, right? ... I don’t blame the guys for doing that, because a lot of the girls are like that. They don’t stand up. They’re just like, ‘okay, whatever, let them do it’ and they just sit on the sidelines. And then they say things like, ‘oh, yeah, they’re so unfair.’ Well, why don’t you go up and tell them that? So they can say something. Guys do listen. They get the point that she can do it. (Sukhi, interview 2).

From Sukhi’s own experience, she believed that she could stand up to the boys and not take any harassment or criticism from them, and that the boys did listen and did get the point when she was speaking. As a result of this, she said that she was considered to have a “reputation” and, in fact, believed that many people were afraid of her, including some of the boys. Based on her own style of handling the boys, she automatically expected other girls to be able to stand up to them as she did. She seemed to impose her own way of dealing with the boys onto the other girls and, in fact, criticized them for not standing up to the boys. Based on her liberal outlook, she believed, that if the girls don’t actively participate, naturally the guys would ‘take over’.

Impact of Male Domination and the Ensuing Preference for ‘Girls Only’ PE

The girls spoke a great deal about their interactions with the boys within a sport context and how they felt and reacted to the boys’ negative behavior towards them. They spoke about being criticized, put down and yelled at. For example, if a girl made a mistake in a game, the boys often laughed and criticized her. This was made clear during one of the focus group discussions.
... the guys don’t think we’re good enough or something. ... it’s fun for the guys, it’s not fun for the girls. ... the guys, you think, are gonna judge you ... you just wanna sit there, you know what I mean. If the guys were there I think half of us would be sitting on the bench.

During co-ed intramurals, some of the grade 10 girls said that they preferred to sit on the bench rather than being yelled at for doing something wrong. They felt that when the boys are so serious and intense about sports they ‘put you down.’ Because of the boys critical behavior towards them, some of the girls chose not to participate or sign up for student/teacher intramural lunch time games.

... the girls that are good in sports, they don’t say anything to them. They just say it to the people that aren’t good in sport. They put the other person down. So why go out there when you know you’re gonna get put down or yelled at. Why go through that. (Focus group 1).

That’s why all the times we played against the teachers I don’t sign up for one thing. (Focus group 1).

Because of the harassment from the boys, the yelling and criticisms, Amy’s preference was to participate in ‘girls only’ environments.

I prefer [participating with] girls. ‘Cause guys, right, I wouldn’t mind playing with them, right, but they just criticize too much, right, and they take it too seriously, right. And over there [public school, co-ed setting] I feel totally uncomfortable. (Amy, interview 1).

Jasmin felt the same way and also preferred ‘girls only’ sports. She especially liked participating in a non-competitive, non-critical environment that was fun and accepting.

... sometimes you get sick of playing with the guys. ... just play between you guys [the girls], right. Like, playing with the girls you don’t really have to win. But with them, you have to try, right. You can goof around once in a while, with the girls. But with the guys ... “what are you doing”, you know ... Because ... like ... all they want to do is play, right. Like, if you do something stupid they scream at
Both Amy and Jasmin transferred to Timmer Secondary and both took PE 11. When I conducted the second interview with Jasmin while she was in grade 11, she expanded on her thoughts about co-ed PE.

"Um, it's [co-ed PE] funner 'cause you get to do more things like you get to go skiing. Like, we're going skiing next week... it's fun, but you gotta play properly, like, you can't goof around or... might get pissed off or something 'cause like once I wasn't playing properly, right, and they're just like 'play properly, play properly' right... 'we're losing', right. Who cares, right. That's why. They're more, how should I put it. They like wanna win more than just have fun. (Jasmin, interview 2).

She seemed to imply that co-ed PE offered a broader range of activities which was fun for her, however, it seemed that what continued to be discouraging for her was not so much about whether there were boys in the class but more about the conditions of the class environment. What didn't seem to appeal to her was always having to win, having to abide by rules around what it means to play 'properly' and not being allowed to goof off. At times she seemed to prefer a non-competitive, fun and social atmosphere which doesn't necessarily fit within the traditional male sport ethos of competition, strict rules and domination. The diversity of her interests and level and type of participation varied depending on the context of the sport. For example, during tournaments she preferred to play competitively and in other contexts, such as PE class, she preferred to have fun and socialize. The girls' sport and physical activity experiences and interests did not seem to always fit within the narrow definition of traditional male sport ideology which continues..."
to be the model employed in many PE classes including Bimini School and Timmer School.

Some of the boys' discriminatory behavior towards girls wasn't necessarily always overt. The subtle behaviors didn't go unnoticed and, in fact, affected some of the girls' participation. Jasmin's experience in her grade 11 co-ed PE class made this clear.

[In co-ed PE at Timmer school], they haven't put me down yet. They haven't like, they just go 'why aren't you playing' right. If they're seriously into the game they'll go like 'why aren't you playing' or they'll just make a face at one another, right. I'll see that face and then I don't play at all 'cause I don't, like I'll play right, but I won't play good so I'm just standing there right. [When they make a face it means] 'what the hell she doing?' Or something right. You know how they do it, like if you're playing volleyball and if you miss the ball and then they'll just go 'what the hell she doing?' right, and things like that. And so then you don't wanna play because you think we're not playing good enough right. That's why. (Jasmin, interview 2).

Although the boys in her PE class didn't overtly put her down, they didn't encourage her either. Their behavior, such as making faces at her, affected her behavior, thus, she often stopped playing well. Although she believed that they were not putting her down, in a subtle way, I believe they were and she was discouraged by them which affected her participation style, motivation, and confidence.

When I asked Jasmin about her experience of co-ed PE she told me that 'it's funner because you get to do better things ... it's just that the girls ... like to socialize more.'

Although she enjoyed the variety of activities offered in PE 11 and preferred a non-competitive and social atmosphere, generally speaking, she found PE 11 to be boring and did not like going on field trips.
I don't like it at all, like I don't like going to classes. I have to, right, 'cause otherwise [the teacher will] call home. And I don't like going to field trips, right, but, like, if Amy goes, right, I'll go, right. 'Cause if I don't go then she'll get pissed off, right, because, like, she doesn't, um, talk to nobody else, right. Well, she will, right, but not like, whatever, like, hang around with them throughout the whole period, right. And so I don't like it. I don't, like, seriously, I don't, this PE class. That's why I might not take it next year. I'm still thinking about it. ... [PE 11 is] so boring. It's seriously boring, like, all you do is find where we're going on a field trip. Okay, we'll go play pool for a class, we'll go, like, we'll do weight training. .... they're really boring. (Jasmin, interview 2).

I wondered if the difference between 'funner' and 'boring' suggested some sort of subtle difference between her interpretation of PE 11 in general and the co-ed context. Was she comparing PE 11 with PE 10? Was she comparing the co-ed vs 'girls only' context or did it all have more to do with complex life issues than PE? Unfortunately, I wasn't able to follow up on these questions. However, the subtle and complex differences in sporting contexts and the dynamics between participants seemed to have a significant impact on the girls' experiences and participation.

Amy, Jasmin and Sukhi shared their thoughts on doing something wrong in PE class and the impact that criticism had on their participation. For Amy and Jasmin, being put down and criticized discouraged them from participating, while Sukhi's response was to either not put up with it, to not take it seriously, or to use it as constructive feedback.

Well, in front of the girls right, uh, I don't mind. They don't criticize me. But when it comes to the guys right, then after, after I don't like playing anymore 'cause they put you down. (Amy, interview 1).

if anyone says anything to me ... then I'd go “oh my god”, right. “I don't want to play no more”, right. (Jasmin, interview 1).

a lot of them are scared of me. Because they know that I don't take things like that with people. Like, if someone said to me, like, ... if it was on my team, right.
... I would take it as something to help me. Like, say, next time don’t do that, right. But then if someone just said that to me, like at a game thing, like say in PE, I would be really pissed off. Like, why are you saying that to me? You know, I do what I do; if I don’t, then I don’t, right. Like, I wouldn’t take that seriously, I wouldn’t let people say that to me. (Sukhi, interview 1).

Not all boys are athletically inclined and those who aren’t also get criticized and put down by other boys. Amy offered an interpretation of boys criticizing other boys for ‘playing like a girl.’

... Um, the guys that don’t play proper, like they, they don’t think they play good, they call them girls or whatever, ‘you play like girls’. And I go, ‘hello!’ ... It pisses us off. Which I really don’t really care because I guess I’m use to it now – ‘oh, you play like a girl’. [What do you think that means when they call a guy a girl when he’s not playing very well?] They think we play bad ... it’s a put down for girls. So, I don’t really let it affect me because I know I’m good. (Amy, interview 2).

In some respects, it seems as though Amy had internalized the sexism that she experienced from the boys, while at the same time she was confident in her athletic abilities. One of the focus group participants also alluded to internalizing what the boys thought of her.

It’s a mental thing. It’s like you’re standing there with a bunch of guys, right, and you go ... ‘can I play’ and it’s like, ‘no, you’re a girl’, you know. I don’t know. Whatever they’re thinking kind of rubs off on you. (Focus group 1).

The White Referent Point

In addition to believing that they had to prove their skills and abilities to the boys, the girls also felt that they had to prove themselves to white girls. Amy, for example, believed that, though in the past, Indo-Canadian girls did not participate in sport and physical activity as often as white girls, now they do, especially in soccer. When I asked her why she believed this she responded,
'cause before they thought we couldn’t right, I guess, right. So now I guess, now we're trying to prove we can ... 'Cause I guess we've been put down so much. Like, 'you don't know how to do anything,' so now it's a perfect chance to prove that we can so. (Amy, interview 1).

During a focus group, some of the girls discussed this further and suggested that Indo-Canadian girls feel that they have to do more, do better and try harder than white girls to prove that they are skilled in sports. One of the girls made an extraordinary comment about being ‘normal.’

You have to prove yourself ... To be normal you have to do something extra. To prove yourself. It's not the same as it is here [at Bimini School]. Here, it's all pun [punjabi], you know, and you can do whatever, you know, do whatever you want and I'll be good enough. But when you're with other white people, you know, you just gotta do more to compare with them. You could stay more relaxed here 'cause it's like, more your kind here, you know. (Focus group 1)

I wondered if she had been conditioned to believe that she was not normal, that perhaps she had internalized this belief, or if she was more critically aware of what ‘normal’ means within the context of white society. She appeared to be suggesting that she had to fit in with an ideology that did not match with her reality, that she had to assimilate into a dominant white environment. At the Bimini School, there was no white referent point and she could be herself, and that this was good enough. The racist, colonial ideology of having to conform to a white referent point can be quite clearly stressful and may have a significant impact on various aspects of one's life, including identity, self-esteem, and participation in sport and physical activity. My own lived experiences as a teenager growing up in Vancouver resonated with a similar narrative as I have conveyed in the poem at the beginning of this thesis.
In the second focus group, the girls spoke about white girls and believed that their experiences and opportunities were the same or mostly the same as white girls. As they continued to talk, they suggested that white girls get involved in sports at a very young age because they get encouragement from their parents.

... white people or something, when they're smart, their parents encourage them.

Now our community is like, starting to realize like, you know, all girls, they can do this and do that. That's why we're more into it now. If we were the same, like, ... we might be at the same stage as them, you know.

'Cause like, white girls, they start out when they're really young. Like, they join teams when they're, what, five, six years old. Like, one of my friends ... like, she's excellent and I go 'when did you start?' and she goes 'oh, well, my Mom started teaching me when I was three and ...' and I was like, 'really' and she goes 'yeah'. That's like, that's part of the reason. They put you in leagues when they're so young ... but I think we're reaching that.

Focus group 2

Some of the girls believed that white girls were better skilled because 'they're more experienced than we are' while another believed that 'if you try, right, you can obviously do better' (Focus group 2). They also seemed to suggest that if they had the same opportunities and encouragement, that is, the same starting line, their experiences of sport may have been similar to that of white girls. The focus on experience, opportunity and encouragement seemed to be used to rationalize and internalize their individual sense of competence. The more subtle and complex issue of the conditions of the sport and physical activity didn't seem to receive the same level of critique.

Amy's thoughts around white girls centered on the belief that her own experiences and opportunities were similar to white girls. She also believed that the participation of Indo-
Canadian girls is on the increase and that many of these girls are now represented on soccer teams as well as basketball and volleyball teams (Amy, interview 1). Jasmin also felt that there weren’t any differences between Indo-Canadian girls and white girls’ experiences and opportunities (Jasmin, interview 1) while Sukhi believed otherwise and explained why she did not consider her experiences and opportunities to be the same as white girls.

... no, I don’t think so. I think that we think it is. I don’t think they do it on purpose ... I just think white girls take more opportunities. [I think Indian girls don’t take the opportunities because] they’re afraid of what people will think, and stuff. A lot of girls have this thing in their head, you know, who cares about sports. Like, a lot of people’s parents expect them to play sports. My parents don’t do that. A lot of people’s parents might. But a lot of people’s parents don’t do that, too - pressure them to play sports. I would .... you know how you said, they get more opportunities. I would go for it ... say there’s a thing out that says lets play soccer. I would go, it doesn’t matter who it is ... I wouldn’t find anybody to play with me. That’s the thing. ... you can’t even find brown girls to play soccer ... no one’s committed enough. White girls are more committed. (Sukhi, interview 1).

In this quote, Sukhi seemed to have been expressing her own frustration at not finding other girls to participate with her. As an outgoing, athletic person she seemed frustrated with her perception that other girls were not as committed as she was. Within a dominant white community, she may have perceived and seen more white girls playing sports but perhaps did not acknowledge that statistically and visibly, there are more of them. She continued to talk about what she called ‘all-brown tournaments’ and differentiated between ‘white tournaments’ and ‘brown tournaments’.

Brown people do get their whole community involved. Like, white people have other tournaments, the other kind, where you have to be really good, and stuff. ... At the brown tournaments there aren’t as many girls. At the last [tournament], at 6:00, we were the only girls there. ... I think it’s the girls ... they come, they play the games, they leave. We come and watch the other games too. I think just, over
the years, it’s changed. Before, I used to see a lot of girls play soccer and stuff. I just think it’s people losing interest in it. (Sukhi, interview 1).

She seemed to be suggesting that ‘brown tournaments’ weren’t as competitive as ‘white tournaments’ and that when ‘brown’ girls did participate, they didn’t stick around after their own games. She may have been suggesting a link between seeing a lot of girls ‘hanging around’ as spectators between games, and interest in sport generally. She appeared to have been describing her own enjoyment of the social and the participation components of sport, and when she didn’t see girls involved in both, may have concluded that ‘people are losing interest’.

According to Sukhi a lot of these [‘brown’] tournaments are mixed boys and girls, men and women, and made recommendations to get more girls interested.

We could have all-girl tournaments. ... It’s more competitive for them, to say it’s an all girls tournament ... The only thing I’m saying is if you have an all girls tournament, you’ll have more teams entering. ... I think more girls would come if it was more competitive. Like, the ones that do play sports. Recreation ... I couldn’t see girls coming just for the fun of it. ... Most girls play to win, right. (Sukhi, interview 1).

As an outgoing individual who enjoyed a variety of activities, competition was an important aspect of sport for Sukhi and she seemed to believe that a ‘girls only’ tournament that has a competitive focus would appeal to many girls which would therefore, increase their participation at tournaments. I don’t believe that ‘most girls play to win’ or that girls wouldn’t come out for a fun, recreational event. Many girls may enjoy competitive events, but I would argue more would prefer a fun, recreational event as a regular part of their lives, with opportunities to participate in competitive events less
often. As someone who did enjoy competition and was often frustrated at other girls for not getting involved, for not asserting themselves and for not standing up to boys dominating behavior, she seemed to project her liberal viewpoint onto other girls. Based on her own interests and experiences, she often generalized the course of action required in order to get more girls participating in sport.

SECTION 2: Systemic Threads - Gender, Race & The Education System

This section addresses the research purpose and the second research question area. The education system played a significant role in the girls' experiences of physical education and sport. Issues of gender, race, school culture, PE teachers, curriculum and the varied contexts of the education system in which the girls' experiences were grounded, are interwoven throughout this sub-section.

Bimini School

The number of years that the four girls spent at Bimini School varied from 2 to 9 years with Jasmin having spent the least amount of time there and Sukhi the most. Although most of the girls enjoyed their varied PE experiences at Bimini School, they were also critical of the school in a variety of areas such as freedom within the school as well as some of the organizational changes that some of them had seen over the years.

Tina compared the concept of freedom between Bimini School and Preston School. She began by pointing out that the principal at Bimini School was aware of when practices were scheduled and when the teams were expected to be finished. She felt that he took on
a parenting role and ensured that once the girls finished practice that they were on their way home and not 'hanging out'.

It’s good in a way because that’s why parents put you in Bimini School. Um, he makes sure all girls are gone now from Bimini School to home and then they’ll be like supervisors all over the school. And here [Preston School] they’re [the staff] like ‘they’ll go, they’ll go’ and they don’t. Well then, that’s their problem. In a way it’s good it doesn’t have anything to do with them [the school], like just with the kids and their parents. It’s with them, like, it’s trust, the parents have to trust the kids. But here [Bimini School] the principals doing it, the parenting job, I think it is, at Bimini School. (Tina, interview 2).

Tina seemed to agree with the level of involvement between the school and the students at both schools suggesting that some parents enroll their children at Bimini School because of its reputation as a strict and disciplined school. At the same time, she felt that the role that Preston School seemed to adopt was also good, that once the school day is over, the schools’ responsibility for the students is also over, and where and what students do after school is between the students and their parents.

Regarding freedom and strictness at Bimini School, it seemed that there were ‘alcoves of freedom’ which were dependent on teachers, physical space, and course content. In the girls PE class, for example, it seemed that the girls had more freedom to express their interests and to make choices about activities to implement. This seemed to be based on the teachers’ student centered approach.

... like, usually here [Bimini School], we ask the PE teacher what we wanna play and we’re allowed to play it. There [public school] it goes with what the teacher says. It goes like, you have to do this activity today from this month to this month. Here you have to do this too but once in a while when we don’t want to, if we just feel like it, we play hockey outside and volleyball inside. We ask the teacher, ‘can we play soccer outside ‘cause you know it’s really hot day?’ She’s
like, okay, she’s like helps us out. She’s like, ‘okay fine, you guys play soccer outside’. It’s like a little bit different. (Tina, interview 1).

Tina seemed to enjoy and appreciate the fact that the teacher was occasionally open to what the girls wanted to do. The more inclusive approach in which the teacher gave the students a voice influenced many of the girls’ PE experiences. Many of them said that they preferred PE at Bimini School because of the ‘girls only’ classes, the female teacher, and the more relaxed and less strict class environment. In this way the girls PE class environment seemed less oppressive than other parts of the school.

I like it here.

It’s not co-ed here. More relaxed, I don’t know. She makes us work, right, but it’s just like all of us, we’re always together, like, there [public school], like, if you go to public school, it’s just like junior high or high school, different people and different teachers and 6/7 teachers and 6/7 classes at a time going on. Here, it’s just, like, I don’t know ... more fun. Our teacher’s quite young too. She jokes around with us. There it’s just like, ‘yeah, you do this’ ... it’s not co-ed here.

In public school, there, all the teachers know guys do better. We have a female teacher.

Focus group 2

Sukhi attended Bimini School longer than the other three girls (9 years) and had seen the school go through many changes. During the first interview, she reflected on her PE experiences at the school before the PE program became more structured to fit into the BC curriculum.

I think the experience is awesome. I loved it, the PE classes in this school. Since kindergarten to grade 10, it’s been good. ... Well, we can do whatever we want. ... Before, the people that were good, dominated ... like, when I was young, like grade 5 and grade 4, we picked our own teams and stuff. Like, the teacher let us do whatever we wanted. ... It wasn’t as organized as it is now. (Sukhi, interview 1).
She was very critical of the focus on organization, skills, rules and the focus on seasonal sports. The structured and formalized curriculum did not seem to appeal to her.

... it's different now. ... Because it's more scheduled, and stuff ... I like how it used to be, right ... they put skills and stuff in it. Before, they just let us play, right. Like, teach us less, kind of. ... It was really, really less organized ... 'Cause it was small and stuff. Like, not just PE. 'Cause it was, like, the beginning, and stuff. And, like, that's why I've seen it change. I've seen the ... grow, and stuff. That's why I'm so surprised at how they have it this year. How there's a season to play basketball, there's a season to play soccer ... Like, I did that last year too, right. So I got used to it. But some people aren't, so it's kind of hard for them. 'Cause I remember when we used to say, 'we want to do this, we want to do that', right. ... Because before, we never even hardly ever played basketball ... we hardly ever learned what we were doing, we were just, like, whatever ... Not doing any of the rules, or stuff. And now we've learned more rules. (Sukhi, interview 1).

Sukhi made an important point about the changes she has seen at Bimini School.

Although she didn’t seem to care for the formalized curriculum, she did appear to think that it was important to learn the rules of some sports. However, her experience corroborates with the experiences of some of the other girls in the study who also preferred the informal and less structured PE curriculum.

**Transition & Identity: The Experience of Transferring From a Private to a Public School**

**Blue Mountain School.** This was not one of the research sites because of its location in Vancouver and because Sukhi was the only student from Bimini School to transfer to it.

Although Sukhi attended Blue Mountain School in grades 7 and 9, she still had some of the usual concerns about transferring to another school as well as additional experiences and difficulties.
I can’t say it was, like, racist or anything, because there was a lot of our people there ... brown people ... so people wouldn’t be, like, racist or anything. So ... that was hard about seeing other people, because I know ... you know, everywhere you go, there’s people of different colors and stuff, but ... it was just kind of hard at first, because ... everyone’s new. If you don’t know anyone, it’s really hard. First you don’t where your classes are, and people that you knew before, they start talking to you and remembering things, then they introduce you to other people. So it makes it easier like that. (Sukhi, interview 2).

In addition to the usual adjustment phase of a new school and new people, the issue of race was important, although it was unclear as to what she meant by ‘it wasn’t racist or anything’. Although I believe there is strength in numbers, she seemed to suggest that because there were a lot of ‘brown people’ at the school, she didn’t believe racism could exist. In fact, a high proportion of any minority ethnic group within a dominant white setting is likely to result in racist tensions due to the privilege and power inequities as well as the systemic nature of Eurocentic biases.

Preston School. Tina’s initial experience of transferring to the new school was positive, although, her main focus was on how she was going to fit in as an athlete since her past sporting experiences had been mostly with other Indo-Canadian girls. Even though Tina was not able to enroll in PE 11 because of scheduling conflicts and because she transferred in from another school, she did want to be involved in school varsity teams.

*But it’s like, um, a lot of other girls that I see, like, they’re really, like, good. And they’re not, we’re not all the same race, obviously not. It’s like different race too, so it just seems different than Bimini School, to play because I’ve, like, never played with other races, like, besides Bimini School. Like, ‘cause we were all one right. And so now it’s been a bit different, but it’s actually been fun too because they participate even more than Bimini School girls that I saw before. So, it’s, like, uh, I actually like it ‘cause a lot of girls participate in it.* (Tina, interview 2).
The fact that more of the girls at Preston School were actively involved in sports seemed appealing to Tina because it provided her with more opportunities to participate with other girls that were just as enthusiastic and motivated as she was.

*I like it here better because, um, it’s like lot of girls here are encouraged but not that many East Indians, right, than other races. Um. They’re not encouraged and they’re not participating, right. ... the girls here are encouraged and they want to play. So, it’s not, like, only me, the only one that wants to. So, it’s, at Bimini School, it was different, you had to push them up and then get go there. It’s easy to do but tiring after a while ‘cause you want them to go on their own. Here the girls just jump at it and they go on their own.*  (Tina, interview 2).

Transferring from a school where she stood out as the star athlete to a school where she was one of many athletic students was a new experience for Tina. Although participating with non-Indo-Canadian girls was a new experience for her, Tina seemed thrilled to be part of a group that was more motivated to participate in sports than some of the Indo-Canadian girls that she referred to.

Tina reflected on her experience of transferring to a public school and the pro’s and cons of each school environment.

*... it’s a really big change especially, um, like an East Indian at Bimini School to a public school. It’s a really big change. But I think it’s good. I think everyone at Bimini School should have a chance to go to public school and see how it is and then they make a choice to Bimini School or public school. But I think mostly everyone would probably pick public school because it’s more freedom, more things to do. It’s actually exciting and they make it in a fun way. It’s like fun way at Bimini School too but it’s really different ‘cause it’s the same people, same race over and over, same color, right, over and over again. It’s kind of boring.*  (Tina, interview 2).

Although Tina verified that PE at Bimini School was ‘fun’, as did some of the other girls, it seemed that the concept of freedom and choice were more important to her. She
suggested that if she had a choice she would have gone to public school rather than to Bimini School. From her perspective, the concept of diversity, freedom and options at public school were exciting and fun and less boring. As a talented athlete, these concepts seemed to meet her needs and perhaps the challenges she was looking for.

**Timmer School.** Amy shared her thoughts when I asked her how she felt about the cultural diversity at the public school. She spent 6 years at Bimini School, grade 4-7 and grade 9-10. As a teenager, when she went to a public school in grade 8, she stated that, 'it was hard for me' because it was a junior high school. I believe that entering junior high school is a difficult transition for many teenagers, although for Amy it may have been more difficult transferring from a private religious school where she was surrounded by people from her own culture.

*So it was different, because I wasn't really used to it, because ... I guess teen years you learn a lot, right. So I didn't socialize with Caucasians or different kind of cultures or anything like that.* (Amy, interview 2).

It seemed as though Amy experienced some of the same challenges and difficulties of moving to another school as many students do. The experience of moving from an all Indo-Canadian school to a more culturally diverse school was something additional that she had to get used to. And, as one of the focus group participants stated earlier, *'you could stay more relaxed here 'cause it's like, more your kind here, you know'* (Focus group #1).
I can understand the transition process, from having a sense of belonging and fitting in, and then feeling a sense of having to adjust, assimilate or work hard at fitting in and belonging. I believe that the experience and impact of moving from a culturally segregated environment into a culturally integrated environment where you become the “other” is more complex and has more of an impact on the psyche of a student than the education system acknowledges. Although, it is beyond the scope of this research project, I begin to wonder, ‘what are the pro’s and cons of culturally segregated schools? How do they prepare students to live in the broader culturally diverse society’?

Although Jasmin only attended Bimini School for two years, she had some significant concerns about the public school, specifically, about finding her way around a new school and a fear of being a loner.

I seriously thought I was gonna be a loner. I didn’t know nobody and I couldn’t find my classes ... and in personal planning I didn’t know nobody ‘cause like, I was the only, no actually in Sociology, I was the only East Indian girl there, right. And so I would just sit there, right, and when all the white people used to talk, I would just sit there. Now I just talk to a few of them. (Jasmin, interview 2).

Within a school with a high proportion of students from various cultural backgrounds, I was actually surprised that she was the only Indo-Canadian in her sociology class. I imagined it must have been extremely unnerving, unfamiliar and uncomfortable to be in her position. She talked about what this was like in the following pages.
Timmer School - Stereotyping by Teachers & Students: Jasmin’s Narrative

When we talked about cultural diversity, Jasmin shared her experiences of being at the public school and how she negotiated the dynamics of a culturally mixed environment.

Actually, it really doesn’t make a difference ‘cause, like, if I wanna talk to someone, ‘cause most, most of my friends are East Indians, like, I’ll talk to one or two white people IF they come up to me, like, or I’ll just go up to them in sociology class, since I’m the only apnee (one of us/East Indian girl),... and last year, like, I was with all East Indians or whatever. In grade 8 there were a lot of East Indians at Preston, right, so, so, like, in my class, like, there used to be like 10, 15 East Indians, right, and the rest were all whites. So then I usually went with the East Indians unless they didn’t have a group so then I, so then I would have to go with the other ones. (Jasmin, interview 2).

She seemed to suggest that she preferred or was more comfortable around Indo-Canadians and that she would only talk to a white person if they come up to her first. Her comfort level as well as her dialogue was grounded within the Indo-Canadian culture - this was her reference. From this perspective, the “other” was white. She continued to share her experience of being the only Indo-Canadian girl in her sociology class, of being put on the spot and the cultural generalizations being made by the students and the teacher.

It’s actually weird ‘cause, because right now we’re talking about, um, arranged marriages and love marriages. And so the teacher would always go ‘yeah, Jasmin, since you’re East Indian, arranged marriages occur lots’. So she’ll be the only one talking to me about the arranged marriages. So I was like ‘I don’t know’. It feels weird because, like, she’ll put me on the spot, like, she’ll go like ‘tell us about, are you going to get a love marriage or arranged marriage or semi-arranged marriage?’ I go ‘probably a semi-arranged’ right. (Jasmin, interview 2).

She shared her experience of other racist and generalizing incidents where she was put on the spot by other students in the class.

And they start asking me questions ‘oh, you’re East Indian, so what happened at the temple’ and this and that right. ... Weird. It’s weird. Like, I don’t like, I
I wondered if she was compelled to educate or to get a dialogue going when she said she would want to ‘talk about it and add to their questions’? I also wondered how her minority status in the class affected her voice or her confidence to address the issue of being on the spot. I asked her how she felt when students and teachers put her on the spot.

*I don’t mind, like, if she’ll [the teacher] put me on the spot. Like, I start turning red when everyone’s just staring at me and if I say something stupid or something right, so like, I don’t mind. If I know the answers to the questions and I’ll say it but other wise I’ll just look around going ‘I don’t know’ ... ‘ask somebody else’.* (Jasmin interview 2).

Even though she got embarrassed when she was put on the spot, she felt compelled to answer the questions and to speak on behalf of her Indo-Canadian culture. On the topic of marriage, the other students were not asked to state their future marriage plans. And on the incident of the riot at the temple, she was being asked to explain simply because she was Indo-Canadian. Because of the color of her skin, Jasmin was a visible target for the one-way colonial gaze of the both the teachers and the students.

**Co-ed PE at Timmer School: Amy and Jasmin’s Narratives**

When I asked Amy what it was like to be in a co-ed PE class and to have non-Indo-Canadian students in the class she expressed some of the usual difficulties that I believe many students experience when entering a new environment. She also expressed some difficulties that may have been an influence of her position/role as an Indo-Canadian and a
female within an environment defined by a traditional white, male, middle class perspective.

It was, at first, hard. But then I got used to it. Because then they start to talk to you, and everything, and it’s like, okay, the pressure’s off now. ... [it was hard] to actually go up and start to talk to them, because I don’t know ... so after, I adjusted to it and everything. And then ... it felt better. ... I guess self esteem has a lot to do with it. I didn’t have that much self-esteem, I guess. Because I didn’t know anyone in my PE class, so I’m, like, ‘okay, what am I supposed to do here?’ so it was difficult. (Amy, interview 2).

It seemed that not knowing anyone in the class was difficult for her. Having very few girls and no other Indo-Canadian girls in the class created a level of discomfort for her. It was, however, important for her to take PE in order to actively resist and challenge the stereotype of the non-active Indo-Canadian girls.

a lot people think that East Indian girls can’t do it, ... like some part of the reason why I wanted to join PE and become active ... to prove that East Indian girls can do this, they are independent, we don’t always have to do whatever, um, so I just like, just proving it (Amy interview 2).

Having Jasmin join the class seemed to have made it somewhat better for both of them.

Yeah, I didn’t join it [PE 11] ‘cause I don’t know why. I guess I just didn’t wanna join it because I wasn’t gonna know nobody or whatever, right. But then Amy told me they only have one PE class and one grade 11 PE class, right, so then she encouraged me. So I go ‘okay fine, I’ll join. (Jasmin, interview 2).

From my observations, the grade 11 PE class continues to be based on a male hegemonic model. Amy conveys her discomfort of this kind of environment and of being the only Indo-Canadian girl in the class until Jasmin joined the class.

It’s different [co-ed PE 11 in public school]. A lot different. Because it has a different atmosphere. It’s not only East Indians. There’s different kind of cultures ... whatever. ... [At] first, I really didn’t feel comfortable around them [boys in co-ed class]. But then after, I just got used to it. [I wasn’t comfortable]
because I was the only East Indian. ... basically, there weren’t that many girls in there, too. There was just, like, three or four. And then, after ... but I don’t know, I guess when Jasmin came, I guess I felt more confident, and I just felt more comfortable with them, and I got used to it, so it’s not bad. (Amy, interview 2).

Not knowing anyone was a deterrent for Jasmin joining PE 11 and being the only Indo-Canadian in the class was uncomfortable for Amy. Observing both Amy and Jasmin in PE class showed how they supported each other. Amy seemed especially supportive of Jasmin, and later, when a new Indo-Canadian female student joined the class, Amy was the one to help her out.

On my first day of observing the PE 11 class at Preston School, the class was scheduled to do fencing drills and activities. Guest instructors, male and female, were brought in to lead the class. Jasmin had joined the PE class at this point but was sitting out because she wasn’t feeling well.

_They’re asked to get into pairs after doing drills for 20-30 minutes. The 2 white girls pair up. The guys pair up leaving Amy to eventually pair up with one of the guys. She stands where she is waiting. The one guy without a partner doesn’t seem to move either. Finally, Amy indicates to him by looking his way, asking him if he wants to pair up. ... I notice when the students are lined up for drills, the guys are at one end, followed by the 2 white girls and Amy at the end._ (Observation: October 23, 1996, PE 11, Fencing).

_The students are asked to get fencing equipment - Amy is the last one to pick out equipment. The 2 white girls leave the gym [for a drink of water?], the guys have paired up. Amy stands by herself. The girls return. All 3 girls work with the female instructor._ (Observation: October 23).

_While the boys end the session with some actual fencing, the girls end with drills and exercises. They don’t do any actual fencing._ (Observation: Oct. 23).
Amy was the last one to find a partner. During drills, she stood at the end of the line. She was the last one to get equipment and she was left standing alone when the other two girls went off on their own. The students were paired up by gender and race, which left Amy standing alone. She was a double minority. Also, Amy's position at the end of the line could be seen as symbolic of her social position on the margins. A week later, when the class went bowling at a local bowling alley a similar positioning on the margins was evident.

The entire class was using the lanes at the far left. Jasmin and Amy were bowling at the lane furthest from the left wall (3rd lane from the end). They were playing with Mr. Samson. The rest of the class was using the remainder of the lanes. The other girls (all white) seemed to be interacting and seated with the other boys while Amy and Jasmin and Mr. Samson were off to the far right side of the entire group. (Observation, Oct. 20/96, PE 11, Bowling).

Amy and Jasmin were 'separated' from the rest of the class and only interacted with the teacher. They seemed somewhat segregated. On the margins once again.

Amy and Jasmin stuck together in PE class. When they interacted with others in the class, it was with two other girls and the Muslim boy, the Fijian boy and an Indo-Canadian boy. They all stuck together and I wondered, "do they not fit in with the rest of the class?"

I talk to them a lot. Before, like, in the beginning of the year, just a little bit but not that much, until Jasmin came. I guess me and Jasmin just stuck together, but then after, we're like ... I don't know, why is it only going to be us two, right. So then we just went up and started to talk to them, so ... now we talk to everybody in our PE class ... friendly. [We interact more with] two other girls ... and this guy ... I think he's Muslim. And Kevin. He's Fijian, so we talk to him. And there's one more East Indian. See they all came after. (Amy, interview 2).
Amy liked it when Jasmin joined her in the PE class. The importance of having a supportive ‘buddy’ who she could connect with and have fun with seemed to have been an important part of the PE 11 experience for Amy.

... because she’s my best friend, ever since last year ... and that’s the only class that we have together, anyways, so ... everybody else had their own little buddies ... and I was a little loner, all by myself. ... we always [support each other]. We make fun of each other, too. It’s a fun, joking way, and stuff like that. [We support each other] just by helping out. Like, I guess, whenever we need to test on someone, I guess, I tell her what to do, like, you’re doing it wrong, or whatever, and stuff like that. Yeah, we help each other out a lot. (Amy, interview 2).

Jasmin voiced a strong dislike for PE 11 but attended classes only to avoid getting in trouble from the teacher, parents and even Amy. She didn’t want to let Amy down by not attending class.

... I don’t like it at all, like, I don’t like going to classes. I have to, right, ‘cause otherwise he (the teacher) will call home. And I don’t like going to field trips, right, but like, if Amy goes, right, I’ll go, right, ‘cause if I don’t go then she’ll get pissed off, right, because, like, she doesn’t, um, talk to nobody else right. Well, she will, right, but not like, whatever, like, hang around with them throughout the whole period, right. And so I don’t like it. I don’t, like, seriously, I don’t like this PE class. That’s why I might not take it next year. I’m still thinking about it. (Jasmin, interview 2).

PE Teachers - Treating Girls & Boys Differently

According to Sukhi, girls have a different experience of sport and physical activity because PE teachers treat boys and girls differently and because they have different expectations from them.

They’re [teachers] easier on the girls. ... Like, they expect less. I don’t know if they should, if I agree with or not, but they expect less from you. When you’re doing the exercises and stuff ... say the whole class is tired, they just say okay, whatever. Like the push ups, too. There are girl push ups and guy push ups. They expect less. And they pressure them more, I guess, ‘cause they think they
can do better. ... They expect guys to be more active and stuff, so they have a different experience. (Sukhi, interview 1).

Although there was some disagreement, some of the girls in the second focus group believed that girls don’t get the same opportunities as the boys because teachers don’t provide the same options. They felt that teachers make assumptions and don’t ask the girls what they would like to do, what their interests are and what they might like to try. They believed that girls aren’t given a voice, that, instead they’re stereotyped.

*The guys got wrestling and we didn’t.*

*Yeah, but the thing is, would you wanna wrestle?*

*I don’t know, but they should at least, should have asked us, right.*

*They should have offered us. I mean they’re just thinking ... in their minds ... the girls don’t want to so why bother asking.*

Focus group 2

The Grade 10 Indo-Canadian Female PE Teacher - Sukhi’s Perspective

Sukhi had some pretty definite ideas and thoughts about Miss Lange, the grade 10 PE teacher. At the end of the grade 10 school year at Bimini School, when Tina did not get the athlete of the year award, many of the students were surprised since Tina had received this award for all of the previous years. Sukhi was one of the students who believed that Tina should have received the award and apparently approached Miss Lange, her grade 10 PE teacher about it.

*And then, see, I thought Tina should have got the award. She (Miss Lange) didn’t give it to her because she played in the tournament. ... She got in a big argument with me. ... I guess because she was brown, she could argue with me. If it was someone else they probably would have just, like, ‘okay, whatever, this has nothing to do with you and we’re not going to discuss this further’. But I remember I spend the whole class ... she took me out of class, she said, ‘you’ve*
been saying this and that' and I told her, this is what I've saying and I'm telling it to you right now. So that's why ... I think if you have someone brown, or something, I guess it gets too personal. (Sukhi, interview 2).

Sukhi argued that it makes a difference when a brown teacher teaches brown students because it gets too personal.

[Between brown people] they take it too personally. They know how the other person is. So that's why, at the end, I was 'okay, whatever'. So at first I thought it was cool ... she's a brown teacher, that's so cool. But it turned out it's not so cool because ... I don't know, I don't think it is pretty cool that ... I don't think it should be like that. (Sukhi, interview 2).

Sukhi's feelings about the teacher before the award incident, however, were different.

Before ... it's kind of the same but it is different that you have brown on brown. Okay, big deal, same color. But it doesn't really make a difference. If someone's a mean teacher, they can be mean, it doesn't matter what color they are, whether they're white or something. At first it seems cool ... you can talk to her ... but you can talk to anyone like that. 'Cause we had another soccer coach too, and she was white, and you could talk to her just as much. It's just the kind of person that a person is. (Sukhi, interview 2).

It was interesting that at first, the idea of having a ‘brown’ female teacher was ‘cool’ and then later, the fact that she was ‘brown’ was what made it ‘too personal’ for Sukhi. I wondered who it was too personal for and what role internalized sexism and racism played in her interpretations? I also wondered, if the fact that her intervention on behalf of her friend was unsuccessful was the reason she decided the teacher was no longer cool. I would imagine for a teenager it would be difficult to continue to perceive someone as ‘cool’ when having a conflict and getting into a heated argument with that person. She also seemed to recognize that teaching styles are independent of skin color which was an important observation and insight on her part.
The Grade 10 Indo-Canadian Female PE Teacher - Other Students’ Perspectives

As one of Miss Lange’s favorite students, Amy’s experience of PE was generally a positive one. Not surprisingly, Amy attempted to justify why Miss Lange didn’t teach them basic rules of some of sports.

She was a lot of fun. I guess I was one of her favorite students, too. So, she treated me well. I guess we were really open and everything. And she always took my ideas in for consideration, and stuff like that. And I guess I just got along with her really well. ... I could trust her ... whatever. She was there for me, once, when I had this major problem. PE ... she taught us the rules of some certain things, but she thought that we’d already know the rules of some other sports, I guess. That’s why she never taught us any of the basics. (Amy, interview 2).

... Miss Lange? Um, she was nice, she does do, like, whatever we wanted to do, ... and, like, you, and we got to be the refs and whatever, right, and we got to pick our own teams and things like that. She was nice. (Jasmin, interview 2).

Although Tina conveyed to me that she enjoyed competitive activities as much as recreational activities, she did appreciate having a female Indo-Canadian teacher for PE and that she made PE fun.

Um, she was female so it was actually good ‘cause if you have problems, you can’t come to PE because of something, you can tell the female teacher, right. And males, you actually can’t. Um, she made it really fun because, um, she was East Indian, too, I guess. So she asked us, like, ‘what do you guys want to play today?’ so, we’ll tell her and then to make it fun, we’ll go outside and play. (Tina, interview 2).

Sukhi, though, continued to maintain her position and perspective about Miss Lange suggesting that she didn’t look confident or knowledgeable. She did, however, reluctantly admit that she did learn a great deal from her.
She was alright, I think. Sometimes she didn’t know what she was doing. Like, she didn’t know all the rules and stuff. But otherwise she was pretty good. Taught us a lot. ... I think we did a lot of learning, because that was the first time I started getting tested in PE, and stuff. ‘Cause she was new, I guess ... that’s why she needed a lot of help, because she was always asking the other PE teacher, Mr. Webster ... maybe if she would have known more she would have looked more confident. That’s why a lot of people didn’t listen to her. Once in a while, let’s just play this and that or whatever. I don’t know. I think she sort of ... wasn’t knowledgeable about it (Sukhi, interview 2).

Although Sukhi maintained her critical position, many of the girls seemed to suggest that a less formal and more student-centered approach to PE was what they liked. I wondered, however, if Miss Lange was trying to slowly bridge the gap between what the students were used to and how they wanted to develop the PE program over time. Because Mr. Webster was also the head of PE at Bimini School, I also wondered if Sukhi’s interpretation of Miss Lange turning to him was simply the two of them working together to develop the program in a fair and equitable way.

The Grade 11 White Male PE Teacher & Problems of Treating Everyone the Same

Amy said that she liked her grade 11 PE teacher, Mr. Samson, and said that he was nice, helpful and that he talked a lot. When I asked her how he treated the girls and the boys and the Indo-Canadians and non Indo-Canadians she replied,

he treats exactly, everyone the same. (Amy, interview 2).

Even though this was Amy’s perception of her teacher, this comment concerned me and I thought, ‘but everyone isn’t the same’. I wondered how he acknowledged differences since the starting line is different for everyone. They bring their own historical, cultural
and social differences into the classroom. I wondered how this was addressed in order to create an inclusive and equitable learning environment. I wondered in what ways are some students barred from equitable access and opportunities? This question haunted me even more so when Amy's grade 11 PE teacher made the following comment to me about the purpose of grade 11 PE and the 'types' of students that enroll in the course.

\[ \text{[This class is good] for kids like Amy who probably won't become PE teachers but can still learn and enjoy (Grade 11 PE teacher at Timmer School).} \]

The teachers' assumptions clearly suggest that his expectations of her were minimal and that, from his perspective, she would never have a career as a physical education teacher. Thus, he limited her opportunities before she even had a chance to prove otherwise. Amy was the first Indo-Canadian female student he had enrolled in his PE 11 class, thus, I believe his 'opinion' may have been based on stereotypes and assumptions rather than facts or personal observations.

Tina also shared an example of a teacher treating everyone the same without taking into consideration individual social or cultural differences. When Tina was in grade 8 at a public school she had a white female PE teacher who would often have students serve detention if they said they were too sick to take PE. A group of Indo-Canadian girls in the class chose to serve detention rather than go swimming.

\[ \text{She treated everyone the same too. Um, that time we had girls and guys mixed... She'd be like 'okay fine you're sick but after school you have to come and serve detention'... but that would just be their excuse. 'Cause, um, some of them didn't want, like, once there were a few girls, East Indians, there was a swimming class and they all said they were sick, so obviously the teachers not going to believe them right. And, um the teacher goes 'okay fine, but you guys have to come after school and serve detention'. And they go 'okay'. So they'd rather serve} \]
Their individual comfort levels with the activity were not taken into consideration. The girls might have been uncomfortable wearing bathing suits, they might not have owned bathing suits, or they might have been uncomfortable with baring their bodies with boys around. Treating everyone the same doesn't take into consideration individual, social, cultural differences and experiences.

Although I did not have the opportunity to talk to them about it, I wondered if the same thing was happening for Amy and Jasmin when they didn’t show up for ice skating. I gave this some thought in my journal.

But what about the ‘conditions’ of the activities, the atmosphere. How comfortable are the girls in the environment of these classes? Are they intimidated, do they believe they are skilled enough, do they fear embarrassment or looking stupid if they don’t know how to do an activity? Are they even interested in the chosen activity? What alternatives are available to them if they don’t want to participate in an activity. I know that I would be intimidated by the rest of the class if I didn’t know how to ice skate.

If they don’t know how to ice skate, I wonder if they would be more likely to try it if the class was all girls or if it was made up of people who didn’t know how to skate so that they’d all be at the same skill level.

What norms, assumptions are these classes and the instructor working from? What are his expectations? What are the expectations, needs and interests of the girls? How do these fit or not fit with those of the teacher/curriculum?

How are the students evaluated? What are the norms, biases, assumptions, … of the evaluation process? Does this process take into consideration the diverse needs, interests, … of the students? Are they evaluated poorly if they don’t fit the norm or expected way of behaving? What sporting ethos is the instructor working from - male sporting ethos. So what happens if a student doesn’t fit into such a paradigm?
Based on some of my interaction with (the teacher) today I get the impression that his philosophy is 'this is the program, the schedule. It is your responsibility to know it and to be there. If you simply attend class and do the assignments you should do well in the course.'

I wonder which classes Amy and Jasmin have skipped or been away from? Have they missed them together? Does their absence have anything to do with the activity schedule for that day? (Journal entry, Nov. 6, 1996)

Co-ed versus 'Girls Only' PE

Although most of the girls ultimately preferred 'girls only' sporting experiences, some of them said that they didn't mind playing with boys some of the times. This challenges some of the stereotypes about Indo-Canadian girls, sport and mixing with boys. The value of co-ed sporting environments was recognized by some of the girls, while they also acknowledged the problems with it. Similarly, a preference for competitive versus recreational and fun activities seemed to be dependent on a diverse range of variables. Because no two girls are alike, it was important to avoid creating binaries and categories of preferences. Sukhi, for example, said that she preferred a girls only PE class but with 'a period or two a week with co-ed', although she recognized that for some girls a co-ed situation would not work. She, herself was comfortable with it because she felt she could stand up to the guys, but she acknowledged that not all girls would be able to do the same.

I think it would have been good if they did have it. But then, I don't think that it made a difference that they didn't, because a lot of those guys were ... losers, type of thing. To me, they wouldn't have said much ... I just know they wouldn't have said anything to me. But a lot of girls weren't allowed to play that really did want to play, because they wouldn't have stuck up to those guys. But a lot of girls would have, so ... Because I would have felt sorry for them, I know that they play a lot, but just because one guys say "sit down", she probably would sit down. It wouldn't be fair for them. (Sukhi, interview 2).
She went on to talk about how she was able to deal with the boys at Bimini School because she knew them and, therefore, felt she could stand up to them, while with strangers she would be less likely to deal with boys the same way as she did at Bimini School. I wondered if race and cultural proximity had anything to do with this? Was it that she knew the boys at Bimini School and in public school she wouldn’t or could it have been that in public school she would be dealing with more white boys, although she would also be around a lot of Indo-Canadian boys at her public school.

See, some guys can be dominating towards certain girls but they can’t towards other girls. Like, the same guy could say something to me, and the same guy say something to another girl, and she would listen and I wouldn’t. So he’s trying, but it works with some person, right. ... It’s not going to work. It’s ‘cause you know them, right. Like, in school, they know what type of person you are. You can’t do that in public school, right, because just go up to a stranger and say “get lost” ... you can’t really do much. But at Bimini School you live with them, practically, because you’re with them all day. So you get to know them. (Sukhi, interview 2).

Even though Sukhi said that she enjoyed playing sports with the guys, and did so often, she also felt that when she played sports with them it was just for fun, that when playing with guys, you couldn’t take it seriously. From Sukhi’s perspective, playing with all girls, however, was more competitive because she believed that the girls take their sport seriously, that they want to win.

... you can share things with the girls. Guys, you play for fun, kind of thing, you can’t take it seriously with them. It’s not like that, right. But girls, it’s different. You can actually take it seriously as your sport, you want to play, you want to go out there and do it hard. See, it’s different with guys because you can’t do that, it’s just for fun. ... But when it’s with the guys, it’s just like relax, you know, have fun ... play whatever. Big deal if you don’t do as well. It doesn’t really make a difference. (Sukhi, interview 2).
Although Tina didn’t have a preference for either ‘girls only’ or co-ed PE classes, she did strongly believe that segregated ‘girls only’ PE classes discourage girls.

... *um, it doesn’t really matter to me, for guys and girls, because no matter what I’m gonna participate. ... I think there should be guys and girls but I don’t think there even should be guys separated and girls separated. I don’t think that should be at all. Because it, it *um, totally discourages girls a lot. Like, I think it does. Like, I think if there was guys and girls PE classes maybe they’ll help each other out. Maybe encourage more girls and from those, maybe there’ll be more girls participating than guys.* (Tina, interview 1).

Tina believed that girls would be ‘way more encouraged to play’ in a co-ed class. I asked her where the encouragement would come from.

*I think, like, if they did something better than the guys, right. Something they did themselves better than guys do, they’ll be like, ‘oh no, I’m pretty good, I did this better than him. He can’t even do this, right.’ And then she’ll get encouraged and then she’ll try on and on, right. She won’t quit then, right. And the guys will be like, ‘oh, she’s doing this’ and so then other girls will like, ‘oh she can do it and I can do it too’. So that’s what I think.* (Tina, interview 1).

I wondered if she was talking about her own experience here. Since she was an exceptional athlete herself, her comments could be based on her own experience of realizing that she could play just as well, if not better than a lot of guys. She could have been relating her experience of how others, boys and girls, have reacted to her when they acknowledged her athletic abilities. I asked her if she gets a lot encouragement from the boys.

*Uh, yeah, like for the house games when they had to pick, *um, teams for the mixed teams, like, they had to pick themselves. I didn’t even bother asking, like, I go ‘maybe they don’t want any of the girls to play.’ Like, why would they want me to play or think that, right. But then two of the guys came, like, we had a basketball 3-on-3 and they had to have not only one girls but have to have two guys and one girl, right. So, I was, like, really, like, oh happy, that they asked me ‘cause, like, you know ‘do you wanna be on our basketball team, right’ .. for the mixed team.*
I go, ‘okay, yeah, sure.’ So that made me happy, to feel, like, yeah the guys think I can play just as good as them. (Tina, interview 1).

I wondered, though, if the boys would have chosen her if they didn’t have to have a girl on their team. There was a ‘one girl’ requirement for the teams and since she was the best athlete in the school, she would be the boys’ natural choice. Did they choose her because she improved their chances of winning? Or did they choose her because they value girls participation in sport?

In a focus group discussion, some of the girls talked about co-ed and segregated PE classes.

Actually, it think it’s better though, you know. It’s good having a mix too. More competition.

... The guys, you think, are gonna judge you by the way ... you just wanna sit there, you know what I mean. If the guys were there, I think half of us would be sitting on the bench.

Focus group 1

The girls’ preferences for co-ed or segregated physical education classes clearly could not be categorized into one or the other, demonstrating the importance of individuality and diversity.

Preference for ‘Girls Only’ PE Classes

In both interviews, Sukhi had lots to say about ‘girls only’ PE classes. As I got to know her better, and as I got used to her feisty personality, I began to recognize how important it was for her to be able to be herself in order to have fun, especially in PE class.
I like girls only. Like last year, we had mixed co-ed too, in public school. But it’s better with the girls, you feel more comfortable. Like, I couldn’t do whatever I wanted with the guys class ... with the girls, they know that I’m already like that. I can do what I want. ... in PE classes, that is, right. Like, PE classes, everybody’s there, watching and stuff. Here, I can do what I want, I can be myself in my own class. (Sukhi, interview 1).

She said that she felt more accepted at Bimini School ‘because I’ve been here, I guess, a long time too.’ The students at Bimini School seemed to know her well and accepted her for who she was and for her outgoing, outspoken personality. Regardless of her personality and her confidence in herself, she preferred participating in a ‘girls only’ sport environment. Although at times she generalized about girls interests in competitive versus recreational activities, at other times she was able to recognize the diversity of girls’ experiences and participation interests.

It’s more competitive when you play with girls. You know, you can show-off, type of thing. If you’re better than some people you can show off. It’s fun too, playing with just girls. Because some girls take it seriously, some girls don’t ... it’s different, because some just come out and play and some girls will be so competitive, and some girls will be half and half, so it’s different with each one. ... Like, we laugh during the games. ... [with the guys] we don’t see that. ... but they’re harsh, like serious about the game and stuff. ... (Sukhi, interview 2).

Amy, Jasmin, Tina and most of the focus group participants also communicated a preference for ‘girls only’ PE. In the following comments, though somewhat generalizing, they clearly summed up their experiences of playing sports with boys, by differentiating the characteristics that significantly influenced their preference for ‘girls only’ activities. They believed that boys were judgmental, serious, always had to win, and often harassed the girls who had to prove their athletic abilities in order to play with them. Girls, on the other hand, were open, supportive, easier to communicate with, liked to have fun and joke around. They felt that, for girls, ‘trying counts’ which made it more comfortable for them.
I think it's more fun. More open. More confident too. ... the girls can be more open towards each other and ... it's a lot of fun, 'cause we get to joke around and stuff like that... I have to prove myself to people ... that I am good. With girls, they really don't care. With guys, it's a macho kind of thing, so I don't know. it's [co-ed] okay, but I don't know ... I prefer 'girls only', so ... (Amy, interview 2).

It's better because, like, they're [girls] not as rough ... it's much easier to play with, like, you can communicate better with the girls than guys 'cause the guys always wanna win, right, ... (Jasmin, interview 2).

With the girls only it's more comfortable than having it with boys and girls. It's like with girls, because, um, you don't have anyone to tell you yeah, 'you're not good at this'. ... so this way all girls, we're all equal. And this way it doesn't really matter what people say because everyone's the same here. Everyone's female. (Tina, interview 2).

... for us trying counts. ... for them [boys] it's win. It doesn't matter if we tried. That doesn't count. For us, we're supportive if, like, anyone tries, right, we all help. And them, they're like, 'get off, sub off' ... (Focus group 1).

[I prefer] girls only. 'Cause sometimes the guys are okay with us, sometimes they're totally, like, 'bandhars' (monkeys, apes, idiots). (Focus group 1).

Although it is likely that many girls, regardless of race or ethnicity, would prefer a 'girls only' sport environment that is supportive and fun and where trying counts, it was important to hear the voices of these particular girls rather than assume that they felt the same way.

SECTION 3: Personal Threads - The Indo-Canadian Community & the Diversity Within

Although this section does not directly address the research questions, it is important to recognize and to acknowledge the influence of the Indo-Canadian family on girls' experiences of physical education and sport. In the case of the participants in this study,
the Indo-Canadian family itself has played a distinct role, specifically, a supportive role which debunks the homogeneous cultural stereotype.

The Indo-Canadian community, including parents, family and the culture play a major role in the girls’ experiences of physical education and sport. Parents of all ethnic backgrounds play a crucial role in the socialization of girls, especially in sports. For this reason it is important to avoid generalizations which assume that Indo-Canadian parents, families and cultures are deficient in some way or that they are solely to blame for girls’ participation levels - they don’t exist in a vacuum. It was also important to recognize and acknowledge the historical evolution of the Indo-Canadian community. The growth, development and pride within the community in general reflects changes in attitudes and, in many cases, have resulted in improved access and opportunities for girls’ participation in sport. As in the wider western culture, though, the need for continued advocacy and change in the area of women and sport continues. The girls’ voices reflect the support they got from their parents regarding sport and physical activity, which in turn, reflect the positive changes that they have perceived in the community.

**Debunking the Myth of the Oppressive Parent**

Although the girls in this study spoke about other Indo-Canadian girls and the lack of support or encouragement that they received from parents, similar to families in many other cultures, they themselves appeared to have had the privilege of parental encouragement for participating in sport. I felt it was important to focus on this in order to debunk the oppressive parent/culture myth.
In the case of one of the focus group participants, her parents' encouragement to participate in sports was based on keeping her involved in positive activities rather than a sedentary lifestyle of homework and television. The parents' desire to keep her from 'going out or something' may have been a reflection of what many parents (of various ethnicities) of teenage girls may be concerned with, including safety, maintaining communication, and, providing opportunities for positive life choices and empowerment.

... Like, my Mom, I say I don't wanna join the soccer team and she's like, 'no, you're going to, I don't care'. She just wants us to get involved basically, she doesn't want us to come home everyday do homework, watching television and going out or something. They want us to get, it's just basically involvement ...
(Focus group 2).

For Amy, being actively involved in sport was important for maintaining fitness and health, and in the case of winning athlete of the year award, generated a great deal of pride in her family.

They [parents] thinks it's a good idea. They support it, right. They don't mind. They, 'cause, my Dad encourages me, right, and see, my younger sister doesn't do it, she's not into sports. My Dad's, like, 'yeah you should be into sports and keep fit and healthy'... They [parents] think what I'm doing is good 'cause I won the athlete of the year award. And then, um, Mom, she told my Aunt and now they're all happy. (Amy, interview 1).

In Sukhi's case, not only did she get encouragement from her parents, but more importantly, she has never been told 'no' or that she 'can't' play sports.

My Mom [encourages me]. She ... if I play, and stuff, she gets happy. My Dad does encourage us too. We just go to him to get permission, and that's about it ...
(Sukhi, interview 1).
... no one’s said to me, ‘you can’t play on this team’. ... I’ve never been [told], ‘oh, I can’t play because those guys won’t let me.’ No one’s ever said ‘no’ to me. (Sukhi, interview 2).

Although all of the girls were quite privileged and received support and encouragement from their parents, the level of support that Tina received, especially from her mother, was clear. As she spoke about her mothers’ active involvement in her athletic endeavors, the emotional charge and connection was evident. Tina was just as passionate about her involvement in sport as she was about her mothers’ support.

... my Mom, my Dad, they’re really happy to see girls participate. ‘Cause some of our cousins, they don’t, like, the guys, I don’t, are really different. Um, they don’t, they’re not into that much of sports than the girls in our family. And when my Mom sees other girls, she gets really happy to see that girls do play. She encourages, she comes out and supports the teams. It makes me happy to see my Mom come out because the last tournament, when I was on the other team, not Bimini School team. When she saw all the other girls play she, it made me really happy that my Mom’s actually, you know, she’s actually interested ... she took them all out to eat. She got them drinks down there. She hugged all of them. She’s, like, really, she’s, like more happy than me ... She really encourages me a lot. ... She told me once, like, ‘I’m really proud of you’ ... (Tina, interview 1).

One of the focus group participants also spoke highly about her mother, how active she was when she was younger, the kinds of activities she currently participates in, and the support she gets from her and from her Dad for her own sport participation.

... my Mom when she used to be in college and stuff, she used to tell me ... ‘I used to play ... hockey ... I used to be just as active ...’. She even goes swimming, like, um, she’s in her 40’s now, right, ... and usually, like, East Indian women at that age go swimming, they just go, like, ‘oh my god, what are you doing?’ My Mom, she’s just, like, pretty modern. ... Like, she’s just basically, like, the hip mother. So she’s just fine with everything, like, in a ways she always wants me to get more involved with sports than my studies ... and my Dad’s always been fine with ‘cause my two older brothers, they’re in their 20’s, right, now, so they don’t really do sports anymore. They used to play soccer. They don’t pay attention to them anymore. Because they’re just like never home anymore, right. So basically it’s just me now and my parents have always, he always likes to go to every one of
my games and always encourages me. ... he'll always pick me up even if it's every day of the week, he'll be there to come pick me up or drop me off. They're, like, 100% there. (Focus group 2).

The Indo-Canadian Community Has Changed

Many changes have occurred in the Indian community over the years with regards to girls and sport. Both Amy and one of the focus group participants articulated this very eloquently within the framework of women's changing status and roles.

Yeah, I think it’s changed a lot. ... I think because women now are becoming more independent and they don't have to always, like, fall back on the guys or whatever, stuff, so I think they believe what's right for them they should do it, so. Yeah, more independent. ... I guess, um, they [the community] started to realize, you know, that you shouldn't control anymore. So that's what, and women won't let them no more, so that's what's happening. (Amy, interview 2).

... but now its changing. ‘Cause, you know, families are realizing that women should have equal opportunity or whatever as men. ... Our culture is getting more into sports, you know. East Indians are out there now. Before, you know, it was like, 'oh my god, she's wearing a 'kacha' [shorts]' but now it's, like, 'oh yeah she plays a sport'. Even the parents know she plays sports and they respect a person for that. [It's changed] because we're used to it now. Getting used to the western. (Focus group 1).

In many cases, women and girls wearing shorts is now symbolic of athleticism and respect, rather than shame or modesty. It is also symbolic of many women’s assertion, independence and improved status within a hegemonic male world. More ‘Dads on the sidelines’ and girls being taken seriously in sport is also part of the evolution within the Indian community.

We get more support. Like, I see at the sidelines ... wow, all these people’s Dads and stuff out there. I guess they’re getting girls more involved in sports. They’re more accepting of it. They [the community] do take girls sports more seriously than they did before (Sukhi, interview 2).
The past 100 years in Canada have resulted in significant changes within the Indo-Canadian community. As the community grows, develops and evolves, so do the attitudes, beliefs and values. Tina alludes to the role modeling that often occurs within the community resulting in a belief system that suggests that 'everyone does it, so it's alright for you, too.' As more girls are seen to be actively participating in sport, they set the stage as role models for others to follow their lead. Although this kind of representation may not be visible from the dominant Eurocentric perspective, it is evident from the referent point of the Indo-Canadian community. What we see in our world is dependent on our privileges, referent points and where we look.

By the end of the data analysis process, the diversity of the girls' lived experiences, interests and outlooks was clear. Although they all attended a Sikh Punjabi school, their day-to-day experiences or beliefs in the Sikh religion, family and their experiences and interests in sport and physical activity varied widely. They all expressed their unique identities while sharing many similarities.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

I do not really wish to conclude and sum up, rounding off the argument so as to clump it in a nutshell on the reader. A lot more could be said about any of the topics I have touched upon ... I have meant to ask the questions, to break out of the frame ... the point is not a set of answers, but making possible a different practice (Kappelar, 1986).

The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary. (Gabriel Garcia Marquez quoted in Dhillon-Kashyap, 1988, p. 120).

We see things not as they are, but as we are (Anais Nin).

INTERPRETATION - Making Meaning of the Tapestry

Based on my perspective and role as the researcher, my purpose in this chapter is to create a bridge between the study’s findings and the literature on: (1) voice, silence, and issues of race and representation, (2) gender and male hegemony in sport and physical education settings, and (3) the cultural deficit model and its use to pathologize and blame Indo-Canadian families and cultures. Following this discussion, conclusions and recommendations are presented.

When I first began the process of interpretation and analysis, my initial reaction to the relatively limited data on issues of race was one of disappointment. However, as I began to synthesize and reflect on the literature, my experiences and the girls’ voices, I realized that what I attempted to explore, understand and interpret was much more complex than I initially envisioned. Thus, this study illuminates the importance of exploring the complexities of interpreting “voice” and “silence” within the context of race, gender and physical activity. Although the issues of voice have received much attention in the
literature recently, the complexities of silence require further exploration. What seems to be missing is a thorough examination and understanding of various techniques to help girls to talk about their experiences as racialized individuals. The silence of race in my findings will be addressed within the context of requiring further research and a need to explore alternate methodologies to draw out the issues of race. This will be followed by a discussion of gender, male hegemony and the context of the PE classroom, an area of the literature that is well documented and to which this study contributes. Finally, my findings challenge the existing literature around physical education and sport, often based on a cultural deficit model, by debunking the myths and stereotypes which have tended to blame families, parents and culture for Indo-Canadian girls' participation levels in sport and physical activity.

**Embodied in the fabric that I seek to understand**

In retrospect, I discovered, and was somewhat unprepared for how I was, and continue to be implicated in my own research. Throughout this study, I often found myself observing, listening, and hearing through a colonized gaze and tone. I made every attempt to check my interpretations with colleagues, although I continue to struggle with the assimilated “I”/eye. This research process has been as much about me as it has been about the issue of Indo-Canadian girls' experience of sport and physical activity. The journey into gender, race, voice, representation, difference and silence became a journey into myself - another step along the journey into de-colonizing my mind, experiences and interpretations.
I believe my location as the assimilated “I”/eye and as a researcher from the same community as the participants may have resulted in my interpretation of and disappointment in the limited data on issues of race. In retrospect, I believe I may have been looking for overt and clear signs of racism, rather than what Ng (1991) calls the “common sense racism”, those “unintentional and unconscious acts which result in the silencing, exclusions, subordination and exploitation of minority group members” (p. 101; see also Essed, 1990; Van Dijk, 1993). When common sense racism is at play, norms and functions that have become ordinary ways of doing things or taken-for-granted, “disappear from the social surface” (Ng, 1991; Bannerji, 1987; Hall, 1990). Ng (1991) suggests that if racism and sexism are treated as common sense features of the world, then none of us can be “immune” or separated from these features of society. She clearly points out that it is the responsibility of all of us, including myself as the assimilated “I”/eye, or the westernized ‘other’, to begin or to continue to work toward eradicating them in all spheres of society. As a result of my positioning as a researcher, what I observed and heard was not nature itself, but nature exposed to my method of questioning (Davis, 1996) and through my gaze. I became embodied in my research, woven into the fabric that I sought to understand. Thus, I attempted to persistently question taken-for-granted modes of speaking and acting (Davis, 1996) as a process of de-colonizing and deconstructing voice and silence.

Hermeneutic interpretation, one of the methodological tools chosen for this study, seeks “to understand the rich textuality of the unique amid the immediately present.” The goal of hermeneutics is to embrace happenstance rather than to “explain it away” (Davis,
Hermeneutics is the art of interpretation in which the researcher is “inevitably incorporated” into the research phenomena. In this thesis, not only was I personally implicated in this type of inquiry, I chose to embrace it.

**INTERPRETATION OF VOICE & SILENCE**

From personal experience and observations and through the observations of others, I knew that more and more Indo-Canadian girls and women were becoming physically active. I originally asked myself why we don’t see these same girls and women represented in the media and in the academic discourse. What I discovered was that, although they are active, they are visible but only if one chooses to look, see and acknowledge their participation. Within the context of the mainstream western notions of sport and physical activity and sport, they are less visible. In retrospect, what I should have asked was from whose perspective are they invisible and also who is willing to listen, hear and care enough to take into consideration their experiences, perspectives and interests without appropriating their voices.

I have now discovered, through an emerging design process, that issues and strategies of voice, silence, representation, safety and “othering” are critical to the discussion. Equitable access to and opportunity for participation in sport and physical activity may be the intended outcomes but, in retrospect, voice and representation of these particular Indo-Canadian girls are critical and complex issues that need to be understood and addressed before we even get to questions about physical activity choices and access.
Since little research in sport and physical activity addresses issues of gender, race, voice and silence, my original purpose of this study was to ‘gain insight into the physical education/activity interests and experiences’ of young Indo-Canadian women and to ‘give voice and meaning to their experiences’. Although this purpose continued to hold true, the issues of voice became more central. This study contributes to the existing literature by highlighting the importance of including the issues of voice, silence and representation in the critical analysis of gender, race and sport.

In retrospect, however, I wondered if the research tools used in this study were the best way to get at issues of voice. The one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews provided a great deal of information. The observations, however, seemed less effective as the research progressed, and in retrospect, I began to speculate what alternate methods might have been employed to draw out the issues of race.

I believe an alternate methodology would require a collaborative and interactive relationship between the researcher and her participants. Such a relationship would have to be open, equitable and non-exploitative. Although I believe I employed such characteristics in my interaction with the participants, the conventional interview techniques, which require the researcher to maintain a distance between herself and the participants, may have created some difficulties in developing a better sense of rapport, trust and safety. I also believe that had I stated my position and privileges up front and clearly with the participants, this may have contributed to a more interactive, sharing and open setting. I assumed that because the participants and I shared gender, race and class
positions, that the power between us would be leveled, thus, giving voice to the participants. Although I acknowledged and was aware of my own privileges, I failed to share these with the girls in the study. The distinct differences in power and privilege remained between myself and the participants. Just as I use both voice and silence as survival and resistance strategies to negotiate my identity and position within a dominant Eurocentric and male society, I imagine the girls in my study may also have done the same.

It is clearly a complex task to interpret the Indo-Canadian girls’ experiences and voices within the context of their lives and within the context of a dominant ideology of sport and physical activity. We must continue to ask how to make sense of and attempt to understand such issues within the multiple folds and layers of patriarchy, colonialism and western bias, racism, silence, hegemony, and stereotypes. Sport and physical activity has traditionally been defined by white male values and ethos. The girls in my study were neither white nor males and their experiences, perspectives and voices have historically been positioned in the margins. Thus, we need to now create spaces to hear the voices from the margins - to center the voices. In addition to asking ‘who is speaking’ and ‘who is listening’ (Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan, 1995), we must also ask ‘who is responding and doing something’ with what is said and heard? How are the marginalized included in plans of action rather than being talked about? We must also ask ‘how safe is it for the marginalized to speak?’ On the one hand, “if girls open their ‘big mouth’ they get into trouble” (Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan, 1995, p. 3) especially if they challenge or speak out against the dominant norm. I wondered if any of the girls in my study felt this way.
Certainly, as the most outspoken in the group, Sukhi seemed to have developed a reputation for ‘opening her big mouth’. According to Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan (1995),

“girls who by virtue of their class position, their cultural status, or their educational privilege have been led to believe that people are interested in who they are and what they have to say, worry about jeopardizing these relationships by revealing what seem like unacceptable parts of themselves. They will often modulate their voices to blend in or harmonize with the prevailing key” (p. 3).

According to Virginia Woolf (1938), this is “committing adultery of the brain”. As a researcher, I too have committed adultery of the brain. The concept of knowing something and negotiating where, when and if to share that knowledge, insight or experience is dependent on the immediate environment and the people in it. Is there safety in representation? The importance of having space to not only speak but more importantly to be heard and validated without judgment must be constantly assessed and negotiated. I wondered if and how often the girls negotiated their voices. I wondered how they negotiated their representation and the continuum between voice and silence.

SILENCE
What is silence? How do we interpret silence? Silence may come from not being present. When present, however, silence is not necessarily passivity. It could be tenacious survival. Choosing not to speak could be interpreted as an act of political resistance in an environment which may not feel safe to speak out in. Another form of silence is ‘silence within’ which could be interpreted as not being able to share or express ones’ self even when questioned. The voices, thoughts and ideas of the marginalized are at times deemed abnormal, deviant and different. Such labels may be internalized, leaving many marginalized individuals compelled and eager to deny and invalidate
differences in order to fit in and assimilate into the dominant norms and values.

When an individual is present, however, the patriarchal, colonial and racist forces may keep this person from being heard. A form of silence that preserves privilege is 'silence to the outside world'. When the marginalized are seldom questioned, asked or included, full participation may be limited. The initial stages of my research with the girls indicated that they were not used to being the focus of attention; they seemed unsure of their voices and how they could contribute to this study. It was likely, that as double minorities, the girls in my study had rarely been questioned, asked or included in meaningful dialogue about their experiences in sport and physical activity. It was also likely that because the participants and I share gender, race and class, that our experiences of racism in our everyday lives were taken for granted. The full pain of racism can often be difficult to talk about because we may share it as a common feature or because we may be afraid to have it denied, especially by those whom we perceive as having conquered it or transcended it.

"The problems of voice and identity are packed with internal dilemmas" (Razack, 1993, p. 97). Razack (1993) suggests that women of color must determine what kind of tale to tell, and in what voice, since there are "penalties for choosing the wrong voice at the wrong time, for telling an inappropriate tale" (p. 97). Questions of speech become central. Maria Lugones (1989), a Chicana woman, asks, "... with which voice, anchored in which place, ... why and to what purpose, do I trust myself to you, ... cat and mouse for your entertainment ...?" (p. 49). Women of color must constantly negotiate
their voices for fear of appropriation of their thoughts, ideas and perspectives. There are times, however, when it is best to remain silent. How is silence as a choice, though, interpreted? According to Trinh Minh-ha (1989), “silence as a will not to say or a will to unsay and as a language of its own has barely been explored” (p. 373). Further research is needed to explore the subtleties and multiple interpretations of silence. It became clear in this study, that silence cannot be viewed as a one-dimensional, simplistic notion in opposition to voice.

I believe the girls in my study may have, at various times and in various circumstances, remained silent for the sake of survival, due to a colonization of the mind or because no one asked them for their thoughts. In Sukhi’s own words, ‘... find out what everybody likes the most ... like, talk to them and stuff. Don’t tell them what to do but ask them too’ (Sukhi, interview 1). She is suggesting a cooperative decision-making process in which participants are given a voice and an opportunity to express their needs and interests. She is also suggesting that people ask more questions before providing or imposing answers of their own.

As the most outspoken of the girls in this study, Sukhi resisted being the ‘nice’ girl or the ‘good’ girl. She spoke her mind and was generally not concerned with what others thought of her. She was not one to remain silent. As a result of her ‘voice’ she gained a particular reputation. This, however, was not seen as a strength. She spoke her mind and many students were ‘afraid’ of her. In a society that is racist and sexist, and in an educational system that demands conformity, Sukhi has the courage to speak her mind.
According to Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan (1995) this could be seen as psychological resilience and political resistance, however, within the context of Sukhi’s life, it is highly unlikely this was seen as a strength.

**SILENCE OF RACE: Survival & Resistance Strategies - Hidden Threads**

Within the spotlight of the colonial, one-way gaze, Indo-Canadian girls and women are visible and yet, they are also invisible. Similarly, they have a voice but are often silenced. As the focus of the one-way gaze, they become curiosities and objects of others’ awareness.

As the only Indo-Canadian student in her class, Jasmin was a clearly visible target for the one-way gaze in her sociology class. According to Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan (1995), when students become aware of this gaze, “many girls go “underground” with their feelings, that public silence about their thoughts and feelings begins” (p. 45). Jasmin’s experience of classroom discussions about marriage and violence, for example, were handled poorly, resulting in perpetuating stereotypes and racism and silencing of one’s voice. Being at risk for discrimination or oppression based on one’s gender and race requires the development of essential skills such as maintaining a “double consciousness” about one’s heritage - being able to look “at one’s self through the eyes of others” (Du Bois, 1989, p. 5). For girls such as those in this study, this awareness is critical when choosing when, where, and if to speak (Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan, 1995). They must use voice, silence, and representation as strategies in navigating and negotiating a balance between the contradictions and contrasting values and beliefs of the dominant society, the education system and their home lives.
The complexities and multiple interpretations of voice, silence, and representation however, often impact and influence the outcome. For example, “good conduct” (read: silence) often results in marginalized girls being overlooked or unnoticed (Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan, 1995). This is what happens to girls in the school system. If they don’t speak out, they don’t get noticed, and they become invisible and often stereotyped. For an Indo-Canadian girl to strategically choose not to speak may be interpreted as a sign of passiveness. However, being able to speak one’s experience, to say what is real or psychologically valid, and being able to do so in safe company, requires a constant assessment of the people and the context. Such censoring, negotiating and hiding behind false masks is a form of silencing. According to bell hooks (1989),

“I was never taught absolute silence, I was taught that it was important to speak but to talk a talk that was itself a silence. Taught to speak and beware of the betrayal of too much heard speech, I experienced intense confusion and deep anxiety in my efforts to speak and write” (p. 7).

This may give way to an “increasing uncertainty, a hesitancy in speaking, a tendency toward self-doubt that questions the validity of their feelings and dismisses the value of their experiences” (Gilligan, Brown, and Rogers, 1990; Gilligan, 1990b; Brown, 1991a, 1991b; Brown and Gilligan, 1990, 1992; Rogers, Brown, and Tappan, 1994). Discerning the difference between the girls not telling or not knowing becomes more complex in the presence of racial and ethnic differences (Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan, 1995).

Marnia Lazreg (1988) brings the subject of intersubjectivity into the analysis of women’s studies on a cross-cultural basis when she argues that when studying Third World women, and I would add, women with lives different from our own,
“it is important to see their lives as meaningful, coherent, and understandable instead of as being infused “by us” [or by dominant whites] with doom and sorrow. ... their lives, just like “ours”, are structured by similar economic, political, and cultural factors. ... these women are, just like us, involved in the process of adjusting, and at times, resisting and transforming their own environments” (pp. 81-107).

Amy’s statement about stereotypes supports Lazregs’ statement about girls’ resisting and transforming their environments.

“... some part of the reason why I wanted to join PE and become active. Well, not like it’s, very little percent. Um, to prove that East Indian girls can do this, they are independent, we don’t always have to do whatever, um, so I just like, just proving it” (Amy, interview 2).

bell hooks also explains that in resisting the debilitating effects of racism,

“over time, the ability to mask, hide, and contain feelings came to be viewed by many black people as a sign of a strong character. To show one’s emotions was seen as foolish” (1993b, p. 133).

John Ogbu (1987) calls these resistance strategies “secondary cultural differences,” attributes that are not part of or evident in the mainstream culture but develop in the context of racism. As the researcher, I know I have developed ‘secondary cultural differences’ as a form of safety and survival, and I wondered if the girls in my study had developed similar strategies for themselves.

VOICE & GENDER: Male Hegemony - Loud & Clear Threads

Sport culture is based on the dual message of celebrating the dominant at the same time as inferiorizing the “other.” Within this dominant form of masculinity, called hegemonic masculinity (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985), difference, femininity and non-hegemonic masculinity is rendered inferior. In this study, racism is encoded as difference, inferiorization and ‘othering’, and in both the private and the public school physical
education settings, the Indo-Canadian girls were considered different, the inferior
‘others.’ Although information pertaining to such issues was mentioned by the girls and
discussed under the classificatory theme of male hegemony, it cannot be teased out as
racism or sexism even though analytically I have attempted to do just that. Racism and
sexism are not additive, but rather, interlocking. Analytically, some of the girls’ voices
and experiences could be classified as a response to male hegemony but are in fact a
response to both racism and sexism.

Sport is an ideal medium for conveying and perpetuating messages of gender and race
domination (Bryson, 1990). Specifically, issues of gender and male hegemony in sport
settings is well documented in the literature. The girls in this study supported this and
expressed their frustrations about interacting with the boys, and how they were made to
feel inferior and inadequate by their dominating behavior.

It is universally accepted to adopt a male criteria to assess and define sport and physical
activity. “Even when women participate separately, there is an implicit male standard
against which they are judged at least in relation to strength, speed, and power” (Bryson,
1990, p. 176). Thus, offering ‘girls only’ programs or classes is meaningless and
ineffective as long as the conditions continue to emulate male values and standards. The
findings of this study support the need to critically analyse the conditions of sport
programs and classes, regardless of the gender and race mix. As long as the one-
dimensional male criteria is used, girls’ varied needs and interests in sport and physical
activity cannot be met and they continue to be marginalized. It is also important to keep
in mind that regardless of the gender and race segregated sport setting, differences between Indo-Canadian girls also get played out. For example, Sukhi and Tina were the most outspoken and also the most skilled athletes in their grade 10 class, thus, as stronger, more skilled girls, they often dominated the rest of the class. The conditions of the sport environment must take into account a diverse range of differences to avoid exclusionary practices and the perpetuation of hierarchical structures.

The male standard of sport is a narrowly defined interpretation of what constitutes the most appropriate and valued forms of physical activities, which, unfortunately continue to be perpetuated and mediated through the PE curriculum. This study confirmed the problems of sport settings which continue to perpetuate hegemonic male norms and standards. The girls' statements about their experiences with boys, specifically, the harassment, controlling, dominating and exclusionary behavior of the boys, supported the existing literature. With regards to gender, within a race segregated environment, the findings confirmed what we already know about gender dynamics in the sport setting, however, it was important to hear directly from Indo-Canadian girls, rather than assume that their experiences with boys would be the same as other girls. Their voices and statements provide strong support for the need to address hegemonic gender dynamics in the sport setting. Regardless of differences based on race and culture, Indo-Canadian girls have a lot in common with white girls with regards to 'negative and battering experiences' in co-ed sport situations (Thomas, 1991; Scranton, 1989; Evans et al, 1987; Wright, 1993).
Traditional physical education curriculum and teaching practices continue to reify the stereotypical masculine images of physical education and sport (Humberstone, 1990). Toughness, aggressiveness, competitiveness, control, domination, physical and verbal attacks, hierarchy, conflict and discrimination are common characteristics frequently observed in physical education and sport settings all of which diminish self-esteem and confidence (Whitehead & Hendry, 1976; Cohen & Manion, 1981; Bryson, 1990). The ways in which many teachers, male and female, interact and talk with students continue to be stereotypically aggressive, dominating and macho. In turn, through socialization, boys learn the techniques of domination and in practicing them, construct spaces in which their views, definitions, needs and interests become defined as the norm. Any attempts by the girls to resist is met with backlash (Mahony, 1989). The perpetuation of such behavior is often silently permitted to continue. A caring, sensitive, encouraging, and collaborative approach to teaching is less common.

Traditional male standards and norms continued to be reified in the classroom, the curriculum and teaching practices. The girls in this study seemed to be significantly affected by such norms and standards and provided evidence and interest in a sport setting that is more open, supportive, and fun. Many of them wanted to be rewarded for their effort and seemed to be deterred by criticism and always having to be serious and having to win. Their statements supported Hargreaves (1994) point that many girls prefer activities that do not separate the sport and the social experience and opportunity. The findings also point to the importance of the varied interests in the gender make-up of the sport setting.
It is important to keep in mind that girls are not a homogeneous group, and that some may prefer co-ed classes and some may not, or that their preferences are dependent on various circumstances or social conditions. Girls must be given options and choices to meet their diverse interests and experiences with sport and physical activity. Individuality, diversity and opportunities to have a voice in a collaborative setting are central to improving the circumstances or social conditions of the sport setting.

Humberstone's (1990) ethnographic study of a co-ed outdoor education curriculum reported that a caring, sensitive approach to teaching “was found to be a strong motivational feature for all pupils, regardless of sex” which provided “male role models that contradicted the stereotypical images of the aggressive, egotistical sportsmen who celebrate machismo and expect feminine incompetence in physical activity” (p. 209). She points to the importance of new, cooperative, yet challenging forms of activities to replace traditional competitive sports and the development of a structural context in which alternative versions of gender identities and relations could be experienced and constructed. Stereotypical assumptions about gender and everyday notions of physicality must be visibly challenged (Humberstone, 1990).

Alternative teaching practices and curriculum are critical in the development and advocacy of equitable and healthy experiences in physical education. However, the organizational culture of the education system, in particular, the physical education setting, often is also implicated in perpetuating male hegemony. Based on the girls’
voices, my observations and document analysis, principles of patriarchy, western ideals, 
hegemony, conformity, and oppression were evident in the sport settings at the various 
research sites in this study.

THE INDO-CANADIAN FAMILY & THE DIVERSITY WITHIN: Challenging 
Cultural Stereotypes

Although the issue of families and the cultural communities was not included in the 
research purpose or questions, I believe that the influence of the family on Indo-Canadian 
girls’ experiences with sport is an important area for further research. I also felt it was 
critical to include such a discussion in order to challenge the cultural deficit model which 
blames the girls, their families and their cultures for low participation levels in sport and 
physical activity (Stanley, 1995). Such a model fails to address and include a critical 
analysis of the broader social conditions and the Eurocentric and male biases within 
institutional structures.

The girls’ statements about the support, encouragement and general influence of their 
families challenges the literature that has concentrated on a cultural approach to explain 
Indian girls’ and womens’ experiences with sport and physical activity (Carrington, 
Chivers & Williams, 1987; Carrington & Williams, 1988; Carroll, 1993). The girls’ 
voices in this study provide evidence for the need to debunk myths, stereotypes and the 
‘adamant’ efforts of the western compulsion to pathologize Indo-Canadian cultures and 
families. The various backgrounds and social and cultural histories of the girls’ families 
supports Brah’s (1992) statement that “there is as much variation among Asian parents on 
issues concerning the education of their children as can be expected in any group of
parents” (p. 74).

The popular use of a cultural approach, deficiency philosophy (Hoover, 1990) or cultural deficit model (Stanley, 1995), with a one-way gaze focusing the attention on students rather than institutional and societal biases and inequities, is no longer acceptable. Indo-Canadian families, parents and cultures are only one piece of the puzzle in understanding how Indo-Canadian girls’ sport and physical activity experiences are shaped and influenced. Their experiences must be framed within a critical analysis of the colonial, racist, and patriarchal structures and social conditions of formal education and the dominant male Eurocentric society. Further research is required to address the biases in and role of the education system and the dominant social structures. The partial gaze of the western white male only serves to keep Indo-Canadian girls silent, invisible and marginalized.

CONCLUSIONS

If there is to be any increase in sports participation of Asian women, creative and radical practices which combine multicultural education, anti-racist and anti-sexist policies must be implemented (Hargreaves, 1994). In effect, anti-racism and anti-sexism education must contextualize current academic knowledge about differential educational outcomes for Indo-Canadian girls. In addition, if equitable access, opportunities and conditions for participation in physical activity and sport are to become a reality, the willingness of providers to rethink strategy and policy is absolutely essential (Talbot, 1981). This requires a shifting away from the idea that it is women or ethnic groups who are the
problem to looking at the system that should be flexible and prepared to change radically in order to meet the diverse needs of a multiracial society (Hargreaves, 1994). My study has supported this by suggesting that the conditions of the hegemonic sport system be critically addressed and re-defined, including the gender and race dynamics and the Eurocentric values and norms of the curriculum.

Anti-racism, anti-sexism education must recognize how the impact of economic and political conditions mediate micro and macro-level experiences of Indo-Canadian girls, their families and their local communities (Dei, 1996). Fundamental issues of distribution of power and privilege within and among individuals, communities and institutions must also be interrogated. Finally, we must also create spaces where girls' voices can be heard, validated and provided with action oriented responses; where silence is acknowledged as a language of its own requiring a critical analysis and in-depth interpretation; where their identities are acknowledged; and, where they are included and can see their realities represented and reflected accurately.

Specific to the education system, curriculum and teaching practices, notions of white, male privilege, assimilation, color-blindness and reproduction of inequalities based on gender, race and class must be challenged. Teachers must "reselect and repackage traditional forms of knowledge" (Thomas, 1991, p. 67). The incorporation of basketball and volleyball year after year, for example, is dull and pointless, and reproducing the status quo is no longer acceptable. It is clear that faculties of education "should play a more active role by training new teachers as intellectuals rather than technicians in charge
of pushing down students' throats a prepackaged curriculum" (Rezai-Rashti, 1995a, p. 17). Teachers and students in teacher education must be critical and reflexive about their practice if the culture of PE is to change (Flintoff, 1990). "Expanding equal opportunities is not just a question of juggling resources or re-arranging option choices ... to liberalise access to an inadequate system might be acceptable in the short term but for more permanent changes a major restructuring of all social institutions, including schools is needed" (Weiner, 1985, p. 10). Teaching practices, curriculum, and institutional policies and practices that challenge male hegemony and western biases and that demonstrate collaboration, responsibility, group support, sensitivity and caring must be valued and implemented in order to reconstruct physical education experiences and opportunities in more humane, equitable and inclusive ways. According to Griffin (1985), change in PE must be seen as a political problem as well as a pedagogical problem (p. 154).

Although the purpose of this research project was to give voice to Indo-Canadian girls in order to gain insight into their diverse experiences of sport and physical activity within the education system, it is quite clear that their realities and day to day experiences do not occur in isolation. The girls' lives are simultaneously situated in multiple locations - their communities, and the society and the education system at large - all of which exhibit racism and sexism, and are not without contradictions and conflicts. Anzaldua (1990) writes that "the future depends on the breaking down of paradigms, it depends on the straddling of two or more cultures. By creating a new mythos - that is a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave ... creates a new consciousness" (p. 80). The future depends on a broadening of our collective
consciousness which supports, values and embraces difference.

This study recommends that the experiences of Indo-Canadian girls be contextualized within the dynamic and coexisting influences of peers, families and culture, teachers and curriculum, and systems and structures. It also recommends that we pay more attention to how we know rather than primarily to what we know (Razack, 1993).

This study has provided the beginnings of a conversation about Indo-Canadian girls’ sport and physical activity experiences and perceptions. By giving the girls’ an opportunity to share their experiences about sport and physical activity within the context of their schools and the broader social and cultural contexts, this study addressed some of the gaps and omissions in the literature by asking questions that had not been asked and by including the voices of participants that have been marginalized and excluded. It is clear that changes need to occur within the sport and physical education settings. In order to create change, Halls (1990) discussion about the media highlights the need to “...attend to the complexities of the ways race and racism are constructed ...” (p. 12). Similarly, in order to bring about change in the education system, specifically in the PE setting, we must address the complexities of gender, race, voice, silence, representation and difference. We must address these issues as political and pedagogical problems and we must break down traditional paradigms and forms of knowledge.

Since this study was the beginnings of a conversation and an exploration into a new combination of social issues, it does not enable us to take the direct leap to concrete
recommendations. In order to get from 'here'- the beginnings of a dialogue - to 'there' - a place where we have a better understanding of the issues based on an expanded base of studies and literature regarding Indo-Canadian girls and sport - we must emerse ourselves in the space or the hyphen between here - there. Just as the border worker is neither an insider or an outsider, but both and within, thus 'working the hyphen' (Fine, 1994), practitioners and administrators need to emerse themselves in the discomfort of the hyphen between here-there, and begin to creatively strategize and negotiate multiple realities, experiences and interests. We cannot automatically leap from 'here' to 'there' overnight. It seems, however, that prescriptions and 'how to' manuals are what is being sought. Within the diverse context of todays society, ‘how to’ prescriptions are not effective nor inclusive. As Rezai-Rashti (1995a) suggests, teachers must take on the role of intellectuals rather than technicians in charge of a prepackaged curriculum.

It is clear that, although this study just scratched the surface, it raised more questions than it answered. As a result, recommendations for practitioners and for future research are numerous and cover a wide range of issues and topics.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. The influence of family and cultural community on girls’ experiences of sport and physical activity require further study, especially in the context of communities such as the Indo-Canadian community. I believe that the impact of immigration and the evolving nature of settlement processes has a significant influence on girls’ experiences of sport in Canada. A study that explores the influence of the immigration process and experience, in relation to how the sport experiences of girls and women from India or other parts of the world changes when they immigrate to Canada, would illuminate a variety of areas, including the tensions between assimilation and retention of cultural heritage and identity.
2. This study contributed to and supported the need to challenge and address the hegemonic PE curriculum and to develop an inclusive curriculum that represents diverse gender and race interests, needs and perspectives. This means: opening spaces for alternative and sometimes oppositional paradigms; ensuring representation of diverse populations; developing a broad-based curriculum and diverse teaching strategies with adequate support systems; and, asking the right questions such as 'what is not taught, what are the omissions and misrepresentations, how are minorities, girls and the poor portrayed, who has power and privilege' (see Dei, 1996, p. 83-84 for a complete list of questions).

3. Because girls' experiences do not occur in isolation and teachers have a significant impact on such experiences, it is important to explore the role of PE teachers and their impact on girls' experiences. Questions around the influence and intersections of gender and race of students and teachers would be critical in addressing issues of role models and representation in sport and physical activity.

4. Some educational systems have begun to develop race relations, anti-racism, and equity policies and practices. However, the realistic impact of school wide policies on PE curriculum, practices, attitudes, inclusion and equity are unknown and issues of accountability remain problematic. A separate study is required to analyse the practical implications and effectiveness of documents and policies.

5. Based on the findings of this study and Trinh Minh-ha's (1989) statement, issues of silence require further study as do issues of representation and voice within the context of sport and physical activity. In order to address the issues of equitable access and opportunities for Indo-Canadian girls, it is imperative to create spaces to listen and to respond to marginalized voices rather than appropriating such voices. According to Dei (1996), it is important to problematize the marginalization of certain voices in society and specifically, the delegitimation of the knowledge and experience of subordinated groups in the education system.

6. In order to contextualize Indo-Canadian girls' experiences in sport and physical activity within the broader contexts, a study to address the influences and links between: peers, families, teachers, curriculum, education system, dominant society (social, political and cultural contexts) would provide a thorough investigation of the topic.

7. In order to get access to issues of voice and race, an alternate methodology must be employed. One possible alternative or technique is the use of an 'interpretive community' (Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan, 1995) and a listening guide (Brown et al, 1988; Gilligan, Brown and Rogers, 1990; Brown and Gilligan, 1992; Rogers, Brown and Tappan, 1994), a voice-centered, relational method which rejects the model of individual interpreters. According to Brown and Gilligan (1992), listening, speaking, taking in, and interpreting "the words and the silences, the stories and the narratives of other people" we hear psychological truths embedded in language and culture. Another possible alternative is the use of an action oriented collaborative research project (such as feminist action research) which ideally levels the power between researchers and participants.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

1. In this study, it was clear that, regardless of the gender and race mix of the sport environment, the hegemonic male values and ethos must be addressed in order to create a more inclusive, broadly defined sport setting that meets the diverse needs and interests of girls. This study provided evidence of the need to acknowledge and challenge the serious problems and exclusionary implications of traditional male hegemonic conditions in the PE and sport setting. This study also provides evidence for the importance of 'girls only' settings that are based on a broader definition of sport that includes not only competition but also fun, socializing, and non-competitive activities.

2. Although there is very little literature that addresses this area, it is important to explore alternative ways of listening to, hearing and responding to the voices and silences from the margins. See Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan (1995, p. 29-34) for a summarized version of 'the listening guide', an interesting and enlightening challenge to our taken for granted mode of communication. Develop a mentoring program for girls from various ethnic groups in order to create a space in which issues of racism can be discussed, acknowledged and validated. In order to address issues of racism, it is critical that people of color have a safe space in which to discuss and explore taken-for-granted racist experiences and perspectives; where individuals have opportunities to develop the language/vocabulary to articulate their experiences of racism.

3. It is critical that practitioners avoid using a cultural deficit model; recognize that there is as much diversity within groups as there is between groups. Recognize and include the broader influences of institutional and systemic structures, political, social and cultural contexts - not just the influence of the girls' families and cultures. They don't exist in a vacuum. It is imperative that we question the stereotypes and the pathological explanations of the 'family' or 'home environment' as a source of the 'problems' some Indo-Canadian girls experience in relation to sport and physical activity.

4. Those in positions of power, such as teachers, administrators and service providers must acknowledge and de-center their own positions, they must question and unlearn white (male) power and privilege and the rationality for dominance in society and in the sport and physical activity setting.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Naidu, M. (1996). Personal interviews with Indo-Canadian females in Vancouver. (Fictitious names were used for the interviewees).


APPENDIX A - Consent Forms

Institutional Consent Form - Interview/Observation

October 9, 1996

Mr. ___________, Principal
_________ School
Surrey, BC

Dear Mr. ___________,

My name is Indy Batth and I am a second year graduate student in the Master of Arts program specializing in Human Kinetics at the University of British Columbia. I wish to request your permission for conducting my research at your school with Grade 11 Indo-Canadian girls who have transferred in from Bimini School in Surrey.

The title of my graduate thesis research is “Physical Activity and Sport in the Lives of Young Canadian Women of Indian Descent.” I will be supervised in my work by my thesis committee, Dr. Patricia Vertinsky (Department of Educational Studies, UBC), Dr. Wendy Frisby (School of Human Kinetics, UBC), and Dr. Yasmin Jiwani (Coordinator, Feminist Research Education Development and Action Center [FREDA], SFU).

The purpose of my research is to gain insight into the physical education/activity interests and experiences of young Indo-Canadian women and to give voice and meaning to their experiences. I would like to do this by conducting observations, focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews. Observations would take place within the physical education classes and the general school environment. Focus group interviews would be conducted with groups of girls as described earlier and one-on-one interviews would take place with individual students and staff. This will be done in accordance with the UBC Ethics Committee and with written consent from students, parents, teachers and the school board.

Participants of this study will be asked to dedicate at least two, possibly even 3-4 hours of their time. This includes time for 2-3 interviews (one-on-one & focus groups) of approximately one hour each. Audio tapes and possibly video tapes may be used during one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews if the participants give me consent to do so. The information gathered will be used as data for my thesis and then destroyed once the thesis is complete. I will not identify either your school or any individuals by name. Confidentiality will be maintained by using pseudonyms in writing and talking
Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your daughter is invited to participate in a study entitled *Physical Activity and Sport in the Lives of Young Canadian Women of Indian Descent.*

Previous studies have indicated that by the age of 6, girls already feel inferior in terms of proficiency in physical activity, and by the age of 10, most girls are opting out of physical activity for life. The results are alarming. In addition, Indian girls and women have sometimes been stereotyped as not interested in sport and physical activity.

**I am writing this letter to obtain your and your daughter’s consent to have your daughter participate in a group interview joined by some of her female classmates, and observations of her physical education program (if she is taking PE), and possibly several short interviews.** During observations, I will be looking at participation level and style and how students interact with each other, with teachers and with other students. In addition, I am also interested in talking to girls about their sport and physical activity experiences even if they are not taking physical education or involved in school athletic or recreation programs. The study will involve only the grade 11 Indo-Canadian girls who transferred from Bimini School in Surrey, some teachers, and some administrative staff. **Permission for this study has been obtained by the Principal.**

The interviews will be led by myself, a graduate student from the School of Human Kinetics at the University of British Columbia. The interviews will take the form of an informal discussion (I’ll try to make it fun!) about your daughter’s experiences in physical activity. I have attached some sample questions that I will be asking. All interviews will be held at the school during school hours.

The information gathered in this study is kept strictly confidential by the researcher, and at no time will your daughter be identified as having participated in it. Your daughter’s name and the name of the school will be known only to the researcher and will not be published in any form. In accordance with the UBC research guidelines, your daughter’s participation in this study is voluntary and she may withdraw at any time. Your daughter’s involvement in this study will provide important information about physical activity experiences which will further the understanding of gender, multiculturalism, anti-racism and the role schools play in enabling girls to improve the quality of their lives through physical activity.
Please return this form by _________________ - Thank you.

I have received and read the attached letter and this consent form. I understand what is required of the participants in the study entitled *Physical Activity and Sport in the Lives of Young Canadian Women of Indian Descent*.

**Parent/Guardian Consent:**

I **DO consent** to having my daughter interviewed.

Signature ___________________________ Date __________________

I **DO NOT consent** to having my daughter interviewed.

Signature ___________________________ Date __________________

Student's Full Name (Please Print) __________________________

Please return this form by _________________ - Thank you.
I have received and read the attached letter and this consent form. I understand what is required of the participants in the study entitled *Physical Activity and Sport in the Lives of Young Canadian Women of Indian Descent*.

**Student's Consent:**

I **DO consent** to being interviewed.

Student's Signature ___________________________ Date ______________

I **DO consent** to having my voice tape-recorded.

Student's Signature ___________________________ Date ______________

Student's Full Name (Please Print) ________________________________

*Please return this form by ______________ Thank you.*
APPENDIX B
Focus Group and Interview Questions - Phase I: Spring 1996

Indian Women & Physical Activity

1. What do you think of when I say the words “physical activity”? What other words come to mind? Why? *Probe: sport, recreation, leisure*

2. Do you like being physically active? Why or why not? What does being physically active mean to you? How important is it to you to be physically active? Are there benefits to being physically active? Please explain.

3. Is it important to win in your pe classes? Do some of the girls like to win more than others? How do you feel if you do something wrong during the class? Or how do you feel if you are good at something in class? How does your teacher tell you that you are doing something wrong or that you are doing something well in class? Do you think your teacher is fair? Why?

4. Why do you think you have to take pe class? Is taking pe important to you? Why or why not? If you could plan your own pe classes what would you do - any changes? Why or why not?

School Culture

5. What is your experience of physical education at this school? Has it been positive or negative? Please explain. What are some of your favorite activities/sports that you do at school? What do you like about them? What do you dislike? Why? What about intramurals and tournaments. What do you do during lunch hour? *Probe: boys, friends, teacher, pe teacher, fairness, competition, team/individual sports, competitive/recreational sport, fun, social*

6. Have any of you attended a public school in the past? What was your experience of physical education at that school? Do you like PE at this school or at the public school? Why?

7. Do you like ‘girls only’ pe or mixed boys and girls pe? Why or why not? Do you think some activities should be for ‘girls only’ and some that are mixed? Do you like participating in sport and physical activity with Indian girls only? Why or why not? Do Indian girls participate in sport and physical activity as often as white girls? Why or why not?

8. Next year you’re going to a public school. How do you feel about that? Do you have any concerns, anxieties, fears? Are you looking forward to it or not? Do you think the public school will be different? If so, how? For those of you taking PE 11, what do you think the PE classes will be like at the new school? Are you looking forward to them?
9. How do you feel about leaving this school? Did you like being a student here?

Social Context

10. What do you think about community recreation programs or physical activity events/programs away from the school? Do you participate in them? Why or why not?
   Probe: camping, skiing, swimming

11. Is your experience of sport and physical activity the same or different from that of boys’ experiences? How is it the same or different? Why? Do girls and boys have the same opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity? Why or why not? Do you participate the same as boys? Why or why not? Do you believe there are certain sports for boys and men and certain sports for girls and women? Is your experience of learning a new sport different than boys experiences? Why or why not? How do you feel when learning a new sport? Do you believe that team sports are the domain of boys and men? Why or why not? Does the fact that you are female influence your sport and physical activity opportunities? How?

12. What do your parents think about girls/women and sport? Who, if anyone, in your family participates in sport and physical activity? What kinds of activities? Who encourages you to be active? Or discourages you?

13. Are your experiences and opportunities the same as white girls? Why or why not? Does the fact that you are Indian and female affect your sport/physical experiences and opportunities? How?

14. If you’re not involved in sport and physical activity, what are the reasons? What keeps you from getting involved? Are there any sports or activities that you have always wanted to do but haven’t done? Why? What are the barriers?

15. Do you think that you will always participate in activity - even when you are as old as your parents? Why or why not? What kinds of activities do you think you might continue? Why?

16. In what ways does your family, your culture, your religion affect your activities?
APPENDIX C
Interview Questions - Phase 2: February 1997

A. Personal Sporting Experience

1. What is your experience of ‘girls only’ PE?

2. What is your experience of co-ed PE/sport?

3. Would you like to tell me about some specific experiences of PE/sports at Bimini School? at public school?

4. Describe your transition experience of transferring from Bimini School to the public school?

B. Institutional

5. What has PE 11 been like for you? What has the co-ed class been like for you? How has it been to have a male PE teacher instead of the female teacher at Bimini School?

6. Tell me about your experiences with your PE 10 teacher? What about other PE teachers? (ie male, female, white, colored, ...)

7. What do you think about uniforms for PE class? (probe: how is it in the summer? How would you change it, if at all?)

C. Relational / Community Perceptions

8. How do you feel about being labelled a ‘tomboy’?

9. Some of the girls have said that the Indian community has changed over the years with regard to Indian girls and sport. Do you agree? Explain.

10. Do you think the non-Indian community holds particular stereotypes of sporting Indian girls? What about the Indian community? How does this affect your confidence or your opportunities in sport?
APPENDIX D - Documents Reviewed

BIMINI SCHOOL

- Administrative Regulations & Procedures and School Discipline (Draft, Nov. 95)
  - Mission Statement
  - School Policy on Discipline
  - Expectations and Code of Conduct
  - Uniform Code of Dress
  - Damage and Theft of School Property
  - Student Suspension
  - Rules for Students Riding in the Buses
- Bimini Quarterly - December 1995

PRESTON SCHOOL

- Belief Statement
- Anti-Racism & Conflict Resolution Camp
- Preston School Celebrates Racial Relations
- From Trouble to Tolerance
- Mission Statement
- Student Charter
- Y.E.S. Program
- Student Timetables

TIMMER SCHOOL

- 1996/1997 Calendar
- Newsletters: August, September & October 1996

SCHOOL DISTRICT #36 - Surrey

APPENDIX F
PROFILE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Name: AMY  Age: 16

Schooling:
* attended Bimini School in grades 4-7 and 9-10
* currently attending Timmer Secondary School with Jasmin

Family Situation:
* middle-class. Western & traditional values integrated with a mix of religious/cultural and old values
* born in Calgary, Alberta; been in Vancouver for 7 years
* Main Language: English
* Family of 6
* Mom not working outside of home; Dad: landscaper & trustee at Bimini School
* Parents are religious, but she is not religious or baptized
* Family, religion or culture do not affect her opportunities to be physically active.
* family participation: younger brother plays sports, parents take daily walks; younger & older sister are not physically active.

General Information:
* first impression: quiet, reserved
* confident in her athletic abilities, "I know I'm good"
* received 'most valuable player' award in grade 10
* schooling: attended public school up to grade 4 and then in grade 8
* believes in equality

Physical Activity:
Meaning, Values, Importance, Motivators
- having fun and keeping fit and healthy, don't want to gain weight as I get older
- likes being physically active because it keeps her 'hyper', 'more open', 'brings out [her] personality'
- motivation for being active: 'brings up my um, spirits', 'makes you feel better when you're having a bad day', 'that's when when we let it all out right', 'lets out all your anger or whatever if you're down or something'
- parents are encouraging and supportive
- favorite activities: soccer, basketball, volleyball, softball; favorite new activity tried in PE 11- karate
- her feelings about having to prove herself: 'that makes me feel real proud and powerful I guess 'cause I go I go to myself yeah, I can achieve this. No one can stop me. I guess that's when you get high self-esteem. It doesn't put me down or anything.

Barriers, Discouraging
- always curious about football; never given a chance to play football; I want someone to teach me; played
a modified version of football in PE class.
- prefers 'girls only' PE classes, 'cause guys right, I wouldn't mind playing with them right but they just criticize too much right and they take it too seriously right. And over there I feel totally uncomfortable, so [in a co-ed setting?]. yeah'
- 'I have to prove right that I am good, that I can do the same as what men can do or boys, men whatever. I can achieve the same goals as they can I guess'
- in PE 11 co-ed class, at 'first, I really didn't feel comfortable ... but then after, I just got used to it', 'when Jasmin came, I guess I felt more confident'
Name: TINA  Age: 16

Schooling:
* attended Bimini School in grades 5-10
* currently attends Preston Secondary School

Family Situation:
* born and raised in Vancouver
* main language spoken at home: Punjabi
* family of 5; parents, older sister, younger sister
* Mom has her own business; Dad not working due to paralysis
* family participation: younger sister somewhat active; older sister and parents not physically active

General Information:
* attended Bimini School for the past 5 years
* prefers public school because there's 'more freedom, more things to do. It's actually exciting ...'
* she is an exceptional athlete, highly regarded by family and friends, including the boys, for her athletic skills and abilities
* "I'm proud to be East Indian and to be a female. I could show other people even guys even white guys different races like yeah we can play too right'

Physical Activity:
Meaning, Values, Importance, Motivators
* wants to become a cop and believes being physically active is important in reaching for this goal.
* sport/physical education are everything to her; PE is more important than any other class at school.
* religion, though, is more important than sports - both are valued and a respectful balance achieved
* she has high expectations of her self in sport and physical activity
* recognition and acknowledgement of her athletic abilities and achievements are extremely important to her.
* often demonstrates leadership qualities by encouraging other girls to get involved in sports because she says 'I don't wanna play by myself', 'I tried to make them feel happy about it like how I feel about it', 'no judge[ment]'; 'I just want you guys to know to come into it and play and that's all that counts', 'so then they I try to encourage them as much as I could'
* her best experience of sport/physical activity is "when I get awards that totally brings me up. It um like my eyes go full of tears I'm so happy you know. I made it to the top ... my name is on this plaque ..."
* parents, especially Mom, are supportive and encouraging
* enjoys all sports and activities, especially soccer; there aren't any activities she doesn't like; she will try any activity; likes trying new things
* it's important to her to prove to the guys 'that girls do play, not all girls don't'
* supports and prefers co-ed PE and sports, although 'it doesn't really matter to me ... because no matter what i'm going to participate'

Barriers, Discouraging
* always wanted to try bunjee jumping and skydiving: Mom won't let her until she's older.
* relatives attitudes are discouraging.
* not receiving the 'most valuable player' award in grade 10 devastated her; she was shocked, as were her classmates, when someone else received it.
* in grade 11, she initially did not go to basketball practice because, "the other girls are harshly good. I didn't want to waste my time".
* not taking PE because it conflicts with required courses - Math and English 11. As a transferring student, she can’t select course until current students have done so. She has less options for course selection.
Name: JASMIN  Age: 16

Schooling:
* attended Bimini School in grades 9 & 10
* currently attending Timmer Secondary School with Amy

Family Situation:
* born in Fort Nelson; been in the lower mainland for about 9 years
* main language spoken at home: English
* Family of 6: parents, older sister (24), younger sister (11), and older brother (18)
* Mom works in a restaurant; Dad works in ???
* family participation: brother plays basketball and hockey; Mom runs, works out (sit ups, leg exercises, running on the spot, ...) at home, to lose weight; Dad runs with Mom; older sister is not physically active because she’s “so busy”; younger sister (in grade 6), “all she wants to do is play”
* family is “not that religious, but they are. They’re in between”
* family, religion or culture do not affect her opportunities to be physically active

General Information:
- parents are supportive of her involvement in sport, as long as she maintains her grades in other courses
- liked going to Bimini School better, ‘it was more fun. You got to socialize...’, although she didn’t like all the rules
- was afraid of being a loner when when she first arrived at public school
- finds lunch times at the public school boring because there’s nothing to do; at Bimini School there were lunch time games; she hasn’t heard of anything like that at public school; she hasn’t looked into it.

Physical Activity
Meaning, Values, Importance, Motivators
* favorite activities: soccer, played since grade 5; basketball, volleyball, hockey
* favorite activities in PE 11: bowling
* enrolled in PE 11 because Amy was there
likes being physically active because ‘you feel good about yourself afterwards. And staying fit, I guess’, ‘And you don’t have to worry about, like, gaining weight or something like that’
- likes PE with ‘girls only’ and coed because ‘sometimes you get sick of playing with the guys’, ‘like if you do something stupid they scream at you, right. If you goof off with the girls, they’re not going to say nothing to you’

Barriers, Discouraging
- has never hiked before and would like to try but ‘I don’t know where to go. I don’t know who to drive me’, ‘ don’t know who to go with’. She would also like to try sky-diving and experiences the same barriers as with hiking.
- finds PE 11 boring; she wants to play soccer and ‘just play more sports instead of going places’. ‘just play basketball and soccer and go horseback riding’, ‘I don’t wanna go scuba diving’
- experience of PE 11: ‘I don’t like it at all like I don’t like going to classes ... And I don’t like going to field trips right but like if Amy goes right I’ll go right ...’
Name: SUKHI    Age: 16

Schooling:
* attended Bimini School in grades K-6 & 8 & 10; because she lives outside of the school district, she was bussed in
* currently attending Blue Mountain School which is not one of the research sites; she attended this same school in grade 7 & 9 before returning to Bimini School

Family Situation:
* born in Langley; lived in the lower mainland all her life
* Main languages spoken at home: Punjabi and English
* family of 6
* Dad’s in real estate; Mom is ???
* Gets encouragement from parents. Mom is happy 'if I play and stuff. My Dad encourages us too. We just go to him to get permission ...

General Information:
- she used to love Bimini School. 'I don't like it how it's become now. It's too changed, and stuff'. 'It's too “new”. Since they got the new school, and stuff. Everything's changed. I guess it's become more strict.' There was more freedom, then.
- didn't feel comfortable in public school; 'like, I could run around screaming here [Knight]. You can't really do that there'; she couldn't be herself in public school; 'the environment's different'
- at Bimini School 'you don't feel singled out ... there are a lot of other brown people with you too', 'but at the public school, you know ... different people, the races are different ... you know, different attitudes ... I don't know how to explain it.' 'Here [Knight]I can do what I want, I can be myself in my own class.'

Physical Activity:
Meaning, Values, Importance, Motivators
- liked PE at Bimini School better because it's taken more seriously
* prefers 'girls only' PE because 'it's better with the girls, you feel more comfortable. Like, I couldn't do whatever I wanted with the guys class ... with the girls, they know that I'm already like that. I can do what I want'. However, she believes some co-ed classes would have been good, but not be in the best interest of all girls. The boys don't criticize her because they're afraid of her.
* likes being physically active because, 'I have no idea. I'm so used to it. I just enjoy is so much. It's like a hobby for me. Like, playing sports and stuff.' 'I get something from it. It makes me feel good.' 'Usually, I know that I get tired faster 'cause I have asthma ... being active and stuff it helps me. Because I'm not tired as much.' 'I know I feel good about myself'.
* favorite activities: “I love soccer”; “I'll play any sport. Once I start playing it, I know I'll start liking it”; likes team sports but not individual sports such as track and field.
- believes PE is for participation, learning, fun, less serious; tournaments and competitions are to be taken more seriously.
- 'I think that everyone should have an equal chance; it's not really a guy-girl thing; like soccer ... girls play, guys play ... what's the difference. It's a skill thing.
- physical activity and inactivity - it's not 'Indian thing ... I don't think it depends on the color. It just depends on the person'.

Barriers, Discouraging
- 'there are no hockey teams with girls on them'. 'If there was a hockey team, I would join.'
* won't be taking PE 11 because 'I want to focus on my studies. Because I don't like public school PE ... I don't really like going. It was not fun for me ... If it was Knight PE I would take it for sure ... I know I can join the teams for sure next year [at public school]. But I just don't want the PE class.' 'I'm going to join soccer this spring.'