

Ramanathan, S. and Crocker, P.R.E. **The Influence of Cultural Values on Physical Activity among Female Adolescents from the Indian Diaspora.** Presented at the annual conference of the Canadian Society for Psychomotor Learning and Sport Psychology, November 2006, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Abstract

This study investigated how physical activity (PA) patterns among female adolescents from the Indian diaspora have been influenced by Indian traditions, beliefs and values. This study used a framework based on Social Cognitive Theory and research on cultural values (Welk et al., 2003; Unger et al., 2002). The research question was: What role do personal, peer, parental and cultural attitudes towards PA have on actual PA among female adolescents in Canada from the Indian diaspora? Six girls aged 15-18 participated in an interview followed by a focus group. All participants considered PA to be important for physical and mental health and to strengthen relationships with family members. Spiritual health emerged among participants with a strong affinity for Indian culture. Parents supported physical activities by playing games with their daughters, providing verbal encouragement, and filling facilitative roles. When discussing Indian culture, participants indicated that males and females were raised to fulfill different roles: females were raised to become wives and mothers while males were taught to be independent. As expected, these differentiated gender roles also emerged while discussing sporting behaviours. In general, boys were deemed more aggressive, assertive and competitive in PA; girls were perceived to promote fun-based learning environments. Future research should address spiritual health and family values among adolescents from other diasporic subcultures in Canada.