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'Singled out because of skin color ... ': exploring ethnic minority female teachers' embodiment in physical education

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ABSTRACT

There is a significant lack of diversity within the teaching population nationwide that reflects historical, political, and institutional racialized inequality. In the context of physical education, ethnic minority teachers often report feeling 'different,' marginalized, and struggle to negotiate the dominant school culture they feel they do not belong to. *Purpose:* To explore how race and gender intersect in the lived experiences of ethnic minority female PE teachers in predominantly white schools in the United States. *Methods:* This study used narrative and visual research methods. *Results:* Participants often felt isolated and uncomfortable in their educational contexts, actively seeking out other ethnic minorities to make meaningful connections and validate their lived experiences. *Discussion:* The intersection of race and gender in participants' embodied identities reflects sexist and racist systems in which white privilege is positioned as normal or universal. PE and PE teacher education programs must actively work to disrupt and destabilize these norms.

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Introduction

Current trends indicate that ethnic minority student populations in the United States are rapidly expanding but teacher populations are not (Columna, Foley, & Lytle, 2010; Culp, Chepyator-Thomson, & Hsu, 2009; Hodge & Stroot, 1997). Ethnic minority students now comprise 35% of the United States' student population and are expected to be over 50% by 2050 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Teacher populations in education and physical education (PE) continue to be homogenous, as white, middle-class females make up the vast majority of today's teaching force (Harrison, Carson, & Burden, 2010; NCES, 2015). Flintoff (2015) suggests that most pre-service PE teachers are 'young, able-bodied, ... and white, characteristics that ... are remarkable for their similarities across different (Western) countries' (p. 205). For example, both Canada's and the United Kingdom's PE programs are also homogenous in population (Douglas & Halas, 2013; Flintoff, 2014).

It is important to consider these figures further to understand how, within PE, whiteness is normalized and ethnic minorities are marginalized. PE and Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) should be examined in order to identify how teacher populations can diversify and become culturally responsive to create a space where all members are included (Harrison & Belcher, 2006). Additionally, PE has traditionally prioritized a culture of masculinity, which often risks disengaging female community members (Azzarito, Solmon, & Harrison, 2006). Examining how race and gender intersect within an individual's embodied experience can provide significant insights into the ways in which social identities take shape in complex and fluid ways (Flintoff, 2014). In this case, we are interested in how race and gender are interwoven into ethnic minority female PE teachers' everyday lives and

teaching identities in the United States. Therefore, this study aims to address the following research questions:

- (1) What are the embodied experiences of ethnic minority female PE teachers who teach in predominantly white school contexts?
- (2) How does whiteness play a role in shaping ethnic minority teachers' embodied identities in predominantly white school contexts?

Theoretical resources

In this qualitative study, the researchers used feminist poststructuralism, Critical Race Theory (CRT), and intersectionality as theoretical resources in order to understand how the social construction of race and gender influences ethnic minority female teachers' embodiment. Feminist poststructuralism is a useful perspective from which to examine teachers' construction of meaning-making as specified by cultural discourses of femininity (Weedon, 1997). This is because feminist poststructuralism validates women's experiences at the individual level while linking them to broader social issues of inequality (Munro, 1998). Additionally, feminist poststructuralism recognizes that when women's experiences do not reflect dominant hegemonic discourses of patriarchal power, they are often discredited and ignored (Weedon, 1997). Another important element is conscious-raising, as this provides a platform for women to recognize that the inequality of their status is not an individual problem but rather one that is a product of dominant discourses that maintain traditional gender norms and rules (Nicholson, 1990; Weedon, 1997).

Teachers' embodied identities are not only gendered, but racialized, (dis)abled, and classed (among others) through cultural, institutional, and material experiences that inform teaching practices and bodily behaviors (Webb & Quennerstedt, 2010). As such, notions of intersectionality offer a theoretical perspective on identity construction and how distinctive social power relations mutually construct each other (Bowleg, 2008, p. 313; Valentine, 2007). This perspective provides a reference from which to examine how multiple social categories intersect at the 'micro-level of individual experience' and, in doing so, reflect 'multiple interlocking systems of privilege and oppression at the macro, social-structural level' (Bowleg, 2012, p. 1267). Intersectionality is an appropriate perspective to examine the lived experiences of those who represent more than one historically oppressed population since 'individuals differentially negotiate multiple and complex layers of identity' (Dagkas, 2016, p. 227).

Intersectionality is a valuable component of CRT as we seek to understand how racialized lived experiences are 'shaped by processes that reflect ... other dimensions of identity and social structure' (Gillborn, 2015, p. 278). A CRT perspective argues that racism is enmeshed within modern society to the point where it is normalized, resulting in a lack of access to various political, economic, and educational systems (Gillborn, 2006; Rogers & Mosley, 2006). CRT provides a useful framework to identify and destabilize racial inequality by acknowledging the ways in which marginalized populations 'challenge and disrupt normative narratives of the dominant group' through resistance techniques such as counter-storytelling (Hylton, 2005; Rollock, 2012, p. 72).

The application of CRT within education has evolved into a significant body of work on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), which centers 'the experiential knowledge of [ethnic minorities] as a means of better combating race inequality in education' (Gillborn, Rollock, Vincent, & Ball, 2012, p. 125). From this perspective, whiteness operates in powerful ways through the norms and practices of educational institutions as mostly invisible positions of 'objectivity' or 'color-blindness' that serve to 'other' ethnic minority experiences (Douglas & Halas, 2013; Hylton, 2005, p. 85). This reinforces deeply-rooted racial prejudices that continue to be reproduced through tacit compliance of educational policy and school environments (Azzarito, 2009; Gillborn, 2005, 2006).

Drawing from CRT and feminist poststructuralism, the intersectionality of race and gender has a complex influence on embodiments and practices that lead to the marginalization of females and/or ethnic minorities (Douglas & Halas, 2013; Rollock, 2007). The act of becoming a teacher and acculturating oneself to a school environment is a complex process often influenced by deeply-rooted socio-cultural beliefs (O'Bryant, O'Sullivan, & Raudensky, 2000). As such, examining dominant ideologies of gender and race becomes vital to understanding the fluidity and interconnectedness of a teacher's identity. This is especially important considering that to date, there is very little research on the ways in which the intersection of race and gender impact teachers' identities, specifically ethnic minority female PE teachers.

Literature review

The vast majority of teachers in the United States are white, middle-class, and female (Ladson-Billings, 2001). The lack of ethnic minority teachers in schools is problematic when considered alongside the prevalence of a Eurocentric curriculum which "other[s] the idea of ethnicity" (Gillborn, 2005; p. 487; Ladson-Billings, 2011). Ethnic minority teachers may experience racial discrimination in predominantly white schools, or schools in which the student, teacher, and administrator population is at least 75% white, and this can have a negative impact on their teaching experiences (Pajares, 1992). For example, ethnic minority PE faculty who work in predominantly white institutions often report feeling marginalized and struggle to negotiate the dominant school culture they feel they do not belong (Hodge & Wiggins, 2010). Given that enduring racism is highly stressful and requires a range of coping mechanisms for teachers, it is vital for school community dynamics to reflect ethnic cultural knowledge in order to be inclusive for all community members (Flory & McCaughy, 2011; Gay, 2010).

PE and PETE programs typically facilitate a color-blind approach as issues of racialized inequality are ignored within schools, thus reproducing 'white privilege pedagogy' through the representation of white experiences as 'universal' (Flintoff, Dowling, & Fitzgerald, 2014; Levine-Rasky, 2000). Representing ethnic minority teachers in schools is important because these teachers often have 'experiences and knowledge that allow them to act as cultural translators and understand cultural codes' (Harrison et al., 2010, p. 187). However, the cultural capital, or forms of cultural knowledge that ethnic minority teachers possess, often lacks similar 'status and legitimacy within formally sanctioned spaces' as compared to white social and cultural capital (Rollock, 2007, p. 67, 2012).

While limited in number, there have been a few research studies that identify the intersected ways in which PE and PETE are both racialized and gendered (Flintoff, 2014; 2015). Flintoff (2015) explored how ethnic minority PETE students struggled to find a place they felt accepted within their predominantly white teacher-training programs. Flintoff (2014) examined the personal narratives of ethnic minority female PETE students, demonstrating how professional identities are inextricably linked to personal ones through social constructs such as race and gender. These studies revealed how social discourses informed students' understanding of their identity and demonstrate the vital importance of continued work on disrupting both color-blindness and gendered norms of masculinity that pervade PE and PETE programs.

At the intersection of racial inequality, the power negotiations inherent in the social construction of gender warrant discussion in order to understand how female teachers experience and negotiate inequality issues institutionalized in schools. Pascoe (2011) writes that 'schools play a part in structuring ... selves through the setting up of institutional gender orders ... including relations of power' (p. 18). The ways in which female teachers construct their identities and negotiate power relations within their educational communities relate to pervasive societal rhetoric regarding femininity, whiteness, and women's role as educators, which is particularly relevant in school PE. Munro (1998) writes:

To be a woman is to lack authority, knowledge, and power. To be a teacher is to have authority, knowledge, and power. Thus, to be a woman teacher is to ... attempt to understand how women negotiate a self within and against cultural norms and expectations.

Since PE is a space where masculinity is prioritized, it is important to give attention to the experiences of female teachers in order to both destabilize discourses of masculinity that marginalize female experiences and reconstruct notions of femininity within PE in order to empower female community members (Azzarito et al., 2006).

While much of the critical research in PE has focused on 'single issues', there is a growing awareness that 'identity is best seen as a dynamic, embodied, and relational process, only meaningful when contextualized alongside gender, sexuality, class, and age' (Flintoff, 2014, p. 351). Identity formation can be defined as the continuing process of negotiating social and cultural contexts as determined by past experiences and biographies' (Sirna, Tinning, & Rossi, 2010). Flintoff, Fitzgerald, and Scraton (2008) write that examining the 'differentiated and heterogeneous lived experiences of women' highlights the complex and fluid nature of identities (p. 76). The intersection of race and gender connects within the notion of identity, impacting teachers' embodied experiences in school.

In order to acknowledge that social identities are 'mutually constitutive,' multiple, and fluid (versus fixed or static), research in PE could remove the additive notion of constructing a plurality of social identities (e.g. Ethnic Minority + Female + ...) that is often found in scholarship on the topic (Bowleg, 2008, p. 312). An additive approach to social identity research positions social factors as ranked in order, separable, and represents some as more salient than others (Bowleg, 2008, 2012; Valentine, 2007). This perspective can be problematic because single analytic categories have 'limited explanatory power' and do not provide a lens for interpreting the intersectionality of social categories (Bowleg, 2012, p. 1271). In other words, the wide range of experiences influenced by macro-level social inequity (racism, sexism, heterosexism, etc.) mean that examining an individual's narrative from an additive approach would ignore the interactions between these large-scale systems of discrimination and prejudice (Bowleg, 2008).

If an educator's lived experiences and personal values are intertwined with his or her teaching practices, curricular decisions, and experiences of teaching, then there is no doubt that racial and gendered identities play a major role in a teacher's narrative. Exploring how intersectionality informs ethnic minority female PE teachers' identities could enhance our understanding of how social inequalities impact embodied experience (Hylton, 2005; 2009). When the experiences of ethnic minority female PE teachers who work in predominantly white contexts are recognized and legitimated, this perspective challenges essentialized and homogenized discourses that 'construct ... difference as 'deficit' or 'other'' (Flintoff, 2014, p. 350) and shows how race and gender are interwoven in individuals' embodied, everyday experiences and lives' (Bowleg, 2008).

Methods

To address the research questions, this study employed a narrative methodology with the integration of photo elicitation to gain insight into how ethnic minority female PE teachers embodied and negotiated power relations in predominantly white school contexts in the United States. Narrative research is characterized by exploring the life of an individual through their tales of subjective, lived experience while allowing for the examination of the ways in which power relations and discursive practices can work to shape our identities (Creswell, 2013; Munro, 1998). The researcher and participants collaborate in honoring the 'interconnected, nested stories in which we live' (p. 22) as important sources of knowledge (Clandinin, 2013). Narrative research is useful for this study because it provides a space for participants to engage in meaningful acts of storytelling, which have the potential to challenge existing norms, include those who may be marginalized, and provide counternarratives to discourses of racialized exclusion (Farmer-Hinton, Lewis, Patton, & Rivers, 2013).

This qualitative narrative research also includes the integration of a visual approach as a way to enhance the depth and scope of collected stories and to help illuminate new understandings and

embodied knowledge (Weber, 2008). By recognizing participants as active agents within their social worlds rather than passive objects to be researched, image-based research can facilitate a greater understanding of the complexities of social reality (Weber, 2008). Visual inquiry is useful for this research study to examine the lived experiences of a specific group of people as this methodology provides a unique avenue for a deeper understanding of a person's cultural and social meanings (Harrison, 2002). The visual representations each participant shared afforded deeper, more nuanced understandings of their worlds, and provided the researcher with an 'inside' look into each teacher's lived narrative. Hill and Azzarito (2012) describe how visual images can function in creating dialogue where the researcher enters the participant's world since visual research methods offer space for reflection and allow participants to take time to produce thoughtful data (Gauntlett & Holzwarth, 2006; Prosser, 2007). Additionally, photo elicitation as a methodology triggers and centers participants' experiences and views that enable them to make sense of and more fully represent their identities (Packard, 2008).

There is a significant link between narrative inquiry and visual methodology, as both focus on storytelling. Van House et al. (2004) demonstrated the importance of visual images in documenting individuals' social construction of identity and how personal photos served to 'share, and deepen social experience[s] and relationship[s]' (p. 11). The researcher and participants engaged in conversations about these photos to co-create new knowledge and enacted a dialogical relationship where the researcher was able to 'see' the participants' lives in new ways (Van House et al., 2004). Visual narrative inquiry facilitates broad, multifaceted understandings of identity construction and serves as a tool to help both the researcher and participant co-construct new meanings of their lived experiences, thus providing a means of enacting more nuanced understandings of embodied experiences (Prosser & Burke, 2008).

Research setting and participants

Participants in this IRB-approved study were three ethnic minority females who were employed in predominantly white schools in an urban metropolis in the United States. Each of the schools was at least 75% white in student, teacher, and administrator populations, and privately run. Tuition at each school is comparable to college tuition costs, meaning that the schools attract a population of high socioeconomic status students. Participants were located via snowball sampling where the primary researcher asked colleagues and professional contacts if they knew anyone who met the participant criteria. For this study, the participant criteria included: (1) participants' teaching experience in a predominantly white school for at least five years; (2) participants self-identified as ethnic minority female; (3) participants' ages ranged from 28 to 39 years old.

Natacha, Sasha, and Cezelia (pseudonyms) were the participants of this visual narrative study. Natacha is 28 years old and the daughter of working-class Haitian immigrants. She works as a PE teacher in the city where she has lived all her life. Natacha's educative experiences vary, from the large ethnically-diverse public schools she both attended and worked at previously, to the small predominantly white private school where she currently works. Sasha is 39 years old and has taught for 11 years in a wide variety of educational contexts, including urban, rural, private, and public. Sasha described her family as middle class and identifies as a 'true' black American since her family's heritage includes both southern and indigenous roots that extend back for many generations. Cezelia is 35 years old, a highly skilled basketball player turned PE teacher and coach of 10 years, and identifies as black. She is originally from the southern United States and describes her family background as middle-class.

Data collection

Data was collected through three in-depth conversational interviews with each participant (Creswell, 2013). The first interview protocol was designed to gather information into participants' prior

experiences and philosophical views on teaching. Before the second interview, the primary researcher asked each participant to create a visual representation of their identity as PE teachers through any means they wished (photographs, videos, artwork, etc.). The second interview used photo elicitation to trigger participants' meaning-making of their teacher identity. Photo elicitation is a useful research technique to probe participants' identity narratives (Pink, 2013; Prosser & Burke, 2008). The inclusion of visual imagery in the interview meant that the viewing and discussion of a photograph became a 'dynamic process' where 'meanings are actively constructed' (Schwartz, 1989, p. 120). The primary researcher conducted a third interview with each participant to offer an opportunity for the participant to respond to the researcher's initial interpretation of the data and to provide additional insights.

Data analysis

The primary researcher organized, and analyzed the data using both inductive and deductive analysis methods (Creswell, 2013). The basis for the inductive analysis was Creswell's (2013) suggested method of organizing, reading, and coding the data, then interpreting and presenting the data, thereby 'building patterns, categories, and themes from the 'bottom up'' (p. 45). We first read the raw data from multiple information sources several times and highlighted statements that provided an understanding of how participants made sense of their lived experience. Next, we developed 'clusters of meaning' from these significant statements that emerged as codes, which helped to classify and interpret the meanings that underpin the stories (Creswell, 2013, p. 82). From these codes, we developed broad themes, or 'units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea' (Creswell, 2013, p. 186).

The deductive content analysis aimed to understand how the elements from the findings refer to the wider cultural context of which they are a part (Rose, 2012). We analyzed data collected from the photos provided by the participants by looking for connections between the text, the image, and the sociocultural context (Krippendorf, 1980). The analysis of the photos took into consideration the image's context of production and the image's reception, or who/what was it created for (Kuhn, 2007). To enhance validity and ensure accuracy, the primary researcher's interpretation emerged from a meticulous deductive-inductive content analysis of all the data collected.

Results

In the following section, we present the three themes that emerged from the data analysis: (a) 'Girlie' and 'Tomboy': Embracing and resisting gender stereotypes (b) 'I thought I was the only one': Developing a racialized teaching identity (c) 'People like me': Creating cultural connections and a sense of belonging. The results of this study illustrate the interconnectedness among and between the multiple identities of ethnic minority female PE teachers in predominantly white contexts as participants both enacted and resisted discourses and stereotypes relating to gender and race (Figure 1).

'Girlie' and 'Tomboy': embracing and resisting gender stereotypes

Participants' construction of a gendered identity was complex and multiple, as they challenged gender stereotypes of femininity but also, at times, reinforced gendered norms. The teachers' enactment of fluid gendered identities demonstrates how discourses of gender reflect intricate socially-produced norms and practices that are not always clearly defined or as taken-for-granted as is commonly assumed (Butler, 2003). First, all three participants identified as highly skilled female athletes and participated in physical activities throughout their lives. For example, the images Sasha and Cezelia included showed them engaged in both sports (basketball) and physical activity (a handstand). Their love of physical activity meant they were often labeled as a 'tomboy' or 'unfeminine' (Sasha). In another example, Natacha reflected on her own PE experiences as a student, saying:



Figure 1. Sasha: 'This is how I like to look at myself.'

I remember a lot of girls caring about sweating, and I didn't care ... Other females might have been like, 'I don't want to sweat between classes' but I didn't think about that because I was so thinking about winning.

Cezelia spoke about how she abandoned her 'feminine' dance activities in favor of sports: 'I was in ballet for four years, and I begged my mom to stop ... and she said, 'Okay' ... And then I started playing softball and then basketball (Figure 2).

Sasha described herself growing up: 'I was a girl who was rough and tough and I was called tomboy and I was okay with it.

Second, while all three represented themselves as subverting traditional gender norms by engaging in physical activity, there were also moments where notions of femininity were enacted. The gender identity of the participants was fluid as each one maneuvered and negotiated a place for themselves in a (PE) space that is traditionally masculine (Azzarito et al., 2006). For example, in one interview, Sasha described how she wanted to play with the boys in her high school PE classes because the boys 'had skills and the girls didn't,' equating masculinity with high-skill sporting levels. However, in another interview, she self-identified as 'girlie' and as loving 'pink' and 'purses'. Natacha juxtaposed her adolescent sport participation with the fact that she was also on her high school dance team, thus engaging in a more traditionally 'feminine' physical activity. Cezelia

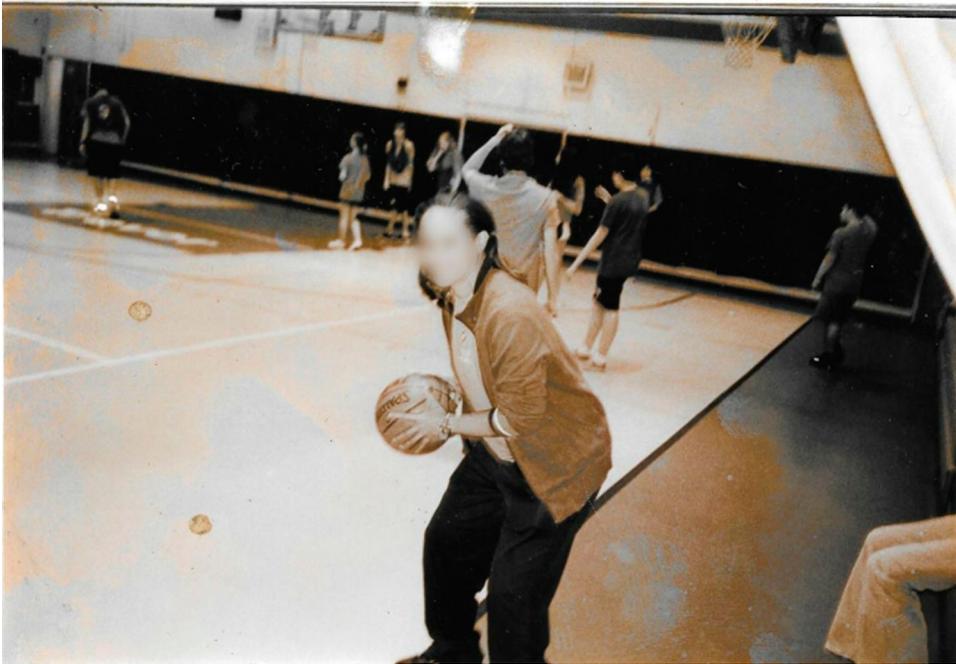


Figure 2. Cezelia: 'I always knew I wanted to be a PE teacher ... [I] find happiness in being active.'

mentioned that even though she was very much into playing basketball in high school, she was also chosen as one of her school's Homecoming Princesses, an American tradition where students vote their peers onto a 'court' for special recognition. Participants' rejection of conforming to gender norms supports the idea that when identities are acknowledged and legitimized as complex, and fluid, traditional discourses of masculinity and femininity in PE can be disrupted and the gender order destabilized (Azzarito et al., 2006).

When it came to reflecting on gender issues in teaching, participants were not universal in their thoughts or even consistent individually. For example, Sasha stated: 'I feel like people are being extremely sensitive about the whole gender thing. I personally am not.' This was in spite of the fact that she had previously talked at length about numerous gender equality issues, from her perspective as a PE student and PE teacher. Cezelia enacted a 'gender-blind' perspective in both her teaching practices and identity as a PE teacher, saying that she felt boys and girls were 'equal' in PE and that she earned 'equal respect' as a teacher. She also viewed gender biologically as the product of a person's physical and bodily properties, which resulted in natural differences between boys' and girls' participation in PE, saying:

Girls go through this puberty phase, where they won't want to sweat. So the participation from females lessens as opposed to the boys who will sweat in their street clothes.

Natacha took another approach to gender issues in her teaching and attempted to disrupt gender stereotypes by making typically female-dominated classes such as dance and yoga more appealing to male students. She shared some videos of her classes, specifically pointing out when there were male students participating, and expressed her enjoyment of teaching these classes to destabilize gender norms. The ways in which participants reflected on multiple notions of gender roles and stereotypes within their PE contexts demonstrated participants' understanding of gender as multi-faceted, and reflected their own embodied notions of what it means to be female in a masculine-driven environment such as PE.

Hickey and Fitzclarence (1999) write that individuals ‘legitimate and rationalize [their identities] through a cultural framework that supports dominant narratives’ (p. 56), which is a useful way of viewing the multiple embodiments of femininity that each participant enacted. Dominant narratives historically stem from those who hold power or legitimacy within societal and cultural norms (Munro, 1998; Nicholson, 1990). The three participants were all consciously aware of the ways in which they disrupted or enacted the dominant gender narratives as a means of negotiating specific power relations within their school contexts and everyday lives. The women in this study navigated discourses of gender in different ways, both breaking down stereotypes surrounding masculinity and gender norms in PE but also at times embracing discourses of feminine norms, as they struggled to reconcile the various and fluid aspects of their embodied identities.

‘I thought I was the only one’: A racialized teaching identity

For all participants, race was both at the forefront of their professional teaching identities and significant in their identity work as a minority in their school context. CRT argues that white experiences are privileged as normal while ethnic minority experiences are viewed as ‘other,’ and there were instances of this within the participants’ stories (Ladson-Billings, 2001). The participants all navigated complex paths of teacher socialization as they attempted to become fully participating members of their educational communities while learning the values, norms, and expected behaviors of a particular institution as part of a minority population (Hodge & Stroot, 1997; Lawson, 1986). All three participants were hyper-aware of the lack of ethnic minority members at the schools where they worked. All mentioned the lack of ethnic minority teachers, demonstrating the significant role that race played in their teacher socialization and identity formation. For example, Sasha showed photos with other ethnic minority students and teachers, saying these photos represented a more diverse school environment where she felt included.

In another example, Sasha stated that she felt her current school was ‘only for white kids’ and that she only felt connected to the other ethnic minority community members:

I think the [ethnic minority] parents definitely see me as a stable teacher in the community, a favorite, ... and now we have [an Administrator] who [is] African-American, I feel like I can go to her and talk about real issues.

Natacha was distressed to note that a black female PE teacher was ‘incredibly rare’. She felt this was problematic because white female PE teachers would not be able to connect to ethnic minority students in the same ways: ‘I feel like you have a different connection with someone when they look like you than you would if they didn’t look like you.’ Cezelia described her first teaching position at a predominantly white school in the South, noting the cultural disconnect and isolation she experienced, saying: ‘I found out I was the first black female coach there ... And my parents were like, you have to give it more than a year. So after the second year, I’m like, can I come home?’ In another example of isolation, she showed a photo of a basketball team she coached where every team member was white (Figure 3).

All three participants spoke about the ways in which micro-aggressions, or minute negative interactions, made them feel isolated and frustrated by the lack of diversity within their teaching contexts. For example, Cezelia explained how other (white) teachers would make unsupportive comments on her mentoring ethnic minority students by laughing and saying ‘Oh, you just want [to be her advisor] because she’s black,’ thus dismissing the connections ethnic minority teachers and students may develop through shared cultural capital. Natacha noted how she frequently felt ‘uncomfortable’ by racialized comments but that she didn’t even know who to report it to: ‘Who would I go to? If I say something, am I just being annoying or is this really something I should bring attention to?’ Racist micro-aggressions such as the examples above demonstrate the ways in which a racialized teaching identity played a significant role in their teaching experiences.

Burden, Harrison, and Hodge (2005) write that ethnic minority teachers’ experiences are often significantly ‘different and disconnected from those of the dominant culture,’ creating a ‘chilly climate’



Figure 3. Cezelia: 'I have not coached one African-American kid in the past year, in softball or basketball.'

of marginalization (p. 2). Both Natacha and Sasha used the exact same phrase regarding other ethnic minority female PE teachers: 'I thought I was the only one.' This references both feelings of isolation in being a minority population in their educational context but also wondering if other ethnic minority teachers were having similar experiences. Natacha stated: 'You start to think something's wrong with you or you're crazy ... I don't know if I can really relate to everybody around me.' She spoke of how she sometimes felt alone at her school in spite of receiving an 'excellence in teaching' award (Figure 4), which demonstrated her position as a well-respected teacher.

Cezelia noted how she was the only black teacher in her division and how she rarely supervised black students, as demonstrated in the photo of the basketball team she coached (Figure 3). Sasha described how she felt she was constantly 'singled out because of skin color and not because of anything else but that.' For example, she spoke of having to often answer questions about her ethnic heritage:

I've had to explain who I am ... and then also would look at myself a little differently now, because I guess this is what they see, whereas before I didn't see what they saw, I just saw myself as part of the norm.

Sasha interpreted the questions regarding her racial identity as a strategy of exclusion and believed she received this question because others viewed her as 'outside the norm'. All the participants in this study struggled in their school contexts; they felt positioned by other teachers and administrators as the 'other' teacher and 'different' from the white teaching 'norm' that was constructed and institutionalized in their schools.

'People like me': creating cultural connections and a sense of belonging

The third theme that emerged within this study was the importance of teachers engaging with other ethnic minority community members. All three noted how cultural connections with 'people like me' encouraged the participants to feel more comfortable in their community. Connections and community also played a strong role in the images participants shared, which ranged from a 'Day in the Life'



Figure 4. Natacha: '[This] is for coaches who dedicate a lot of time and are really passionate about what they do here ... It was a nice recognition.'

collection, to places and objects that were significant to them, teams they coached, students they taught, and co-workers they connected with.

Sasha discussed how she connected with other ethnic minority community members in her school, saying: 'I was the only African-American teacher for six years straight, and [other ethnic minority teachers] were people I felt like I can talk to.' Many of the photos she shared featured other ethnic minority community members, demonstrating the importance of the relationships she developed with them. Additionally, she shared a photo of a plaque in her school commemorating the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, which reminded her of these connections. Sasha discussed how she felt more included at her previous school, which had a diverse student and teacher population: 'There was a school that I worked right before here that I truly loved. I was well supported by the administrators and the families ... [It] was a comfortable fit (Figures 5 and 6).'

Natacha discussed how a conference on race and education allowed her to recognize that she was not alone in her experiences of marginalization. This helped to justify her decision to work in a predominantly white, educational context once she heard from the few ethnic minority students enrolled how important their relationships with ethnic minority teachers were:

I was still feeling like I had more of a purpose when I was at my old school ... But there were kids at the conference who spoke about their experience and the fact that they appreciated, even if it was one staff member that was a black person, or a Hispanic person, or Asian person, that they could connect with. Because they felt isolated in that environment. So just that one thing gave me another purpose.



Figure 5. Sasha: 'I've been on the search for a happy place, where I don't feel like I'm singled out because of who I am.'

Cultural connections promoted engagement and support. For example, Natacha described one of her mentors, a Dominican elementary school PE teacher, as significant because she felt that she had a 'different connection with someone when they look like you.' In another example, Cezelia discussed interactions with ethnic minority students where she encouraged them to take pride in their cultural capital, saying: 'I spend an hour in a family conference ... just speaking about [how] it's okay to wear your hair in braids, it's okay to be from [a historically black neighborhood].' These teachers, who were aware of the systematic racial inequality prevalent in their schools, relied on interactions with other ethnic minority teachers and students as a means of: 'How to cope, how to deal, how to be that only person in a room full of people who are not like you [and] still keep your strength to be who you are' (Sasha). Sasha's words summed up the ways in which a diversity conference helped her realize the need for support and friendship from other ethnic minority teachers:

I value it [the conference] because it's like a breath of fresh air. It's like the experience of a person being in a room or a building full of people that are not of their culture, then all of a sudden they're in the room with people of their culture. It's like ... people like me ... Whereas, I think that white people don't usually have that experience ... and when they're in a situation where they're in a room with people of color and they're the only ones, it's like fear sets them. And so imagine that same feeling with someone who has to work in that ... And you start to think something's wrong with you or you're crazy. But then you go to a conference, you share that with someone else, and ... oh yeah, that happens to me too. So you just start to feel a little bit better about yourself and that you're not going crazy.

Whether participants drew support from or offered support to fellow ethnic minority community members within their educational contexts, it was clear that the cultural connections they created with others were an indelible form of strength and comfort.

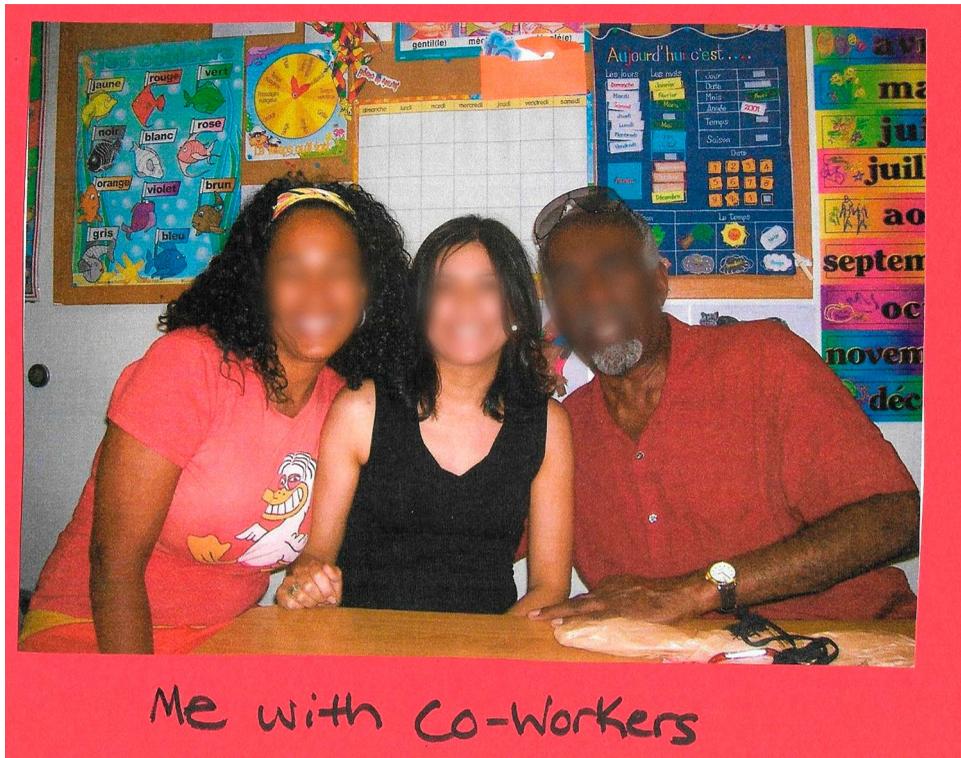


Figure 6. Sasha: 'These were closely connected coworkers that I felt like I can relate to.'

Conclusions

This research study provided insight into the embodiment of a marginalized population: ethnic minority female PE teachers. We adopted a critical theoretical perspective to examine how ethnic minority female PE teachers viewed their identities and negotiated gendered and racialized power relations in predominantly white schools. What emerged from the data was a complex and multi-layered portrait of each teacher's identity. Participants shared their lives, their stories, their achievements, and their trials, which we then put into context and linked to theoretical perspectives on gender and racial inequality. From this set of data and analysis, we start to understand how gender and race intersect within a teaching identity. We listened and validated the experiences of a specific population that might be considered 'outside the norm' of particular educational contexts, in this case white schools. By providing a space for ethnic minority female teachers to tell the stories of their lived experiences, we begin to break down the pervasiveness of white privilege as a universal experience. Drawing from the findings reported in this paper, it can be suggested that there is still a significant need to recognize that both gender and race play a role in a teacher's experiences, given the feedback on the ways in which a racialized identity was associated with feelings of isolation and exclusion.

There are a number of implications for study. First, there are some concrete, practice-based implications for schools to better support ethnic minority teachers, particularly if the school's teacher and student populations are predominantly white. Schools, teachers, and administrators need to actively work to dismantle systems of white privilege and color blindness inherent within education and demonstrate their support for teachers who do this. Examples include providing funds and staffing support for *all* teachers to attend conferences or workshops that address issues of racism within education or bring in speakers and hold workshops that specifically provide a space for community members to reflect on how racism impacts the school community. Another way of centering race

within schools is to hire more ethnic minority teachers with the explicit intention of continuing conversations about racism and to break down the pervasive color-blindness that many schools engage in. Schools need to enact CRP within the classroom and the gymnasium; critical PE curricula such as 'Sport for Peace' (Ennis, 2000) and 'The Body Curriculum' (Azzarito, Marttinen, Simon, & Markiewicz, 2014) are examples of ways in which to make PE a space which resists gendered and racialized stereotypes. Additionally, in order for there to be more ethnic minority PE teachers, PETE programs need to actively recruit and support ethnic minority students and commit to hiring more ethnic minority professors within their departments so that ethnic minority PETE students have greater potential mentors who can relate to their racialized lived experiences (Burden, Hodge, O'Bryant, & Harrison, 2004).

Beyond these specific implications for schools, there are a number of theoretical implications as well. The ways in which social factors interacted for all three participants demonstrates the complexity of lived experience within the umbrella categories of race and gender. From a feminist poststructuralist perspective, gender is socially constructed and not absolute or essential (Butler, 2003). The participants in this study all moved fluidly within numerous gendered identities, from 'tomboy' to 'girlie', providing evidence for the notion that gender is not a binary and that women's experiences are not homogenous (Munro, 1998; Weedon, 1997). When examining the racialized experiences of these female PE teachers, it became clear that race is an integral element of their teaching identities (Rollock, 2012). The racialized embodiment of the self functioned to shape their daily lived experiences of teaching and highlighted the problematic enactment of a colorblind perspective embedded within the schools they worked (Bowleg, 2008; Burden et al., 2004). Minute yet pervasive racist interactions served to 'other' the participants within their educational communities, positioning them as different or outsiders (Gillborn et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995). This weight of feeling 'different' or an 'outsider' proved to be a heavy load to bear at times and the repercussions were evident in participants' racialized, gendered embodiment as ethnic minority PE teachers in predominantly white school contexts (Rollock, 2007). As a way to reject, or counterstory, these negative interactions, all the participants sought to create their own inclusive communities by connecting with other ethnic minority community members, even if they were not in their department or even teachers (e.g. facility workers) (Gillborn, 2005).

At the intersection of race and gender, this study evidenced how we can see the heterogeneous and fluid nature of each teacher's embodied identity and also the broad ways that sexist and racist discourses contributed to the participants' experiences of being an ethnic minority PE teacher in predominantly white contexts (Flintoff, 2014; 2015). Intersectionality can be a platform for justifying the centering of marginalized teacher populations within PE programs (Bowleg, 2012; Dagkas, 2016; Flintoff & Fitzgerald, 2012). This study provided a space for 'othered' teachers to share their stories, reflect on their experiences, and highlight the ways in which their embodied identity came to be viewed from both a gendered and racialized lens. When existing social norms and rhetoric are disrupted, marginalized teachers gain opportunities to voice and critique hegemonic ideals of whiteness and masculinity. From this study, we argue that there is a continued need for the examination of the ways in which intersectionality impacts teachers' identity construction so that structural racism and sexism within education are dismantled. More research is warranted on this and similar topics in the hopes of continuing to develop our understanding of how PE can become a space that is inclusive and empowering for all community members.

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