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"Who Are You?": Exploring Adolescent Girls' Process of Identification

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We used ethnographic methods to examine the ways that adolescent girls (n=9) defined and understood themselves as individuals and in relation to cultural identities. We utilized Cook-Sather's (2002, 2006, 2007) theory of translation to make sense of their identification as an unfixed process of negotiation by centering their voices and revelations. While the girls struggled to articulate cultural identities in relation to themselves, they had clear notions of those identities and the social expectations associated to them. They noted the ways cultural identities could be both empowering and constricting. Moreover, we found that they understood and discussed cultural identities in relation to themselves and others in ways that both resisted and maintained social categories.

Nous avons utilisé des méthodes ethnographiques afin d'examiner les différentes façons dont des adolescentes (n=9) se sont définies et comprises en tant qu'individus et par rapport à leurs identités culturelles. En positionnant leurs voix et leurs propos au centre de la recherche, nous avons utilisé la théorie de la traduction de Cook-Sather (2002, 2006, 2007) pour donner du sens à leur identification et mettre en évidence un processus non prédéterminé de négociation. Bien que les filles aient eu de la difficulté à exprimer les identités culturelles par rapport à elles-mêmes, elles avaient une idée très claire de ces identités et des attentes que la société avait pour elles. Elles ont indiqué les façons dont les identités culturelles pouvaient être émancipatoires et contraignantes à la fois. De plus, nous avons trouvé qu'elles comprenaient et discutaient les identités culturelles par rapport à elles-mêmes et aux autres en remettant en question les catégories sociales et les maintenant en même temps.

"Who are you?" This is the question we posed to the 14–18 year old girls who agreed to be coparticipants in a research project that had been a year in the making. Even in writing this first sentence we are already making decisions of categorization, which are central to the point of this article. Who we are has implications that clearly go beyond labels of identity to the expectations of cultural agreement

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associated with such labels, as well as our internalization of, or resistance to, those expectations. So, do we say teenagers or 14–18 year olds? Girls or women?[1] Or, do we avoid labels of gender and go with the more seemingly neutral "students"? They are in school and that is how we have come to know them, but is this an identity that is important to them? Or, one of many social labels thrust upon them? Indeed, a lot is given away with the label "coparticipant." Already the critical eye picks up not just the distinction between the "subject" of quantitative research and the "participant" of qualitative research, but even more so an attempt to lessen the uneven power relations associated with the researcher and the researched.

As part of a larger research project, we worked to understand the ways that our participants defined and understood themselves as embodied individuals and in relation to cultural identities. In other words, how did they answer the question of "who are you?" both when asked in open-ended ways and when explored in relation to broader, collective cultural identities? While we went into our research with the intention of investigating girls' experiences of their embodiment in the contexts of their physical education courses, the girls themselves pushed us to reconsider our narrow physical education frame to better understand them. Thus, in this article, we explicate our negotiation with the girls in exploring their understandings of themselves, each individually, in relationship to one another, in relationship with us, and with other students in their physical education classes. Most strikingly, the clear contextual boundaries, which we might have liked as researchers, such as, "who are you—in the context of physical education?", was nonsensical to them. Yet, by engaging in critical pedagogical practices within a physical education context, we were able to explore their identification processes with our participants.

We used the theoretical work of Cook-Sather (2002, 2006, 2007), particularly the concept of translation to examine their processes of identification by centering their voices and revelations, as well as to consider our own processes of reflection. In this way, we researched in relation to, and with, our participants. This meant that participants brought their entire "worlds," and identification processes, with them to physical education from family, media, church, friends, and so on, and all of the contexts of their lives. Most importantly, we attempted to place the girls, their voices, and their experiences at the center of our consideration of their identification process by utilizing critical pedagogical practices within the physical education context. We saw the research process as relational between participants and researchers. To explicate this relationship and the identification processes within it, we use Cook-Sather's concept of translation, which we make clear later in this article. We specifically explore the embodied identification processes of participants that transpired during focus group sessions within a physical education context. To consider these processes, we first discuss the ways concepts of cultural identity have been taken up in sociology of sport, physical education, and physical activity. We then consider the theoretical tools of Cook-Sather's concept of "translation" and how it best positions us to offer a critical analysis of our findings, particularly understanding identity and identification as processes, which are fluid and unfixed. Students' bodies and physical performance are continuously on public display and are central to the context of physical education. Therefore, physical education offers a rich site for students and educators to understand, and potentially deconstruct, constricting cultural identities, as well as for allowing space for students to explore their own embodied identification processes.

Cultural Identities

The concept of cultural identity can be linked to broad and over-arching understandings of place and belonging—imagined communities (to borrow from Anderson's (1983) notion of national identity), tied to nationality, ethnicity, social class, religion, sexuality, gender, age, and so on. Cultural identity can also be linked to more local group belonging—family, school affiliation, church groups, teams, gangs, friendship groups, and groups linked to activities and interests (e.g., sport, dance, games, etc.). As sport sociologist Ben Carrington (2007) argued, affixing the adjective "cultural" to the noun "identity" both indicates the social constructedness of such categorizations, and also the influential power of all forms of culture within that process. Yet, as Tinning (2004, p. 244) noted:

> Trying to make sense of the concepts of identity and self is a difficult process. The tensions that exist between "modernist" and "postmodernist" perspectives about identity are complex, yet a distillation of the theorizing behind these differences reveals that whereas a modernist perspective sees identity as emphasizing the individual and his/her accomplishments, a postmodernist perspective sees identity as "a process of becoming."

Most often, studies in the sociology of sport, physical education and physical activity have taken a more social constructionist approach, and focus on one or more aspects of identity as a "process of becoming." These researchers have examined cultural identities within the particular physical contexts considered, or the influence of these contexts on the identity. For example, researchers have focused on: gender in physical education (e.g., Fisette, 2011; Paechter, 2003); racial and ethnic identities[2] in sport (e.g., Harrison, Harrison, & Moore, 2002); racial/gender differences in jock identity (e.g., Miller, Farrell, Barnes, Melnick & Sabo, 2005); boys and masculine identities in physical education (e.g., Bramham, 2003; Hickey, 2008); girls' gender identities in traditionally gender appropriate sport or physical activities (e.g., Forsberg & Tebelius, 2011; Wellard, Pickard & Bailey, 2007); religion and masculinity in physical education (e.g., Farooq & Parker, 2009); and embodied identities related to antifat bias in physical education (e.g., O'Brien, Hunter & Banks, 2007). This research, as a whole, makes a strong case for the relationships between the contexts of physical education, sport and physical activity and understanding social identities. Particularly with the moving body, ideas about physical skill, and/or certain physical activities can be cornerstones to identity construction. Of course, these constructions are considered particular to the specific contexts being examined. However, as we noted, the participants in our study did not see the boundaries of context in a fragmented way. Thus, by centering on our participants' voices, we explored the processes of identification as they blurred the boundaries of the particular contexts of the girls' lives.

A number of research projects focus on perceptions of culturally conflicting identities, sometimes linked to traditional exclusions, or transitions, in physicality or physical contexts, for example: disability and athletic identities (e.g., Huang & Brittain, 2006); girls in traditionally masculine sport, or boys in traditionally feminine sport (e.g., Jeanes, 2011; Ratna, 2011; Schmalz & Kerstetter, 2006); migrants or immigrants in sport (e.g., Taylor & Doherty, 2005); and ethnic/racial

minorities in sport (e.g., Burdsey, 2008). Overall, this research demonstrates how these physical contexts can be sites of exclusion and/or resistance in the constructions of cultural identities. Not surprisingly, identities that are traditionally excluded in a context become highlighted within that framing. In our larger research project, this was an area of concern for the participants whose activist research, in a different stage of our research with them, responded to their concern over the barriers and inequalities young people face in relation to socially constructed identities (Fisette & Walton, in press).

Within research on the context of physical education, more specifically, identity has been considered in the ways that physical education curricula and teacher education programs may be serving to support cultural identities, which work to create boundaries and maintain inequality (e.g., Beckett, 2004; Brown & Evans, 2004; Dowling, 2008; Dowling & Karhus, 2011; Tinning, 2004; Ronholt, 2002; and Wrench & Garrett, 2012). This body of work exposes what has been termed the "hidden curriculum," whereby schools create contexts that teach far more than the content stated within official academic curricula (Bain, 1990). Hidden curricula are the ways educators, often without such intention, promote ideologies, such as race, gender, sexuality, disability[3], etc., which might serve to further inequalities and divisions that are disempowering for students. Without conscious attempts to understand and expose the hidden curriculum, such disempowering ideologies are supported and maintained rather than questioned and deconstructed. A number of scholars have addressed this and have recommended strategies on creating a more inclusive and equitable educational experience to empower students within and outside of educational contexts (Fisette, 2011, 2013; Fisette & Walton, in press; Azzarito, 2009; Brown, 2005; Lawson, 2005; Tinning, 2004).

Importantly, scholars have examined embodied identities within physical education contexts, interrogating the processes through which identities and the ideologies associated with them are understood and performed (e.g., Fisette, 2011; Azzarito, 2009; Azzarito & Katzew, 2010; Oliver & Lalik, 2001 & 2004). These studies make explicit the social construction and navigation of cultural identities. Most importantly for this present work, how one physically lives and enacts one's sense of self (i.e., embodied identity), clearly comes to the fore in the body-centered context of physical education. We argue that the practice of critical pedagogy within physical education must include careful considerations of the processes of embodied identity. Critical pedagogical practices have the potential to disrupt and expose the hidden curriculum and create a context instead that fosters opportunities for students to be empowered. Physical education contexts are places where particular bodies may be literally celebrated over others (e.g., muscular boys/thin girls over "unathletic" or "fat" bodies), as students grapple with their identity processes. Thus, our identities are not just who we think we are, but also how we are embodied in the world, enacting those identities. Physical education puts the body as central; a meaningful place, then, to explore embodied identification. In examining these processes we found Cook-Sather's (2002, 2006, 2007) work on "translation" allowed us to enter into the fluid slipstream of our participants' processes of embodied identification, by centering their voices and experiences. At the same time, the concept of translation allows a focus on the relational process between the participants and us, in a way that acknowledges the research process itself as part of the identification process of the participants and researchers. While

there has been considerable work using cultural studies frameworks to understand physical education and/or embodied identities, none has made use of Cook-Sather's theoretical conception of translation. Thus, our work brings a new lens through which to view the processes of identification within physical educational contexts. Thus, we now turn to our use and understanding of Cook-Sather's work.

Theoretical Grounding

Cook-Sather's (2002, 2006, 2007) development of the theoretical framework of translation within educational settings fits with a cultural studies understanding of the social construction of identities (e.g., Hall, 1996). Rather than the common usage of the concept "translate," meaning to render into one's own or another's language, Cook-Sather (2007) defined translation as "a never-finished process of change that enables something—a text, an experience, a lesson, a setting, a person or a group—to be newly accessible to comprehension and communication" (p. 830). In particular, then, we were interested in the ways our coparticipants transformed their identities within the contexts of mediated social norms and expectations, family life, school, friendships and experiences, as well as in their interactions with us, as we engaged them in critical pedagogical practices in physical education. While the students we worked with came from physical education classes, and we used critical pedagogy within our focus group sessions with them, the experiences and processes of identification, which they shared with us, came from all aspects of their lives. Not only were the participants translated in this process, we, the researchers, were as well. As the participants experienced translation, we also acted as translators of their experiences, and at the same time we were translated by our involvement with each other, with them and with this writing process. Importantly, these processes of translation do not have an end point. Some of the translation that we experienced as researchers did not occur until we engaged in the processes of translating our "data" into texts such as this manuscript. Further, translation will continue for us as we engage in our next research project. Translation, for us within this manuscript, went well beyond our short time in the field during data collection.

Significantly for this work, the use of "translation" exposed very clearly the "language and culture-based nature of the unfixed and ongoing processes of student experience that must be studied through similarly unfixed and ongoing processes of perception, interpretation, and representation" (Cook-Sather, 2007, p. 829). In particular, we were interested in the ways our participants identified themselves, as well as their perceptions of cultural identities and their meanings, and how they experienced the translation of their identities, all within their social and mediated contexts. The process of translation included the constant remaking and reestablishing of concepts that we used to name ideas, identities and roles. Thus, the use of "translation" was especially helpful because it was generative. Within translation, something of the former version was retained in the new version. This demonstrates the fluidity of who we are as individuals, and specifically for our focus, how we identify. For example, when thinking of translation in terms of something as complex as "race," because it is a cultural construct, any person's translation into understanding, even adopting, race as relevant to one's identity, still has part of the former identity in which race was not a significant concept (e.g., before the

child learns "race"—its meanings and performances). Race, then, as argued in race relations research (e.g., Roediger, 2008), is not what we look like or who we are, but what is translated through cultural expectations. Translation, therefore, is not just about change and transformation, but also about what is preserved or continued from former versions. This was pertinent for young women, in this case, who were only beginning to become their adult selves.

As a framework, translation allowed us a more in-depth and complex understanding of the research process as interpretation,

> attentive to language, lived experience, and representation, because the people and the experiences those people have are themselves neither fixed nor fixable – they are, rather, ever changing, like language and the contexts within which and the purposes for which it is used. (Cook-Sather, 2007, p. 831)

This was clearly demonstrated in the artificiality of this research project. We asked the girls questions, engaged them in critical pedagogy activities, and overall tried to create a context where they felt comfortable to engage with us. Yet, we were not just eliciting from them the "truth" or "reality" of their identities or mediated and embodied experiences. Nor was it possible for us to be "neutral" and unbiased—even when we worked to maintain an openness that allowed the girls' voices to be central to our project. Instead, their experiences of these things were actually translated through the process of engagement with us. Asking participants to engage in research with us was yet another experience through which their identities became translated (Fisette & Walton, in press). Our own identities were translated through our experiences with the participants, each other and in the engagement of analyzing data and reporting our findings. Our research process, therefore, included interpretation, production, apprehension and now representation. In this journey of experience, both of us, and the participants, were thus translated.

Methods

We used ethnographic methods to try and gain a deeper understanding of high school girls' negotiations of their embodied and mediated identities. The larger project from which this study came, involved three stages of research: first, establishing relationships with the participants, getting to know them, and exploring their senses of self through the use of critical pedagogical methods in physical education (e.g., body drawings, identity profiles, media image elicitations, etc.); second, engaging them in exploring issues and concerns they had related to physical education, physical activity, and their lives in general as students; and third, supporting their efforts to take action on an issue that they raised (Fisette & Walton, in press). This article is based on data collected in the first phase.

Setting and Participants

The site of this research was Medley High School (MHS),[4] located in the Midwest region of the United States, with an enrollment of 1,300 students. According to demographic labels and statistics on the state report card, students were 24.8% black (non-Hispanic), 4.7% Asian or Pacific-Islander, 1.6% Hispanic, 4.7% multiracial,

64.2% white (non-Hispanic), 17% economically disadvantaged, and 9.3% with disabilities. According to state academic standards, the school ranked as excellent, with a graduation rate of 98.6% and meeting all state indicators of academic achievement, testing well above the state average in all areas.

Participants in this study were divided into two focus groups: one from a required half-semester Survey of Physical Education class, typically taken in the first year of high school (9th grade) and one from an elective Dance class, which included only girls that semester. In this article we draw from the contributions of nine girls, who were present during the early focus group sessions in which we engaged in critical pedagogical activities within physical education and discussions related to identity. The Survey group included four students, three who were in their first semester of high school (Mia, Mango, and Lucy), and a senior who transferred to MHS that academic year (Chloe). The Dance group (Zebo, Misty, Tori, Janelle, and Allie) ranged from their sophomore to senior years of high school, between the ages 15–18. For the most part we collectively used data from both focus groups though we provide details of their specific contexts and interactions when it is relevant to the findings.

Permission to conduct the study was obtained by the principal and school board and through our university's Institutional Review Board. Parental, participant, and teacher signed informed consent was granted before the start of the study. Participants were assured anonymity, and self-selected their own pseudonyms. We created all other pseudonyms.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred during the fall 2010 semester, which began in August and ended in December. The first phase of the data collection process engaged participants in critical pedagogical tasks and activities that we developed to learn more about the girls' identities and experiences in physical education through their voices as well as informal discussions initiated by the girls. We attempted to create an educational context to authorize student perspectives, which meant "re-tuning our ears so that we [could] hear what they [said], and redirecting our actions in response to what we hear[d]" (Cook-Sather, 2002, p. 4).

Focus Group Interviews. Weekly focus group interviews ($N = 36$) started the third week of the semester, lasting 90 min. Initially, our goal was to establish a safe and comfortable environment for the participants to share their thoughts, feelings, and perspectives, and to engage participants in activities to generate discourse about their experiences in physical education. We facilitated critical pedagogical activities such as personal profiles, autobiographical writings, participation identification, picture identification, a body drawing exercise, and social identity profiles. These activities were based on the literature (Oliver, 1999; Oliver & Lalik, 2001) and previous studies conducted (Fisette, 2011, 2013; Fisette & Walton, in press). These activities are described in more detail as appropriate within our analysis. The girls engaged in conversations as they completed the activities. All focus groups were recorded and transcribed verbatim. We listened to their words within the context of their expression, which led us to ask scaffolding and probing questions to get the girls to articulate and to make meaning of their thoughts, feelings, and experiences at a deeper level.

Field Notes. We started taking descriptive field notes on the first day of the academic year. Our observations were unstructured and eventually primarily focused on the participants. We kept notes of class content, structure, social interactions, and critical incidents. Our notes were our impression of each classroom culture, often reflecting our own interests and biases as much as a recording of events. We observed every class period during the first two weeks, then twice a week for the remaining class sessions. Furthermore, our graduate assistant also observed these classes, also in an unstructured way focusing on our participants and critical incidents, once a week to gain insight on participants' behavior and performance on a day when we were not in the field. Our observations occurred in the physical education teachers' office, the locker room hallways, and during participation in their physical education classes. Our notes focused on the girls' interactions with their peers and teachers, participation in activities, and their verbal and nonverbal communication and body language. In focus group sessions, we often discussed what transpired in physical education class, which brought to light some of our inferences. Since we were immersed in the field, we were able to understand and engage in conversation when the girls shared events that happened on days that we were not at the school. We were familiar to, and with, all of the students in each of the classes, providing rich material for discussion about particular incidences.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

The data analysis process was conducted simultaneously with the data collection process, as we had to analyze and interpret the content from the observations and focus group sessions to plan subsequent sessions. Field notes were word-processed into narratives as quickly as possible. The transcriptions and field notes were coded using content analysis and the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), looking for common themes and unifying meanings, as well as critical incidents which created clarity or further complexity, or shifted the interactions of the focus groups. Initial analysis occurred after each day of data collection as we discussed the field notes we recorded, informal conversations with the physical education teachers, and key points that arose during the focus group sessions. Then we recorded our interpretations within the word-processed transcripts, tables, and researcher notes. Each week we met to discuss our interpretations and challenge one another on our analyses. We also used focus group sessions to clarify our understandings and meanings with the participants. Collectively, we had a total of 1,300 pages of transcription, 90 single-space pages of observer notes, and 63 participant artifacts. The multiple sources of data, conversations and discourse between us, to challenge and question one another's perspectives and interpretations, recordings in our researcher journals, member-checks throughout the research processes, and maintaining an audit trail ensured the trustworthiness of this research study.

Translating Cultural Identities

We asked the girls in varied open-ended ways the question of "who are you?," which garnered a myriad of responses often unrelated to traditional cultural identities. The girls used adjectives to describe themselves, such as athletic, creative,

fabulous, inspired, sensitive, passionate, honest, respectful, and smart. They also described things they liked to do, for example, help people, text, have fun, shop, laugh, dance, run, listen to music, and sleep. While these descriptions of themselves helped us to understand their values and what they saw as important or their perceived weaknesses, they were less helpful in getting us to understand how they experienced their cultural identities. Even though cultural identities were often a source of conversation, these were not labels the girls used to describe themselves.

Socially Constructed Identities

To get a clearer understanding of how the girls understood cultural identities more generally, and especially specific to themselves, we created activities to address these issues directly. One of the activities that we did with each focus group was a social identity profile. In this activity, we wanted to see the ways the girls understood themselves in relation to current and common cultural identities and how they made sense of these socially constructed categories. Thus, we provided commonly referenced social identities (adapted from an exercise in a social justice workshop with Pat Griffin in 2005). We asked the girls to identify themselves given these categories and then to create two pie charts to demonstrate the proportion of importance of each identity and then which identities they thought about the most. The point of this exercise was to create another context within which the girls could be self-reflexive about their own process of identification.

While the categories aligned with common cultural identities, they were also open to allow for self-definition (e.g., race/ethnicity, religion, gender, social class, sexuality, physical ability, and age without subcategories defining identity in each social category). Each participant discussed her stated identities and then explained her pie charts. Given that identity is such a complex concept, particularly social identity, participants indicated that describing themselves and articulating their identities was quite difficult—both when we had open ended activities and questions related to how they identified, and in this identity profile activity. As Mia noted in relation to the identity profile, "I thought it was hard. Thinking about it, because it's not something that you usually think about." This reveals that how we learn and integrate cultural identities may not be an open or conscious process, thus, the term "hidden curriculum"—which goes well beyond the classroom, where we learn potentially constricting ideologies such as race, class, gender, etc. Others said that they had been asked such questions or about "who they are," but sometimes felt that the adults in their lives did not listen to what they said or wanted to hear particular answers, rather than the girls' feelings or experiences from their own perspectives. According to Mango:

> My grandmother tries to find my true self [and] helps me to figure out the meaning of life. And it was kind of similar. [But,] I think she's trying to annoy me because, like, she tried to get - like, she feels like she's a psychologist - and she tries to get inside my brain. She thinks she knows everything because she watches Oprah. But, I'll tell you what I really feel, but she thinks something different. I told her everything that bothers me, and I told her, and she's like, "you didn't tell me any good things." And she's like, "tell me more." And I'm just like "uuuuhhh."

As Cook-Sather (2006) noted, "Perceiving meaning is not the same as producing it" (p. 9). In other words, the girls expressed that they felt expectations to make meaning of themselves in particular ways, but not in ways they themselves produced. Mango, and other participants, felt the tension between who will make meaning of their lives and how to translate that meaning into their lived experiences, or their lived experiences into meaning. This potentially created communication barriers, when, as in this instance, Mango's grandmother wanted to hear about Mango's "true self" and yet also wanted Mango's version of her true self to match the meaning that the grandmother had created for her—particularly for Mango to be more positive. As Cook-Sather (2007) argued of education more generally, but which also applies to the many contexts of power hierarchies that adolescent girls live within, "Many of the incidents students describe refer to imbalances in relationship (and thus power), interruption of an inclination, and violation of a right – including the inclination and right to engage productively in their work" (p. 834). In this case, there is an interruption in the work of their processes of identification or making meaning of themselves. Within translating their identities, the participants were often torn between conflicting meanings in terms of what they believed, saw, experienced and what was defined as "positive" or "negative" within the different value systems that they navigated, and their relative power within those contexts.

As researchers, this was something that concerned us as we recognized our positions of authority in coming from a university, being older, and having permission from the administration and support of the teachers, but also in our differentiated status as outsiders to the school. Meanwhile, we embodied and experienced our own cultural identities, which we did not share with the participants during the social identity profile exercise, nor did the participants ask. We elected not to do so, because we wanted the focus to be on the girls and their voices, particularly as they struggled to articulate their thoughts. However, this served to support differential power relations whereby we maintained privacy while asking the girls to share potentially sensitive information with us and with each other. At other times during the focus group sessions, we shared personal information and the girls sometimes asked questions. Certainly, the girls made their own assessments and reflections of the embodied identities that we presented in our physical forms. Our analysis of the data, after we left the field, revealed that there were certain areas where we were more comfortable pushing the girls to consider topics more deeply or to question their assumptions (e.g., gender norms) and others where we were not (e.g., religious beliefs).

Thus, our own personal and professional positions and identities impacted the findings in complex ways, which are impossible for us to fully know. As should be obvious, there can be no completely "neutral" researcher. We were women working with girls. We would likely be racially coded as "white" even if we never orally identified that way. We were middle-aged, college professors. And, as one of the participants described us, "athletic, fit-looking." Most especially, we presented ourselves as research partners, but did not "come out" to our participants as lesbian partners. We do not know the ways this decision, or any of our embodied identities, impacted our interactions with the girls and with each other. Just as objectivity is likely impossible to achieve in social research, so, too, is complete subjectivity. If we had chosen to also engage in the social identity profile with the girls, we might be wondering what would have happened had we left that space for them to

navigate. However, we were acutely aware of the complex processes of identification taking place, leading to careful field notes and extensive conversations with the coparticipants and between ourselves, producing rich "thick description" from which to draw our analysis (Geertz, 1973). Importantly, the processes of identity translation occurred not only in the moments of interactions with the girls and each other, but also as we interpreted our data, which included the participants and also ourselves. Much of research focuses only on what participants produce and not what researchers produce in the process of interaction with participants. In our analysis, we see this data as inseparable. Thus, the process of translation for us as researchers continued even after our semester spent at the high school with the girls in focus groups after school and in their physical education classes. Thus, in acknowledging these questions in writing our results, we make ourselves vulnerable to criticism as researchers. We also try not to misuse our authorial power to present our participants' processes of translation as if they are divorced from our own part in the research relationship and our own processes of translation.

One particularly interesting moment of translation occurred during the social identity profile activity, which involved resistance that shifted the course of the Dance class focus group. Misty said that social identities did not matter at all, and then further offered her own meaning of her identity, explaining:

> I don't believe any of the lists are important. They're just ways that people judge you and stereotype you. I believe that personality is 75% of what's important to me because it's what makes me who I am, not my race or where I come from, or what religion, blah, blah.
>
> Theresa: What does personality mean to you?
>
> Misty: Like how I treat people. How, like, I don't judge people by talking about them to people. Like being a good person instead of saying that, "oh because you're black you have a big butt." Or, "because you're white you have to be really skinny." I don't think that makes you who you are. I said talents for the other 25% because this quote or saying goes, "it's not about where you're from it's about where you're going and if you don't have any talent then you can't go, well you can, but you won't go far." So, like, what I can do with my artwork or like my pictures, that means a lot to me because it's going to tell me. . .
>
> Jen: And how did you come to this identity? I'm sure it was some sort of process for you.
>
> Misty: Well, after I was about five, I was taken away from my mother and I had to be by myself a lot and I developed talents by myself.

In expressing this, Misty became emotional which changed the tone of the discussion to become much more serious. Misty was not one to interrupt or to offer information without prompting and was often reserved with the appearance of emotional restraint. In some ways her conception of herself fits with other findings of purported "color-blindness" (Azzarito, 2009; Oliver and Lalik, 2004), but she goes further in directly questioning the stereotypes, which were brought up during the previous dance class ("skinny" whites and "big butts" for blacks). Indeed, she classified her racial category as "human." Moreover, her sharing of

this personal information had an impact on the group and on us. She eventually stopped coming to the focus group sessions, saying that she felt she did not have anything to contribute. Yet, her contributions had a significant impact on the group, eventually determining the direction of their action research. This demonstrated the collaborative nature of the group sessions as well as a collective collaboration over cultural identities. Collaboration complicated the notion that we are "self authoring" by highlighting the ways in which we always translate ourselves in relationship and context (Cook-Sather, 2006, p. 142).

Acting Colors and Intersecting Identities

In our first focus group session we did some short "get to know you" activities. For the Dance focus group, the activities were interwoven with running commentary of their class, school, and life in general. This banter continued throughout our time at the high school and brought up information that was difficult to get just by asking. Discussions about race as a cultural identity were most robust at these times. At the end of our first session with them, for example, the girls had this exchange as Tori reflected on her embodied identity as a dancer:

> Tori: So girls I get what you are talking about. So when I did my dance, and Zebo was there, and we came back to our locker, and she told me that they were looking at me because I was doing all these "black girl" moves, and that I wasn't allowed to be doing that. I was like "hey really? It's dancing and hip hop, get over it!" I was upset about it for a second and a minute. You know what? You are probably just jealous and that's all. They talk about us as if they are jealous.
>
> Janelle: Like you know, it's weird because I really generally view myself as a popular person but at the same time I am confident in being silly and everything and I am not really paying attention. But as soon as the silliness stops, then I start feeling a little self-conscious and then I start worrying about what people are thinking. Even though I tell myself like I know, I know, I know whatever they say does not matter and it's annoying. Because I get called the "white girl" because...
>
> Zebo, interrupting: [nodding vigorously in agreement] You are not white, "why are you calling me white?"
>
> Janelle: exactly, exactly. And I say, you can't act a color. I can be green. I can be black, purple. I cannot act in white. So therefore I don't act a color.

The girls were in constant negotiation, particularly in the dance class and in school as to what it means to be "white" and "black," as noted in Tori making "black girl" dance moves. Tori was one of three girls in the dance class who took dance seriously and danced outside of the school context. The other two girls fit with cultural racial stereotypes in the US in the type of dance they pursued (e.g., a "black" student on the Step team, a "white" student doing modern dance). Thus, Tori's dancing was questioned because it did not fit within dance stereotypes. "Within these sets of spaces, students discovered and considered various "pulls"

– ways that they defined and were defined by their relationships to people, places, ideas, and times" (Cook-Sather, 2006, p. 136). They worked to translate their own meanings, while at the same time being hyper-aware of the social expectations, and attempts by those in their lives to reinforce them. In this case, Tori's classmates tried to enforce, through their criticism of her, that she was physically moving in ways inappropriate for a "white girl." While all of our participants seemed to be in agreement that "race" does not mean anything, at the same time they expressed how they were constantly told that race did mean something—particularly if they were behaving in ways not conforming to "racial" expectations.

Furthermore, this was deeply intertwined with social class and economic wealth. While the demographics of the school were diverse in terms of race, they were less so in terms of social class. Misty noted that she was "human" in discussions of racial identity tied to the social identity profile noted above, explaining, "I hate it when people ask me my ethnicity." She further said, "I'm not in a class yet" because she was still dependent on the adults in her life. Notably, her class would be considered economically disadvantaged in the language of school demographics. Meanwhile, Janelle, who would be labeled with the broad brush of middle-class, claimed that social class meant nothing to her. Participants often focused on areas of cultural identity in which they felt they did not enjoy privilege, at the same time negating the influence of those identities in which they were privileged.

One of the ways some participants made sense of, and translated, the concept of race was to relate it to their religious beliefs. For example, Janelle argued:

> I feel like if God made me black, white, Asian and all together and put us all in one world, why does it matter? Like, because I tend to think I am so intelligent so, why would you do that if you wanted us to separate? Why would you do that if you wanted us to identify? Like he would have put us, like, here's the Asian world, here's the black world here's the white world, if he wanted it to be like that. And obviously he doesn't because he put us all here together so...

Thus, Janelle felt that if God intended racism and separation, he would have created our social contexts to reflect that. Religious beliefs and identities were important to most of the girls, but was an area that often went without discussion. For example, no one addressed the religious component to Janelle's assertion, though other girls affirmed the notions of acceptance and multiculturalism.

Furthermore, the ideas the girls expressed of race were complex, and the discussion of stereotypes in general took many forms, from Tori dating a "Mexican-American" and the comments that other students would make about him, such as stereotypes of migrant workers, to discussions of people with red hair and the belief that "gingers have no soul." One participant, Allie, expressed the pressure she felt from her peers based on ethnic stereotypes and the idea that you must put yourself into an ethnic identity.

> Zebo: But you're a really cute young Asian.
>
> Janelle: Everything that says, "check your race, check your race."
>
> Jen: Well I mean, even today how did it feel when Miss Flurry basically singled you out and said you're the one Asian in the class?

> Allie: In our school there is a thing where people think you have "Asian powers." I don't even know. Like, because they say, "Asians are smart," like it's a stereotype. It's nothing bad. Or like, if I do something that someone can't do, she's like, "because she's Asian so she can do it." Yeah.

Allie, who lives with only an older brother, mentioned many times the expectations that she would do well in school because of ethnic stereotypes, but did not express equal pressure to excel in physical endeavors like physical education and sport. Even though she claimed that her favorite hobby and activity was sleeping, and that she mostly did "nothing" at home, she did keep up on her schoolwork and was enrolled in advanced classes. In addition, "Asian" was used in an all-encompassing way. Though Allie's parents were Vietnamese, she spent at least a month in Vietnam every summer and is fluent in Vietnamese, she never identified as Vietnamese. Yet, she listened to Korean music and did not know any Korean, but had Korean American friends who were all included in the group referred to when Asian stereotypes were discussed. Meanwhile, the other participants would indicate that it was all the same to them, and this was not something that concerned them. As Allie noted above, the stereotype seemed to be "positive" and so was not considered a concern by the Dance focus group.

Gendered Ideals and Sexuality

Being female was central to how the girls translated their identities. One conversation focused on what an ideal woman was, stemming from the social identity profile activity. The girls offered conflicting notions of feminine ideals as curvy or thin or fit/muscular:

> Mango: My ideal, I would say, is Nicki Minaj. That's how, I think, many of the traits everyone would be, because she's, like, tall. She's got really big boobs, she got a big butt, and she got big thighs – you know, like really curvy.
>
> Lucy agreed, but added: Like, not really, but cheerleaders, they don't want to look like Nicki Minaj, they want to look like Taylor Swift, because it will be better. Because if you have, like, a big butt and like really curvy, it doesn't fit. But they want to look like Taylor Swift. If someone wants to be like a stripper or something they want to look like Nicki Minaj and not Taylor Swift.
>
> Mia: I know who I want to look like – Carmen Electra. She's all over, like, exercise videotapes and everything.

In other photo elicitation research, Azzarito (2009) and Oliver and Lalik (2004) also found that girls expressed particular ideals—especially the thin, white cheerleader, as represented here by Lucy's reference to Taylor Swift. The girls in our study seemed to offer a range of ideals, more similar to what Azzarito (2009) found in regards to masculine ideals for boys. Regardless of the feminine ideal each articulated, they all argued how unattainable any of these ideals were. However, the girls also felt that rather than change the ideals, people had to work to change if they were not happy with themselves. Mia offered, "I think they have to, like, make an effort to change instead of always thinking, like, oh I'm ugly, and stuff." Or, as Mango said, "You notice something big – if someone's really big and they

don't make an effort not to be big." Yet, when challenged, she then clarified that it was not about weight but about being healthy. Cook-Sather (2007) argued that, "translation provides a way of dealing with the necessarily ongoing nature of assuming, expecting, and listening by making them conceivable as more conscious, deliberate, and continually revised processes" (p. 860). Thus, when we discussed gender ideals we also used care at the same time to listen, challenge, question and offer as many diverse examples as we could. In other words, we worked to not assume that we understood what the girls meant, asking clarifying and sometimes challenging questions, pushing ourselves and the girls to be more conscious and deliberate. The participants challenged each other and us as well, thus opening the possibilities of questioning assumptions and creating more empowering notions of their own gender expectations.

Another critical activity we had the girls do was to draw their own bodies and then to draw an ideal female body. The girls talked about their bodies in objectified ways, noting their "big boobs" or "huge thighs" as Fisette (2011) found with middle school girls. Meanwhile, the girls also argued that girls and women should be comfortable with different bodies, as long as they were healthy. Yet, it was difficult for them to say what it meant to be healthy without reference to body weight. One participant, Mia, used the example from the *Tyra Banks Show*, saying that people should learn to "rock their ugly." The idea was to celebrate those things that made people feel uncomfortable about themselves and find beauty in their unique differences. As Jeanes (2011) noted, "Girls are more visible than ever before and they are able to present multiple identities which contest and challenge the restrictive, submissive, traditional version of girl but are still perceived to be acceptable" (p. 404). The girls indicated that how students are impacted by gender ideologies was something that should be addressed in physical education where body aesthetic differences and abilities are central to the focus of the public educational context.

At the same time, the girls noted limits to this acceptance. Some of the girls expressed the sentiment that "too much" muscle was not good for women, or men. One said that women could not wear a dress if they had muscular arms. Lucy talked about the show *Jersey Shore* in reference to GTL (gym, tan, laundry), saying none of their lifestyle choices were healthy (especially tanning, drinking, and smoking), even though they might look good. Moreover she noted of the men and women on the show:

> I mean, they go to the gym and they work out for, like, hours a day and they try so hard to be so muscular and it was gross. Like, they'd be like so buff, and like, you don't need to do all that just to call yourself "Situation." The situation is that you're going to the gym six hours a day. That's the situation. So you don't need to do all that just to look good.

One of the men on the show, who was quite muscular, references his well-defined abdominal muscles as "The Situation." Lucy, and the other girls, who agreed with her, felt that the actual "situation" was that he spent too much time working out, his body was too muscular, and he worried too much about the way he looked. Thus, gender was tied to embodiment related to physical activities and appearance.

The girls drew their understandings from their experiences and the media around them. As Azzarito (2009) explained, we live in "a world of images, a world

of bodily visibility through which cultural messages about the body are constantly produced and permeate individuals' lives, especially through popular culture and the mass media of fitness, health and sports" (p. 19). Sometimes the girls questioned or resisted the messages they received and sometimes they supported and maintained those social expectations. The girls often discussed and recognized their conflicts. As Mia reflected, "I think it's called you're a hypocrite because you say one thing but then you say another, even though you know you don't mean it, but you do mean it." Thus, they recognized competing ideals in their translation of their own identities. On the one hand, they wanted acceptance and freedom from judgment. At the same time, however, they struggled with the limits of that acceptance and freedom as they recognized themselves judging and evaluating others and themselves.

We also used another critical pedagogical tool, a picture identification activity, which elicited further discussion about gender identity. We had pictures of 85 girls participating in as wide a variety of physical activities and with as diverse bodies and identities as we could find, including team sport activities, physical education classes, dance, outdoor recreation, and individual physical activities. Interestingly, when participants were asked to identify images they felt represented them, they made selections based on their perceptions of the emotions and social atmosphere presented. None of the participants selected images with an indication that they physically resembled the people shown, or that they wanted to look like the characters in the images. For example, Mia selected one image, "because when I'm outside of school I only do things that I enjoy and I said that she looks happy. And I also do easy exercises that I have fun with." Or, as Mango said, "because outside of school when you don't have to worry about actually participating, I like to be with people and do activities with other people."

Yet, for the images where they debated how appropriate the activities were for girls, like wrestling or football, they focused on how the girls looked and how they might get hurt. They felt these activities were inappropriate for girls, even as they noted that activities they considered appropriate for girls, like cheerleading or gymnastics, were also dangerous. Thus, they clearly tied certain activities to gender. As Mango said of a girl wrestling, "If they feel like they want to be like a man let them go for it. But I think it's for boys but, you know." The girls challenged each other on these perceptions, but acknowledged that the social pressures of these beliefs were likely what kept certain activities, like dance, cheerleading, football and wrestling, mostly gender segregated. In these ways the girls themselves supported traditional gender constraints by separating out girls who did not conform as being "manly" or discouraging girls from taking physical risks.

At the same time, however, there were numerous incidents where the girls chaffed at gender expectations, which they experienced as limiting to them personally. As Kelly, Pomerantz, and Currie (2008) found in their work with identity production with "skater girls," our coparticipants recognized the unwritten rules they were either following or resisting and sometimes articulated both the need to conform as well as the need to resist. This was particularly true for the girls in the Survey course, which had a significant number of physically low skilled boys and very athletic girls.

Therefore, the Survey focus group discussed the boys in their class quite often. In particular, there were three boys who dominated a lot of the attention in the class.

While the physical education teacher did her best to minimize the disruptions they caused, they were significant social forces in the context of the class. The girls spent considerable time trying to figure them out and make meaning of their behavior. The nature of the boys' disruptions ranged from bullying by one student; a student with mental disabilities who would sometimes shut down and cry, and other times engage with clear joy; another student with emotional and mental disabilities who had violent outbursts, one time overturning a table; and in general off-task and defiant behaviors. There were no girls in the class who were disruptive in these ways and the boys' behavior often was understood by the participants in gendered ways, which fits with findings on the differences between boys' and girls' bullying and social interactions.

Issues of sexuality were also linked to gender identity expectations. The participants spoke of stereotypes of engaging in gender inappropriate activities (dance and cheerleading for boys, football and wrestling for girls) and how one's sexuality would be questioned. Janelle said that her sexuality was questioned just for associating with a very athletic girl.

Two of the girls in the dance class, who were not part of our focus group, identified as lesbians. One of these girls, Carmen, was the subject of considerable bullying during our observations, by her own "friend" group, as has been supported by other research on girls' bullying (e.g., Cillessen & Borch, 2008; Merten, 1997). The other girl, Lana, appeared to be admired by our participants and others in her class. Both girls who identified as lesbian dressed in what the girls described as "feminine" ways. The girls explained to us that Carmen would often hold hands with her girlfriend at school, but that her friend group rejected or bullied her because of their Christian religious beliefs. In this particular clique in the dance class, there was often a lot of "drama," in the language of the girls—including certain members being excluded, a suspension for fighting, and variable participation in the class, despite the fact that all of these girls were very close with the physical education instructor. Like the small group of boys in the Survey course, the actions of this group of girls dominated the class, so they were sometimes the focus of discussion among our participants. Based on our observations, our participants mostly appeared to try to avoid interactions with this group. So how much of Carmen's sexuality played into her treatment was difficult for us to understand since we engaged only informally with her and with her group of friends. Though we did directly ask the group of their bullying of Carmen, they never openly talked about her sexuality, and often laughed in response to our questions. The apparent popularity of this group, their power within the class setting, and the humor that they found in how they treated Carmen fits with research on girls' bullying (e.g., Cillessen & Borch, 2008; Merten, 1997).

The other self-identified lesbian in the class, however, seemed to engage comfortably with everyone in the class and was never the subject of bullying that we observed. She interacted regularly with the participants and they spoke favorably of her, especially finding amusement in the confusion that she caused when she informed people, boys especially, of her sexuality. We questioned the girls about this:

> Janelle: Like Lana, when she came to school, she told everybody. She was like, "I'm a lesbo, get over it."

Zebo: I know the first thing she said to Tyrell was so funny. Tyrell goes, "Hey girl." You know, cause he think he got game. And so she goes, "I don't... with..." [indicating that she does not have sex with boys, by making "humping" motions and pointing to his penis.] And she just looks at him, and he goes, "mmm." His face just dropped. But Lana, like, she's real cool.

Janelle: Lana's, like, one of the nicest people I know.

Theresa: So, one of the things we've talked about is gender appropriateness. Let's link this into the discussion about Lana for a little bit. Why would most people assume that she's not gay?

Misty: Because she's cute.

Zebo: Like, she's so outgoing.

Jen: She's cute in what way?

Janelle: Like, she, her appearance is cute. It's something that the typical guy would be attracted to. Plus that and the way she walks.

Tori: But like, Lana will dress like a girl, like a normal girl. So guys would assume she's straight.

Theresa: But what's a normal girl?

Janelle: I think it's just showin' a sign of femininity in the way you dress is dressing like a normal girl.

When we tried to go further into what "feminine" meant, an already scattered discussion broke down even further. The girls expressed highly mixed feelings and beliefs as they negotiated this discussion—both individually and collectively. They gave examples and then interrupted each other, and even sometimes themselves, to give contradictory examples (e.g., the girls' basketball team primarily wearing only sweats and shorts to school, and none were gay that they knew, even as they noted that Lana, a lesbian, dressed like a "normal" girl). Thus, ideologies of the link between gender performance and sexuality were strong in how they assessed their peers, even as they recognized contradictions. For example, they indicated that the girls on the basketball team wore sweat pants and shorts to school, using this as an example of girls wearing "boys' clothes" and possibly providing an indication to one's sexuality. Yet at the same time none of the girls on the basketball team were out as lesbians. So while they translated themselves and their identities, they also drew and redrew cultural boundaries around gendered notions of sexuality—even as they delighted in the blatant resistance to those boundaries. This came to the surface particularly with their relationship to, and negotiation of, Lana, who resisted not only in the way she clashed with stereotypes of how she "should" look and dress, but also in that she was not ashamed of who she was and was so outgoing.

Religion and Identity

Religion and religious beliefs were brought up quite regularly and provided one example of where the girls negotiated conflicting value systems and identities,

such as religion at home, the predominant philosophy of science at school, and the neo-liberal consumer culture in which they were embedded. In analyzing the transcripts and field notes, this was an area where we were least likely to question the girls, and most likely to listen to what they told us without evaluations. All questions related to this topic were directed toward clarifying meaning. The girls also rarely challenged each other in these discussions, with religion seemingly marked as "too personal" to challenge. We did not intentionally set about to not question the participants in this area, but it was clear in analyzing the data, on the whole, that not only did we not question the girls, we only brought up religion in relation to the social identity profile (mentioned above), which asked them to consider common social identities. Since we chose not to share our social identity profiles, we never shared our own religious beliefs with the participants. Further, religion was something about which the girls never asked us, or each other.

In this instance, we performed as typical researchers who most often do not disclose personal information about themselves, rather than coparticipants. In part, this was, no doubt, related to how the epistemological basis of religion—faith—contrasts with an evidence-based, scientific approach. Thus, even when religion as a social identity may get discussed within an educational context, the tenets of such a belief system, resting on faith, do not. While we sometimes challenged our participants' beliefs about ideologies of race, gender or sexuality using evidence and facts that we have accumulated in our lifetimes of education, it seemed less appropriate to question a belief system based on faith, whereby facts and evidence are not the basis of such philosophies. In this regard, there was a respect among the participants and between us not to proselytize our beliefs to each other.

If we are to be more critical of our role as coparticipants, we must also acknowledge that the lack of engagement about religion also clearly demonstrates a level of discomfort on our parts with our sexuality (gay) and religion (atheist and agnostic), which once we recognized it has prompted us to ask questions of ourselves and has translated us as researchers, through the process of elucidating here. Thus, our findings in these areas must be considered in light of this context. While we were "out" in all other contexts in our lives, the difficulty of gaining entrance to the research site, our attempts to create a "neutral" presentation of ourselves early on, so as to ensure that we had girls to agree to participate in our focus group sessions, and being new research partners all created uncertainty and insecurity on our parts. We have no way to know how our presentation of ourselves impacted the girls who chose to participate or our interactions with them. It has, however, translated our sense of ourselves as "out" and as honest researchers. Certainly, there is no doubt that participants likely withheld aspects of their "selves" as well. Our reflection of this in our data analysis pushes us to translate our researcher identities.

In negotiating their religious identity, some participants were explicit about how they did not accept all of the ideologies they felt were expected of that identity. For example, Chloe noted feeling torn between her Christian religious identity and her feelings of acceptance of differences in sexual orientation, particularly her understanding of homophobia as being part of a Christian identity. She had indicated that being Christian was the center of her identity. Homophobia in the school was apparent to us on a daily basis in the use of homophobic insults students used with each other. Thus, homophobia was a constant part of the physical education context, despite the efforts of the teachers to address it. Yet, Chloe said in regard to the constant use of "gay" in the hallways as a slur:

> By other people in the hallway, like, when you're gay, that's you. And, like, for Christianity it's, like, taught that homosexuality is a sin. So, like, I feel bad for people when, that's you, and that's you, and that shouldn't affect anybody else and so…
>
> Theresa: So do you ever struggle with your belief versus your religious, um-
>
> Chloe: Mm hmm [indicating yes]. Plus my family, they think it's gross. But I think, "That's you." And it doesn't bother me.

She puts forth the idea that being homosexual is not something a person chooses or not, it is just who a person is—the person's embodied identity. Thus, even though she felt her religion held homosexuality as a sin, she did not embrace that as part of her religious identity. Her religious identity reflects the hybridity of the conflicting ideological systems in which she operates on a day-to-day basis. The idea of not judging others by their identity went along with the general overarching sentiment of both groups that people should not be judged by labels of who they are, or that states of "being" such as being gay or Black or White, should not be the measure by which we understand each other. However, the girls had difficulty with this as well, and recognized how challenging it was not to judge people based on ideas and stereotypes of social categories. Of course, such identification processes are intertwined with each other as we found with regard to certain illustrations of gender and religious ideologies.

In one instance, the behavior of one of the boys' in the survey class was considered in light of potential cultural and religious differences. Mango noted feeling mad to be on the same team as him in class, saying,

> Because, to me, it feels like he thinks he's in control of everything. And, Lucy said that in his religion the men are, like, the head of everything. So to him, I'm a girl and he's a boy and so he should be more, like, in authority. I'm like, "no, you're not going to be in control of me," because I'm not going to do that. So that's a problem.

So even though she might be willing to say that girls should not do certain activities, like wrestling, she did not find it acceptable to be told what to do in physical education by a boy. She also noted another student in class who might have the same religious beliefs as this student, who did not act that way. Mango felt that the student was just controlling and bullying using religion as an excuse. Interestingly, since the girls did not know the boys' religious beliefs, as this is not something that was discussed in a formal way in class, these speculations of the girls could be tied to their own cultural biases.

Meanwhile, though, the girls felt that such differences should be topics of conversation and yet there was fear to discuss them and most people remained silent, rather than express concern or discomfort. Mia indicated that she would not say anything if she was uncomfortable with what went on with her team in class or what someone was doing in class. Thus, while the girls spent considerable time trying to work out what was going on, there was no space or time allowed in class for such issues to be addressed. The girls felt that this fostered stereotypes, hard

feelings and lack of participation. Their observations in this regard were tied to gendered norms in particular, but also, as noted, the ways they intertwined with religion and race.

Concluding Remarks

As university professors and researchers we often feel as if we have something to offer as educators whose role as experts is primarily to give information and instruct, rather than to listen, or to go out and collect "data" of which we are then authorities to make meaning. In this research project we were challenged to reexamine our roles, give primacy to listening, and to rethink what it means to learn, as well as what it means to be. Cook-Sather (2007) observed that, "one's self along with one's words must be translated if one wishes actually to engage with the unfamiliar rather than simply redefine it according to the givens of one's own outlook" (p. 831). It would have been a fairly straightforward and simple matter to collect information from the girls, particularly keeping them strictly focused on physical education, and then represent our understanding of that material back to readers, making us primary authors of that interpretation. Instead, we have challenged ourselves to engage actively with our own perspectives and roles. In particular for this article, this meant using critical pedagogical practices in physical education to examine identity translation and the process by which personal and cultural identities were not simply reported in the research process, either by the participants or by us here, but instead as an unfixed process of negotiation. Most importantly, this meant following the girls into their stated areas of meaning, which came from all aspects of their lived and mediated lives.

While the girls struggled to articulate cultural identities in relation to themselves, when we asked them explicitly to identify with fixed social categories, they had clear notions of those identities and the social expectations associated to them. Yet, they were less certain of their own subjective experiences of cultural identities, even as they discussed the ways cultural identities could be both empowering and constricting for individuals. Moreover, as we engaged in critical pedagogical methods during the focus group sessions, we found that they understood and discussed cultural identities in relation to themselves and others in ways that both resisted and maintained social categories. As other researchers have found, this meant that the girls sometimes supported cultural identities for themselves individually, and for others more generally; yet, at other times they rejected cultural identities that they found unfairly constricting for themselves or others (e.g., Allen, 2008; Azzarito, 2009; Azzarito, Solmon, & Harrison, 2006; Cammerota & Fine, 2008; Oliver & Lalik, 2001 & 2004).

The girls were highly aware of the many layers of unwritten rules of being girls as well as how they related to expectations of race/ethnicity, sexuality, social class, being students, as physical movers, and as participants in their various social units (e.g., friends, teams, family, church, community). Addressing this process of translation, through the use of critical pedagogy as part of the physical education curriculum, allowed the girls space to consider, expose, and address the hidden curriculum (Bain, 1990) often promoted unintentionally in schools, but which they

experienced to various degrees across the different areas of their lives. This put the girls as central to their own educational process, which led to their eventually taking action on areas of social concern to them (Fisette & Walton, in press, 2013).

We felt it important to question and challenge participants' beliefs and ideas, particularly those that could be potentially limiting or damaging to them, where we had evidenced based knowledge to share with them. Yet, we did not want the girls to again feel that they were being told what to think, feel and experience. This was a difficult line at times to maintain, as these were potentially important moments of translation. Accordingly, Cook-Sather (2007) cautioned against normalization, warning researchers

> against letting established terms go untranslated. Normalization is about fixing, freezing, and imposing ways of meaning and ways of being on others. An insistence on ongoing translation has the potential to unfix and release students and those with whom they work into more meaningful and livable – and life-affirming – understanding and practices. (pp. 837-838)

So, we worked to engage the girls in translation even as we were trying to understand their ongoing processes of translating identities in their day-to-day lives. In the same vein of collaboration, the girls took over the leadership of the focus group sessions as we moved from discussion to action (Fisette & Walton, in press, 2013). This attempt to be part of the process of translation, rather than authorities, was sometimes difficult for us as researchers because so much of the outcome was out of our control. We sometimes worried that the girls took on too much in their activist research projects or at other times that they could do more. We worried that they did not question social norms enough, and at other times marveled at their sophistication. It is difficult to be part of a fluid process of translation, while also under pressure to produce "good" data. We sometimes coparticipated better than other times, which was a major part of our translation process in our role as researchers.

Yet, by approaching identity translation in multiple, different ways and across the course of the semester, we came to see particular patterns of translation, as well as the unpredictable and somewhat chaotic direction of two groups of adolescent girls. Cook-Sather (2007) argued that:

> Any interpretation of identity must be informed by multiple sources and undertaken from various angles. The numerous dimensions of diversity that go into composing an identity are a manifestation of the multifaceted nature of being a socio-cultural entity, and while all must be taken into account when rendering an interpretation and representation, what [this work] highlights is the importance of the generally missing dimension: the perspective and experience of the young person claiming or being labeled with a particular identity. (p. 840)

Thus, our willingness to be trusting and vulnerable to the sometimes erratic directions of the girls, as we created a student-centered physical education context, allowed the girls space and opportunity to voice their understandings of identities and their processes of navigating them, placing their voices and experience as central to our research. We then were privy to their complex processes of translating their identities as they navigated social expectations from family, peers, and the mediated social context of their lives. Their sense of themselves was further translated

through their interactions with us, within the first stage of the research project described here, and in the subsequent stages when they identified issues important to them and then took action on those issues (Fisette & Walton, in press, 2013).

Our findings have important implications for all levels of education more generally, but physical education and youth sport more specifically where embodied identities play out in public ways in the gymnasium and on the playing fields. Physical education could be a potentially rich site to allow students space to explore and discuss their embodied identification processes. However, educators must themselves first confront their own biases and identities, to be able to facilitate contexts that are more open and inclusive. While teachers and coaches may often not reflect on their own identities and identification processes, they run the risk of creating contexts that promote hidden curricula, supporting ideologies which can be damaging and constricting, creating and maintaining systems of inequality (e.g., Dowling, 2008; O'Brien, Hunter, & Banks, 2007; Tinning, 2004; Wrench & Garrett, 2012). Moreover, educators may reward or punish students based on their own internalized ideals of "good" behavior, without understanding or knowing the experiences, beliefs and identities of their students, which may further alienate "bad" students (Fisette, 2011). Without listening to students, physical education teachers might misinterpret student behavior as disobedient, when it might instead relate to a context that marginalizes that student (e.g., a fearful student who cannot keep up in a fitness test and instead decides to not participate, appearing defiant). Understanding identity processes as fluid and ongoing cultural constructions allows teachers and students a way to put into practice knowledge creation contexts that move away from the constrictions of fixed identity labels, which is more in keeping with the complex ways in which we "are" embodied in the world. Toward this end, researchers and teacher educators should continue to explore processes of identification to understand those processes and to create critical pedagogical practices within physical education for students to be able to learn about themselves and, even to question potentially constricting social identities.

Notes

1. While recognizing that any labels that we used, such as "girls," have particular meanings and connotations, which are the focus of this article, we have used these labels for the sake of lucidity. We followed APA format, which labels girls as females who are younger than 18 years, with young women also acceptable during the transition stage in the few years before 18. Our participants did not agree on a label among themselves with most using girl, some using young lady, and only one using woman.

2. We understand both "race" and "ethnicity" as culturally constructed and negotiated ideologies (e.g., Hall, 1996; Roediger, 2008). Thus, we use them interchangeably within this manuscript, explicating any important nuances in intended meanings used by participants (e.g., when "race" is used to indicate differences in skin color).

3. Each of these ideologies are socially constructed notions which are often believed to have a biological basis. For example, historically "race" has been understood to relate to biological differences, while "ethnicity" connotes cultural differences. A majority of recent scholarship in sociology as well as in biological sciences brings into question the biological reality of racial, sex, sexuality, obesity, disability, etc., categories, understanding them to be much more complex, fluid, and less clear cut than previously understood (e.g., Carlisle Duncan, 2001; Knoppers & McDonald, 2010; Murray, 2008; Smaje, 1997; St. Louis, 2003). Most significantly, the mean-

ings associated to any of these ideologies are culturally constructed, maintained and sometimes resisted. This is the vein in which we use and understand these concepts. Thus, we do not try to maintain artificial distinctions over that which is culturally constructed and that which is rooted in biology.

4. To protect anonymity, and in keeping with our Institutional Review Board approval, we used pseudonyms for the school, administrators, teachers and students.

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