

WSI International Conference

Physical Activity and Health Guidelines for Women: National and International Considerations Related to Ethnicity and Race

St. Louis, USA, June 2, 2002

Group 2 Report - Task: Establish a research agenda for Social Sciences issues:

What are the most pressing research needs?

PHASE 1: DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Given that we lack data on the current state, the first phase would involve gathering descriptive information on the questions listed below. We also acknowledged that the research methodologies would vary across cultures to reflect different communication modes, ways of interacting with women, etc. The questions of interest are as follows:

1. Who is Doing What?

What are women doing in terms of physical activity? This analysis must include activities that range along a continuum from structured sports to recreation, domestic tasks and activity required for transportation. Language and conceptual definitions (i.e. structured physical activity versus domestic activities) must be considered in this analysis.

2. What are the Health Benefits of the Alternative Forms of Physical Activity?

While we may know of the health benefits of various structured physical activities, we know little of the health implications associated with domestic and transport activities.

3. What is the Level of Health Awareness?

What do women know about health, the antecedents and correlates of good/poor health? Furthermore, what is their level of awareness with respect to the health benefits of physical activity?

4. What is the Meaning of Physical Activity?

How is physical activity perceived amongst various groups of women? What does it mean to them?

5. How Are Resources Distributed?

How are the resources, ranging from financial to facilities, equipment, administrative support, and personnel, distributed?

6. How Are Structures Organized According to Gender?

An analysis of structures along gender lines is needed. For example, are women in positions of coaching, sport administration, etc.?

PHASE 2: ANALYSIS OF MOBILIZING AND INHIBITORY FACTORS

This phase would be designed to identify the factors that both enable and/or motivate women to participate in physical activity as well as the factors that inhibit participation. The factor viewed as the most important is that of safety, both at the structural and personal levels. Within the community there are issues related to crime and violence. Within the actual sport or exercise setting, violence in the form of harassment needs to be addressed. Unless women feel safe, they will not engage in physical activity, regardless of being aware of the health benefits of activity and available facilities and support systems.

Some other mobilizing factors would include appropriate leadership from women, the experience of pleasure or enjoyment associated with activity, and positive attitudes towards being active. Other factors will undoubtedly arise with further study.

Summarized by Gretchen Kerr, Canada