Chapter 20
Promoting Culturally Sensitive Strategies to Enhance Physical Education among Immigrant and Refugee Youth

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ABSTRACT
Given the prevalence of overweight and obesity among immigrant and refugee children and youth in America, there is a growing need for physical education, physical activity and sports professionals to incorporate culturally and socially responsive strategies into their programs and activities. According to Ike-Chinaka (2013), obesity has been identified as a chronic disease that emerges among immigrant populations after they settled in the United States of America. This chapter will focus on the challenges of newly arrived immigrants and refugee youth, and determinants of participation in physical activity and sports. Additionally, the chapter offers some culturally and socially sensitive tips and strategies that professionals in physical education, physical activity and sports can incorporate into their programs and activities so as to increase the participation among newly arrived immigrants and refugee youth.

INTRODUCTION
In the past decade, the United States of America has witnessed a dramatic influx of immigrants and refugees (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996; Rong & Preissle, 2008; Martin, & Midgley, 2006). Immigrant and refugee children and youth under the age of 18 continue to be the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population (Rong & Preissle, 2008; Martin, & Midgley, 2006). The school system in the United States of America has been the most significant social institution that has directly been impacted by the ever-increasing influx. These children represent over 150 different languages and dialects, and have different cultural beliefs, values, backgrounds and perceptions towards
physical activity. Although most of them arrived to the United States of America with high expectations, it is unfortunate that most of them have been disappointed by their acculturation encounters (Rong & Preissle, 2008; Martin & Midgley, 2006; Kaleidoscope, 2003 & Rotich, 2004). They left behind a familiar language, culture, role models, community, and a social system, thus are forced to adapt to extremely different ways of life. They are confronted by two different cultures, and often struggle to find ways to balance the value systems of their native culture with those of the current culture. Many of these changes make them vulnerable to drug use, obesity, violence, teen pregnancies, and other unhealthy lifestyles (Kaleidoscope, 2003 & Rotich 2004). They face countless acculturation and poverty related challenges and are more likely to live in environments with limited support for health-promoting behaviors. Compared to other children and youth, adolescent immigrant and refugee youth, especially those living at or above the poverty threshold are more likely to become sedentary, overweight or obese (Ike-Chinaka 2013).

While the schools and communities are culturally enriched by this influx, they encounter numerous unprecedented acculturation related challenges that affect their health and academic success. According to Rong & Preissle (2008), their successful adaptation depends on the society’s response and especially the effectiveness of the U.S. educational system.

While the overall benefits experienced by the growing numbers of immigrants are positive, they face critical lifestyle and systematic challenges (Bailey, 2002; & Balgolpal, 2000). This, coupled with other unknown pre- and post- immigration crises have led to an increase in deviant acculturation such as disinterest, feelings of isolation, worthlessness, health problems, domestic violence, depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), increase in school drop-outs, teenage pregnancies, sedentary lifestyles, and involvement in other detrimental and unhealthy lifestyles (Ike-Chinaka 2013; Bailey, 2002; Balgolpal, 2000; & MacDonald, 2003). These challenges are more pronounced among adolescent immigrant and refugee youth who are understudied, yet are seen as key to a serious understanding of the long term consequences of contemporary immigration to the American community (Portes and Rumbant, 1996; Bailey, 2003; Gordon-Larsen, Harris, Ward, & Popkin, 2003).

According to Bailey (2002), and Gordon-Larsen, Harris, Ward, & Popkin (2003), adolescent immigrant youth are constantly struggling to find their niche as they acculturate into their new American culture. As a result, language acquisition, learning new cultures, and finding new friends have become their immediate integration and acculturation priorities. They experience slippery and sporadic short-lived transitions from youth to adulthood and back to youth (Bailey, 2002 & Rotich 2004). Many adolescent immigrant youth are forced to act as cultural brokers as well as provide financial support for their families because of their immediate exposure to the public education system (Kaleidoscope, 2003). This exposure helps them to learn the language and culture faster than their parents or adult counterparts and to understand how to navigate the American systems. However, these insurgent adult-roles have created some concerns among immigrants. According to the Kaleidoscope (2003) and Bailey (2002), some youth are reported to take advantage of the situation and use this as an avenue to reject the traditions and practices of their parents and culture as a whole. This process has led to a feeling of disconnection and tension between immigrant parents and their youth. Due to culture and language limitations, most parents feel that they are not in control of their youngsters because they are unable to enforce standards and expectations. This pressure and conflict of cultures and expectations among immigrant adolescent youth, their parents, and communities has been associated with an increase in detrimental and unhealthy lifestyles among the youth. Compared