

Using a Culturally-relevant Approach to Engage South-Asian Female Adolescents in  
Secondary Physical Education

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## **Abstract**

The South-Asian (SA) population makes up the largest visible minority group in Canada. Little research in Canada has examined the interplay of gender and culture in Physical Education (PE), and strategies to increase PE participation in Canadian SA female adolescents. In addition, there is a lack of pre-service and in-service teacher training on culturally-relevant PE. This lack of exposure may cause PE teachers to perpetuate Western norms and ideals as being the most desirable, thus resulting in PE programs that have little meaning or value to SA female adolescents. If PE is not meaningful or relevant to SA female adolescents, they may be less likely to develop lifelong physical activity (PA) habits. Using the framework of Culturally-relevant Physical Education proposed by Halas, McRae, and Carpenter (2013) and an in-depth literature review, this study examined the challenges to PE participation in SA female adolescents and recommends culturally-relevant strategies. Based on the literature review, a comprehensive framework to engage SA female adolescents in PE has been created. The following strategies were found to have the potential to increase the engagement of SA female adolescents: supportive learning environment, student-centered approach, alternative teaching models, authentic assessment, family and school partnerships, and culturally-relevant pedagogy. The findings of this research have the potential to improve PE participation and the overall well-being of the SA female population. Implications of this research demonstrate that physical education teacher education (PETE) must incorporate culturally-relevant PE, school mental health programs need to target the SA population, and policy-makers must place a higher value on PE in schools.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Personal Background**

During my four years of teaching in the public and private systems of Canada and internationally in Australia, I have had the privilege of teaching a wide variety of students in physical education (PE). Throughout my brief experience teaching elementary PE, I noticed a difference in skill level and motivation among girls, particularly at the intermediate level. During the majority of my experiences teaching secondary PE (primarily Grade 9 girls) in the Peel District School Board – one of the most diverse school boards in the province of Ontario, Canada – I noticed a lack of enjoyment, motivation, and enthusiasm of Grade 9 girls in PE. Throughout my teaching experiences, I have worked hard to tailor my program to females in PE by providing choice, ownership, positive encouragement, and peer teaching opportunities. However, despite these methods of differentiated instruction, I have noticed that even when implementing these strategies, many South-Asian (SA) females still lacked engagement in PE. This realization challenged me to reflect upon my teaching practices and unearth the underlying cause for such disengagement. As a white female growing up in Canada who was involved in sports, it was difficult for me to relate to the cultural challenges that SA female adolescents may encounter.

PE in Canadian schools has been criticized for being dominated by white male and female teachers, who may also encounter similar difficulties relating to their students. This inspired me to conduct my research by examining the intersectionalities of gender and culture, and how they might intersect to influence SA female engagement in PE. The goal of this research is to shed light on the challenges that SA female adolescents face,

and to encourage physical educators to implement effective strategies to increase PE engagement among this population. Doing so has the potential to ultimately improve PA levels of the SA population at large.

Being a white female conducting research on minority groups can be criticized as only serving to contribute to the unequal power dynamic between the majority and the minority group. My opinion of the most pressing issues to discuss may not be in line with SA females' beliefs and opinions and thus, I may not be able to fully capture the experiences of this cultural group. The power dynamic between myself (the researcher) and the researched is unequal because I am free to choose to elaborate on the content that I feel is most relevant (Walseth, 2015). Since this is conceptual research, my interactions with this group can only be based on my personal teaching experiences, and not on empirical studies.

### **Background of the Problem**

SA populations consist of those who self-identify as having ancestors originating from South-Asia, including those who report their origin as at least one of the following: Bangladeshi, Bengali, East Indian, Goan, Gurjarti, Kashmiri, Pakistani, Punjabi, Nepali, Sinhalese, Sri Lankan, Tamil, or South Asian (Statistics Canada, 2001). About three-quarters (3/4) of the foreign born SA population were recent immigrants to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2007). In the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), of the SA population, the Muslim faith was the most commonly practiced (3.2%) in Canada, followed by Hindu (1.5%) and Sikh (1.4%). In addition, the province of Ontario was home to 73.6% of the Hindu population, 55.2% of the Muslim population, and 44.6% of the Buddhist population.

Data reported in the ParticipACTION 2015 Report Card, the most comprehensive document in Canada synthesizing child and youth PA information from multiple sources, has presented some alarming results for the health of children and youth. According to this report card, only 9% of 5- to 17-year old youth get the 60 minutes of cardiovascular PA they need for optimal health each day. Physical inactivity has been identified as the fourth-leading risk factor for global mortality (World Health Organization [WHO], 2013).

To date, there has been limited research in the field of SA female adolescents' participation in PE in Canada. Epidemiological data suggests that members of the SA population are at a higher risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity compared to other ethnic groups (Anand et al., 2000; Gupta, Brister, & Verma, 2006). In addition, a Canadian study found that SA immigrant populations experienced higher rates of generalized anxiety when compared to their Canadian-born populations (Islam, Khanlou, & Tamim, 2014). The SA population comprises the largest visible minority group in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006). A Canadian study found that the level of moderate PA was lowest in South-Asian (SA) female immigrants, which suggests that it is common for many SA immigrants to adopt a sedentary lifestyle after immigrating to Western countries (Bryan, Tremblay, Perez, Ardern, & Katzmazyk, 2006; Jonnalagadda & Diwan, 2002). PE class in schools provides students with the opportunity to be active while also developing other important socio-emotional skills such as self-awareness, self-regulation, teamwork, and cooperation skills which can impact their lifelong participation in PA (Basch, 2011).



### **Statement of the Problem**

In Canada, there is a lack of research regarding culturally-relevant strategies that can be used to engage SA female adolescents in PE. In addition, there is also a lack of pre-service and in-service teacher training on culturally-relevant PE. If teachers are not provided with adequate training, then they may be more likely to perpetuate Western norms and ideals as being the most desirable, thus resulting in curriculum that has little meaning or value to SA female adolescents.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to identify the barriers to PE participation in SA female adolescents in Canada. Drawing on the literature, this study will explore a variety of strategies to increase the engagement of SA female adolescents in PE. The framework created will summarize the recommended strategies for physical educators, with the goal of informing current teaching practices to become more culturally-relevant and accessible for SA female adolescents in PE.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that have guided this study are as follows:

1. What are the current barriers/challenges that SA female adolescents face in PE, as reported in the scholarly literature?
2. What strategies do the literature recommend for increasing PE engagement of females, particularly SA females?
3. How can teachers implement culturally-relevant pedagogy into the PE curriculum to better engage SA females?
4. What are the implications of these findings on school PE programs?

### **Significance of the Study**

The SA population in Canada has grown substantially over the last 20 years, and is anticipated to continue to grow. Given the high percentage of SA immigrants in Canada – and the high-risk of cardiovascular disease, sedentary lifestyle, and reduced mental health in this population – this study is needed to target the wholistic health of this population. Research demonstrates that current PE programs are not effective in both engaging female adolescents in PE, and relating to their future PA participation. Quality PE that is meaningful and relevant to female adolescents and delivered by PE specialists has the potential to improve overall health and future PA patterns of female adolescents.

Thus, PE programs in Canada have been chosen as the focus for this study. This study is needed to highlight the unique needs of SA female adolescents while creating a culturally-relevant program that is equitable for all SA female adolescents to actively participate in PE. The strategies suggested are supported by research and serve as a basis to inform pre-service and in-service teacher education programs.

### **Theoretical Frameworks of the Study**

Two theoretical frameworks will be used as a lens to examine the literature on SA female adolescents' participation in PE: 1) Varieties of Intercultural Strategies in Immigrant Groups and in the Receiving Society (Berry, 2001), and 2) the Culturally Relevant PE Model (Halas, McRae, & Carpenter, 2013).

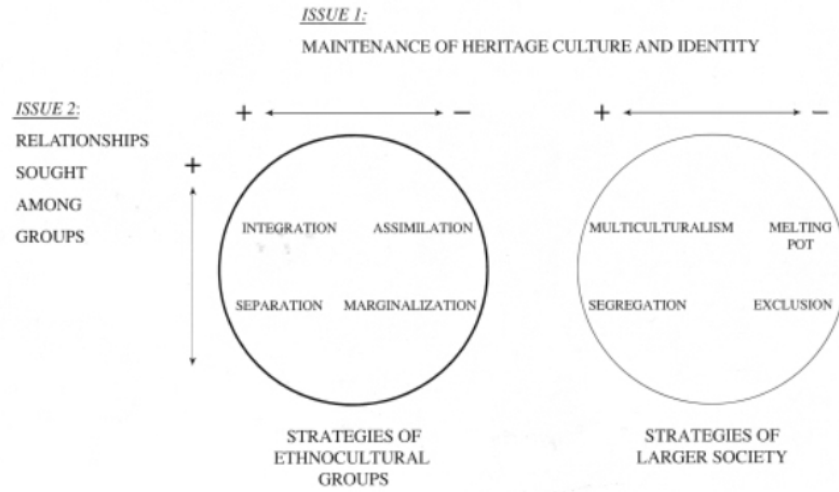
#### **Varieties of Intercultural Strategies in Immigrant Groups and in the Receiving Society**

Berry's (2001) Varieties of Intercultural Strategies in Immigrant Groups and in the Receiving Society Model (Figure 1) will be used to examine the challenges SA

female adolescents face when participating in PE. This model explains the difficulty that SA female adolescents and their families encounter when deciding whether or not to maintain their cultural identity or assimilate to the Western culture or identity. This model also highlights the role that the dominant group may have in influencing the SA community.

Acculturation is a process that entails contact between two or more cultural groups. Intercultural strategies refer to the attitudes that the receiving society has of immigrant groups. As Berry (2001) explains, from the point of view of the immigrant groups:

- The assimilation strategy is defined when individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural heritage and seek daily interaction with other cultures.
- The separation strategy is defined when immigrants place a value on holding on to their original culture, while avoiding interactions with others of different cultures.
- The marginalization strategy is defined when there is little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance (often due to reasons of enforced cultural loss) and little interest in having relations with other cultures (often due to reasons of exclusion or discrimination).
- The integration strategy is defined when there is an interest in maintaining one's original culture while also engaging in daily interaction with other cultural groups. In this option, immigrants seek to interact with other cultural groups while participating as an integral part of the larger society. Integration can only be chosen and successfully pursued by immigrants when the receiving society is open and inclusive in its approach towards cultural diversity.

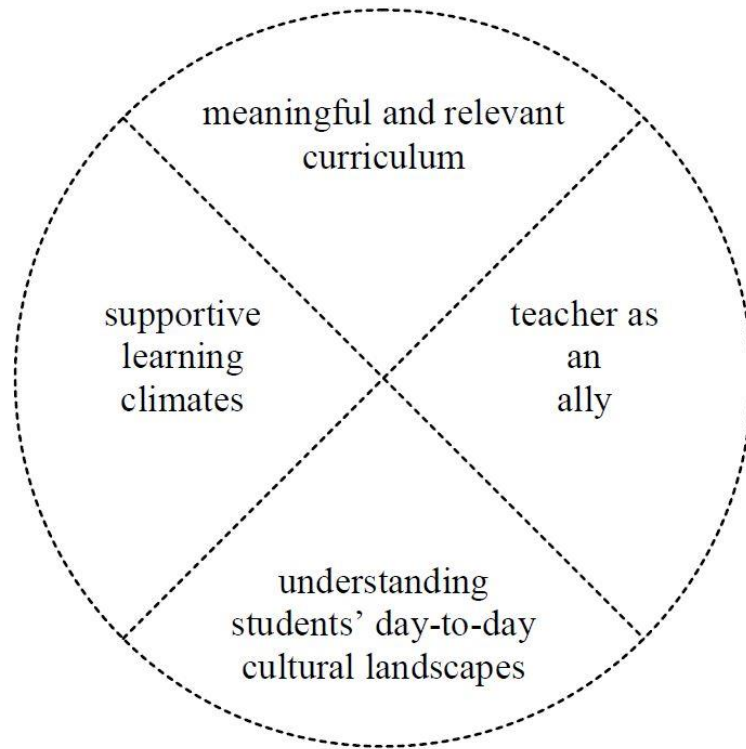


*Figure 1.* Varieties of intercultural strategies in immigrant groups and in the receiving society (Berry, 2001, p. 618).

Berry (2001) also examines the role that the dominant group plays in influencing the way in which mutual acculturation would take place. Assimilation when sought by the dominant group can be termed the melting pot. When separation is demanded and enforced by the dominant group, it can produce segregation. When marginalization is imposed by the dominant group, it can become exclusion. Lastly, when cultural diversity is an objective of the larger society, it represents multiculturalism. Research recommends *integration* as the most positive individual and group acculturation strategy, and *multiculturalism* as the most positive objective for the larger society.

### **Culturally-Relevant Physical Education: A Theory for Engaging All Students in Meaningful Ways**

Culturally-Relevant PE can provide programs that are rich in meaning and relevancy, which can help embrace the cultural identity of students (Halas, 2011). Culturally-Relevant PE was adapted from Ladson- Billings' (1995) concept of culturally-relevant pedagogy. The purpose of Culturally-Relevant PE is not to insert cultural activities into the curriculum, but rather, to use students' culture as a tool to help students learn and incite critical consciousness (Halas et al., 2013). This approach is a student-centered one that focuses on putting the student first and the content second. This approach recognizes that each individual comes with substantial experiences that are an intersection of race, ability, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, religion, stereotypes, and cultural and family traditions. This model was created with the purpose of being implemented across diverse student cultural populations. Figure 2 displays the model in a wheel formation, which depicts the interconnectedness and relation between all four aspects (Halas et al., 2013, p.197).



*Figure 2.* Culturally-relevant physical education (Halas et al., 2013, p.197).

Halas et al.'s (2013) model includes four interrelated constructs, summarized by Casey and Kentel (2014):

- 1) The teacher as an ally: In what ways can teachers use their positions of privilege to build equitable, respectful, and supportive relationships with students?
- 2) Who understands the students and their day-to-day cultural landscapes: What is known about students' day to day cultural landscape? What are their stories and histories, both personal and collective?
- 3) In order to provide a supportive learning environment: In what ways can a supportive and engaging climate where everyone, regardless of where they are situated in relation to the many axes of difference, feel respected, included, supported, and engaged in PE?
- 4) That includes a meaningful and relevant curriculum: What learning experiences are meaningful and relevant for the students? In what ways can lessons be designed to affirm students' cultural identity? Namely, what is of interest to them?

This model will be used throughout Chapter Four, the findings section, to frame all of the culturally-relevant and accessible strategies to engage SA female adolescents. This model was chosen because it is student-centered and reflects a supportive learning environment where the teacher is the advocate for meaningful and relevant curriculum, all of which have been demonstrated in the literature as positive means for increasing the engagement of cultural female adolescents in PE.

### **Overview of Chapters**

Chapter Two provides a literature review which summarizes the main challenges that female populations and SA female populations face in PE participation, as well as a

summary of culturally-relevant pedagogy. Chapter Three consists of the study's methodology and the steps that were taken throughout the research process. Chapter Four outlines the framework created and provides a detailed explanation of each recommended strategy. Finally, Chapter Five consists of a discussion and conclusion outlining recommendations for PE pedagogy and future directions for further research in this area.



## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter will begin with a summary of the overall health of the SA female population, and will then examine the research on the challenges of PE participation in female adolescents, followed by the challenges experienced specifically by SA female adolescents. A detailed analysis of the challenges to SA female adolescents' PE participation will be organized into the following categories: dislike of the competitive environment, skill, and fitness assessment; unfamiliarity with Western PE programming; religious challenges; cultural conflict; and a lack of culturally-sensitive personnel. Intersectionality will be used as a lens in this chapter to unpack the complex interaction of identities that SA female adolescents may experience and how these various identities may affect their engagement in PE. The literature behind culturally-relevant pedagogy will be summarized and explored, with particular relevance being drawn to the PE curriculum.

Research has demonstrated that recent immigrants have been found to experience a decline in health status as they undergo socioeconomic, political, and cultural transitions (Ali, McDermott, & Gravel, 2004; Tremblay, Bryan, Perez, Ardern, & Katzmarzyk, 2006). Immigrant females also have a decreased rate of participation in PA compared to their male counterparts, and encounter very distinct barriers in comparison to Canadian-born females such as religion, cultural conflict, and unfamiliarity with popular Western sports (Taylor & Doherty, 2005). More specifically, in a review of PA among SA populations, results indicated that SA women did not meet the recommended amount of PA for adequate health benefits (Babakus & Thompson, 2012). A Canadian study conducted by Islam et al. (2014) found that SA immigrant populations "experience

higher estimated prevalence rates of diagnosed anxiety disorders and self-reported extremely stressful life stress” (p. 15) in comparison to Canadian-born populations. In addition, being female was associated with greater risk of negative mental health outcomes for SA immigrants, and an inactive PA level was associated with a greater risk for mental health disorders for SA Canadian-born populations. The low levels of PA and mental health risks among SA populations living in Canada have alarming implications for the overall health of this ethnic population.

PA is a means for maintaining physical and mental health that can result in increased fitness, performance, self-confidence, and fulfillment (Bendikova, 2014). The Active Healthy Kids Canada (2013) recent report card found that 32% of Canadian youth were overweight or obese. Children and youth are recommended to get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity PA daily; however, recent statistics show that only 9% of this age group meet this target (Statistics Canada, 2012; 2013). According to the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, only 17% of Canadian local governments agreed that PA is a high priority issue (Cameron, Craig, & Paolin, 2004). This finding is concerning, as physical inactivity is linked with a variety of cardiovascular disease risk factors, and the health conditions associated with physical inactivity have created an economic burden for the Canadian government (ParticipACTION, 2016). Thus, daily PA should be seen as a priority issue.

PE class in schools provides students with the opportunity to be active, which can impact their lifelong PA participation and thus, their overall health (Basch, 2011). Research reported in Basch (2011) suggests that physical and aerobic fitness declines as youth transition from middle to high school. Often, adolescent male and female students

choose to participate in different forms of PA; thus, these preferences should be reflected in PE class instruction in order to optimize PA participation (Lodewyk & Pybus, 2013). Recent research has further demonstrated that female students have decreased participation in PA compared to their male counterparts (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008). Scholars have found that for female adolescents, this disengagement in PE may be emerging in middle school (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008). Little research has examined the interplay of gender and culture in PE, and even less empirical data have identified strategies for increasing PE participation among Canadian SA female adolescents. Given that the SA population is the largest minority group in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), identifying strategies for increasing engagement among SA female adolescents is essential for ensuring the optimal health of this population. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify challenges SA females face in PE participation and to make recommendations regarding culturally-relevant strategies to enhance the engagement of SA female adolescents in PE.

### **Challenges to PE Participation in Female Adolescents**

Research to date has identified a multitude of barriers that affect female students' participation in secondary PE that differ drastically from their male counterparts. In her Canadian research on sport and PA experiences of young women, Pfaeffli (2009) highlights the self-reported mental and physical benefits of PA in female adolescent students. Literature analyzing female participation in PE points to the lack of physical literacy in this population. PHE Canada (2015) reports that "individuals who are physically literate move with competence and confidence in a wide variety of physical activities in multiple environments that benefit the healthy development of the whole

person” (Physical literacy section, para. 1). Physical literacy develops confidence and the more females feel good about their performance, the more likely they are to continue participating (Pfaeffli, 2009). Although the development of physical literacy is a key goal for all PE teachers, research demonstrates that for females, many other factors affect lifelong PA patterns. As reported by White (2012) during adolescence, girls face a greater risk of lower self-esteem, report more stressful experiences, and are more concerned with social relationships and norms compared to their male classmates.

Multiple research studies in Canada conducted by Gibbons, a leading scholar in the field of engaging females in PE, have discovered that many high school girls found their PE experiences to be boring and repetitive, opting out of PE as soon as the required course was finished (Gibbons, 2014; Gibbons, Wharf Higgins, Gaul, & Van Gyn, 1999). In an elementary PE setting where boys and girls were participating together, many female students felt that sport choice was not gender equitable and perceived boys’ PA choices to take preference (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008). A competitive environment that focuses on sport skills and meeting fitness norms is intimidating for many students, particularly for less active girls (Mitchell, Gray, & Inchley, 2015). This is often due to the public nature of the activities, and the possibility of being singled out and made fun of (Pfaeffli, 2009). Female adolescents are often self-conscious about how they look while exercising, which can also inhibit their participation (Robbins et al., 2003). A study conducted by van Daalen (2005) in Canada indicates a large dissatisfaction with fitness testing; specifically, participants in this study experienced intimidation and identified fitness testing as a source of shaming. The females in this study reported that they

resented being evaluated on the way in which their body worked and felt that PE praised those who were proficient and shamed those who were not (van Daalen, 2005).

In comparison to male students, female students are more likely to participate in individual sports, novel activities, and they prefer the health portion of PE (Lodewyk & Pybus, 2013). Common challenges to PE participation for females include a lack of motivation, low perceived ability, and confidence (Lodewyk & Pybus, 2013; Whitehead & Biddle, 2008), heightened body image or shape concerns (Lodewyk & Pybus, 2013), feelings of self-consciousness, and a fear of failure (Robbins, Pender, & Kazanis, 2003).

### **Challenges to PE Participation in South-Asian Female Adolescents**

As mentioned previously, there has been limited research on SA female adolescents' participation in PE in Canada. However, of the research that exists on SA females in PE, the majority stems from the United Kingdom (UK) (Walseth, 2015). Often, students who have the greatest need to increase PA (most notably, urban minority youth and adolescents) have the fewest resources and supports to do so (Basch, 2011). The common challenges to PE participation in SA females have been categorized as follows: dislike of competitive environment, skill, and fitness assessment; unfamiliarity with Western PE programming; religious challenges; cultural conflict; and a lack of culturally-sensitive personnel.

### **Dislike of Competitive Environment, Skill, and Fitness Assessment**

In a study of Muslim girls in PE in Norway, girls demonstrated a dislike in secondary PE lessons that tested physical skills. Many felt pressured to meet fitness standards and were intimidated by the fact that their lack of fitness would hinder their mark and overall average (Walseth, 2015). A study of PE in Sweden found that even

though PE teachers viewed lifelong PA and enjoyment as the main goals of PE, their assessments tended to reflect a measurement of skills or abilities (Redelius, Fagrell, & Larson, 2009). This is also the case for many secondary PE programs in Canada, where skill assessment and fitness standards are commonly used for evaluation. Feelings of self-consciousness, low self-esteem, and an intimidation of PE are common challenges that adolescent females face when participating in PE.

Although some research has demonstrated the low levels of PA in new immigrants to Canada, few studies have addressed challenges encountered in PE class specifically. Stride (2014) conducted a study in the UK on SA Muslim girls' experiences in PE. She found that, similar to other studies on females in PE, many girls did not put forth their full effort due to fear of embarrassment and ridicule from girls who are competitive or unlike themselves. Many girls found competition to be intimidating, and felt that their PE experiences were irrelevant to their lives away from school, and possible PA experiences in the future. These findings are consistent with previous findings of barriers faced by females in PE when culture was not controlled for (Lodewyk & Pybus, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2015).

### **Unfamiliarity with Western PE Programming**

Many SA females may often be unfamiliar with Western policies and approaches to PA program delivery; thus, routines, rules, and sport instruction may seem overwhelming or peculiar to them (Frisby, 2011). This cultural dissonance in school PE can cause feelings of exclusion, which can further result in the discontinuation of PE classes (Taylor & Doherty, 2005). SA females may or may not speak one of Canada's official languages, and thus, the barriers of being an English Language Learner (ELL)

may also be present (Frisby, 2011). In addition, barriers related to social factors, religion, gender, social class, and ethnicity may all be present while participating in PE (Frisby, 2011). According to Harlow (as cited in Young & Sternod, 2011), in PE, teaching occurs in the psychomotor domain. Factors such as body language, personal space, physical contact, and dress can greatly impact learning if they are not made culturally-accessible. PE is a subject where performance is outwardly evident; thus, a lack of competency in movement skills can be very obvious.

Another pressing issue for the Canadian SA community is the lack of role-models in PA and PE settings that SA populations can look up to (Dagkas, Benn, & Jawad, 2011). This unfamiliarity with Western PE programming may cause SA female adolescents to adopt a separation strategy (see Berry's Model, Figure 1) unless the PE programming is made culturally-accessible for them (Berry, 2001). In a study by Walker, Caperchione, Mummery, and Chau (2015) that examined the role of leisure-time physical activity (LTPA) of SA populations in Canada using Berry's (2001) model, acculturation was significantly associated with vigorous LTPA where separated SA populations participated in less vigorous LTPA than integrated SA populations. This finding is realistic considering the cultural beliefs of running, aerobics, and vigorous sports in some traditional SA populations when compared to the positive view of vigorous PA that the Western population holds. This study provides valuable insight into the intersection of acculturation and PA levels, and demonstrates the fact that SA families that choose not to integrate into Canadian culture may be at a higher risk for inactivity and health risks.

## **Religious Challenges**

Canadians of SA origin are divided among the Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim groups, with a small percentage identifying as Christian, and a minute percentage reporting that they have no religious affiliation (Statistics Canada, 2007). Incompatibility of PE programming with one's religion is viewed as a major challenge for SA populations, particularly for those practicing the Islamic faith. Challenges indicated for some individuals practicing the Islamic faith may include the need for gender-conscious groupings, attention to religious practices, such as fasting during Ramadan, and modest dress options, such as long pants and long-sleeved shirts, in PE (Dagkas et al., 2011; Nakamura, 2002). In addition, the lack of sex-segregation and feelings of being watched and interrupted by male classes hindered participation due to the inability to remove cultural garments (Nakamura, 2002). Research on SA girls has demonstrated that females' desire for gender-segregated PA was not caused by restrictive parents, but rather an internalization of culture and religiosity (Strandbu, 2005).

Many SA females struggle to make a choice between PA and their religious beliefs when religious accommodations are not provided. Although many Muslim women expressed positive attitudes towards PA, they often gave religion a higher priority (Jiwani & Rail, 2010). Many SA females take part in Ramadan, where individuals practicing the Islamic faith engage in a daily fast from sunrise to sunset, which lasts between 28-30 consecutive days (Sato & Hodge, 2016). During Ramadan, participants are required to abstain from eating, drinking, sexual relations, and all immoral vices from dawn to sunset (Mughal, 2014). In the Islamic religion, fasting encourages compassion, care, and charity, and may have many spiritual benefits including a greater appreciation of blessings, and



an increased relationship with God and others around them (Mughal, 2014). The common dietary practice is to eat one large meal after sunset and one lighter meal before sunrise (Sato & Hodge, 2016). Fasting is prescribed once children reach puberty; however, many families encourage their children to begin fasting for a few hours a day at a younger age (Sato & Hodge, 2016). Common problems associated with fasting may include headaches and lethargy (Mughal, 2014). In PE classes, where students exert a large amount of energy, it is essential that teachers are mindful of the intensity of the activities that they are teaching.

### **Cultural Conflict**

According to the research by Nakamura (2002) and Vahabi, Beanlands, Sidani, and Fredericks (2012), SA females may be at a high-risk for physical inactivity due to the cultural conflict that they face. When compared to other cultures, the Western culture often has differing views of gender roles and how the body is viewed. As reported in Vahabi et al. (2012) in many SA cultures, personal autonomy is often discouraged, and self-sacrifice, by putting the family needs above one's own, is seen as the main priority. In this view, putting one's health first by making regular PA a priority may not be seen as an acceptable practice. Research has consistently found that SA females believe that taking time away from their family to participate in PA would be viewed as a selfish act (Babakus & Thompson, 2012). This cultural belief may translate into SA females' views of PE, resulting in a lack of eagerness to participate during class time. For SA females, the physical performance in PE may be influenced by cultural guidelines of perceived appropriate behavior (Young & Sternod, 2011). In many Muslim communities, sports have been associated with play, and thus are not seen as being worthy of commitment and

dedication (Benn, 1998). Being a young Muslim woman who is active in sports may cause conflict because it may challenge the boundaries of their ethnic identity.

Students' approaches to learning may also be affected by the value system in which they were raised. The individualist value system reflects individual competitive-oriented factors, whereas, a collectivist-oriented system reflects collaboration and interdependence. It appears that the SA culture is based on a collectivist approach, in which high value is placed on women as mothers and wives (Dagkas et al., 2011). As reported in Nakamura (2002), the SA culture may also reinforce the importance of academic and intellectual gains as superseding others; for instance, achieving a good standing in academic subjects that allow students to move on to post-secondary education may be seen as bearing greater importance. Often, these cultural views impact the choices of young SA girls and may discourage them from taking PE as a course in high school, post-secondary, or from taking up exercise routines as a hobby (Dagkas et al., 2011). In addition, if females in PE are only exposed to physical activities that reflect an individualist value system, this may cause confusion and cultural conflict.

In Western industrialized societies, it is viewed as oppressive to cover the body, whereas in the SA culture, the hijab is a symbol of dedication to the Islamic faith (Benn, Dagkas, & Jawad, 2011). In other religions, the embodiment of faith is not displayed publicly; however, in the Islamic faith, faith is expressed thorough the presentation of the body and appearance in social interactions, and through a display of actions that are integral to a religious identity (Benn et al., 2011; Seddon, 2010). The self-presentation of SA female adolescents, including the clothing worn, may separate them from the receiving society (Berry, 2001). Thus, they may experience prejudice and discrimination,

resulting in an adoption of the assimilation strategy to avoid rejection (Berry, 2001). Although many SA females do not believe that wearing the hijab is a barrier to PA, many recognize that it may make PA options difficult. This difficulty may be in the form of getting hot and uncomfortable, or feeling discriminated against (Jiwani & Rail, 2010). In a study by Taylor and Doherty (2005) that examined the PE, sport, and recreation experiences of English Language Learner (ELL) Canadian adolescents, discrimination was correlated with sub-cultural identity. Thus, the more one identified with their culture, the more they were discriminated against. This finding demonstrates that students who were born in Canada, but still identify strongly with their culture, experience what Berry (2001) identifies as a separation cultural identity, and therefore, they may still experience discrimination. This finding also indicates that students may take on an assimilation identity in order to feel accepted by their peers (Berry, 2011). In summary, the research consistently illustrates the cultural conflict that may be faced by SA female adolescents regarding whether or not to maintain or abandon their own culture.

### **Lack of Culturally-Sensitive Personnel**

The paucity of culturally-sensitive personnel and insensitive teachers and administration were a perceived challenge to participation. Students who felt they were not accommodated for in PE class were not able to have positive experiences. Schools that had a large Muslim population were more likely to effectively accommodate students. This resulted in positive experiences for these students and a perceived minimization of challenges (Vahabi et al., 2012).

### **Intersectionality**

Many students identify with a variety of identities which may be very personal

and subjective to each individual student. According to Stride (2014), “intersectionality examines the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power” (p. 402). As reported in Chhin (2015), in education, it can be defined as categories such as age, class, education, ethnic background, gender expression, physical and mental ability, race, religion, and sexual orientation being experienced simultaneously, without the ability to separate the categories. Valentine and Spelman (as cited in Stride, 2014) argue that intersectionality is an important lens to consider in schools, as it recognizes that individuals occupy multiple identities and it is important to acknowledge that this interaction may affect students’ motivation to learn. PE in schools often unintentionally marginalizes girls through pedagogical principles that embrace a narrow range of abilities (Benn, Pfister, & Jawad 2011; Penney, 2002; Scraton, 1992).

In Stride’s (2014) study on Muslim girls’ experiences in PE, some students felt that because teachers had the authority in the selection of PE experiences, this created an unequal power dynamic, making some students feel helpless. Walseth (2015) found that in terms of intersectionality, the embodied identity of being female or Muslim, or female and Muslim, may pose a challenge. Thus, Muslim girls’ experiences in PE are not always influenced by their religiosity. It is important that teachers recognize that they may unintentionally marginalize SA female students because of their inability to recognize their own bias. While using accommodations to assist SA female students in PE, teachers may unintentionally marginalize cultural females. Thus, it is essential to consider the intersection of gender, religiosity, and culture.

### **Culturally-Relevant Pedagogy**

In the province of Ontario, the PE curriculum is very broad and allows teachers to use their own professional judgment to determine what sports or activity units to include. The Grade 9-12 Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum (2015) makes reference to the word 'culture' 33 times and 'cultural' 51 times. It provides teacher prompts to explore how culture may affect food choices, physical activity preferences, level of expenditure, discrimination and safety, sexual decision-making, and many more areas. It also suggests teacher prompts that reflect the Aboriginal culture (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). Although this curriculum displays a dedication to equity and diversity, teacher education programs may not always display this same commitment to honour various cultures in their teacher preparation.

Although many teachers believe that it may be more politically correct and acceptable to display behaviours and attitudes that embrace racial neutrality, by not discussing these critical issues, it can further perpetuate the idea that Western pedagogy is the most valued (Harrison & Belcher, 2006; Robinson, Borden, & Robinson, 2012). Integration of multicultural concepts within PE is more than merely incorporating cultural games; it involves a shift in social attitudes through a class climate that values diversity (Chepyator-Thomson, 1994). The Canadian Multiculturalism Policy (Government of Canada, 1971) asserts that individuals cannot accept those that are different from themselves until they are secure in their own identity (Berry, 2001).

In many schools, there may be a discrepancy between the world views, values, and background of the school culture and a teacher's own personal views and values. This discrepancy can be referred to as cultural distance. This may occur in urban

communities, leaving students and teachers feeling that they cannot relate to each other. A study by Columna, Foley, and Lytle (2010) found that while teachers felt that diversity was an important issue and it should be valued in the classroom, they were not comfortable with implementing culturally-responsive pedagogy methods. In addition, PE teachers and teacher candidates in this study felt that they were not capable of providing the appropriate culturally-relevant environments that are needed to accommodate diverse populations, primarily due to a lack of training and experience in this realm. Research on SA Indian immigrants has found that culturally-sensitive PA interventions are needed to increase PA levels in this population (Daniel, Wilbur, Fogg, & Miller, 2013). Interventions that focus on acculturation, discrimination, and self-efficacy are recommended (Daniel et al., 2013). In order for teachers to implement effective culturally-sensitive pedagogy, the development of cultural competency is needed.

The cultural values and beliefs of families are the fundamental aspects of culture that can have a direct impact on learning (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2010). The amount of racial identity development that a teacher has can have a direct impact on how the teacher interacts with their minority students (McAllister & Irvine, 2000). As reported in Young and Sternod (2011), in order for teachers to successfully teach culturally-relevant material, they must confront their own biases and recognize the value that various cultural backgrounds can have on the school experience for all students. When teachers develop their cultural competency, they understand and relate to students' cultural perspectives (Stuart, 2004), they understand their own bias, they understand and appreciate the difference between themselves and their students (Wachtler & Troein, 2003), and they use that knowledge to facilitate effective learning environments

(Columna et al., 2010; Harrison, Carson, & Burden, 2010). A culturally-competent teacher accepts and respects difference and engages in continuous self-assessment to expand their cultural knowledge (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Issacs, 1989). Cultural competence is a process that teachers must consistently work at to allow for equitable teaching practices. It is important to recognize that in order for culturally-relevant pedagogy to be effectively implemented, it must be delivered by a culturally-competent teacher.

It can be argued that teachers need to have a white race-consciousness by examining their own place of power and privilege within society in order to understand the implications of systemic racism on the lives of their minority students (Halas et al., 2013; Robinson et al., 2012). By gaining an understanding of the community dynamics such as who the student lives with, religions practiced, languages spoken at home, and the amount of parental support available for homework support, teachers are developing their own cultural competency and thus, they are better able to implement strategies that are in line with their cultural knowledge (Flory & McCaughtry, 2011). When teachers take initiative to understand the cultural landscape of their students, they develop a better understanding of inequitable colour-blind discourses that are prevalent in education – in which everyone is treated equally without recognizing racial or ethnic differences (Tatum, 1999). Culturally-competent teachers are able to implement pedagogy by using cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and frames of reference of culturally, ethnically and economically diverse students to create meaningful and relevant instruction while increasing students' own cultural competency (Columna et al., 2010; Gay, 2000). Cultural competency is an evolving, accumulating process, and an individual may never

achieve complete cultural competency; however, with exposure to diverse worldviews, improvements can occur (Domangue & Carson, 2008). Cultural competence is extremely important in PE because teachers with low cultural competence may perpetuate negative stereotypes about PE such as a negative relationship between intelligence and athletic ability (Harrison, 2001).

Cultural negotiation is a communication and instructional style that has the goal of creating a progressive, equitable, and thriving environment for all participants (Culp, 2013). Educators who practice cultural negotiation help students explore their own and other's cultures in a variety of ways with the goal of enriching their education (Culp, 2013). Cultural negotiation requires cultural competence, and the ability for one to interact comfortably and communicate effectively with a wide range of people from diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds (Culp, 2013). Topics that educators may have to navigate and understand that affect the success of SA females in PE include low literacy levels, migrant issues, social capital, economic mobility, and educational inequality (Culp, 2013).

As North America has become more culturally diverse, there has been a body of research surrounding the idea of culturally-relevant pedagogy. Culturally-relevant pedagogy can provide the best education for children by preserving their cultural background and preparing them to have meaningful relationships in the future without sacrificing their own cultural beliefs and values (Pewewardy, 1994). Culturally-relevant teaching allows students to learn through the incorporation of culture instead of forcing students to fit unrealistic demands of a prescribed curriculum (Flory & McCaughtry, 2011). Culturally-relevant teaching is an ongoing process that allows for equitable access



for all students (Flory & McCaughtry, 2011). Culturally-relevant education identifies and nurtures students' strengths while recognizing the existence of deficit-based thinking, which occurs when teachers' ideologies, actions, and behaviours influence traditional school practices and placement (Halas et al., 2013; Howard, 2003). The ability to develop skills to work interculturally with peers is an essential skill for students and a main goal of culturally-relevant pedagogy (Chhin, 2015).

Culturally-relevant education is based on three key principles: (1) students must experience academic success; (2) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (3) students must develop a critical social consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Richards, Brown, and Forde (2007) identify three dimensions of culturally-relevant pedagogy: the institutional dimension, the personal dimension, and the instructional dimension. The institutional dimension reflects the administration including policies, the personal dimension refers to the cognitive and emotional aspects that the teacher must engage in to become more culturally competent, and the instructional dimension includes materials and strategies that are used to conduct culturally-relevant instruction.

PE teachers who implement culturally-relevant pedagogy use a wholistic teaching style that makes use of cultural knowledge and skills by empowering students socially, emotionally, intellectually, and politically (Gay, 2000; Halas et al., 2013; Harrison et al., 2010). The reality in many teacher education programs is that many physical educators progress through teacher education programs with very little exposure to people of colour or different socioeconomic statuses. Many scholars suggest that prejudice reduction can only occur when cross-cultural connections are made (Irvine, 2003). Many teachers are

uncomfortable addressing racial, ethnic, and cultural issues. This creates a problem because when students' ethnic identities are ignored, their cultural perspective is also silenced, creating an unequitable learning environment (Irvine, 2003).

A study by Harrison et al. (2010) found that PE teachers of colour had higher cultural competence when compared to Caucasian teachers. In addition, Caucasian teachers in city schools scored significantly higher in multicultural teaching knowledge than those who taught in more rural schools. Teachers of colour may experience similar cultural influences and experiences to students of colour, both of which act as a basis for identity development (Harrison et al., 2010). Thus, the literature demonstrates that teacher training programs must expose all students to diversity training in order to avoid the maintenance or development of stereotypes about students who are different from themselves (Columna et al., 2010). PE teacher training on multicultural content must be tailored to situations that PE teachers may encounter while working with a diverse body of students (Columna et al., 2010).

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided a detailed analysis of the challenges facing SA female adolescents' PE participation in the following categories: dislike of competitive environment, skill, and fitness assessment; unfamiliarity with Western PE programming; religious challenges; cultural conflict; and a lack of culturally-sensitive personnel.

There are many similarities between the challenges encountered by female adolescents and SA female adolescents' participation in PE. Similarities include a lack of physical literacy, a lack of engagement and motivation to participate in PE, fear of scrutiny by peers, and a dissatisfaction with the PE class offerings. Many of the

differences in the two groups that apply solely to SA populations stem from cultural and religious factors such as modest dress, having a sex-segregated classroom, and differences in the perceived importance of PA. Intersectionality was used as a lens in this chapter to attempt to unfold the complex interaction of identities that SA female adolescents may experience, and how these various identities may affect their engagement in PE. It is clear that in order to be effective, PE teaching must focus less on developing physical skills and more on getting to know students' interests and cultural landscapes. In addition, PE programs need to focus on enhancing girls' self-esteem, increasing enjoyment, and creating a love for PA in their lives.

Culturally-relevant pedagogy has been demonstrated as an effective pedagogical strategy that is inclusive of the needs of SA female adolescents in PE. The first step to implementing culturally-relevant pedagogy requires the teacher to analyze their own bias, power, and privilege and the ways in which they may unconsciously normalize Western PE teaching practices. When Western PE practices are normalized, SA females may be more likely to experience oppression in the PE environment. Once teachers have developed their own cultural competence, they are then able to use this cultural knowledge to implement meaningful and relevant instruction. Culturally-relevant pedagogy can provide the best education for youth by allowing them to utilize their strengths by preserving their culture and interests.

In the next chapter (Chapter Three), this study's research methodology will be reviewed and in the following chapter (Chapter Four), culturally-relevant strategies to increase the engagement of SA female adolescents in PE will be suggested.

### **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

A conceptual research approach was chosen to investigate the PE participation of SA female adolescents in this study. Strategies that were presented throughout the literature were summarized, and a framework was created for SA female adolescents in PE. This framework was created to inform teachers and PE advocates of the unique needs of SA female adolescent populations. The phases of this study included a literature search and review, and the development of a conceptual framework, which will be explained below.

#### **Literature Search and Review**

There were two phases involved in the literature search. In Phase One, I exhausted the literature in the physical education, sociology, cultural studies, sport and PA databases (e.g., ERIC, Education Source, CBCA Complete, Scholars Portal E-Journals, and Sport Discus). The literature search was conducted using the following key words: immigrants and physical education, females in physical education, South-Asian females and physical education; South-Asian females and physical activity, culturally-relevant pedagogy in physical education, culturally-responsive pedagogy in physical education, and culturally-sensitive physical education. After the initial search, I completed Phase Two of the literature search, which consisted of adding to the literature by examining public organizations. I used the following government organizations to add to my literature: the Government of Canada, the Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum, ParticipACTION, Active Healthy Schools Canada, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and previously submitted academic theses in Canada.

After conducting the literature search, I conducted a review of the literature with four phases. In Phase One of the review, abstracts of each article were read and categorized for significance. Phase Two of the literature review consisted of a thematic analysis. The following themes were created: barriers/challenges to PE participation in adolescent females, barriers/challenges to PE/PA participation in SA adolescent females, strategies to increase engagement in PE, and culturally-relevant pedagogy in PE. In Phase Three of the literature review, the most relevant articles were read thoroughly and the reference lists of these articles were analyzed, which contributed to the body of literature. In Phase Four of the literature review, key scholars in the field of females in PE and culturally-relevant pedagogy were identified, and these scholars' publications were searched to further exhaust the literature. In the last phase of the literature review, all articles were read, and main concepts were added to the thematic analysis.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The primary purpose of this study is to identify strategies to increase the engagement of SA female adolescents in PE to inform physical educators. This chapter will present these strategies. Combining the research on female PE, SA female PE and PA, culturally-relevant pedagogy, and using the lens of Halas et al.'s (2013) Culturally-Relevant PE Model, I have created a framework that offers research-based strategies to increase the engagement of SA female adolescents in PE (see Figure 3). This model has been created based on an in-depth review of the literature, and my teaching experiences and expertise with SA female adolescents.

### **A Framework to Engage South-Asian (SA) Female Adolescents in Physical Education**

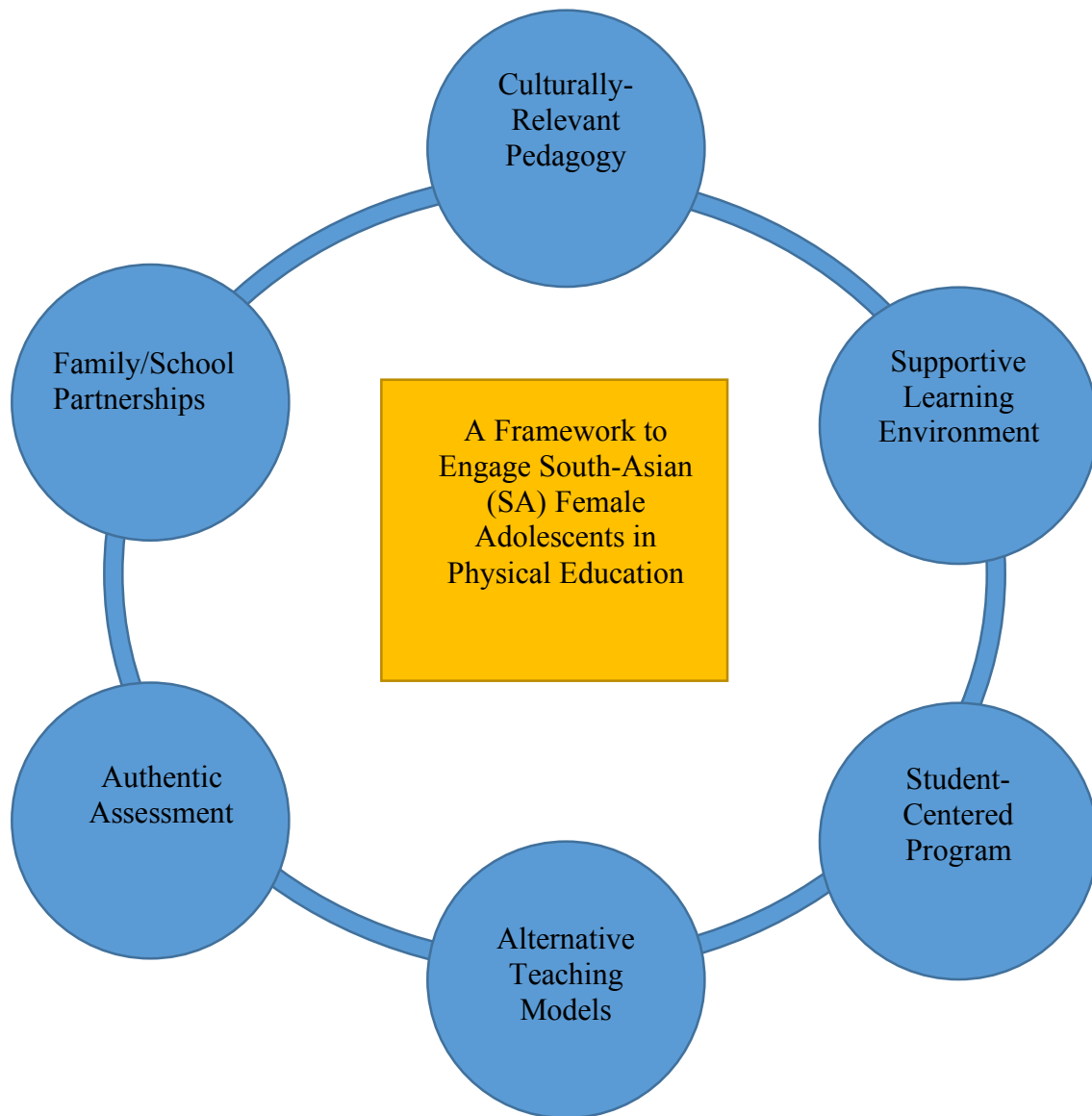
As a result of the high drop-out rates in secondary school PE, in addition to the high obesity rates, it is evident that many PE programs are failing to motivate SA female adolescents to be physically active (Goodyear, Casey, & Kirk, 2014). Literature published in Goodyear et al. (2014) has established that from a young age identities are constructed by females in PE; identities such as “sporty girl,” “tomboy,” “not sporty,” or “Muslim girl” are created, which can, in turn, influence their engagement. Girls who adopt a “sporty girl” identity engage with PE and find it fun and enjoyable because of their high physical literacy. In contrast, the females who identify as “non-sporty” associate PE with fear, anxiety, and humiliation. Strategies presented in the framework discussed below (Figure 3) include: supportive learning environment, student-centered program, alternative teaching models, authentic assessment, family-school partnerships, and culturally-relevant pedagogy. This framework has the potential to increase the

engagement of SA female adolescents in PE, ultimately improving the overall PA levels of SA students and their families.

### **Supportive Learning Environment**

Teachers have the ability to provide SA female adolescents with opportunities to relate to each other, develop a social connection, and experience a positive and fulfilling PE experience. The feeling of being socially connected to one's peers has been found to be connected to motivation and feelings of competence in PE (Cox & Williams, 2008). In addition, girls with a higher sense of relatedness to their peers and teachers were found to show enthusiasm and engagement in PE (Shen, McCaughtry, Martin, Fahlman, & Garn, 2012). This section will discuss the importance of creating a respectful and safe environment, emotional well-being, targeting enjoyment and delight in PE, and cooperative group activities. This section has been selected first because without a supportive and equitable environment, SA female adolescents cannot thrive in a PE setting.

Creating a respectful and safe environment is the first step in allowing meaningful connections to be made in PE. Setting a positive tone by helping students feel safe and valued is crucial. Including clear and positive expectations, encouraging inclusive language, and reinforcing positive behaviour is critical in creating this environment (Gibbons, 2014). Co-constructing behavioural rules with students and implementing a process of choosing partners or groups in an inclusive manner is also effective (Gibbons, 2014). Implementing ice-breakers to get to know the students and creating community in the classroom is also recommended (Gibbons, 2014). Having students complete a PE



*Figure 3.* A framework to engage South-Asian female adolescents in physical education.



profile, such as likes and dislikes in PE, and generating the schedule collectively with students may increase female students' autonomy (Gibbons, Temple, & Humbert, 2011).

### **Social Support**

Social support in PE class has been an emerging theme in the literature (Mitchell et al., 2015). When girls have a positive experience in PE class and express enjoyment while participating with their peers, they are more likely to attribute this to a lifestyle of lifelong PA. Having a supportive teacher who promotes fun and helps to empower students is a significant factor in female adolescents' attitudes towards PE (Mitchell et al., 2015). Research reported in Lorusso, Pavlovich, and Lu (2013) found that when a teacher is an active and knowledgeable part of the class, when their personality reflects enthusiasm and a caring attitude, and when they provide encouragement and positive feedback, students are more likely to experience enjoyment. In addition, girls that felt important and appreciated by their teachers were more likely to report enjoyment and happiness in PE (Shen et al., 2012). One positive way to increase the self-esteem and social support of girls in PE is by handing out a sheet with students' names on it, passing it around the class, and having each student write a positive comment about their fellow classmate and then returning the sheet to the student (Gibbons, 2014). Having participated in this activity myself as a teenage girl, I found it was a great bonding activity to get to know others in my class by recognizing their strengths and having other students recognize my own – some of which I was not even aware of. This created an environment in PE where I internalized these positive comments, contributing to an increase in self-efficacy.

### **Emotional Well-being**

Emotional well-being can be referred to as “the emotional quality of an individual’s daily experience-the frequency and intensity of experiences of interest, excitement, joy, pleasure, enjoyment, happiness, hope, or pride that makes one’s life pleasant” (Lu & Buchanan, 2014, p. 29). It is the teacher’s responsibility to develop a rapport with their students in order to improve the emotional well-being of their student’s (Lu & Buchanan, 2014). PE provides a setting where students can learn to regulate a variety of emotions during their performance in activities, competitive and cooperative games, and their interactions with classmates. It is essential that PE programs encompass emotional development teaching strategies to address students’ emotional needs and help students learn how to regulate their emotions (Lu & Buchanan, 2014). When students learn that winning and losing are a natural part of life and that enjoyment is the main objective, this can create emotional competence, thus resulting in better emotional regulation.

As reported in Lu and Buchanan (2014) emotionally competent behaviour can help to create a supportive and positive learning environment, both of which are goals of PE. Setting task goals in PE has been found to be positively related to the activation of positive emotions (Mouratidis, Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Auweele, 2009). Regularly recognizing students’ positive contributions, such as highlighting a “Student of the Day” or “Student of the Week”, is also an effective way to create a positive welcoming environment (Gibbons, 2014). Thus, as reported in Lu and Buchanan (2014), emotional well-being should be recognized as a high priority issue in PE, as positive experiences in

PE can encourage students to develop a positive attitude towards active lifestyles in the future.

A common complaint of many females in PE is that they are not provided with enough time to change. As a teacher, it is important to recognize this issue and respect students by providing them with sufficient time to get changed and shower, if necessary (Gibbons, 2014). When students feel respected and understood by their teacher, they are more likely to enjoy coming to class. In addition, it is always important for teachers to be reflective in their teaching. By administering a course evaluation half-way through the semester and at the end, teachers will be able to make adjustments to better meet the needs of their students (Gibbons et al., 2011).

### **Enjoyment, Fun, and Delight**

Once a positive, emotionally safe, and supportive environment has been created, enjoyment should be targeted in PE. Targeting enjoyment should be a key goal for all teachers, as enjoyment in PE has been found to be the strongest and most consistent correlate of PA outside of school (Lorusso et al., 2013). Prochaska, Sallis, Slymen, and McKenzie (2003) have found that when teachers focus on PA that promotes enjoyment in PE, it increases engagement, increases fitness testing scores and grades, and allows teachers to focus on instruction as opposed to classroom management. Wang and Liu (2007) found that it is important to promote incremental beliefs in female students in PA. By focusing on the malleable aspects of sport ability, female students may be more likely to adopt a mastery approach, resulting in improved competence and enjoyment. An example of adopting a mastery approach may be encouraging a student to work on their set shot in basketball – a sport in which they already enjoy – which may allow a

particular student to focus on developing competence and enjoyment in the sport of basketball. Teachers should be role models for enjoyment and discuss their own enjoyment in PA while participating actively with their students. When teachers inform their students that they genuinely care about their enjoyment in PE and attempt to form genuine connections with their students, students are more likely to experience enjoyment and satisfaction in PE (Lorusso et al., 2013). Building these meaningful connections with students by getting to know their interests and appreciating their effort can have a positive impact on the PE engagement of SA adolescent females.

Undoubtedly, there is a link between health and happiness; however, the things that we do with our good health matter much more than health itself (Kretchmar, 2006). Students can successfully participate in years of PE, but never change the sedentary patterns of living that may mean more to them (Kretchmar, 2000). The knowledge and fun of PE are not powerful enough to produce consistent movers. Fun is an outcome of well-run PE programs; PE provides students with the opportunity to encounter unique experiences that may be difficult to confront in a classroom environment. One effective objective that strives beyond fun can be referred to as delight (Kretchmar, 2006). Delight is more durable than fun, and can be referred to as the feeling we encounter when we are carried away and captivated by an experience (Kretchmar, 2006). When students experience delight, they are transported from the mundane to the memorable (Kretchmar, 2006). These types of experiences in PE can transform students' experiences from an enjoyable part of their day to an unforgettable part of their educational experience (Kretchmar, 2006).

## **Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative learning activities may provide students with the opportunity to experience delight in a PE environment. Johnson and Johnson (2009) have highlighted five elements associated with cooperative learning: positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, group processing, use of intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills (IIRS), and individual accountability. Goodyear et al. (2014) highlight the effectiveness of cooperative group activities on increasing the engagement of female students in PE. Female students have expressed that having the opportunity to interact and participate with their friends was a motivator to participate in PE class (Mitchell et al., 2015; Pfaeffli, 2009).

Goodyear et al. (2014) implemented a student-focused cooperative learning program for female adolescents that focused on learning in multiple domains. This study implemented a cooperative learning model with the use of video cameras. In this model, students were assigned a variety of roles, some that focused on learning physical skills, and others that focused on social and cognitive learning. Results demonstrated that some girls only fully participated in lessons when learning was within the social or cognitive domains and they were not required to participate physically. The authors argue that by taking away the physical aspect of PE – by placing disengaged girls in social or cognitive domains – girls' attention was taken away from feelings of inferiority and the number of opportunities for public displays of performance were reduced. Since perceived competence had been interrelated with engagement, their social and cognitive perceptions of competence may have been the reason for their increased engagement. Thus, by

temporarily removing the physical aspect of learning, the girls' engagement in PE improved, and they later began to participate in the physical aspect of PE class.

Fitness testing has been consistently found as a source of fear and anxiety for many females and pushes many away from PE, especially if fitness tests are assessed based on achievement (Mitchell et al., 2015). Fitness testing can be used as an important tool to track improvement in fitness throughout the semester; however, it can be modified to increase engagement. Firstly, by marking fitness testing based on effort, it will allow SA female adolescents to feel that their effort is valued despite their ability to meet fitness norms. I have witnessed first-hand the positive impact that transitioning from evaluating fitness testing on achievement to effort has had on SA female adolescents. Secondly, fitness tests can be modified to include cooperation and fun, such as a relay 12-minute run, relay beep test, or a team fitness challenge. By modifying fitness testing, it can increase SA female adolescents' self-efficacy and prevent shaming in these tests. PE opportunities that allow for social interaction have been shown to build confidence, increase enjoyment, and decrease feelings of marginalization in SA female adolescents (Stride, 2014).

Adventure-based learning (ABL) is a curriculum model that emphasizes a holistic, student-centered approach and uses experiential activities to help students practice and develop social and life skills (Stuhr, Ressker, Sutherland, & Ortiz-Stuhr, 2016). With the increase in technology, students are presented with fewer opportunities to interact with others; thus, interpersonal interaction is a crucial skill to build to allow future success. In the ABL model, the students are exposed to activities that are goal-oriented and provide maximum opportunities to interact with a team to reach a desired

outcome. The five elements of effective cooperative learning (as previously mentioned) promote the goals of ABL. ABL components consist of the brief, the experiential activity and the debrief, all of which are important to achieve the cooperative learning goals (Stuhr et al., 2016). Another effective cooperative learning program – The Team-Building through Physical Challenges (TBPC) program – includes a series of 22 group problem-solving tasks in PE where students work in small groups to take on challenging tasks that require trust, communication, risk, and cooperation. Teachers work to educate students about assigned roles (e.g., organizer, praiser, encourager, summarizer, recorder). These roles rotate throughout the challenges. Empirical evidence demonstrates improvements in the self-conceptions of middle school children, and may somewhat favour female students in a gender-segregated class (Gibbons & Ebbeck, 2011).

This research points to the need for cooperative games and activities that embrace social interaction and fun, which may also lead to delight. I argue that cooperative learning activities that emphasize team-building concepts such as trust, communication, and risk may be effective in increasing the relatedness and thus, the engagement of female SA adolescents. Incorporating motivational techniques to build a level of excitement in PE – for instance, through trophies, prizes, and picking class favourite games from a hat – while using a cooperative learning program can be a great way to engage females in PE (Gibbons, 2014). In addition, activities such as low-organizational games and novel activities, where students all start at the same level, may be effective in increasing engagement, cooperation, and fun for SA female adolescents (Gibbons, 2014). These activities may include: Larry, Curly, Moe, Huckle Buckle, Omni-Kin ball, body-ball, tchoukball, chuck the chicken, or fitness-related activities such as buddy circuits,

Zumba, and Tai Chi. In addition, providing students with opportunities to learn from each other by creating a dance, creating a gymnastics sequence, or leading a warm-up in a group may be effective. Game-creation activities, such as invent a game or lead a tournament, can also be effective. In terms of assessment, using peer assessment, such as forearm pass checklists or having one “expert” student teach a skill to a group, can be another effective way to engage all students. In addition, providing students with opportunities to develop their skills as a game official, such as a referee or scorekeeper, may empower SA female adolescents (Gibbons, 2014). Lastly, providing SA girls with the opportunity to participate in PA outside of the classroom, by organizing or signing up students for a charity run or engaging a local elementary school in a sports tournament, could also increase cooperation and team-building of the class (Gibbons, 2014).

There is not a significant body of evidence to say that PE, in its current form, has a positive impact on health. In addition, although the development of physical literacy is important, it is not the most important, as it is common for many physically literate athletes in high school to adopt a sedentary lifestyle later on in life. As Kretchmar (2006) notes, “who our friends are, what we are good at, where we can go, and what we can do—these things often do more to produce personal meaning than does our health” (p. 7). Many current PE advocates suggest a more wholistic approach to education. Focusing on enjoyment and the affective and social learning domains may be more likely to facilitate lifelong engagement and enjoyment for SA female adolescents (Lorusso et al., 2013).

### **Student-Centered Program**

This next section is important, as research demonstrates that many SA females experience a disconnect between their PE experiences and their engagement with PA



outside of school (Stride, 2014). This lack of engagement can decrease the enrollment in optional PE courses and can also decrease the likelihood of leading a healthy active lifestyle. In most Canadian provinces, PE becomes an elective in high school after students' mandatory participation in one course (Robinson & Berezowski, 2016). The majority of female students opt out of PE elective courses when they are provided the opportunity (Gibbons, 2009). Ntoumanis (2005) attests that PA levels in Canada are seen to be inadequate to promote positive health benefits. In order to address the inactivity and high drop-out rates in high school PE for SA females, providing attractive PA opportunities within school communities has been seen as a valuable solution in the literature (Gibbons, 2009). Research on adolescent females in PE has demonstrated that females benefit from a student-centered program (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008). It will be argued that to increase the engagement of SA female adolescents, a student-centred program that provides students with choice and ownership, targets alternative forms of PA, and provides cultural relevance can be more effective in increasing SA female students' engagement and relating to their future PA participation.

### **Providing Choice and Autonomy**

Recent research has found that many adolescent females felt that not having enough choice in their PE class negatively affected their engagement (Mitchell et al., 2015; Robbins et al., 2003). Providing students a voice to express their interests helps to build a student-teacher relationship that is based on trust and respect (Mitchell et al., 2015). When students are given the opportunity to contribute to the curriculum, they are more likely to remain engaged (Ennis, 1999; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008). PE environments that provided some opportunity for meaningful choice resulted in increased

engagement and more emotionally-satisfying experiences for adolescent females (Mitchell et al., 2015). The degree to which teachers support girls' autonomy was found to be a strong predictor of engagement and learning in PE (Mitchell et al., 2015). Thus, although it may be impossible to provide SA female adolescents all the authority in activity choice, Mitchell et al. (2015) acknowledge an important point:

It is not simply the act of offering 'a choice of activity' which will change girls' engagement in the subject ... if girls recognize that teachers are attempting to make a more supportive, enjoyable environment, this may increase their motivation in PE. (p. 596)

The challenge with providing choice in PE is that not all students will be able to participate in the activity of their choice or have the confidence to make a choice that is different from the majority of their peers (Mitchell et al., 2015). Teachers may need to adjust the way that choice is offered, such as using one-on-one or small group consultation or having students fill in anonymous forms. Providing these options will ensure that all students' options are considered and students' interests will feel valued and listened to (Mitchell et al., 2015). In addition, providing choice can be difficult when classroom and gym space is limited. Taking these factors into consideration, providing choice and autonomy has been clearly found to be a positive intervention to engage adolescent females. SA females would also benefit from choice and ownership in PE. Teachers should encourage SA female adolescents to make choices that allow them to embrace their cultural and religious landscapes, such as through cultural games or foods.

When PE programs emphasize the development of girls' autonomy by providing them with choice, cultural relevancy, and the ability to work with others in a group

setting, their intrinsic motivation may increase (Gibbons et al., 2011). According to Deci and Ryan's (1989, 2000) Self-Determination Theory (SDT) of motivation, individuals who perceive they are autonomous, competent, and related are more likely to be intrinsically motivated to participate in a behaviour – in this case, PA. It can be hypothesized that if SA female adolescents become intrinsically motivated in PE, they are more likely to engage in PE class for the enjoyment and satisfaction derived from the participation (Gibbons et al., 2011). Some ways that choice can be implemented into the curriculum is by providing SA female adolescents with choice in appropriate PE attire, providing students with choice in unit selection, incorporating small choices as part of the class – for example, with warm-up activity and fitness blasts – and providing opportunities for regular self-assessment (Gibbons et al., 2011).

The use of portfolios and learning logs are a great way for students to track their growth over a period of time (Robinson & Randall, 2014). Asking students to track their effort and behaviour towards their classmates may increase the self-efficacy of female students (Gibbons, 2014). Students can also complete self-assessment checklists each day that assess effort, helpfulness, and other skills and attributes. (Gibbons, 2014). Providing students with a way to track their growth is an effective way for students to develop ownership by taking responsibility for their own learning. This increase in ownership may, in turn, increase their confidence, thus leading to future PA patterns. In addition, by using portfolios and learning logs, students can track their enjoyment in PE by reflecting on activities that they enjoyed and could see themselves participating in (Lorusso et al., 2013).

### **Student-Centered Program**

As reported in Lorusso and her colleagues (2013), PE programs that are varied and novel have been found to increase student enjoyment. Gibbons (2009) highlights the importance of PE programs that reflect lifelong PA options. Gibbons (2009) also notes that value-added options, such as first-aid training or coaching certification, appeals to female students. As reported in Mitchell et al. (2015), PE programs that emphasized competitive sports as the sole focus were found to be intimidating for many females and may not also reflect future PA patterns of many females. In addition, minimizing opportunities for on-display movements in PE has been found to be desirable, and individual activities are more likely to achieve this goal (Robinson & Berezowski, 2016).

Felton, Saunders, Ward, Dishman, Dowda, and Pate (2005) highlight the importance of implementing relevant PE programming for females. They implemented a program called LEAP to target females in PE and found positive changes in girls' PA levels using several components, some of which included lifelong PA options, non-competitive activities, and use of small groups. Gibbons and Humbert (2008) implemented a similar program with a learner-centered focus, which provided students with a variety of choice and PA options. This program fostered a sense of ownership in the female students and increased engagement. In this learner-centered focused approach, the teacher acts as a facilitator or consultant, allowing students to direct their learning in ways that are meaningful for them.

Student-centered instruction focuses on creating a meaningful and relevant environment that takes into consideration student preferences and cultural influences. PE can have a student-centered focus by providing choice in units and activities, allowing for

reciprocal teaching or having students self-select particular units they are most interested in (Young & Sternod, 2011). Although this research is specific to gender and not culture, this program could easily be targeted to SA female adolescents by implementing a cultural component where the teachers and students work together to build cultural competence and implement culturally-relevant pedagogy.

Planning a program that reflects a variety of instructional strategies, such as guided discovery, peer teaching, and task teaching, can empower students to participate, increasing overall engagement (Lorusso, Pavlovich, & Lu, 2013). For example, students can be paired to learn a skill, such as the forearm pass in volleyball. They can work in groups to explain the correct steps and positioning to complete a perfect pass. They can then, with teacher assistance, if needed, teach this explanation to a peer group.

This section demonstrates that student-centred programs which target gender and culture as one entity – as opposed to two separate entities – may be effective in increasing the engagement of SA female adolescents. Previous literature indicates that many SA female adolescents do not enjoy the sport-based focus that exists in many secondary school Grade 9 PE programs. The goal of PE programs is to develop a love for PA so that students can become active for life. If students are not exposed to PA that they enjoy, the idea of becoming active for life may not seem realistic. Alternative PE options including cultural dance, yoga, fitness, and outdoor education will be argued as more effective in increasing students' engagement and relating to their future PA participation in comparison to the traditional multi-activity sport model discussed above.

## **Alternative Physical Education Programs**

**Cultural dance.** The sound of music can stimulate the brain and form connections between the body and mind, while also increasing PA levels and improving coordination (Archer, 2007). Musical intelligence has been classified as one of Gardner's (1993) multiple intelligences; thus, it can engage a variety of learners (Culp, 2010).

Scientific evidence demonstrates the physiological benefits of Western dance forms such as ballet, jazz, and modern on fitness and aerobic capacity (Jain & Brown, 2001). Dance can be seen as a positive way to improve physical literacy through locomotion, stability, and balance, while also improving overall well-being. As reported in Vahabi et al. (2012), dance offers opportunities for immediate positive outcomes such as fun, enhanced mental and physical well-being, and a sense of belonging. Although dance is encouraged in the Ontario Health and Physical Education curriculum, from my experience, dance is rarely implemented into PE programming at the secondary level. In many SA families, cultural dance is a common way to celebrate weddings, cultural events, and family parties.

Cultural dance can be described as dance within a community or group that serves one or more purposes related to traditional or ceremonial practices, celebrations, healing, spirituality, cultural transmission, or social connectedness (Jain & Brown, 2001).

Literature demonstrates that cultural dance has had positive effects on SA populations including enjoyment and increased engagement (Vahabi et al., 2012; Vahabi & Damba, 2015). This literature demonstrates that cultural dance, as a form of PA intervention, may be effective to engage SA female adolescents in PE class. The social aspect, cultural relevance, and support from family and friends were key elements that motivated SA females to engage in this form of PA (Vahabi et al., 2012; Vahabi &

Damba, 2015). PE teachers in the GTA are encouraged to implement a culturally-tailored dance unit or focus course as a vehicle to engage SA female adolescents. However, teachers must take into consideration specific concerns in order for all cultural groups to participate fully in dance. These concerns may include having controlled access to the gymnasium that does not allow boys classes to enter or view the gymnasium, having a female dance instructor or teacher teach the class, and ensuring that the lyrics in the music and the dance moves are appropriate and not offensive or hyper-sexualized (Benn, 1998, 2005; Vahabi et al., 2012; Vahabi & Damba, 2015). In addition, when implementing a dance program, it has been recommended to make use of community supports such as dance studios or SA cultural communities, make use of a dance teacher that is culturally competent, provide students with active engagement in planning and implementing the program, and provide little to no cost (Vahabi & Damba, 2015). It is evident that with the appropriate accommodations in place, cultural dance would be an effective means of engaging SA female adolescents in PE.

**Yoga and mindfulness.** As Robinson and Berezowski (2016) report, “the success of yoga does not lie in the ability to perform postures but in how it positively changes the way we live our life and our relationships” (p. 16). Yoga is a practice that connects the mind and body, and involves a series of physical postures, breathing exercises, meditation, and relaxation (Conboy, Noggle, Fre, Kudesia, & Khalsa, 2013). Yoga has the potential of unifying the physical, emotional, cognitive, spiritual, and social self while focusing on movement and breath control (Conboy et al., 2013). Research reported in White (2012) indicates that girls are at a greater risk for lower self-esteem, report more stressful experiences, are more likely to internalize their feelings, and exhibit depression

when compared to their male counterparts. In a Canadian study examining ethnicity and mental health treatment conducted by Gadalla (as cited in Islam et al., 2014), SA individuals with major depressive episodes reported the highest proportion of unmet mental healthcare needs when compared to eight other ethnic groupings in Canada. Thus, the SA population clearly faces challenges in the availability of mental healthcare. In a study based in Toronto, Ontario, health sector workers and members of SA communities identified mental health as a highly stigmatized and silenced health issue in SA populations (Islam, 2012). Yoga will be argued as a good form of alternative PA that is accessible and enjoyable for SA female adolescents. I will argue that yoga may be a beneficial form of PA for SA female adolescents to increase their self-esteem and improve their physical and mental health, while also providing a safe environment to discuss mental health.

In studies of yoga with adult participants (as cited in White, 2012), yoga has been correlated with a decrease in anxiety, stress, depression, and pain. Yoga has also been associated with improved mood, reduced stress, and overall mental and physical benefits for youth and children (Conboy et al., 2013; Robinson & Berezowski, 2016). Research reported in Robinson and Berezowski (2016) has found that yoga can have a positive impact on mental health and youth anxiety. It has also been shown to improve dedication and work ethic in school, improve self-image, impact positive changes in diet and food choices, and relieve stress prior to tests (Conboy et al., 2013; Robinson & Berezowski, 2016). Yoga can also improve fundamental movement skills and contribute to good overall physical health. Research reported in Robinson and Berezowski (2016) highlights



that the physical health benefits of yoga may include weight reduction in obese youth and management of chronic conditions such as back pain and hypertension.

The practice of yoga is a unique wholistic intervention in which individuals can uniquely develop their own competence and experience. Some students may gain a physical benefit, while others a mental and emotional benefit. Research has found that many girls are more inclined to participate in individual activities as they are less competitive (Lodewyk & Pybus, 2013). Since yoga is a subjective experience and an individualized activity, it is focused on improving one's own performance and well-being and thus, may be a positive alternative to team sports. For many students, yoga may be a new activity, meaning that the students' competence may begin at the same stage. Persistent participation may increase competence leading to feelings of self-efficacy.

Kabat-Zinn (as cited in White, 2012) have defined mindfulness as the way in which individuals become aware of the present moment; it is done by paying attention to things that are not normally noticed. Yoga is an effective way to incorporate mindfulness into PE class by helping students reflect on the present moment and recognize the importance of emotional well-being (Lu & Buchanan, 2014). Furthermore, yoga is a beneficial form of PA that is inclusive for all students and may increase confidence, competence, and emotional well-being in SA female adolescents.

In a recent study conducted by Robinson and Berezowski (2016) in Nova Scotia, Canada analyzing the experiences of an alternative PE course Yoga 11, participants demonstrated positive mental and physical health benefits including an improved ability to focus, less stress, positive interpersonal relationships, improved self-confidence, a feeling of being stronger, and greater flexibility. By allowing these students the choice to

take this course instead of a traditional PE class, it may also have impacted the level of engagement of the female students, as providing choice for females has been found to increase engagement and relevancy (Gibbons, 2009; Robinson & Berezowski, 2016). Conboy et al. (2013) implemented a high school yoga program for both males and females in Grades 9 and 10, and found positive benefits in athletic performance, bodily awareness, sleep, emotional regulation, stress reduction, and social outcomes. Most participants in this program also wanted to continue their yoga practice; thus, this program was able to contribute to possible lifelong PA. As feelings of self-consciousness have been found as a major barrier to PA participation in adolescent females, it is clear that by improving self-confidence and interpersonal relationships, yoga can definitely be an effective form of PA. Alternative PE courses, such as yoga, may offer positive benefits for SA female adolescents that may not have been understood in a traditional sport-based PE class (Robinson & Berezowski, 2016). They may also provide opportunities to improve both mental and physical health simultaneously – both of which have been indicated as priority issues for SA females (Bryan et al, 2006; Daniel et al, 2013; Islam et al., 2014).

**Personal fitness.** Gibbons (2009) suggests that females do not feel that their current PE curriculum can relate to their future PA participation. PA curriculum that reflects lifelong PA may be more beneficial for SA female adolescents, as one of their main perceived barriers is a feeling of unfamiliarity with activities (Taylor & Doherty, 2005; Vahabi & Damba, 2015). As individuals progress in their lives, it is rare that they continue playing all of the sports or games that they once played in their adolescence; however, fitness activities are a common transition for many athletes and are also

inclusive for individuals who did not participate in sports. From my experience, individual fitness options such as boxercise, Pilates, step aerobics, spin class, and Zumba are popular with females in PE. Fitness activities such as circuits can be included to address a range of fitness components such as strength, flexibility, agility, and muscular endurance. There are a variety of ways to regularly integrate personal fitness, such as “Fit Fridays,” “partner runs,” and “mother-daughter walks.” It is essential that health-related fitness is implemented in the class in a fun way and is not made to feel like a chore (Gibbons et al., 2011). Team-building activities can be built into fitness circuits, such as “crack the code.” In this fitness activity, stations (movement cards) are set up around the gym face-down. Each team receives a code, and as a team, it is their job to find each exercise and complete it. Once a team has cracked the “code,” they are asked to complete victory laps until the other team’s finish (Temertzoglou, Personal Communication, September 25, 2015). Targeting a variety of individual and cooperative group fitness activities in Grade 9 PE may be an effective way to increase the engagement of SA female adolescents, making PE relevant to their interests and lives outside of school.

**Outdoor education.** As the technology opportunities have increased, students are spending less and less time outside in the natural environment (Louv, 2010). Nature Deficit Disorder has been defined as the social, psychological, and ecological struggles that may occur as a result of our society becoming less involved with the natural world (Stenger, Ramsey, & Curl, 2010). As reported in Stenger, Ramsey and Curl (2010) Louv’s research has demonstrated that children who receive outdoor time on a regular basis were more likely to perform better in school, were more content with life, and were more physically active. PE teachers are in a great position to implement outdoor time into

the curriculum. Walking on local trails may provide students with the opportunity to explore nature while also being active. In addition, going for a walk to local parks, gyms or community centers can expose students to facilities that they can be active in outside of school. When pedometers were used in a school-based PA intervention, they were found to assist in goal setting and increased the enjoyment and motivation of students (Nicaise & Kahan, 2013). Providing students with the ability to use their own pedometer, phone application or device (such as a Fitbit) can be a great way to incorporate PA technology into the curriculum, introducing students to ways that they can track their own fitness progress outside of school.

A valuable PE program for SA female adolescents must acknowledge their interests and consider their cultural landscapes, using a wholistic approach. Through an exploration of the above research, it can be argued that a student-centered program that focuses on alternative forms of PA such as yoga, dance, fitness, and outdoor pursuits may be effective in increasing the engagement of SA female adolescents, in addition to relating to their future PA pursuits. This study will continue to explore the importance of increasing engagement, improving physical literacy, and increasing enjoyment in PE the next section.

### **Alternative Teaching Models**

Models-Based Practice (MBP) is an instructional concept which uses a teaching model to increase the effectiveness of PE instruction and student engagement. There has been much debate with regards to the most effective teaching model to engage students in PE. The multi-activity model, most commonly used at the secondary PE level, has been criticized as being an ineffective teaching model for female minority groups. This section

will explore three additional models that may be more effective in increasing engagement and improving movement skills of SA female adolescents. In Ontario, students are institutionally required to enroll in only one PE course in order to graduate. From my experience teaching in the province of Ontario, Grade 9 PE is the required course that most students are enrolled in. I have consistently encountered the multi-activity model being used in practice in GTA schools.

The multi-activity model is characterized by multiple, short duration units consisting of little instructional time. The goal of this approach is to expose students to a variety of activities so that they find some form of PA that they enjoy. However, this model can be unequitable for minority groups, females, or students with low skill level as it does not provide a physically and emotionally safe environment for all students. With units consisting of 3-6 days, it can be very difficult to build skills – and thus, confidence – in that particular sport, especially if the sport is completely new to the student. In addition, the teacher must be attentive to the fact that this model encourages highly-skilled players to dominate, which may hinder the confidence of less-skilled players (Ennis, 1999). The Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum (2015) does not specify which sports need to be taught; rather, the goal of current PE programs is the development of physical literacy and lifelong PA participation. One common issue in current PE programs is that teachers have focused on engaging girls in the current system (multi-activity model) rather than attempting to challenge the barriers by changing the structure of the program itself (Rich, 2004). I believe that the models suggested below – The Easy Play Model, Teaching Games for Understanding (TGFU), and Sport Education

– may be more equitable and effective in increasing the engagement and enjoyment of SA female adolescents.

### **The Easy-Play Model**

Research demonstrates that females with low perceived competence in PE are more likely to have decreased motivation and willingness to participate (Mitchell et al., 2015). The Easy Play model, created by Lu (Lu & Steele, 2014), can be used as a solution to provide equitable opportunities for all SA female students in PE, while increasing motivation and movement competence. This model is focused on creating an optimal and challenging environment by emphasizing optimal competitiveness to generate positive play experiences for all participants (Lu & Steele, 2014). The goal of the framework is to foster an environment that encourages fun and PA that appeals to a diverse population. This model is intended to be implemented among popular team sports, such as basketball and soccer. Key characteristics of the model include providing optimal challenges to all players, learning through playing, optimizing the number of players on the field to maximize players' opportunities for success, varying the size of the field at play to provide enjoyable playing, providing regular breaks when needed, switching the players from team to team to allow for balanced games, rotating players through a variety of positions, using cooperative play (e.g., playing easy on those learning the sport), and self-regulated and self-refereed honest play (Lu & Steele, 2014). The model of Easy-Play facilitates an inclusive safe environment where players feel supported regardless of their abilities or fitness levels, where they have the potential to develop movement competence, and where they can enjoy physical activity through sport (Lu & Steele, 2014).

## **Teaching Games for Understanding**

TGFU (also referred to as “Game Sense” in other parts of the world), another learner-centered teaching model, focuses on helping students learn fundamental movement skills, concepts, and principles that they can apply to a wide range of physical activities. As reported in Georgakis, Wilson, and Evans (2015), in the TGFU model, students learn authentically within the context of the game while teachers employ questioning rather than direct instruction. According to the TGFU model, different games can be grouped together because they consist of a similar structure; thus, a more thematic approach is used to teach games through the use of four game categories: target games, net and wall games, striking and fielding games, and invasion and territory games (Ellis, 1983; Mandigo, Butler, & Hopper, 2007). In this model, the teacher acts as a facilitator who provides opportunities for students to solve problems through small modified games. The teacher also asks questions to engage students in learning. Through these questions, students receive consistent feedback and see that their knowledge is valued (Georgakis et al., 2015). Many of the popular sports in Western countries, such as soccer, football and basketball, fall under the category of invasion games; as a result, this game category may often dominate in PE environments, thus resulting in low competency in other game categories.

The six steps of the TGFU model are crucial for attaining competence and tactical understanding. The first step, the game itself, fosters an understanding of the game form, while participating in a modified version of the full game. The second step is game appreciation, in which learners develop an appreciation of the rules, skills, and strategies. In the third step, tactical awareness, learners participate in game-like scenarios, and

develop an understanding of offensive and defensive tactics that may assist them in gaining an advantage over their opponent. In the fourth step, decision-making, learners begin to understand how to make decisions within the game setting. In the fifth step, skill execution, learners use the knowledge they have developed from the previous steps to develop and refine their current skill level. Finally, the last step, game performance, involves applying the knowledge gained in all previous steps through performance in a formal game, advanced form of the game, or altering a modified game to be more representative of a formal game. In this last step, it is crucial that teachers provide feedback to the students based on their execution of skills and their tactical understanding (Mandigo et al., 2007).

The framework mentioned above describes the structure of the model; however, it does not explain how to actually implement TGFU lessons. According to Thorpe and Bunker (1997), with respect to implementation, there are four key pedagogical principles that will be discussed. The first principle can be referred to as sampling; this technique is used to develop an understanding of how tactical solutions, rules, and skills transfer between games (e.g., comparing the smash in badminton to a spike in volleyball, both are net/wall games). The second principle is game representation, where teachers create developmentally appropriate game-like scenarios that explain how to use a skill or tactical strategy within a game (e.g., using only one base in baseball to help children learn the connection between hitting the ball and running to a base). The third principle is exaggeration, where the teacher chooses a particular focus for an activity based on a game structure, and then creates a developmentally appropriate scenario that exaggerates the particular focus (e.g., using the top half of a court in singles badminton to focus on



using drop shots and placing the birdie to the sides of the court). The fourth and final principle is tactical complexity, which is the idea that there is a developmental progression of tactical solutions (e.g., before learning how to change up a serve to trick opponents in badminton, they must learn how to position themselves effectively on the court with their partner).

TGFU teachers break games into their simplest form and increases in complexity as learners develop skills. According to Mandigo et al. (2007), “by exposing students to the primary rules, fundamental skills, and tactical problems associated with the games in each category, students become able to participate in a variety of games, not just the ones chosen by the teacher” (p. 17). Contrary to the traditional form of teaching sports that emphasizes drills, small-sided games are introduced to teach skills as well as tactical awareness with the goal of developing transferrable movement skills (e.g., skills learned in badminton can be applied to volleyball) (Mandigo et al., 2007). It is clear that this model would be effective for SA female adolescents who may have a low skill level in PA and demonstrate a lack of motivation. Placing the students’ needs first, as opposed to emphasizing sport-specific skills, can lead to an increase in student enjoyment and participation (Mandigo et al., 2007).

### **The Sport Education Model**

The Sport Education Model (SEM) was created by Siedentop (1994) to provide students with an authentic and educationally-rich sporting experience that focuses on teaching how to perform all of the aspects of sport. According to this theory, students will develop three skills: literacy, enthusiasm, and competency. When a student is literate, they understand the rules of the game and value these rules. An enthusiastic student

displays acceptable behavior and participation that allows the spirit of the game to be true and honest. A competent individual has developed a level of skill that allows the individual to participate successfully. These three goals can be accomplished when the following six features are implemented: seasons, affiliation, formal competition, record keeping, festivity, and culminating events. The development of enjoyment and relatedness has been evident in the literature examining the use of this model (Perlman, 2010). This model would be highly effective for SA female adolescents because it allows low-skilled students a heightened sense of inclusion due to the team affiliation. In addition, students are provided multiple areas to develop competence such as by acting as a coach or statistician, as well as opportunities for autonomy and independence (Perlman, 2010). When compared to the traditional multi-activity model, students have reported an increase in enjoyment, friendship goals, performance-avoidance goals, sportsmanship, and perceived effort when they were involved in a SEM curriculum (Mendez-Alonso, 2015; Mendez-Gimenez, Fernandez-Rio; Pritchard, Hansen, Scarboro, & Melnic, 2015). The SEM model is most often used in sport-based units; however, Pritchard et al. (2015) implemented the SEM model into a fitness-based class, renaming the model as Sport Education Fitness Model (SEFM) and found that this model was effective at improving fitness levels, content knowledge, and meeting 50% of the moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) goal during PE lessons.

The Easy-Play, TGFU, and SEM models may be effective alternatives to the traditional multi-activity models, as they are learner-centered and focus on developing more than just the physical aspect of a sport or activity. In addition, these three models focus on participation, engagement, inclusion, relatedness, and cooperation rather than

skills, tactics, and competition. All three models may also increase the self-efficacy and enjoyment of SA female adolescents. Self-efficacy has been shown to be an important correlate of PA in adolescents (McAuley & Blissmer, 2000; Taymoori, Rhodes, & Berry, 2010). The Easy-Play model can be combined with TGFU or SEM; however, it would be difficult to combine both the SEM and TGFU models completely. TGFU-type activities can be introduced by the teacher and led by the team coaches in SEM. Each of these models have their advantages and disadvantages; for example, both TGFU and SEM require much more preparation for the teacher and require a large shift in routine for students, as these models may be very different from what students are used to. The Easy-Play model does not require as much preparation, but rather a safe, respectful, and cooperative learning environment among students. Although TGFU and SEM require quite a bit of preparation, they may be very effective in increasing the enjoyment and competence of SA female adolescents, resulting in higher enrollment in PE and a greater possibility that they will be active for life.

An important consideration to be made is that MBP may be an effective instructional strategy in PE that has the potential of overcoming the limitations of the multi-sport model; however, for some veteran teachers, the conceptual shift may be too difficult. Research by Casey (2014) demonstrates that the biggest factor that affected the successful implementation of MBP was the sustained support offered through collaborative partnerships between schools and universities. Thus, providing teachers with support and professional development sessions from experienced colleagues is an important factor to consider to allow for successful implementation of the MBP's explained above.

### **Authentic Assessment**

PE class provides many excellent opportunities to connect to students' lives; however, as mentioned previously, if students are not exposed to activities that they see as relevant and related to their future PA patterns, they are less likely to be engaged during class time. This section will discuss how PE can relate to students' lives, both inside and outside of school. Authentic assessment can be viewed as an effective assessment strategy to increase the engagement of students. As reported in Georgakis et al. (2015), an authentic assessment is a type of assessment that pursues tasks and foci that have value and meaning to students beyond the instructional context. Research demonstrates that the relationship between PE classes and activities beyond school can be seen as an area of weakness (Georgakis et al., 2015).

Literature further highlights the need for meaningful authentic assessments in PE class that allow students to make real-life connections to the course material they are learning (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008). When students are able to see how the material they are learning can be used in real-life settings, they are much more likely to remain engaged in course material because they see a purpose. An example of an authentic task could be inviting the students and their families into the class to teach a cultural game or dance. This type of activity celebrates diversity and provides relevancy for SA females in PE (Young & Sternod, 2011). When teachers are creating authentic assessments, it is important that they present the task in a new situation, in addition to providing minimal to no support (Gulikers, Bastiaens, & Kirschner, 2004). The purpose of this is for students to transfer what they have learned in class to a real-life situation. For example, after learning about the difference between dynamic and static stretching, students may be

asked at random to apply their learning by making a fitness plan for their parents or siblings using effective stretching techniques.

As mentioned above, TGFU is an example of an authentic assessment. In TGFU activities, the teacher is the facilitator who sets up a climate for continuous learning within a real-life (game) setting; students are then provided with authentic learning within the context of the game (Georgakis et al., 2015). In TGFU, the assessment piece evaluates overall game performance as opposed to skill execution. A skills test outside of a game situation, such as a free-throw assessment, is not an adequate measure of the key learning objectives (Georgakis et al., 2015). Teachers can also integrate authentic assessment into the health classroom, such as by analyzing food labels and assessing individual risk.

### **Service Learning**

Service learning is another form of authentic assessment that will be the focus of the remainder of this section. It is a community-based method of education where students fulfil their course requirements while simultaneously contributing to the community (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). Service learning provides a real-life setting for students to apply and understand course material, while also raising awareness of public needs, social concerns, and the civic responsibility of community members (Domangue & Carson, 2008). Research reported in Domangue and Carson (2008) has been consistent in the finding that service learning enhances the personal, social, and career development and academic learning outcomes of students. All service learning programs must meet the same three criteria: relevant and meaningful service with the community, enhanced academic learning, and purposeful civic learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Howard,

2001). A key component of the service learning program is thoughtful reflection. Without reflection, the experience may be counterproductive and may result in a lack of compassion toward the experience and community partners (Domague & Carson, 2008). Although activities such as volunteering and community service are valuable experiences for youth, they do not meet the criteria to be considered models of service learning (Howard, 2001). Domangue and Carson (2008) investigated how a service learning program could influence pre-service teachers' cultural competency and found that the service learning participants identified consistent engagement, exposure to another culture, and an engaged instructor as key contributors to cultural competency in the service learning program.

Rec and Read, a culturally-relevant service learning program developed at the University of Manitoba by Carpenter, Rothney, Mousseau, Halas, and Forsyth (as cited in Halas, McCrae, & Carpenter, 2013) demonstrates an excellent example of service learning that is culturally-specific. This program is conducted in the Bachelor of Physical Health and Education program and involves Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal university students and Aboriginal high school students who collectively plan and deliver a culturally-relevant PA, nutrition, and education program for early-year students at a neighbouring school. A core component of the program is intercultural relationships. Once programming begins, the university and high school mentors work together to deliver the games and activities they have planned for the students. Each activity day ends with a sharing circle, where the mentors debrief among themselves as they critically reflect on how their activity plans unfolded. As a culturally-relevant approach, it has also

provided university students with a unique opportunity to develop their intercultural competencies in working with diverse populations.

Although most service learning opportunities have been conducted at the post-secondary level with undergraduate students, service learning has the potential to be a valuable asset to secondary school programs if implemented correctly. Service learning opportunities for secondary school students may include involving students in a volunteer activity in and out of school, such as leading intramurals or fitness clubs, participating as a volunteer in a community event like a charity run, or a school-wide event such as Wellness Week. Although secondary school teachers do not have as much freedom as university professors, as supervision is required, pairing with elementary and middle schools can be an excellent way to encourage community interaction. Secondary students could, for instance, organize a charity sports tournament or an Amazing Race for elementary students. However, regardless of the volunteer program chosen, it is important that the program relates to the curriculum and that it involves critical reflection of the students' contributions; reflection is required prior, during, and after in order for effective learning to occur. Teachers can also encourage parents to join in on the events to promote PA as a family unit (Gibbons, 2014). By providing SA female adolescents with a variety of field-based experiences to work with a diverse community, they will have rich meaningful experiences that can increase their cultural competency and provide them with positive PA experiences.

### **Family/School Partnerships**

This next section is an important topic, as parental influence and opinions are particularly influential in the lives of SA youth and adolescents (Dagkas et al., 2011).

This section will discuss the importance of increasing the health and PA knowledge of parents, the risk culture, increasing parent engagement, and community partnerships.

### **Increasing the Health and PA Knowledge of Parents**

Research demonstrates that knowledge of PA and its benefits are lacking in SA populations (Babakus & Thompson, 2012; Vahabi et al, 2012). For instance, Vahabi et al. (2012) conducted a study on SA female adults' beliefs about PA and dance as a form of exercise. Results revealed limited knowledge about the health benefits of PA, with the majority of participants under the impression that PA was important only to lose weight. These gaps in knowledge can negatively impact SA females' experiences in PE and lifelong PA practices; if parents are not educated on the health impacts of PA, then they will be less likely to support their daughters' PA pursuits outside of school. Thus, it is crucial for teachers to incorporate culturally-appropriate physical and health education while also increasing the knowledge of parents (Vahabi et al., 2012).

Health is a high priority for parents; thus, teachers need to make a conscious effort to share scientific information that links human well-being to movement (Kretchmar, 2006). Teachers can do this by holding an information session or sending home an information sheet on the benefits of sport and PA including factors such as fun, social networking, skill development, and decreased stress. When parents understand the importance of PE in schools and learn about the program that is implemented, they will be more likely to support their children in PE pursuits (Dagkas et al., 2011). In addition, if parents understand the positive impact that regular PA can have on cognitive functioning, academic achievement, and overall happiness, they may be more likely to support their child when they enroll in optional PE classes (Davis & Cooper, 2011). As



previously mentioned, by gaining an understanding of the community dynamics, such as who the student lives with, religions practiced, languages spoken at home, and the amount of parental support available for homework support, teachers are better able to implement strategies that align with their cultural knowledge (Flory & McCaughtry, 2011). Teachers cannot effectively engage parents or community partners unless they have a good understanding of the cultural landscape of their students.

### **Risk Culture**

Some SA mothers have never played a sport and thus, the idea of their daughter participating in sport or PA may seem incomprehensible. Many parents have been influenced by the current risk culture, and as a result, minimize any risk to their child by using constant supervision or reducing outdoor physical activity (Carver, Timperio, Hesketh, & Crawford, 2010; O'Brien & Smith, 2002). For females in particular, parents were more likely to intervene in a risk-taking behaviour and perceive their daughters to be more vulnerable to becoming injured (Morongiello & Dawber, 2000; Morrongiello, Midgett, & Stanton, 2000). In addition, girls risk-taking was mitigated by the risks they deemed to be acceptable by their parents (Morrongiello & Dawber, 2004). When risky play is removed or withheld, parents remove the necessary development of risk assessment skills in the child – and this can have a large impact on adult life when similar risky situations are encountered (Brussoni, Ilsen, Pike, & Sleet, 2012; Gill, 2007). Research demonstrates that often, parents are not aware of the consequences of taking their child out of PE class. In their home countries, PA may have been absent, optional and treated differently compared to academic classes.

### **Increasing Parent Engagement**

Parent engagement and school community and family partnerships can address cultural barriers in PE directly, and can also work collaboratively to improve the PE experience of all SA females. It has been a consistent finding in years of research on parental involvement that when parents are involved in school, children from a variety of ethnic and economic backgrounds perform much better in school (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Research surrounding parental support of PA and PE has demonstrated mixed reviews and is a very complex issue to unfold. Some research demonstrates that SA parents are very supportive of their child's participation in PE as long as religion is being practiced effectively; however, some research demonstrates a lack of parental support of PE due to feelings of its irrelevancy for future academic pursuits (Dagkas et al., 2011; Jiwani & Rail, 2010).

Literature demonstrates that more active girls received more parental encouragement, with many parents involving their daughters in PA starting at a young age (Whitehead & Biddle, 2008). Family support was a strong predictor of participation in team sports and a modest predictor of moderate-to-vigorous PA in Grade 8 girls (Saunders, Motl, Dowda, Dishman, & Pate, 2004). In many SA cultures, there is an emphasis on family bonds and viewing parents as authority figures; thus, targeting families to encourage PA at home is an effective strategy to consider (Taymoori et al., 2010). Parents can act as role models for effective PA by participating actively with their child which may, in turn, increase self-efficacy of SA females.

Dagkas et al. (2011) recommend a "whole-family approach" to changing attitudes and opening up lines of communication between families and schools, and have found it

to be a successful strategy for improving Muslim females' participation in PE and school sport. PE provides a great opportunity for parents and families to share their cultural knowledge and expertise in the form of cultural games and dances (Young & Sternod, 2011). Teachers can engage families by having them come in as parent volunteers to lead a cultural activity or game. Teachers can also provide parents with a list of volunteer opportunities that SA female adolescents can participate in with their parents. Female PE teachers can encourage PA at home by making school space available for mothers to exercise with their daughters (Taymoori et al., 2010). PE teachers can also set-up PA workshops that demonstrate a series of suitable forms of exercise that mothers can participate in with their daughters.

Parents can support PA by providing transportation, encouragement, and participating in PA with their children (Taymoori et al., 2010). Using parent engagement to incorporate cultural games and activities can increase the engagement of students, bring together classmates through collaboration, and celebrate the rich culture that exists in Canada. Creating open communication with parents about the health and physical education curriculum is an important strategy to get parents on board with the value of PE as a vehicle for lifelong PA.

### **Community Partnerships**

Schools can also partner with local community recreation centres to create effective religious accommodations that allow SA females to be physically active on their terms. Changes such as creating sex-segregated spaces, lowering the cost of PA participation, and increasing education regarding the importance of a physically active lifestyle should be made a priority for recreation leaders (Jiwani & Rail, 2010). Schools

can invite recreation partners to participate in programs that are focused on cultural competence and religious accommodations. Teachers can also encourage parents to take on leadership opportunities related to health and fitness, such as acting as volunteers at a local run together, or running or walking with their child in a charity run.

It is clear that family and school partnerships are an important factor to consider to increase the PE participation of SA female adolescents. When parents are informed of the importance of PA in their children's lives, are accommodated through culturally-relevant practices, and are given opportunities to engage with their child's education, they may be more likely to understand and contribute to a healthy active lifestyle.

### **Culturally-Relevant Pedagogy**

The last section, culturally-relevant pedagogy, is a crucial component of this framework. This component ensures that the teacher acknowledges their own cultural bias, gets to know their students' cultural landscapes, and incorporates teaching strategies and activities that are culturally-equitable. Culturally-relevant pedagogy, as previously mentioned, can provide the best education for children by preserving their cultural background and preparing them to have meaningful relationships in the future – without sacrificing their own cultural beliefs and values (Pewewardy, 1994).

Once teachers have developed their own cultural competence and they understand students' cultural landscapes and are able to accommodate them, they can implement culturally-relevant activities. Culturally-relevant teaching allows students to learn through the incorporation of culture instead of forcing students to fit unrealistic demands of a prescribed curriculum. The purpose of culturally-relevant pedagogy in PE is not merely to incorporate cultural games into the gymnasium, but rather to implement culturally-

relevant instruction and demonstrate cultural competence by using knowledge about the culture of one's students to make meaningful connections with the students and the community (Robinson, Barrett, & Robinson, 2016). I will use Halas et al.'s (2013) Culturally-Relevant Physical Education Model, in addition to the work by Casey and Kentel (2014), to suggest culturally-relevant strategies for teachers of SA female adolescents according to the following categories: race and immigrant status, religion, culture, language, and gender.

### **Race and Immigrant Status**

Canadian pedagogy experts discuss the lack of expertise and confidence that teachers have when discussing issues pertaining to race and diversity (Casey & Kentel, 2014). These fears often result in an avoidance of particular conversations out of a fear of offending someone. This avoidance can normalize the experiences, histories, and world views of the racialized minority groups (Casey & Kentel, 2014). There is a need for curriculum and teaching practices that support students in critical pedagogy that recognizes and respects Canada's diverse population (Casey & Kentel, 2014). Using Halas et al.'s (2013) culturally-relevant physical education model, PE teachers can ensure that their environment is set up in an inclusive manner with zero tolerance for racial slurs or racist comments. Teachers can also ensure that discussions of race are a regular aspect of class discussions to increase awareness and improve cultural competency of all students. Teachers should seek to learn about activities that students are involved in outside of school such as cultural dances, games or sports. Students should be invited to share their cultural and religious traditions and contribute to the living curriculum through games, music, and dance (Casey & Kentel, 2014).

Immigrants and refugees may experience challenges associated with both race and socio-economic status. Many immigrants are qualified professionals; however, their credentials are not recognized in Canada. Immigrant or refugee families need to adjust to economic changes, learning a new language, and adapting to a new culture. Many immigrant and refugee families that are struggling financially may not be able to enrol their children in extracurricular activities; thus, providing more intramurals and clubs before and after school can create more participatory possibilities (Casey & Kentel, 2014). Providing students with cross-curricular learning to learn about and share their learning of their own place of origin would also be valuable. For example, in PE, providing SA female students with the opportunity to explore the music, dance, games, and cultural foods of various cultures can be a valuable experience for all (Casey & Kentel, 2014).

### **Religion**

Practicing one's religion is a basic human right, and PE teachers must ensure that they provide all students with the opportunity to do so. Research has consistently demonstrated that many Muslim girls embody their faith; thus, teachers need to accept and respect the diversity of Muslim women's opinions on how they choose to participate in PA (Walseth, 2015). Teachers must ensure that they are not consciously or unconsciously promoting one religion over another. In addition, teachers need to be mindful that the learning climate they create allows for both religious and non-religious expressions of faith (Casey & Kentel, 2014). The religious barriers to participation in SA female adolescents can be minimized when teachers increase their cultural competency by getting to know their students and understanding their cultural experiences. Asking

students to fill in a “get to know you” form to find out their cultural and religious background is a good strategy, as some racialized minority groups may not feel comfortable discussing these issues in a group setting. Issues such as modest clothing needs, restricted access, and religious practices such as fasting need to be addressed.

It has been demonstrated in the research that gender segregation in PE at the secondary level is essential to maximize PE participation for many female adolescents (Benn & Dagkas, 2006). Controlled access to the gymnasium where female classes are taking place should be implemented when required. The use of blinds on fitness studios or rooms should also be implemented. These accommodations will allow all students to participate fully by diminishing the barrier of being watched, viewed, or scrutinized by others outside of the classroom. Many SA families practice religions that do not allow the viewing of any body parts; thus, flexible dress codes in PE and providing alternative locations to change are required in order to effectively accommodate all females (Dresser, 2011). Alternative clothing options, such as long pants and long-sleeved shirts, should also be made available.

An additional activity that PE teachers can incorporate to develop cultural competence among all students surrounds the practice of Ramadan. Teachers can acknowledge the first day of Ramadan and have a student explain the different practices of Ramadan that students will be undergoing until Eid. This would be a culturally-relevant activity for SA female adolescents, as it uses curriculum as a vehicle to connect traditional cultural activities with current teaching practices (Robinson et al., 2016). Students who participate in Ramadan should be given alternative fitness testing dates that take place prior to the beginning of Ramadan. In addition, teachers should plan vigorous

PA around the month of Ramadan and be mindful that some students may need breaks. There is not one single strategy that can help Muslim students cope with Ramadan: a combination of collaborating with students and parents, adjusting vigorous PA time, providing appropriate breaks, and avoiding displays of food can all assist Muslim students in coping (Kirkendall, Chaouachi, Aziz, & Chamari, 2012). Teachers need to be culturally-sensitive with regards to physical contact in PE when some activities such as self-defence, wrestling, or dance may involve contact that is not acceptable in certain SA religions (Young & Sternod, 2011).

### **Culture**

In PE, strategies to increase cultural relevancy may include translating materials into parents' native language and offering intramurals on the lunch hour to make PA accessible for students who may have cultural or family commitments after school (Flory & McCaughtry, 2011). In addition, teachers may need to be aware of the proxemics in the PE environment such as the use of eye contact and personal space, which may be new for SA students (Culp, 2010). Research demonstrates that change rooms have been a source of discomfort in PE for marginalized youth; thus, ensuring change rooms are safe spaces where multiple areas for changing (e.g., closed door change rooms) are essential. In addition, it is also important to discuss acceptable behavior in the change room, as it is essential for SA female adolescents to feel safe (Chhin, 2015). Having a discussion about the cultural differences between Western countries and SA countries can increase the cultural knowledge of all students, ensuring that all students are comfortable and understand the differences. In addition, in health units such as nutrition, teachers should also be mindful of the fact the Canadian Food Guide has Eurocentric origins, and by



refraining from looking at various types of foods from various cultures, this may perpetuate the norm of Western values – making SA female adolescents feel isolated (Chhin, 2015). Incorporating a variety of cultural foods into the discussion in nutrition can help to minimize this possible barrier.

Creating learning opportunities within the context of culture is an important factor to consider. This can only occur once the teacher has an understanding of the community in which they teach and the cultural factors that affect their students' learning. Students' approaches to learning may be affected by the value system in which they were raised. The individualist value system reflects individual competitive-oriented factors, whereas a collectivist-oriented system reflects collaboration and interdependence. Many SA cultures embrace a collectivist culture system; thus, in PE, teachers should implement activities that reflect both collectivist and individualist cultures to ensure they are meeting the needs of all students (Young & Sternod, 2011). Collectivist activities may include choreographing a dance or creating a low-organizational game. Collectivist activities may also engage families in PA at home by creating a fitness plan for one's family. Individualist activities may include creating an individual fitness plan. Culturally-relevant activities that reflect both value systems can provide meaningfulness and relevancy for all students. Cultural games and sports such as Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Cricket, and Chin-lone, are culturally-relevant for SA female adolescents. In addition, cultural dance has been seen in the literature as an effective way to engage SA females, as mentioned above (Vahabi et al, 2012; Vahabi & Damba, 2015). Teachers are encouraged to use a new resource (GTActivity: <https://gtactivity.ca>) created at the University of Toronto as a living archive of all the forms of PA in which people in the GTA participate. This

resource provides a plethora of cultural sports and PA's to explore. This is a great resource that highlights many cultural activities, sports, and games, and provides information about the origin and rules of each. Teachers can use this resource with their students by asking them to work in groups to present a cultural PA from the resource.

### **Language**

English Language Learners (ELL) are a particular group of individuals that may require additional support in the PE environment. The PE environment is a highly stimulating environment where multiple stimuli are occurring at the same time. Many SA female adolescents may encounter challenges in fast-paced PE environment if they are new to the English language. It is important to recognize a few key points when working with ELL learners. In terms of translating materials into student's native languages, PE teachers can work with ELL students to label technical language such as skipping, jumping, or dribbling in both English and the ELL's native language (Sato & Hodge, 2016). In addition, teachers should use a variety of teaching methods such as sensory-motor, kinetic, and linguistic practices. Peer tutoring can also be highly beneficial for ELL learners (Sato & Hodge, 2016). PE teachers can ask previous ELL students who speak the native language of the ELL learner to work with the ELL student using their native language as a means to teach them English. Often, the speed of instruction is too fast for ELL learners, so peer teaching – where instructions are repeated in both English and the students' native language – can allow ELL students more time to process, thus resulting in better learning.

PE teachers need to also be mindful of ELL refugee students who may have encountered traumatic events in their home country. Research by Sims, Hayden, Palmer,

and Hutchins (as cited in Sato & Hodge, 2016) demonstrates that ELLs who had war-related trauma may have a hard time controlling their reaction to outside stimuli and may show autonomic responses to danger. PE teachers should collaborate with parents, local immigration services, and other teachers to collect information and work as a team to come up with multiple options for best practice.

### **Gender**

PE and sport present an atmosphere where domination and masculinity is often valued, as the purpose of many activities is often to perform better or faster than an opponent (Casey & Kentel, 2014). Females who do not act in a feminine manner, according to socially constructed norms, may encounter a marginalized experience in schools. Common forms of gender slang in PE that oppress women such as “girl push-ups” or “you run like a girl” should be avoided and discussed directly if they arise. In addition, teachers need to think of gender beyond the binaries of male and female, and must work to disrupt gender stereotypes or attitudes relating to expected roles, behaviours, appearance, and dress. For many SA females, the divide between male and female in PE is very prominent. In addition, the activities and sports that are acceptable for males and females are typically gender-normed. Thus, it is essential in the SA population to dispel the stereotypes associated with PA, and to focus on the physical, mental, and emotional benefits (Casey & Kentel, 2014).

It is clear that incorporating effective culturally-relevant pedagogy in PE is essential to allow all SA female adolescents an equitable opportunity to experience PE. The components mentioned throughout the framework have provided tangible recommendations for teachers to engage SA female adolescents in PE. In the following

section, the contribution of this research to the Canadian PE context will be discussed, as well as the implications of this research and future research recommendations.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the challenges to PE participation in SA female adolescents and to use research-based evidence to explore effective culturally-relevant strategies to inform physical educators. Previous research has applied Halas et al.'s (2013) Culturally-Relevant PE Model to Aboriginal populations; however, this study is the first one to apply Halas et al.'s model to the SA female adolescent population. This study is also the first in Canada to identify a culturally-relevant program in PE for SA female adolescents. This study makes clear that current PE programs in Canada are not meeting the needs of all SA female adolescents. If PE programs continue this way, the SA female population may continue to display a decrease in PA levels upon immigration to Canada, resulting in an increased risk of disease and diminished mental health. The findings of this study have the potential to improve PE participation and the engagement of SA female adolescents, increase PE enrollment at the secondary level, improve the mental health of the SA female community, and increase the overall well-being of the SA female community at large.

In the literature review, this study compiled research that reveals that SA female adolescents encounter many unique challenges in PE participation. If PE is not made culturally-relevant for these females, current research suggests they may not be able to participate in PE equitably, which may further negatively impact their lifelong PA patterns. A supportive learning environment has been demonstrated as an important factor, as social connection and level of relatedness to peers in PE has been seen as a motivator to PE participation. Previous research on female adolescents has found that a student-centered program that fosters choice, autonomy, and cooperation can increase PE

engagement. While a student-centered program that targets gender in PE has been found to be effective, this study adds to the literature by recommending cultural dance, yoga and mindfulness, personal fitness, and outdoor education for the SA female adolescent population. Previous research demonstrates that the multi-activity model is not effective in engaging adolescent females, but instead, in this study, the TGFU Model and Sport Education have been supported by research as having the potential to increase engagement. The Easy Play Model is a new and promising model that emphasizes cooperation and enjoyment, both of which have been seen as important elements of PE engagement in adolescent females.

Authentic assessment, specifically service learning, has been found to be very effective in teacher education programs; however, this study recommends its use at the secondary school level. Family-school partnerships have been indicated as an important factor for SA communities, as research demonstrates that SA parents are often uninformed of the importance of PE programs. Providing school and community programs that allow mothers to be active with their daughters, in addition to providing information sessions at school about the importance of PE programming, may be effective strategies to target parents. Finally, culturally-relevant pedagogy is not a new term and it has been applied to PE in some literature. Recently, strategies to include culturally-relevant pedagogy as a part of the Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum have been introduced; however, this study is the first to apply these strategies specifically to SA female adolescents. Strategies according to race and immigrant status, religion, culture, language, and gender have been outlined for SA female adolescents.

This research highlights the importance of using a wholistic meaningful approach to PE pedagogy that targets enjoyment and delight. Focusing on the affective as opposed to the physical domain should be an important consideration for teachers when planning an effective PE program for SA female adolescents. Other than helping improve overall health, PE provides an excellent means to build relationships, problem-solve, and collaborate with others – all which are important 21<sup>st</sup> century skills for SA female adolescents. PE programs for SA female adolescents should transition to self-directed, meaningful programs that are student-centered and culturally-relevant. Health is a high-priority issue for parents and administration, and teachers need to do a better job connecting physical movement to overall well-being (Kretchmar, 2006).

As mentioned in the Culturally-Relevant PE Model by Halas et al., (2013) the PE teacher is an ally who should advocate for an equitable PE experience for all of their students. The PE teacher is in a good position to implement the framework to engage SA female adolescents in PE that has been created in the findings of this study. However, teachers cannot implement such a program unless they are familiar with their students' cultural background. The task of becoming familiar with students' cultural landscapes is not an easy one; it requires care, investment, and consistent reflection of the PE teacher. Once teachers have input this time and energy to understand their students' cultural landscapes, they can then create a supportive learning environment in the class that values diversity. The strategies recommended in the framework can only be applied effectively if the teacher creates this environment. Thus, as the teacher is the individual who implements such a program, this research should inform teacher education programs, both in-service and pre-service.

### **Implications of the Study**

Based on the conclusions of this research, the following implications have been identified to improve PE programming.

#### **Pre-Service and In-Service Teacher Training**

The importance of culturally-relevant pedagogy must be passed down from the school board level and supported by administrators and all staff. Teacher training must reflect equitable practices and provide strategies for teachers to accommodate all students. In addition to the obvious health benefits of PA, increased PE participation in schools can provide opportunities for increased intercultural communication and understanding, reducing instances of discrimination and enriching Canada's physical culture (Doherty & Taylor, 2007; Donnelly & Nakamura, 2009). Research demonstrates that teacher education programs and in-service teacher training lack an incorporation of culturally-relevant pedagogy (Culp & Chepyator-Thomson, 2011). Administration that is not sensitive to the needs of SA females can be argued as a key barrier to participation. In a study examining PE teachers' cultural competency, many teachers who, on average, had 15 years of experience never enrolled in a multicultural education course (Culp & Chepyator-Thomson, 2011). This points to the importance of providing in-service teacher training in cultural competency.

In pre-service teacher education, teachers should be provided with opportunities to experience diversity in their practicum placements. The first step to developing cultural competency is being exposed to a diverse student population. When pre-service teachers are exposed to multicultural students, they are able to provide challenges to the perceptions of various cultural norms while examining their own cultural identity



(Harrison et al., 2010). Culturally-relevant pedagogy does not require much addition to the curriculum; however, all instruction requires a review of the relevance that it will have to the class (Culp & Chepyator-Thomson, 2011). In addition to culturally-relevant pedagogy, teacher training should also include gender-specific training, as research has proven that female adolescents benefit from a PE program that reflects choice, ownership, minimizes on-display movements, and incorporates novel activities – a program that is much different than that recommended for male adolescents. It is the teacher's duty to act as an ally for their students by advocating for culturally-responsive and inclusive teacher training (Halas et al., 2013).

### **Targeting Mental Health in PE Programs**

As highlighted in the Islam et al. (2014) study, mental illnesses have become much more prevalent in SA communities when compared to other minority group populations. SA immigrant populations require better economic support and assistance upon arrival to Canada to mitigate negative mental health outcomes (Islam et al., 2014). Moving forward, teachers may want to consider implementing mental health programming for their students, focusing specifically on females who migrated to Canada in early childhood, as they are at a greater risk for mood disorders and mental health issues. Research reported in Islam et al. (2014) found that cultural or language barriers may be related to the lower prevalence of mental health service utilization in SA immigrant populations. It is important to break the stigma about mental illnesses in this group by opening up the discussion, bringing in healthcare professionals as guest speakers, and encouraging SA female adolescents to open up this discussion at home. PE

teachers can also implement yoga and mindfulness in PE class to contribute to a positive mental health of their students.

### **Refraining from Homogenizing the SA Population**

In the way that all immigrants who come to Canada do not experience the same barriers, not all SA females may experience the same barriers in PE. Religious and cultural practices vary; thus, future research should not homogenize this group and should work towards understanding the multitude of barriers that can be encountered by some or all members of this cultural group (Hamzeh & Oliver, 2012). For instance, students' interpretation of hijabs and clothing restrictions may be different and changing as they continue to explore their own identity (Hamzeh & Oliver, 2012). It is essential to understand the intersecting discourses in the lives of SA female adolescents and allow them to make their own decisions on physical activity preference (Hamzeh & Oliver, 2012).

The previous section highlighted potential strategies, which, from my perspective and experience, may have the ability to improve PE participation and future PA participation of SA female adolescents. Assuming that all SA female adolescents are a monolithic group that experience the same challenges to PA can be damaging to students' and families' self-worth, culture and respect for the education system. This study relied heavily upon Muslim females as the main research group. Research examining Muslim SA female adolescents can be much more commonly found in comparison to other religions such as Hindu and Sikh. Thus, although the framework to engage SA female adolescents in PE was created in Chapter Four, not all strategies will be effective for SA female adolescents. It is essential for teachers to treat each student on a case-by-case

basis, providing equitable and culturally-relevant pedagogy to all. The perception that SA female adolescent populations are receiving special treatment must change; providing an equitable opportunity for PE participation is a right and should be made accessible for all SA female students.

### **Targeting Middle School PE**

Several studies have found that the decline in PA among females begins during the transition to middle school; specifically, Prochaska et al., (2003) found that PE enjoyment decreased significantly from the fourth to sixth grade, and was lower among girls (Robbins et al., 2003). In addition, they also found that girls, older children and those not on sports teams were especially dependant on PE as the setting for accruing health-related PA, and thus, strategies to enhance their enjoyment are needed. It is clear that interventions to target enjoyment in PE need to be made a priority beginning at the middle school level. For SA female immigrants who may have had minimal exposure to PE in their home countries, it is essential that they have a positive and enjoyable experience in middle school PE. If SA females are beginning to experience dissatisfaction in middle school PE, it is rare that they will enrol in optional PE classes once they have completed the mandatory Grade 9 course. Gibbons and Humbert (2008) analyze the perceived barriers to participation in middle school females, and highlight effective strategies to increase engagement and enjoyment; these strategies should be implemented into teacher training workshops.

From the literature examined, one intervention that would be effective in increasing the enjoyment and physical literacy of middle school girls in PE would be hiring PE specialists. PE specialists have the knowledge and training to implement

developmentally-appropriate movement skills, to target enjoyment, and to provide the essential feedback that is required for improvement of movement skills. As reported in Mitchell et al. (2015), research suggests that females prefer single-sex PE. Most middle school PE programs are co-ed, and research demonstrates that at this phase in their lives, their PA enjoyment and engagement is beginning to decrease. I argue that gender specific PE in a sex-segregated class may be more effective for SA females at the middle school level (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Mitchell et al., 2015). It is essential that teachers work collaboratively to identify the main issue at hand: the lack of PA in SA female adolescents. Rather than focusing on changing current teaching styles, teachers need to dig deep to get to know their own bias, get to know their students by developing cultural competency, and change the structure of programs by implementing alternative teaching models such as TGFU, Sport Education, and Easy Play to allow all SA female adolescents an equitable opportunity to experience enjoyment and confidence in PE. Thus, recruiting and hiring PE specialists should be made a priority in all middle schools in order to provide meaningful and enjoyable PE experiences for SA females.

### **Advocating for the Value of PE in Schools**

One of the factors that affected enrollment in high school PE did not have to deal with the student not wanting to enroll in PE, but rather the PE course not fitting into the students' timetable or schedule, and PE not meeting a graduation requirement, career goal, or a personal need for PA (Lodewyk & Pybus, 2013). Thus, many high school females may face the difficult choice of taking a course that they love or taking a course that will help them in their academic future. Students enrolled in PE reported significantly higher quantitative levels of perceived autonomy support, self-efficacy,

domain value, autonomous regulation, and levels of active exercise beyond PE when compared to students who did not enroll in PE. Thus, these results demonstrate that students who chose to enroll in PE demonstrated important life skills that will help them in any job in the future, and also demonstrated much more regular PA. This highlights the need for school officials to attribute a higher value to PE courses and possibly provide university or college level classes that students could use towards their grade average (Gibbons, et al., 1999).

PE needs to be portrayed as an essential part of the curriculum that is more of a privilege than a duty – a place where students have the freedom to move rather than a class where they have to exercise (Kretchmar, 2006). In addition, a school board and administrative team that supports the increase of enrollment choices that students have in high school PE (e.g., team games, lifestyle fitness, dance, and individual and dual games) may stimulate more value, motivation, and retention of females in PE (Lodewyk & Pybus, 2013; Ntoumanis, 2005). Government officials can also make PE compulsory, and school administration can work to align students' schedules so that taking PE is possible. Guidance counsellors and other school staff can also recommend that students take PE (especially females who have body image concerns), as it can help contribute to positive mental, emotional, and physical health (Lodewyk & Pybus, 2013). Teachers need to use a comprehensive school PA model to target all school staff, the community, and parents in order to get the message across that PA should be a valued and essential part of all SA female adolescents lives.

### **Comprehensive School Physical Activity Model (CSPAP)**

Improving PE programs cannot alone be effective in increasing PA levels of SA females. An “all hands on-deck” approach needs to be taken by schools and community members in order to decrease the barriers of PA participation. The ultimate goal is to increase lifelong PA patterns to allow for a healthy body, mind, and soul for students and their families. The Comprehensive School Physical Activity Model (CSPAP) is a multicomponent approach that helps students meet the national recommendation of 60 minutes of activity per day, while also developing the knowledge, skills, and confidence to be physically active for life. The CSPAP reflects the social, emotional, and cultural needs of students, their families, and the community, thereby establishing a supportive environment for PA participation (Brusseau & Hannon, 2015; CDC, 2013). CSPAP has five components: (1) quality physical education, (2) physical activity during the school day (3) PA before and after school, (4) staff involvement, and (5) family and community engagement (Brusseau & Hannon, 2015).

The first component of the CSPAP is quality PE. The PE teacher is in the ideal role to implement the CSPAP; however, they require strong support from other staff, parent volunteers and teachers in order to implement the program effectively (Castelli & Beighle, 2007). The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC] (2013) explains that to maximize PA opportunities in schools, activities need to be well-planned, executed and evaluated, ultimately creating a culture of PA that is integrated into the school and community environment. The second component of the CSPAP is PA during the school day. PA during the school day consists of structured activities (PE class and PA in the classroom) and unstructured activities (recess and drop-in programs). The third

component of the CSPAP model is PA before and after school. Before and after school PA programs provide students with an opportunity to be physically active, resulting in enjoyment and socialization. These programs can include intramural programs (sport programs that emphasize cooperation and provide students of all skill levels opportunities to participate), walking or biking to school program, free-play or organized games on school grounds, and physically-active homework (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2012). The fourth component of the CSPAP model is staff involvement. School staff have a vital role in promoting personal health through modelling PA behaviour, leading PA opportunities, and encouraging PA engagement. Donnelly et al. (2009) found that teachers who modelled PA in the workplace gained positive benefits such as a reduced chance of occupational stress and burnout, and an increase in self-efficacy of students, as modelling provided children with the opportunity to see their teachers demonstrating healthy behaviours.

The last aspect of the CSPAP is family and community engagement. Parent engagement in schools involves parents and school staff working together to support and improve the learning, development, and health of all students (CDC, 2012). As mentioned above, when parents restrict their children from risk that may occur in outdoor play, the loss of physical fitness that may occur as a result of decreased outdoor play and PA may actually create more of a risk to children's emotional and physical health than any injury associated with outdoor play (Carver et al, 2010). Parents should be encouraged to participate in regular outdoor family PA and be invited to participate in PA initiatives throughout the school. Teachers can also deliver workshops on the importance of PA, PA ideas for parents and the importance of risk-taking for development. PA

options that take place in the community can also be encouraged. Jiwani and Rail (2010) demonstrated that women-only facilities are rarely available in the larger Canadian society. When inclusive PA options are provided in the community, Muslim females feel less embarrassed to do PA while wearing the hijab, they feel safer since they may be participating with familiar members of their community, and it allows for social interactions between community members of SA. All of these qualities have been deemed important for SA females when participating in PA. At the University of Toronto Mississauga campus, the SA population is the most common minority group. Women-only fitness hours have been implemented in the gym, fitness studio, and the pool. During these hours, there are blinds or barriers restricting viewing from these areas. From my experience working at the pool, the women-only swim and adult swimming lessons were usually the busiest swims of the week. This example demonstrates that when gearing fitness opportunities to the ethnic makeup of the community, SA females are more likely to participate actively and on their own terms. This demonstrates the need for more community programs that allow for women-only fitness opportunities. In schools, teachers can also implement 'girls-only' fitness clubs to encourage PA outside of school.

### **Future Research**

Through an analysis of the challenges that affect SA female adolescents' participation in PE, it is clear that more research is needed that intersects gender and culture. Most of the studies in PE with SA females have been conducted in the UK. Studies, such as the one conducted by Stride (2014) which examined the experiences of SA females and their experiences in PE, would be highly beneficial in Canada. Hearing directly from SA females regarding their experiences in PE can provide possibilities for



mutual and enriched learning. However, much more research should also be done in connecting gender, immigrant status, and experiences in PE. Future research should also continue to examine the barriers to PA and PE participation in SA females across a variety of religious groups including Sikh and Hindu, as the majority of the research has focused on the Muslim population. Future research should conduct a longitudinal study on students who receive PE from a specialist and those that do not, connecting this to their PE experiences at the high school level and their future PA patterns, and comparing it to those who did not have a specialist. In addition, future studies should examine PA intervention programs for SA females in a PE setting such as cultural dance, yoga, personal fitness, using a sport education approach, and alternative PE courses such as individual fitness (offered in Grade 9 in Ontario), individual sports courses, focus sport courses, or PA choice classes where students are given the ownership to create their own curriculum. Future research should also focus on the implementation of the framework created in Chapter Four in a Greater Toronto Area (GTA) school where there is a prevalent SA population to test the effectiveness of this model.

### **Personal Reflection**

This research experience has allowed me to understand and critique a variety of perspectives, cultural beliefs, and values different from my own. As a passionate Caucasian female physical educator, I believe it is my duty and political necessity to address the lack of PE engagement in SA female adolescents for the equity of women in the world. Although I cannot personally relate to the challenges experienced by SA female adolescents in PE, I can understand, empathize, and work hard to break down Western norms in PE. The goal of this research was to create a framework to engage SA

female adolescents and increase overall PA levels of the SA community. Since this framework is the first created to target SA female adolescents in PE, my hope is that this framework will be implemented into secondary Greater Toronto Area (GTA) schools and beyond – and will be modified to become effective and equitable for SA communities.

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