Critical Inquiry on the Body in Girls' Physical Education Classes: A Critical Poststructural Perspective

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Drawing on poststructuralism and related theoretical perspectives, we worked in girls' physical education classes to examine the development and implementation of a curriculum strand focusing on girls' bodies. The purpose was to help adolescent girls name the discourses that shape their lives and regulate their bodies. We asked two major questions: What were the major tasks actually used during the enactment of the curriculum strand? and: What issues and concerns emerged for us as we enacted the strand and how did we respond? This study took place in a 7th–12th grade rural high school in the southern United States. We collected data during the 2000–2001 school year in three girls' physical education classes. We conducted 14 sessions for each class and analyzed our data using the constant comparison method. Several issues emerged including: making the curriculum meaningful, offsetting task difficulties, sustaining ethical relationships, and lessening interference of research culture.

Key Words: adolescent girls, critical literacy, activist research, body image

In this study we examined what happened during our efforts to develop a curriculum strand designed to be implemented in girls' physical education classes. The curriculum strand was designed to help adolescent girls name the discourses that shape their lives and regulate their bodies. It was inspired by insights from the radical perspectives of critical literacy (Freire, 1974; Luke, 2000; Siegel & Fernandez, 2000; Stanley, 1992) and poststructural feminism (Kelly, 1997; Luke & Gore, 1992; St. Pierre, 2000; Weedon, 1987; Wright, 1995, 1997, 2000). We recognized that we were nurturing this radical curriculum strand in schools—environments within which the traditional values and beliefs of humanism prevail (Kelly; Scheurich, 1997). Thus along with Luke, we wondered, "What happens

when a radical approach to . . . education moves into the tent of a secular state education system" (p. 1).

The curriculum strand grew out of seven years of listening closely to adolescent girls. During that time we learned, among other things, that many girls feel pressured by worry about how others assess their bodies. For example, Nicole told us quite directly, "I hope that I can learn to just not care what people think about my body" (Oliver & Lalik, 2000, p. 69). The more closely we listened to adolescent girls, the more interested we became in supporting girls' efforts to develop strategies for identifying, resisting, and disrupting forms of enculturation that threaten their health and limit their life chances (New London Group, 1996).

Besides inspiring commitment to curriculum work with adolescent girls, our initial efforts helped us develop several crucial insights that inform this study. For example, we learned about the potential dangers of any effort to shape curriculum. That is, no effort is without its theoretical limitations (McRobbie, 1994), and none is free from moral and ethical vulnerabilities. Efforts that seek liberatory possibilities (Lather, 1991; Oliver & Lalik, 2001, in press) can hardly claim exception to such limitations. Thus, in this curriculum work, we find ourselves on dangerous terrain. Our decision to persist in these efforts requires us to keep careful vigilance on the practices we pursue, a vigilance that compels us to question and otherwise trouble (St. Pierre, 2000) our practices, especially in relation to the very values to which we claim allegiance.

In this article we explain our theoretical perspectives, outline the research design, and highlight and illustrate our interpretations. Finally, we discuss the implications of our research for physical education curricula.

Theoretical Perspectives

For many poststructural feminists the body is a work site of language and a signifier of desire in its psychic, discursive, and material dimensions (Kelly, 1997). The body is understood as a "constellation of language, desire, power, and identity" (Kelly, p. 15). Language, in the form of discourses, linguistic clusters of interrelated beliefs, values, and practices, are the materials through which the construction of subjectivity proceeds unrelentingly (Weedon, 1987).

From this perspective, subjectivity is the name given to the "conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (p. 32). Though dynamic and complicated by contradiction, subjectivity molds desire, thus influencing the parameters through which we shape and are shaped by the world. According to Coward (as cited in Kelly, 1997), female experiences "make change such a difficult and daunting task, for female desire is constantly lured by discourses which sustain male privilege" (p. 21).

Inscribed through language, the embodied subject is no longer thought to be a unified, omniscient, and empowered agent. Relationships among language, culture, and identity are seen as dialogic rather than unitary and fixed. Agency is thought to exist but only in a limited form. Nevertheless it is a form that many claim can be enhanced through critical examination of language and culture (Wright, 1995). In this context, then, a transformed view of literacy emerges—one that focuses on "how language works in whose and what interests, on what cultural sites, and why" (Kelly, 1997, p. 19). According to Kelly, even though it presents

daunting challenges, this type of critical literacy opens space for significant possibilities. That is, such a literacy offers one effective means of addressing "the coercive character of texts to shape desire, to constitute 'real selves' that are positioned in 'real worlds' (Davies, 1993, p. 148).

> Texts, here, must be understood beyond the parameters of Davies' reference and the rigid borders of containment that hold texts as entities; instead, texts are fluid constructs, the permeable boundaries of which are continually negotiated in the intersection of knowledge, power, culture, and desire. (Kelly, p. 20)

Schools, as one particular site for cultural work, introduce and circulate discourses through various processes including curriculum and pedagogy. Rather than understanding a curriculum as an object to be mastered, curricula could be understood as forms of cultural politics or organized constellations of social relations circulated through schooling that express and enforce particular relations of power. According to Kelly (1997), curriculum is the "planned means by which some discourses are legitimized and others marginalized or silenced" (p. 18). As a form of cultural politics, curriculum represents a legitimate focus of study within poststructural thought.

Similarly, pedagogy could be understood as "the details of what students and teachers might do together *and* the cultural politics such practices support" (Simon, as cited in Kelly, 1997, p. 13). Radical pedagogies, such as those inspired by critical, feminist, and antiracist discourses are intended to counter oppressive tendencies in culture and society. More than these others, however, poststructural pedagogies reject understandings of reason, objectivity, universality, and essence spawned in the maelstrom of modernist culture. So, for example, Davies (1993) argues, "The innocence of language as a transparent medium for describing the real world is undone in poststructuralist theory revealing a rich mosaic of meaning and structure through which we speak ourselves and are spoken into existence" (p. 148).

Rather than supporting poststructural or other emerging perspectives, prevailing school curricula and pedagogy reflect humanist notions of the subject and the world. Typically, in schools, the transcendent signifiers of humanism such as democracy, truth, and reason, are used to organize and stabilize meaning and to shape relations according to the interests of the nation-state or, more recently, the interests of dominant players in the global economy. Students are encouraged to develop the "innate capacity for reason" (Kelly, 1997, p. 18). Curriculum is construed as object, and it is thought to be revised on the basis of new knowledge developed through "the progressive evolution of human understanding of the objective laws of 'man and nature'" (Kelly, p. 18).

These understandings persist in schools, in part, because they are supported by the larger society in which humanistic values and beliefs circulate broadly. According to St. Pierre (2000):

> Humanism is in the air we breathe, the language we speak . . . the relations we are able to have with others, the politics we practice . . . the futures we can imagine, the limits of our pleasures. Humanism is everywhere, overwhelming in its totality; and since it is so 'natural,' it is difficult to watch it work. (p. 478)

Though pervasive and taken for granted, humanism has spawned considerable damage and suffering. St. Pierre (2000) named several of these harmful outcomes of humanism: "The world humanism has produced is harmful to women, as well as to other groups of people. This is hardly surprising, since patriarchy, racism, homophobia, ageism, etc., are cultural structures, cultural regularities, that humanism allows and perpetuates" (p. 479).

Given humanism's problems, one might think that knowledge about the centrality of the body as a site of desire, subjectivity, language, and culture would have inspired policy makers to select the body as a focal point for study in school curricula. Indeed several theorists in physical education have encouraged policy makers and practitioners to reexamine the ways that they and others develop curricula and pedagogy (Nilges, 1998, 2000; Vertinsky, 1992; Wright, 1995, 1996, 2000; Wright & King, 1990). Nevertheless, schools have remained largely impervious to these suggestions.

Even so, recognizing this intransigence in school practices, a cadre of researchers and theorists in physical education continue to challenge the dominant patriarchal discourses that permeate physical education curricula and pedagogy. For over a decade a growing number of analysts have suggested the development of alternative physical education curricula (Armour, 1999; Burrows, Wright, & Jungersen-Smith, 2002; Ennis et al., 1999; Kinchin & O' Sullivan, 1999, 2003; Kirk & Claxton, 2000; Kirk & Tinning, 1994; Nilges, 1998, 2000; Oliver, 2001; Oliver & Lalik, 2001; Penney & Chandler, 2000; Prusak & Darst, 2002; Wright, 1995, 2000; Wright & King, 1990). More specifically, some of these scholars have focused on curricula for identifying and challenging gender discrimination in physical education (Ennis, 1999; Nilges, 1998, 2000; Prusak & Darst; Wright, 1995, 1996, 1997, 2000). Others have suggested adding curricular units to physical education programs that encourage students to critically reflect on social conditions that shape their beliefs toward physical activity and health (Burrows et al.; Kinchin & O'Sullivan, 2003; Kirk & Tinning; Oliver & Lalik, 2001).

As part of this effort to lead physical education toward such change, Wright (1997) proposed a reconsideration of "both the content of the curriculum and the pedagogical practices employed" (p.70) in its construction. She suggested "using a greater variety of pedagogical modes including more student-centered approaches" (p. 70), rethinking "the dominant place that games and sport continue to hold in the [physical education] curriculum" (Wright, 1995, p.20) and pursuing "classroom practices which challenge patriarchal discourses" (p. 20).

Following Wright's lead, Kinchin and O'Sullivan (2003) engaged high school boys and girls in a "cultural studies unit." The goals of this unit were for students "to become critical consumer[s] of sport and physical activity; to gain a local, national and international perspective on sport, and to gain a historical appreciation of the development of sport" (p. 248). They found, among other things, that students valued opportunities to discuss "gender, body image, and sport media . . . [because they] deemed such content to be significant to their life in school and in the wider society" (pp. 256-257).

Speaking more specifically about curricula for girls, Vertinsky (1992) argued that physical educators need both to pay more attention to how adolescent girls' cultural perspectives contribute to their sense of self and to provide girls with many opportunities to notice and critique discursive practices that shape embodied subjectivity and desire. In addition, we would assert that girls would benefit

from opportunities to take up alternative discourses that make possible more just action. As Weedon (1987) has theorized, "It is language in the form of competing discourses which constitutes us as conscious thinking subjects and enables us to give meaning to the world and to act to transform it" (p. 32).

We agree with those physical education scholars and others who strive to understand ways of creating more gender-sensitive physical education curricula (Ennis, 1999; Napper-Owen, Kovar, Ermler, & Mehrhof, 1999; Nilges, 1998, 2000; Wright, 1995). In our own efforts, we have attempted to assist girls in a critical examination of discursive practices that impinge on the body. In doing so, we have explored numerous theoretical perspectives. For example, we have considered perspectives including critical literacy (Freire, 1974; Shannon, 1990; Shor, 1992; Weiler, 1988), critical-race theory (Collins, 1991, 1998; hooks, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and poststructural feminism (Ellsworth, 1992; Fine, 1992; Kelly, 1997; Lather, 1992; Luke & Gore, 1992; Nilges, 2000; St. Pierre, 2000; Wright 1995, 1997, 2000).

Drawing on these perspectives, we developed an alternative approach to working with small groups of adolescent girls (Oliver & Lalik, 2000, 2001, in press). Through our work we have shown that opportunities for critical-literacy development as an integral part of physical education can assist girls in analyzing some of the ways that culture works to limit their physical well-being and life chances (New London Group, 1996). In one of our studies (Oliver & Lalik, 2001), the girls showed signs of resistance to oppressive cultural messages. Some of the girls were able to privately resist dominant cultural narratives that equate girls' value with their outward appearance. The girls were also able to critique destructive eating patterns during small group conversations by reporting the practices of other girls. Others were able to identify how White bodies and standards of beauty are promoted through the schools' hidden curriculum (Oliver & Lalik, in press). Given these findings, we have argued for the development of a critical physical education curriculum strand. We have suggested that, as part of such a strand, learners be "encouraged to ask questions about the body that are important to them and to explore the various curricular areas for evidence to inform their inquiries" (Oliver & Lalik, 2001, p. 329).

Whereas we believe our research findings are noteworthy, they remain strikingly insufficient. That is because, although results with small groups are promising, they do not inform us sufficiently about what will happen when these efforts are transformed for entire class groups of students in more mainstream settings. It is one thing to work with small groups of girls in an environment largely controlled by researchers generally open to, and supportive of, feminist, poststructural thought and the related discourses that inspired the curriculum project. Less is known about what can happen when such a curriculum strand is imported into public school physical education classes—classes in which humanist beliefs and values typically circulate. As St. Pierre (2000) claimed, "Once a discourse becomes 'normal' and 'natural,' it is difficult to think and act outside it. Within the rules of discourse, it makes sense to say only certain things" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485). When we try to implement a curriculum that rejects many of the premises of humanism in an environment imbued with humanistic themes, we create a field for contradiction. That is, we create a field in which the things we want to talk about, as well as the ways in which we want to talk about them, might seem quite inappropriate to others in that setting and even to ourselves.

In this article we examine what happened during our efforts to develop a curriculum strand for girls' physical education inspired by a poststructural feminist perspective. We developed the curriculum strand to be incorporated into girls' high school physical education classes throughout an academic year. We wanted to provide the opportunities for mindfulness that seemed to be missing in a curriculum almost exclusively committed, through its daily practices, to activity. Given that the mind and body are inextricably interrelated, a curriculum for the physical remains incomplete without opportunities for reflection. Further, our previous research indicates that opportunities for reflection are associated with girls' transformative behaviors (Oliver & Lalik, in press). Thus, one way to think about physical education is to view it as the place in school where the mind and body are understood as mutually constitutive.

In our efforts to make physical education curricula more meaningful to girls, we planned a curriculum strand that focused on girls' bodies and physical activity. We incorporated critical literacy processes such as reflection, inquiry, and artistic representation into these plans in order to assist girls in naming the discourses that shape their lives and regulate their bodies. In keeping with the feminist tradition of exploring the personal as a means to understand political, cultural, and societal constraints (Weedon, 1987), we wanted to use girls' experiences of and interest in the body as a wellspring for learning. In order for us to understand and critique our curriculum effort, we asked two focal questions: What were the major tasks actually used during the enactment of the curriculum strand? and What issues and concerns emerged for us as we enacted the strand and how did we respond?

Method

Setting and Participants

This study took place in a 7th–12th-grade rural high school in the southern US. Of the 412 students, 60% were classified as European Americans, 38% as African Americans, and 2% as Hispanics. Forty-three per cent of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch. In 1999 a state-certified girls' physical education teacher had been hired at the school—the first in the school's history. Despite Title IX regulations, girls and boys physical education remained separate. According to the school principal, boys and girls physical education classes had "always been separate" at Crestville High. Before the recent hiring of a female teacher, the girls had been taught by an uncertified aid, whereas the boys enjoyed the services of a certified physical education teacher.

During the time of this study, students were required to take physical education during seventh and eighth grade and again for one year between 9th and 12th grade. The school was on block scheduling. Physical education classes met three days a week for 1 hr and 45 min. The girls' physical education curriculum had a strong health and wellness emphasis and focused primarily on lifetime sports and physical activities. Although most students took physical education at the same time the entire year, they did have the opportunity to change their schedule at the end of the semester.

The participants in this study included a physical education teacher, (Ms. Jamie Lee), the school principal, (Mr. Sam Watson), the girls who attended the physical education classes in which the curriculum strand was enacted, and the

researchers, (Drs. Kim Oliver and Rosary Lalik). At the time of this study, Jamie was 26 years old and in her third year of teaching physical education. She identifies as White and middle class. The principal was a 36-year-old White man in his second year as acting principal. Kim is a 36-year-old European American who was raised in an upper-middle-class family in Southern California. She taught physical education in public schools and currently works as a university-level physical education teacher educator and researcher in a university located in the southwestern United States. Rosary is also a university-teacher educator and researcher. She grew up as a member of a working-class immigrant family in the 1950's and was employed as a public-school teacher before she began university work in literacy studies. Like Kim, Rosary identifies as a European American, though, as a child, members of her community often questioned her racial identity.

During the study, Jamie collaborated with Kim during the enactment of the curriculum and provided assessment and other commentary about the curriculum strand. Mr. Watson approved the curriculum-strand purpose and approach, visited the classroom regularly, encouraged our efforts, and informed us about the school and school community. As researchers, Kim and Rosary planned, reflected on, and revised the curriculum strand throughout the year. Kim also led the instruction during all sessions working closely with Jamie.

The girls in the three classes participated in the activities for the curriculum strand and talked and wrote about their experiences. Because this curriculum strand was created to be a part of the larger physical education curriculum, all girls participated in the tasks. Parent-consent forms were sent home, however, in order to obtain permission to use the girls' work in a research project. Of the 90 girls in the 3 classes, parents of only 4 girls withheld permission.

Crestville High was selected as the research site because the physical educator, Jamie Lee, a former student of Kim's, had indicated an interest in learning more about how to engage adolescent girls in critical study of the body. Jamie had learned about this type of curriculum during her teacher-preparation program and had used some of the tasks with her classes during her first year of teaching. She wanted to further incorporate this type of teaching into physical education. In her view it was one way to make her curriculum more meaningful to her students. Thus Jamie and Kim discussed the possibilities of doing a research study to learn how to incorporate the curricular ideas that Kim and Rosary had been developing with small groups of girls in regular physical education classes. Further, Jamie worked for a principal, Mr. Watson, who was fully supportive of teachers trying "new ideas" in hopes of engaging students more fully. Thus, Jamie's physical education classes became the site for this research project.

Data Collection

We collected data during the 2000–2001 school year in three girls' physical education classes. The classes ranged from 25–36 girls in Grades 7–9. One class consisted largely of 9th-grade-honors students, whereas another consisted largely of 7th-grade students, many of whom were classified as special-education students, designated typically as learning disabled. The racial mix of the students in each class was approximately one-half African American and one-half European American. Special-education designations did not appear to be associated with

race. That is, the proportion of White to non-White students who were labeled as learning-diabled students was consistent with the racial make up of the class group.

To initiate our planning of the curriculum, we drew on what we learned from our previous research on curriculum with small groups of girls (Oliver, 1999, 2001; Oliver & Lalik, 2001). For example, we learned that girls like to talk about fashion and peer-group relations and that they can conduct analyses of images in popular magazines and use their analyses to develop a language of explanation and critique. We also learned that journal writing is a means through which girls can express thoughts and critique ideas that they might not express during group conversations. In addition, we found that inquiry is a process through which girls can examine an idea or phenomenon and that girls enjoy opportunities to take photographs and develop artistic representations of their knowledge and perspectives.

During planning sessions, we discussed this learning at length, and we incorporated many of the tasks we had found useful in small-group settings into the plans we designed for classroom-sized groups of girls. These tasks became the major units of activity for the curriculum strand.

As a starting point, we had imagined that we would include tasks that used analyses of teen magazines. We wanted to include tasks that involved the girls in taking photographs, and we wanted to plan an inquiry task through which girls could examine topics that interested them and that related to girls' bodies. We planned to alter this strategy if our assessment of girls' participation patterns suggested that we should do so. During planning sessions we often reminded each other of our learning from earlier work, spending the bulk of our time fleshing out the details of each task, estimating the time it would take girls to complete each task, considering various ways to sequence tasks, and developing strategies to assist girls in completing tasks.

In our efforts to stay true to our commitment to design a responsive curriculum, we planned only one 2-day segment at a time, enacting the plan with the girls and reflecting on what happened during enactment before planning a subsequent 2-day session. Kim carried out each plan in the classroom, observing the girls and conferring with Jamie, who collaborated in the classroom. At the end of each class, Jamie and Kim discussed issues that became salient for them during the class sessions. These informal interviews lasted 15 min each and occurred twice each day Kim was at the school.

After each enactment, Rosary and Kim held extensive debriefing conferences during which, using her field notes and Jamie's written communications as bases, Kim recounted what she did during each enactment and how the girls responded. At these debriefings we framed and reflected on emergent issues and considered how those issues should affect our subsequent plans. Kim took extensive notes. After the debriefings, we held planning meetings during which we designed the next enactment sequence, creating and refining tasks based on what we were learning from our extensive analyses. Kim took written notes during these sessions as well.

Using her notes from the debriefing and planning sessions with Rosary, Kim recorded our curricular plans in the form of task sheets that we designed during our planning meetings. Typically, we designed two task sheets for each task. We used one task sheet, detailing the specifics of the plan, to guide Kim's work with the girls. We used the second, more-simplified task sheet to assist the girls in

completing each task after Kim gave oral instructions and provided other supports such as examples and think-aloud demonstrations. We agreed that, during enactment, Kim would be free to make any modifications to the plans she deemed advisable in light of the girls' responses.

The curriculum strand for this research project was woven into Jamie's regular physical education curriculum for two consecutive school days during the months of September, October, December, January, and February and during four consecutive school days during the month of May. Kim conducted a total of fourteen 1-hr-and-45-min sessions for each of the three classes. This time frame represented the duration of the allotted physical education class. Each session took place in the school library so the students would have a place to work.

Jamie assisted with instruction during these sessions. After the sessions she used e-mail to correspond with Kim and Rosary about her impressions of each session. In addition, Jamie completed several follow-up activities with the girls that were part of the curriculum strand.

Data Sources

Several data sources from the planning and enactment of the curriculum strand were analyzed for this study. These included the researcher's written documentation from the debriefing and planning sessions, task sheets developed for each session, transcripts of audio recordings of the researcher's instructions given during each class session, researcher- and teacher-written field notes from each session, and written notes from the twenty-eight 15-min informal interviews with the teacher and two 30-min informal interviews with the principal. During these informal interviews with the principal, Kim elicited comments on the history of the town, people in the community, and the school. She also gathered data on the types of physical-activity opportunities for the girls in the school and community.

To focus particularly on the girls' involvement in and perspective on the curriculum strand, we also collected a wide variety of materials the girls produced. These data included journal entries, collages, photographic essays, session exit slips, and other textual and visual artifacts. For each class session, we also audio recorded and transcribed the interactions of three groups of girls during the first period class. Finally, we asked the girls to work in pairs to conduct an interview with each other. Figure 1 is an example of the survey the girls used to guide their interviews.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze our data in a manner that would increase the trustworthiness of our interpretations, we followed the general outline for qualitative data analysis proposed by Tesch (1990). That is, we used three major strategies: "developing an organizing system, segmenting data, and making connections" (Miller & Crabtree, 1994, p. 345). Our analytical strategies were informed, as well, by methodologists such as Bogdan and Biklen (1998) and Hutchinson (1990), who recommend general guidelines for researchers who plan to move through a series of analytical levels.

To begin the process, Kim organized our data chronologically, paginating it, copying it, and filing it by cycle and date. Kim and Rosary each read through the

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End of the Year Survey

It is important to us that we know how you feel about the activities that we did with you. With your partner take turns interviewing each other about how this experience has been for you. Please say your name before you start your interview so that we can keep track of you. The interview should last about 5 min.

Please describe how you felt about doing each of the following:

Magazine tasks_____

Journal writing_____

Inquiry projects_____

Photographing different topics/events_____

What was your favorite part of the entire experience and why?

What was your least favorite part of the entire experience and why?

Figure 1 — End of the year survey.

data separately, making notations in the margins about insights that were generated during this independent reading phase. Next, working together, we took turns reading the data aloud and shared our recorded insights. Using these insights and the two major research questions as our guides, we segmented and categorized the data. Our major categories included, among others, plans, enactments, and concerns. Within each major category we developed subcategories to further specify the information in each data segment. For example, included among the subcategories for plans were reasons for plans, concerns about plans, changes in plans, and specifics of plans. We coded data segments under more than a single category whenever we deemed more than a single category to be relevant. For example, several segments were coded as both plans and concerns.

Once we had coded data using this categorization system, we used the system as the basis for writing a narrative to describe how we planned, enacted, and reflected on the curriculum strand during each of the six cycles of planning, enactment, and debriefing that we engaged in during the year (Oliver & Lalik, 2002). That is, for each cycle we used our multiple data sources to analyze what we planned, why we planned it, what we actually did with the girls, the issues and concerns we faced as we enacted the curriculum, and how we responded to those issues. Kim wrote a draft of this narrative, and Rosary returned to the data and the classification system to revise the draft.

Throughout the analysis, we worked at times alone and at other times together, frequently challenging each other's decisions and interpretations. We used strategies of rereading and continuing data exploration to resolve our differences. Through these processes we sometimes found evidence that supported the interpretations of one or the other of us. At other times a new interpretation grew from our disagreements and subsequent data explorations. This revised narrative description became the basis for the next level of analysis.

For our next level of analysis, we reviewed our narrative together to determine trends across cycles. In this way, we moved to a more abstract level of interpretation using strategies consistent with those proposed for grounded theory (Hutchinson, 1990). Using our assessment of trends, we worked together to generate tentative assertions related to these themes. We returned to the data once more to verify, reject, or modify each tentative assertion (Erickson, 1986).

We used our assertions as guideposts for composing a second narrative account of the curriculum project. Again Kim wrote the first draft of a narrative of our interpretations, and Rosary returned to the data, the coding system, and the first narrative to question, revise, and substantiate the patterns we observed and their links to our interpretive statements. Throughout our writing process (Alvermann, 2000; Oliver, 1998), we maintained a critical stance, repeatedly questioning our interpretations and testing alternative interpretations.

Whereas we made repeated efforts to study our data intensively and extensively, we intended for our research to reflect our critical stance. Thus we support the view of Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) that "critical researchers do not search for some magic method of inquiry that will guarantee the validity of their findings . . . [through] a technology that has focused on reducing human beings to taken-for-granted social outcomes . . . [that] maintain existing power relations" (p. 151). Rather we have striven through data analysis, as well as through the entire conduct of this research, to move in directions outlined by Lather (1991) and Lincoln (1997). That is, we have attempted to help participants in this research develop the dispositions and skills useful for understanding how oppressive social dynamics shape the world and for transforming those dynamics—a criterion for qualitative research that Lather calls "catalytic validity" (p. 68).

According to Lather (1991), "If it is to spur toward action, theory must be grounded in the self-understandings of . . . [participants] even as it seeks to enable them to reevaluate themselves and their situation" (p. 65). To accomplish this, we attempted to nurture a research criterion that Lincoln calls "reciprocity" (p. 61). Drawing on the work of Reinharz, Lincoln encouraged qualitative researchers to engage with other research participants through "relationships . . . marked by a deep sense of trust, caring, heightened awareness, and mutuality" (p. 61). Thus, throughout the research process, including our efforts at data analysis, we worked in ways we believed were consistent with both catalytic validity and reciprocity.

In the next section of this research report, we present the second interpretive narrative, which we constructed according to suggestions of reviewers. In our narrative we referred to the group as a whole when behavior was consistent. When we observed differences in behavior, we referred to specific categories of participants. So, for example, if we observed differences among classes, we distinguished between classes in the narrative. When we observed differences among age groups, we noted these distinctions.

Interpretations

Our interpretation is divided into two sections. In the first section we present a narrative table to indicate the major tasks we enacted during the curriculum strand. In the second section we present a narrative to describe the issues and concerns that arose as we worked to use the curriculum strand with girls and our responses to those issues. We describe four issues: making the curriculum meaningful,

offsetting task difficulties, sustaining ethical relationships, and lessening interference of research culture.

Planned Curriculum Strand

Table 1 provides a brief overview of the tasks that were enacted during the curriculum strand. Throughout the table we use the language that we used with the girls to explain the tasks.

Enacting the Curriculum Strand: Emergent Issues, Concerns, and Responses

Making the Curriculum Meaningful.   A major concern for us throughout the entire project was finding ways to make the curriculum meaningful, interesting, and significant to the girls' lives. Whereas we believed in the importance of helping girls learn to name and critique forms and processes of bodily regulation, we also believed that it was our ethical responsibility to develop curricula in ways that were responsive to the girls' needs, not just our own. In this section we will highlight how we struggled to use the girls' interests and proclivities to support critique, how we worked to provide the girls with choices, and prepared them to make meaningful choices. We also describe some of the choices they made.

Using Girls' Interests and Proclivities to Support Critique.   One of our early goals in the project was to involve the girls in a critique of teen magazines. Our intent was to use the girls' interests as a place to focus their critique. Specifically, we hoped that they would begin to identify ways that girls learn to think about their bodies and the bodies of others from the images and messages found in the magazines that they enjoy. In order to keep the critique centered on things that they found important, we began by asking them to look through the magazines and select and categorize images and articles that captured their attention.[1]

Fitness, fashion, shoes, cute boys, hairstyles, food, beauty, body products, articles you read, and people you admire were examples of categories of images that most groups of girls wrote down during the magazine exploration. The girls were able to explain the reasons for their choices. For example, one group explained in writing their selection of fitness as a category. "Fitness—we made a category out of pictures of people exercising and playing sports. We picked some of these pictures because we think it's important to exercise and stay healthy." Another explained in writing their selection of clothes as a category. "Clothes— we chose to use this as a category because we wear some of the designs that we cut out. We liked the name brand; we liked the bright colors; we liked some of the styles."

We also asked the girls to use the images that they found compelling to discuss how these pictures related to girls' bodies. Hope,[2] Nicky, Casey, Carson, and Ansley, a group of 9th-grade White girls, used an image of an African American funk-dance teacher to discuss how fitness related to girls' bodies. They wrote, "Many people do funk dance for exercise. This keeps your body in shape. This is a fun way to keep your body in shape because most girls like to dance anyway. Dancing helps women to stay healthy. It is an exciting way to exercise."

Christian, Keallie, Tonya, Star, and Aquarious, a group of 7th-grade[3] White and Black girls, used a picture of a White girl dribbling a basketball to discuss girls' bodies. They wrote, "Some girls like to play BB. It's fun. Girls are superior.

Table 1   Planned Curriculum Strand by Cycle

Day/Date	Tasks and instructions	Instructional supports planned	Extended instructional supports planned
		Cycle 1: Magazine exploration	
Day 1 Sept. 8	Individually go through magazines and cut out pictures/articles that grab your attention. Select your favorite 10 and write about why you selected that picture.	Kim gives oral instructions and distributes written task sheets. Jamie and Kim support work groups.	
Day 2 Sept. 9	In your group arrange your pictures/articles that go together to form categories. Write explanations for each category. Discuss why pictures are in categories. Explain one category to class.	Kim gives oral instructions and distributes written task sheets. Jamie and Kim support work groups.	
Task of month	In your journal document the times you feel good about your body. Document the times you feel bad about your body.	Kim distributes journals.	Jamie provides journal-writing time during PE classes.
		Cycle 2: Picture categorization and analysis	
Day 1 Oct. 15	Individually, using pictures from your category folders, select 5 pictures that tell you something about girls' bodies. Write what messages girls receive from each picture. Share pictures with your group creating a list of all the messages girls receive about their bodies. Play class game (identifying media messages girls receive about their bodies).	Kim gives instructions, does think-aloud demonstration and distributes written task sheets. Jamie and Kim provide further group support.	

Day 2 Oct. 16	With your group select 3–4 pictures that tell something about girls' bodies and make the following judgments in writing: Who benefits from this picture? How do they benefit? Who, if anyone, is hurt from this picture and how are they hurt? Use your analysis and pictures to create a poster to show who benefits and who is hurt. Present posters to class.	Kim gives instructions, does think-aloud demonstration nd distributes written task sheets. Jamie and Kim aprovide further group support.	Jamie provides journal-writing time during PE classes.
Task of month	In your journal, document things that send messages to girls about their bodies.	Kim provides time for journal writing to begin.	
	Cycle 3: Journal Search:	*Places girls receive messages about their bodies*	
Day 1 Dec. 11	Part I. Individually go through your journal and read all your entries about places girls receive messages about their bodies. Make a list of all the places you documented and what the messages are. Part II. Share information with your group. Brainstorm other places girls might receive messages about their bodies. Part III. In groups come up with big categories that explain where girls receive messages about their bodies. Part IV. Take your school category and list all the messages. Share 1–2 ideas with class. Class determines whether messages are positive or negative.	Kim gives instructions, does think-aloud demonstrations for first three parts of the task and distributes written task sheets. Jamie and Kim provide further group support.	

Table 1 (*continued*)

Day/Date	Tasks and instructions	Instructional supports planned	Extended instructional supports planned
Day 2 Dec. 12	Part I. Posters: Make a school map to reflect where girls receive messages about their bodies, put an X at the locations where these messages take place, and write out what these specific messages are. Include drawings if desired. Part II. Photograph two places where girls receive positive messages and two places they receive negative messages about their bodies at school.	Kim gives oral instructions, does think-aloud demonstration, and distributes written task sheets. Kim provides further group support. Jamie takes groups one at a time to take their photographs.	
Task of month	No task of the month planned		
	Cycle 4: Inquiry project initiation		
Day 1 Jan. 18	Individually create list of spring school and community events that are interesting to teens, discussing how events relate to girls' bodies. In groups design a "calendar of events interesting to teens that relate to girls' bodies."	Kim presents an introduction to project for new girls.[4] Kim gives oral instructions and distributes written task sheets. Kim and Jamie provide further group support.	

Day 2 Jan. 19	In your groups select one or two events that you might be interested in studying further. Develop a couple of interview questions to find out how other people would experience this event. Practice interviewing each other using your questions.	Kim gives oral instructions, does think-aloud demonstration, and provides written task sheets. Jamie and Kim provide further group support.	
Task of month	Using your questions, interview a variety of people and record their responses in your journals.		Jamie provides time during PE classes.

Cycle 5: Survey Development

Day 1 Feb. 15	Select one event you want to study and find three other people who have selected the same event to work with. Share interview data from journals. Document common themes in writing. Write learning statements What am I learning about my event? and What am I learning about designing interview questions? Share with class.	Kim gives oral instructions, does think-aloud demonstration, and distributes written task sheets. Jamie and Kim provide further group support.	
Day 2 Feb. 16	Design survey. Write five to seven survey questions. Choose two questions from list provided on how this event influences how girls experience their bodies and create three to five others that reflect information you want to learn about your event. Title your survey. Make plan to photograph your event.	Kim gives oral instructions, does a think-aloud demonstration, and distributes a list of written questions and written task sheets. Jamie and Kim provide further group support.	

Table 1 (*continued*)

Day/Date	Tasks and instructions	Instructional supports planned	Extended instructional supports planned
Task of month	Photograph your selected event. Survey 10–15 different types of people.		Jamie provides time during PE classes.
		Cycle 6: Inquiry Project Conclusion	
Day 1 April 30	Analyze survey data. Ask two questions from survey data: What am I learning about other people's views? and What am I learning about girls' bodies?	Kim gives oral instructions, does think-aloud demonstration, and distributes written task sheets. Jamie and Kim provide further group support.	
Day 2 May 1	Write learning statements based on analysis. Create representation of learning (book, photographic essay, play, poster, song/dance). Include what you learned about other people's views and about girls' bodies. Develop 5 min presentation.	Kim gives oral instructions and distributes written task sheets. Jamie and Kim provide further group support.	
Day 3 May 2	Finish project. Give presentations.	Jamie and Kim provide group support. Jamie videotapes presentations.	
Day 4 May 3	Recap what you did and what you learned throughout the curriculum strand.	Kim gives oral instructions and records girls' recollections on chart paper. Kim Conduct debriefing interviews. Class party. distributes written interview questions. Jamie and Kim organize girls into groups in which they audio-record their responses to debriefing interview questions.	

Girls are active. Girls dress active in sports. It sorda makes me think girls can do sports like boys."

Another strategy we used to pique their interest in critique was to incorporate games among session activities. We reasoned that a game might lower the risk level and introduce a sense of playfulness into the processes of critique. All of the girls participated enthusiastically, identifying many different and additional ways that the pictures they selected related to girls' bodies. For example, one group selected a picture of a White woman wearing a bikini to advertise her weight-loss success story as part of a product advertisement. The girls explained that this image sent a wide array of messages to girls about their bodies. They listed on a note card some of these: a) "that girls like to keep strong abdominal muscles," b) "that it's important for girls to stay in shape and healthy, c) "that it's better to be skinny," d) "that everybody needs to be in shape and strong," and e) "it tells us girls what to eat in order to lose weight and be healthy."

After the completion of the game, Jamie wrote in her field notes lauding the girls' responses and engagement in the game and describing her surprise. "I loved hearing their opinions and what they had to say. . . . I also think that the students enjoy hearing what each other have to say, as well as adding their own input. I didn't think they would enjoy the discussions, but they really did. And they really didn't act shy about it either."

We also thought that the use of multiple forms of representation would pique the girls' interests, as well as expanding the kinds of meanings available to them. Kim documented in her field notes, "The girls seem to really enjoy the artistic forms of representation." Thus, on several occasions, we asked them to visually illustrate their learning. For example, when they designed posters to illustrate those who benefit and those who suffer from a particular picture, we provided the girls with a variety of art materials including pens, markers, glitter glue, colored paper, and tape. The girls appeared engrossed in the poster tasks and each group described their posters enthusiastically. One group of 8th- and 9th-grade girls designed a poster centering their critique on a Latina with long, straight, dark-brown hair and brown eyes wearing a "skin-tight" white dress. On their poster they wrote an analysis that suggests a sense of dilemma posed by conventional relations of beauty, as well as the operation of power within those relations.

> Men benefit from this picture because they like to look at pretty women and women who don't look like her are hurt. . . . You may not look as good as the woman on the picture; that don't mean you're not attractive and don't get as much attention as a "pretty" woman would get. Some attractive women sometimes don't want to be attractive because people take advantage of you when you look like this. Also, some women wish they weren't so attractive so people can look at you for who you are, and when they do that, that makes you feel like you're somebody.

Similarly, a group of 7th-grade girls used a picture of the faces of three White women. They wrote, "men benefit, that's men's general idea of the 'perfect woman' and how they should look. Young girls and women are hurt because they feel bad because they don't [look like this], because they want to look like her in order to get the attention that the models get.

We also used photography to provide the girls with another alternative representational form that might sustain and enhance their analytical efforts. With

Jamie's help, the girls photographed places in their school that girls receive both positive and negative messages about their bodies. Several groups of girls chose to photograph the girls' bathroom. Some of the messages girls identified were, "people call you fat" or "people say stuff to hurt your feelings." Other groups identified the home economics class as a place where girls receive positive messages about their bodies, explaining, "They teach you how to take care of yourself and cook healthy food," and "We learned that if you take care of your body you will stay in shape."

Preparing Girls To Make Meaningful Choices.   Another strategy that we used to keep the girls' interests central to the curriculum was to provide them with choices about the foci for their attention. In order to do this, we provided them with time to reflect on issues that they thought were important. For example, before beginning the inquiry project, we wanted the girls to take some time to think about what topic was worth the investment of time and effort. Rather than asking them to select a topic quickly, we asked them each to design a calendar to name and illustrate all the events at school and in their communities that were interesting to teens and that related to girls' bodies. Some of the events they noted included, softball tryouts, basketball, volleyball tryouts, the "Beauty Walk," cheerleading tryouts, and school dances.

To further provide them time to reflect on the topics, we asked them to write about their experiences (or imagined experiences) with two of the events from their calendars. Several of the 9th-grade girls wrote about the Beauty Walk. Paige wrote:

> I have never been in a beauty walk before, although I might be in it this year. I have watched several before though. I have never really wanted to be in one because I feel that looks are not everything. I think that you should be judged on more than your looks, like on how you treat other people and how you are on the inside. I think that is true beauty.

Several other girls wrote about basketball. Shawna, another 9th grader, wrote:

> I play basketball, and it's fun 'cause we get to play many games. At tryouts I was nervous 'cause I thought I wasn't going to get picked. But I got picked. I enjoy basketball a lot 'cause I get to play with a lot of my friends from other teams. Basketball is kinda my favorite sport. I experienced a lot of things. Sometimes it can be scary 'cause I was very nervous 'cause the people be call us names from the other team. People be want to fight us if we win. But sometimes basketball can be very boring 'cause this is my first year and when you don't get to play you get mad and be thinking basketball is very unfair. But I like basketball.

As part of topic selection, we also asked the girls to create a couple of questions that they could ask others in order to learn more about the event, and then to interview several different types of people and document the responses in their journals. One group of 8th and 9th graders asked several people, "What type of influence does basketball have on a girl's body?" "What do you have to do to play basketball?" and "Do you think girls and boys should have a chance to play basketball together? Why or why not?" Responses to their questions included many statements that expressed various opinions about basketball. For example, "Basketball helps girls stay in shape," "To play basketball you have to dribble and

be able to run," "Girls and boys are equal," "To play basketball on the court, you have to have good sportsmanship," "You have to exercise, train, and practice to be better at basketball," "Sometimes in basketball, boys are more aggressive than girls," and "Boys and girls compete in basketball to see who is better."

Girls as Choice Makers.   After providing the girls with time to reflect on the topics that they thought they might be interested in studying, we asked each girl to pick one topic that they wanted to learn more about. Once the girls selected their topic, Kim gave them an opportunity to choose an inquiry partner. She said to the class:

> I want you to find somebody who has the same event that you do, that you think that you can work well with. Now, here's the catch. Don't pair yourself up with somebody who you are tempted to goof around with because then I'm going to have to change you, and it will be changed in the middle [of the project] and that won't be any fun. So do make a responsible choice. If you know you can't work with somebody in particular then do not do it [the class laughs].[5]

Examples of topics that the 9th-grade girls selected included, "How softball relates to girls' bodies," "Why girls enter the beauty walk," and "How it feels to play basketball." Questions that the girls raised about their topics included, "Explain how softball makes girls feel about their bodies," "Why shouldn't girls play baseball with boys?" "Explain how this event [softball] relates to the way girls learn to think and feel about their bodies," "Why do girls enter the Beauty Walk?" "Describe how the Beauty Walk is a good or a bad thing," "Why do you think the Beauty Walk was created?" "How do you think basketball helps a girl's self-esteem?" "Explain if you think basketball is a sport for girls and boys or just girls and just boys," and "Describe what you are doing with your body when you experience basketball."

Examples of topics that the 7th- and 8th-grade girls selected to study included, "Girls, softball and their reasons," "Cheerleaders," "Why girls play basketball," "Why people shop," "Experiences in the mall," and "Volleyball." Specific questions they raised included, "Explain why some cheerleaders feel they have to be anorexic or bulimic," "Explain why some cheerleaders feel obligated to date someone popular such as a football or basketball player," "Explain what a girl's figure has to do with cheerleading," "Describe how winning the game makes you feel," "Describe how being at the mall might make girls feel about other people's bodies," "How does a girl's size influence their shopping?" and "Explain why does volleyball make a girl's body nice and fit."

Not only did we try to help the girls make meaningful choices, we also helped some of the girls relate their personal concerns to their inquiry project. For example, when the girls' basketball team lost a big game, the girls studying basketball became disoriented, absorbed in their sense of disappointment. Because the girls were studying the topic, "Why girls play basketball," Kim encouraged them to use their disappointment to design survey questions that get at how it feels when you lose an important game. Kim recorded the girls' reactions in her field notes, "After about 20 min of almost complete silence, the girls got into the question design and came up with some questions that reflected their disappointments." Some of their survey questions included, "Describe how it feels to lose an important

game," "If your teammates have worked so hard to make it to the subregionals and you didn't get to play in the game, how would you feel, and why?" and "How do you hold yourself together if it's the last game and you're losing?"

The Girls Express Their Interest.   At the end of the year, all of the classes were able to reconstruct the major tasks and many of the details of the curriculum strand. The girls remembered each task in far more detail than Kim expected, or even remembered herself. For example, several recalled selecting magazine pictures that they liked and using the magazine pictures to identify "messages girls receive about their bodies." They recalled discussions about who benefited from magazine pictures and whom they hurt. They talked about doing "journal searches" and "surveys."

The girls expressed considerable interest in many aspects of the curriculum strand. They expressed most interest in the tasks involving visual media. In the words of one youngster, "I liked it because I think I'm a little creative, and I like drawing and talking about basketball and then writing about it and how it affects girls' bodies . . . [and] taking pictures of people." The girls also expressed interest in the inquiry projects. For example, one commented, "I enjoyed this because we got to research our topic and learn more about it." They also expressed appreciation for the general topic of the strand—girls' bodies. "We were able to organize things that were hurtful and harmful or good for us, and I like to see that."

One activity that many girls found difficult, less interesting, and at times, "boring," was journal writing. As one succinctly asserted, "I just don't like to write!" Others were more equivocal in this regard distinguishing among writing tasks. "I don't really like writing in journals and stuff like that, but to figure out all the different answers we got was pretty interesting." Another girl expressed interest in journal writing only after Kim asked them to analyze their journals. She explained, "If I knew we were going to use our journals, I would have written more."

Offsetting Task Difficulty

Many of the critical-literacy processes in which Kim engaged the girls were, for them, new ways of learning and working. Further, according to a conversation Kim had with Jamie, the work of this curriculum strand was more difficult than what was considered typical school work. "Too many teachers just don't expect these girls to work hard, and they aren't held accountable for learning difficult material." To support the girls in these apparently novel processes, Kim used a variety of scaffolding strategies. For example, she provided the girls with a task sheet in order to supplement her oral instructions and explanations.

In addition to task sheets, Kim also presented think-aloud demonstrations for several of the more complex assigned tasks. During these demonstrations Kim explained to the girls how she might approach a particular task. In addition, Kim involved the girls in discussions of how to approach various tasks.

Kim: What I'd like to do is to walk you through—I'm going to borrow yours as an example—and explain what you are going to do. . . . What you will do is you will divide your surveys equally amongst your group, so that Leah would have the same number as her partner. And then what I need you to do is one person will read the survey question and the answer. So for example, [Kim reads from a survey] "Explain why you think girls should play softball." I'm going to read this to my partner. . . . The response is "because it's

good exercise and it's fun just to play and not participating in no activities. Girls should have the same opportunity as boys." So you'll read the response and then your job together with your partner is to come up with a few words or a phrase that describes what this means. That's the hard part. So for example, let's do this one as a group. "Because it's good exercise and it's fun to just play and not participating in no activities. Girls should have the same opportunities as boys." What do you think that's telling you? And it can be more than one thing. Why should girls play softball? What do you think that response is telling you?

Ms. Lee: Kaliee, what do you think? Why do girls play softball?

Kaliee: It's fun.

Kim: Ok. It's fun, so we might write fun on the side. I would write fun down. What else was the response saying? Because it's good exercise. . . . yes?

Camilla: To stay in shape

Kim: Okay. So you might write keep in shape or stay in shape.

Another type of support that Kim and Jamie provided the girls was to assist each of the small groups. One strategy that Kim used with the small groups was to walk them through some of the more complex tasks by using a sequence of questions. For example, when one group of girls was struggling to word a survey question about why some people think that girls are not as capable as boys in sports, Kim worked with the group. She helped them to think through how to word a question that would help them learn about others' views regarding inequities and/or stereotypes of girls and boys.

Kim: Okay, You want to know whether or not boys and girls are compared. Is that what you wanted to know?

Meg: Just a bunch of people on hers said no 'cause girls can't do everything boys can do and stuff like that.

Kim: So you're wanting to know. . . . Oh, okay let me think. You want to know whether or not people don't think girls can play sports? What do you want to know?

Meg: A bunch of people on hers said that "You know that boys are better than girls." We wanna know if people compare boys to girls like being equal.

Kim: Okay, so what if you asked that? Are boys and girls [cut off]

Ashley: Are boys and girls equal in sports?

Kim: So how can you word a question to get at . . . what people think?

Ashley: Are boys and girls equal in sports?

Kim: That's a yes or no question.

Rachel: How about, "What do you think girls should play, baseball or softball?" Because like they . . .

Meg: That's still a one-word answer.

> *Kim:* Okay, let's think about this. . . . Why do girls play softball and not baseball? Explain why girls and boys don't both play softball or don't both play. I'm just thinking out loud.

> *Meg:* And they are going to say because the boys can beat 'em. (transcript data)

This was the typical type of sustained and personalized support that many of the groups needed. Thus it became a challenge to provide this level of support to the many groups that were at work in the classroom.

Whereas many of the groups requested help from Kim and Jamie, there was noticeable variability in success among the groups. The most noticeable difference was in how the 7th graders worked as compared with the older girls, and in particular, the advanced 9th graders. Specifically, the 8th- and 9th-grade girls were much more analytical than the 7th-grade girls. The younger girls seemed to move much more quickly through the tasks, focusing more on task completion than on analysis. For example, when the girls were writing about why they selected certain magazine images, a typical 7th-grade response was, "He is fine a[nd] he got the body and his tattoo" or "I like this picture because this is how a real man should hold a woman."

Similar differences surfaced when the girls were identifying places at school that sent messages to girls about their bodies. One group of 7th-grade girls noted the gym as a location and the messages girls received, as "You're fat," "You smell bad," "You got pretty teeth," and "You're athletic." There was little elaboration to the messages.

In contrast, the 9th graders typically elaborated their responses. For example, when explaining a picture of a woman who had just had a baby, one group of 9th graders elaborated, "It [a picture of a woman who had just had a baby] caught my attention because it's NASTY! It was nasty because it showed a pregnant woman after she had her baby and she had all kinds of stretch marks from her pregnancy." Similarly, when describing a picture of a successful businesswoman, another 9th grader explained, "This picture shows women and how they can reach goals just as well as men. It makes me proud to be a woman and that there are women out there who are in control of their lives."

Another task that challenged the 7th-grade students was the part of the inquiry project in which they were to analyze the responses to the interview questions that they collected as part of their "task of the month." Kim explained each part of the task three or four times before the girls were able to proceed. Reflecting on the session, Kim wrote, "It was loud, [it] felt totally out of control because there were so many bodies." Some of the girls chose to work on a topic for which they had not previously conducted interviews, and more than a few of them had recorded only one- or two-word interview responses in their journals. Kim summed up her assessment of this part of the curriculum in her field notes, "Some of the girls were able to eventually do the task, but on a whole it didn't feel right."

Whereas the younger girls struggled to analyze their interview data, the older girls worked with energy and focus. They not only were able to complete the analysis but they also critiqued the interviewing process. Kim had asked the girls to write down what they were learning about designing interview questions and interviewing people. She explained that such analysis could help them design more effective ways to gather the information relevant to their topics. With Kim's help the

9th graders could often imagine better interviewing strategies. During one such discussion, Kim and several 9th graders reconsidered the use of interview questions.

> *Kim:* When you just go out and you interviewed directly, people froze up. What might you do in order to take that factor out? What would be something that you could do, given that information? If I'm going to interview you, but I know that sometimes people freeze up in interviews, what might I do instead?

> *Meg:* Make them more comfortable.

> *Kim:* Okay, you could make them more comfortable. How might you do that?

> *Allisa:* Interview them individually instead of when a bunch of people are around.

> *Kim:* Okay. So interview. . . . Were they uncomfortable when they were in a group?

> *Allisa:* No.

> *Kim:* They were just uncomfortable?

> *Abigal:* Some of them were uncomfortable. . . . They felt weird answering questions about this stuff like boys, about beauty walk. . . . And you could feel the tenseness around them. And then you tense up too. 'Cause you know 'em.

> *Kim:* Okay. Well, let's think about this because this is really important. What if you wanted information, but you don't want people to feel awkward? What could we do instead?

> *Meg:* Change the questions around. . . . Just go up and start a conversion with 'em and then ask them questions . . . about that topic.

> *Kim:* Okay. So that might be one way. That's a really good. That's a REALLY good strategy.

Although more than a few 9th graders explained that they learned that "interviewing was hard," they were able to report specific difficulties. For example, they explained during a conversation with Kim that respondents "[were sometimes] uncomfortable," "some people wanted to ask questions themselves," and some gave "stupid responses such as girls aren't good enough to hit baseballs, that is why they play softball." Further, they were able to make productive suggestions about how to deal with the difficulties of interviewing, and they eagerly elaborated on ways to gather their data more effectively.

Though the 7th graders appeared challenged to complete many of the tasks, we decided to continue with the curriculum strand along with the support strategies that Kim was using. We did this because there were many moments of enthusiasm expressed through the girls' participation. Further, we wanted to learn whether, with support, the 7th graders could benefit from participating in the curriculum.

Besides struggling with the analytical aspects of the tasks, many of the 7th-grade girls struggled with print literacy. Some of the girls were unable to use the task sheets that were intended to provide instructional support. Others could not

fully complete the writing portions of the tasks. Because many of the tasks involved reading and writing, we tried to find ways to support girls who struggled with reading and writing. Thus, Kim found ways to verbally clarify what we wanted the girls to do through elaborate explanations, think-aloud demonstrations, and small group help.

Jamie also worried about the girls who struggled with print literacy. She thought that these girls might be more successful if we decreased the opportunities for writing and increased their opportunities to talk in a large group. She noted that they were both fluent and energized during large group conversations. Because this was the case, she thought that the girls who struggled would be able to provide a more elaborate critique, if they did so, through conversation rather than in a written response.

On the other hand, although Kim valued large group conversations and used them occasionally, she believed that opportunities to write about their thinking would help the girls, in the long run, to become more skilled in written communication. She also believed that such opportunities would allow them to disclose and develop ideas that might seem to them inappropriate in a more public arena. Further, Kim believed that the writing and thinking that went on individually and in the small groups were a necessary precursor for thoughtfulness during large group conversation.

Despite the difficulties and the variability among the girls, they were able to work through the tasks with support from Kim and Jamie. For example, during the map task in which the girls were to illustrate and name both positive and negative messages girls receive about their bodies at school, every group successfully named what types of things girls learn about their bodies. One group claimed that, in the gym, people make comments such as, "you're white (pale), you've got hairy legs, you're fat or too skinny, you're ashy (need some lotion), you stink (need some deodorant), you have a good figure." In the hallways and the lunch room people "gossip" and say things such as "move your fat a** out of the way, mind your own business, you're fat, ugly, and stupid."

Similarly, despite the difficulties, the groups all were successful with their inquiry projects. For example, one of the groups of 7th-grade girls who had struggled through most of the tasks completed their inquiry project on "the mall" and illustrated, through pictures and narratives, how teen pregnancy is related to the mall. They photographed a boy, the stomach of a 15-year-old girl who was 8 months pregnant, and a baby by a rack of shirts. The written analysis that accompanied their photographic essay read, "Sometimes, at the mall, people get together in the bathroom stalls and young girls get pregnant. Young girls who get pregnant can ruin their lives because, when they have their baby, they can't go to school."

Danielle, Ashlyn, and Woo, a group of 9th-grade girls who studied basketball, learned that

> to play basketball you have to have dedication, courage, determination, and be able to accept criticism and work together. We learned that basketball is very hard work but it is really fun. It helps a girl's self-esteem. It's fun to watch but better to play. It makes you feel good, if you accomplished your goal and excelled at your sport. It also keeps your legs strong and very fit. (photographic essay written analysis)

By the end of the year, Jamie, Kim, and the girls agreed that the curriculum was appropriate for the girls. Jamie became increasingly confident of this. After the inquiry presentations, she reported her estimate of the girls' success in her field notes. "I really think the [inquiry] projects and presentations went really well. . . . Even the younger class did a great job." Kim shared this opinion, explaining her understanding of the need for learning time with the critical processes. "I just think that it takes time for them to learn how to use these processes. It would have been too easy to give up trying to work with the younger girls, rather than working to help them learn the processes of critique." Many of the girls reported that many of the tasks, though at times "hard," were quite helpful to them in learning about cultural messages of the female body.

Sustaining Ethical Relationships

Another issue we faced was how to develop and sustain trusting and ethical relationships among the teacher, the researchers, and other school employees. Kim and Jamie had worked together previously, and both were committed to the research project. Whereas both Kim and Jamie were comfortable with the girls' movement around the classroom space, there were times when their interpretations of what was going on in the classroom differed considerably. Specifically, Kim and Jamie held conflicting views about the appropriateness of different types of classroom talk.

Kim viewed social talk (talk not directly related to the tasks) and academic talk (talk specific to the task) as overlapping and interchangeable. Kim considered both forms of talk as very important to the girls' success with the curriculum because interpreting social talk was often necessary for the support of academic talk. In her researcher journal, Kim wrote in her field notes that she was "convinced that they [the girls] desperately need the opportunity to combine academic and social talk as these issues [issues of the body] are personal, social, and academic." Jamie, on the other hand, was not as comfortable with the girls' social talk, typically assessing social talk as a signal that the girls were "off task." At times she would discourage the girls' social talk because she considered it to be a sign that the girls were not "following your [Kim's] instructions."

During one session, Jamie scolded a group of girls who were talking about a boy because she judged the girls to be "off task." The students enlisted Kim's support, claiming that Jamie's actions limited their ability to continue the task. The following conversation occurred as Kim attempted to get the girls back to their project and to reassure them that they were doing what she had asked of them, without speaking about Jamie in ways that would undermine or discredit her in any way.

Kim: [Says to a group of girls] What's wrong?

Danielle: Mrs. Lee.

Kim: What about her?

Danielle: She was jumpin' on us because we were doing what we were told.

Kim: Okay.

Danielle: And smilin' And we were smilin' like this [provides example]

Ashlyn: They said Andrew Scott's name.

Danielle: Yeah and see he's on the interview data. Mrs. Lee said that we were saying Andrew Scott had nothing to do with it. I said that Andrew said, then I started saying what he said and she said "you had nothin' to do with this thing" and he was my person I interviewed and I was tellin' them what he said.

Ashlyn: And she [Mrs. Lee] jumped all over us.

Kim: Okay. I know it's not any fun when that happens and sometimes teachers make mistakes and

Danielle: [cuts Kim off] Look who I have probably just as much notes as somebody sittin' there [points to another table].

Ashlyn: And yet she jumped all over us cause she said we were talkin', well there were other girls talkin' too, and she didn't say anything to them. Cause they were sittin' right beside me.

Danielle: I packed up early but I just takin' notes and I got that to prove.

Ashlyn: She had her notes right beside her. Just because she might of put her notebook in there doesn't mean she wasn't takin' notes. And then she said "It's not time for smiling." I didn't know that when I came to school I could not smile with my friends that's who I wanna be with and I can't even smile. That's ridiculous.

Kim: Well, well you can smile.

Ashlyn: Not what she said.

Kim: Actually if you all had these scoured faces when you were doing this I would be a little bit worried. Because then I would think you were bored. (transcript data)

One of the things that Kim did to try to sustain relationships with both the girls and Jamie was to further talk with Jamie about some of the things that she was asking the girls to do. For example, after trying to help the girls get back on task after being "yelled at," Kim spoke with Jamie during the class session about what she had said to the girls with respect to "discussing the boy they were talking about earlier." As the year progressed, Jamie made many adjustments in the ways she worked with the girls. She increasingly provided them with latitude. Toward the end of the year, when the school librarian became upset with Jamie because she thought that "the girls were too social and chaotic," Jamie explained that the girls were doing what they were asked to do and were not "goofing around."

The principal maintained a supportive stance toward the curriculum strand. He visited the classroom frequently and asked the girls about their work and views. He seemed enlivened by what he observed. His overt support for the curriculum and its atypical activity structure could have supported Jamie in her transformation. At the end of the year, during an interview with Kim, he explained his disappointment about the conventional behavior that persisted among teachers at the

school. "Too many of the teachers still think learning only happens when kids are quiet and sitting in rows."

Lessening Interference of Research Culture

The final issue, which we experienced throughout the entire project, was the tension that arose between collecting data and working with the girls in responsive ways. There were two types of stress involved. The first problem was the complexity resulting from the many documentation activities that were included in the curriculum strand solely for data-collection purposes. The second was the problem of ensuring that all of the recording devices were functioning properly the entire time. In Kim's words, "The [data collection] technology is causing so much undue stress that it is interfering in being able to teach, not to mention think."

The analytical tasks were difficult enough, and we worried that the additional complexities of documentation would overwhelm the girls and discourage them from giving their best effort. Early in the project, in addition to the writing tasks meant to support analysis, there were writing tasks for the purposes of documenting students' work. For example, we asked each girl to put her name and a number on the back of every magazine picture that she selected as interesting. Then we asked them to list numbers on a sheet of paper that "go with the number[s] on the back of each picture." As part of another task in which girls had selected five pictures that told them something about girls' bodies, we asked them to "make a card for each picture you selected. First, record the category, name, and number on the top of the card." These documentation tasks added a layer of difficulty to the already complex analytical tasks we had designed for this curriculum.

After the second cycle in the curriculum strand, Kim reflected in her researcher journal on the stress involved with the documentation activities. "I think we need to cut way back on the level of difficulty to all the gazillion parts of the tasks. It might be more effective, not to mention more enjoyable to the students, to do less." In reflecting on the approach to data collection in this project, Kim summarized her view. "It [data collection approach] seems confusing, and . . . I think we will end up creating a curriculum that is appropriate to get a great deal of data, but not so appropriate for teachers to actually do with classes of 30–35 students."

Providing responsive instruction during the sessions while keeping all of the data collection technology functioning properly was another problem with which we struggled. Even when the girls and Jamie began to assume more responsibility for monitoring the technology, this concern persisted. During each session, Kim set up audio recorders and video recorders to collect data. There was also an abundance of coded cards and other documents produced by the girls that required gathering and sorting during and between classes.

As a researcher, Kim felt that it was vital for her to gather these data so that we could learn about the curriculum effort. As an instructor, Kim felt committed to listening to and observing the girls' behaviors while she was sharing explanations, leading discussions, providing directions, and offering examples. Kim experienced these commitments as competing agendas, often reporting strong feelings of stress as she worked in the classroom, shifting her attention between working through the curriculum strand with the girls and monitoring the data collection technology. On several occasions Rosary and Kim discussed ways to lessen the technology interference but were never able to come up with strategies that would both provide

stress relief for Kim and still allow them to gather the types of data that they both thought were important. If a research assistant had been available to run the equipment, some of the tension could have been alleviated, but Kim did not have one. Thus, throughout the year, the girls and Jamie continued to help Kim monitor the technology.

Discussion

Our research focused on the development and implementation of a curriculum strand designed to help adolescent girls name the discourses that shape their lives and regulate their bodies. In our analysis we asked two questions: a) What were the major tasks actually used during the enactment of the curriculum strand? and b) What issues emerged for us as we enacted the curriculum strand in girls' physical education classes and how did we respond? We asked these questions in part because we wanted to understand whether a curriculum developed and inspired by critical pedagogy and poststructural feminism could realistically be implemented in a public school setting that is embedded with the contradictory values and beliefs of the humanistic school environment. Our analysis suggests that, although such a curriculum holds promise for encouraging girls' critique, it is fraught with moments of complexity and difficulty.

One of the biggest difficulties we faced was being confronted with the many girls who found the work difficult and confusing. Given that many of the critical-literacy strategies were very new ways of working for the majority of the girls, we struggled to find ways to help them learn the processes of critique without imposing our own critiques on them. We were cognizant of Alvermann, Moon, and Hagood's (1999) reminder that continually asking students to critique things that bring them pleasure can simply add another layer of oppression to the lives of adolescents.

In addition to the struggles of finding ways to help the girls learn processes of critique without imposing too many of our own beliefs, we were also confronted with finding ways of working with girls who struggled with print literacy. Many of the critical-thinking tasks required students to be able to read and write. Throughout the entire curriculum strand, we were continually trying to find ways to support these girls that would allow then to experience success. We believed that it was better to continue to work with the girls and help them learn rather than to give up using the strategies of critique simply because they had difficulty reading and writing. Our hope was that through the experiences of this curriculum strand they would develop their print-literacy skills.

Further, we were faced with trying to sustain an ethical relationship among all those involved in the process when there was conflict around interpretations of what was happening in the classroom. For example, when a group of girls elicited Kim's support after Jamie scolded them for being off task because they were "talking about a boy," Kim had to negotiate with them to alleviate their frustration without criticizing their teacher.

The girls believed that their talk about the boy was important to their task completion, yet Jamie believed this conversation to be more social than academic. Dillon and Moje (1998) reported similar experiences in their work with teachers and adolescents. They, too, noted a tension between social and academic talk and that often students' social talk was interpreted by teachers as being off task even when it related to the topics being studied.

Another challenge along the same lines was finding ways to communicate about the girls' working processes to other members of the school staff, such as the librarian, who believed the girls were "being too noisy." Teachers hoping to implement this type of curriculum might find themselves having to explain what they are doing to other teachers and administrators who might not understand or appreciate such vocal and active learning. In this study, we had the principal's support. Such a support base helped us to enact the curriculum within the school context.

Despite our skepticism and the problems that we encountered, there were outcomes that suggested that this type of work was appropriate for the girls. We found that openings were created for small insights that would not have otherwise been explored or shared. Further, the girls seemed to be generally successful in the work we asked them to do. They were able to complete all tasks, sometimes on their own and sometimes with the assistance of Kim and Jamie. They participated eagerly during the frequent discussions and sharing sessions. They produced creative and well-developed artifacts. The older girls produced well-elaborated critiques of cultural messages about the female body, and the younger ones initiated critique. Both older and younger girls recalled much of what we did together throughout the year. Finally, all of the girls described their experiences in generally positive terms. In sum, the curriculum strand allowed girls to develop some insight into the ways that culture influences subjectivity.

Although the girls developed critical-analysis skills that we judged to be noteworthy, they did not describe alternative possibilities or discuss alternative practices to any extent. Thus we were left wondering whether it is possible to move beyond critique to the transformative practices of envisioning and creating alternative possibilities. Whereas the curriculum strand allowed girls to "produce new ways of seeing which make sense of . . . [conflicts and contradictions in our everyday lives,] enabling women to call them into question" (Weedon, 1987, p. 5), it is not clear whether these opportunities were sufficient to enable transformation. More research is required to determine whether such transformation can occur in the physical education classroom.

Throughout the research project, we found theoretical perspectives from poststructural feminism quite useful in developing and critiquing this curricular effort. Though not a panacea, these perspectives allowed us to think carefully about ways of working with the girls and ways of assessing our work with them. The linkages among language, subjectivity, desire, and critique were especially helpful in our work. Thus we have grown supportive of the view that, in transformative work, "we need a theory of the relationship between experience, social power, and resistance" (Weedon, 1987, p. 8) to support new modes of subjectivity and thus open new possibilities for change toward equity for all peoples.

In sum, we want to encourage curriculum-transformation efforts that counter damaging humanistic values. In this regard, we continue to be encouraged by Pagano's (1993) words, "If knowledge is constitutive of the world then our choices about what to teach, how to teach, and how to interpret the texts we teach are ethical choices. They are choices about the sort of world we want to live in. They are choices about what sort of life that world will support. They are choices about a consciousness that projects the world" (p. xv).

In spite of the difficulties of nurturing a radical curriculum in the humanistic environment of the school, the successes of the girls in considering the conflicting messages they receive about their bodies and physical activity make us supportive of this type of effort. Further, given that the alternative to these difficulties is inaction

and the maintenance of the status quo, the only real choice we have as teachers and researchers is to imagine and enact curricula and pedagogy that have the potential for a more just world.

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Endnotes

[1]The girls provided the researcher a list of magazines that they enjoyed. Some of the magazines used were purchased by the researcher, some were brought in by the girls themselves, and others were provided by the librarian.

[2]All pseudonyms used in this research paper were selected by the girls themselves.

[3]We use multiple examples from the girls to illustrate the variability amongst the students.

[4]The physical education classes changed composition at the beginning of the spring semester, which was also the beginning of the fourth cycle in the project. Of the 90 girls that started the project, seven dropped physical education and five added. Further, some of the girls changed class periods. Given these changes, we planned the next three cycles so that the new girls could be successful and the small groups from the previous semester could change. Whereas some might argue that the change in participants and class structure could influence the project outcome, our intent was to understand how to implement a curriculum strand of this nature in regular physical education settings. Changes in class structure and students are typical in school settings and this is just one issue that teachers will have to work around if they try to use this type of curriculum strand.

[5]Unless explicitly stated, the data sources are the transcripts of the class sessions.

Call for Monograph Proposals

The editors are seeking proposals for a potential monograph for Volume 24 Issue 4 (to appear in October 2005). Proposals should be no more than 10 pages in length and clearly identify the scope of, need for, and theme of the Monograph. It should include abstracts and contributing authors of all chapters. Data should be collected or in the process of being collected at the time the proposal is submitted. The proposals should be submitted electronically by July 15, 2004, to:

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All proposals will be reviewed by both Co-Editors and three members of the JTPE Editorial Board. Editorial decisions will be made in August 2004. The completed draft of the Monograph is due for review on March 1, 2005. Final draft of the Monograph is due June 1, 2005. Questions on the Monograph proposal submission process should be directed to Bonnie Blankenship at the above address, by phone (765) 494-3188, or by e-mail at bblanke@purdue.edu.