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Chapter 11

Students' Gendered Learning in Physical Education: A Didactic Study of a French Multi-Ethnic Middle School in an Underprivileged Area

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Abstract

This chapter is about how gender order is enacted in a multi-ethnic co-educational physical education class located in an area of low socioeconomic status. Using the joint action conceptual framework of the French *didactique* tradition, it explores the schooling experiences of girls and boys in a multi-ethnic middle school. Through three nested time-scales of didactical analysis, it scrutinizes how gendered learning emerges as a by-product of classroom interactions. The findings point out that gendered learning among girls and boys goes through a complex process in which participants' epistemic gender positioning intersects with their cultural/ethnic backgrounds through micro-social interactions related to particular curricular contents within a particular context. The analysis reveals that not all girls are dominated when playing games, and not all boys reinforce hegemonic masculinity in the class. Each student occupies a specific niche in relation with the meaning she/he gives to the teacher's expectations and how she/he negotiates the meaning of her/his practice within the

peer group. Finally, some implications are pointed out in terms of feminist emancipatory pedagogies for schools located in underprivileged areas.

Introduction

In this chapter we focus on gender issues in PE with the aim of examining the extent to which gender is addressed at the level of the knowledge taught and learned and how the gender order is enacted in a multi-ethnic coeducational class located in an area of low socioeconomic status (SES). We consider that gendered practices are shaped by social, cultural and economic inequalities, which produce differing educational outcomes. The didactic analysis carried out in this study uses intersectionality as it pertains to the various systems of discrimination within multiple groups to explore the interplay of student's gendered positioning understood as a knowledge-specific concept, which relates students to classroom and gendered knowledge in a particular way (see Amade-Escot, Chapter 3), and students' cultural/ethnic backgrounds. Recognising the importance of social class, ethnicity and gender in the schooling experiences of girls and boys, we mainly focus, in this chapter, on the interplay of gender and ethnicity in a middle school located in a very deprived district. In the French tradition of research in social science, the term 'race' is not used because it is considered philosophically as a non-sense: there is a single human people. We use the term 'ethnic backgrounds' or 'ethnicity' in this chapter when referring to the intersectional dimensions of this study.

Over the years, an increasing volume of research in physical education (PE) has recognised that pedagogical practices participate in the social construction of gendered bodies and minds through the curriculum. In the case of multi-ethnic schools in areas of low socioeconomic

status (SES), this task is made harder as teachers have to maintain discipline and combat sexism in ways that allow peace to reign in the class (Larsson et al., 2009; Öhrn, 2009). Research literature has shown that, in this kind of school, teachers have to deal with the difficulty of maintaining both conceptual learning and engagement. Students' engagement is often formally obtained by using simple, closed tasks. This favours immediate achievement and disciplined behaviour but may lower the quality of learning because such tasks are not related to exacting knowledge content (Debars and Amade-Escot, 2006; Kheroubi and Rochex 2004). The case study research reported here revisits this issue in the light of gender and students' cultural/ethnic backgrounds. Within the French *didactique* tradition, it focuses on how teacher-student interactions and students' peer-to-peer relations participate in the production of gendered learning (Verscheure and Amade-Escot, 2007).

We first sketch out the conceptual framework and then outline the design of the case study research, which is based on three nested temporal scales of didactical analyses related to how the content is delivered to girls and to boys: a macro-scale analysis aimed at identifying, over the unit, whether there are differences in the progression of the knowledge taught; a lesson-time-scale analysis to investigate how the teacher's verbal supervision differs according to whether it concerns girls or boys; and a micro-scale analysis of specific episodes, which pays special attention to participants' gender positioning during transactions related to knowledge construction. The findings highlight how differential gendered learning is gradually established through the three scales of analysis, taking account of students' cultural/ethnic backgrounds. The chapter ends with some implications for pedagogical practices.

Investigating student gendered learning in PE through the joint action in didactics framework

The joint action in didactics (JAD) conceptual framework assumes that gendered learning emerges through didactical transactions (Amade-Escot, Chapter 3; Verscheure and Amade-Escot, 2007). Subject-specific knowledge and know-how are co-constructed in action by teacher and students and/or among students within a learning environment that is irreducibly conceptualized as cultural, institutional, material and social (Ligozat, 2011). In this study, the social and cultural dimensions of learning environments are related to the context of a multi-ethnic middle school located in a low-SES district. The JAD framework gives a descriptive, situated frame for studying the enacted curriculum by grasping students' learning experiences and the differential meanings constructed through these experiences. During classroom practices, the teacher gives the students directions that expose what counts as knowledge and appropriate ways of practising in a specific social activity. But teachers and students may not share the same goals or same agendas, particularly in this type of school. Negotiations and transactions occur, some of them related to the gendered facets of each particular piece of content, others to students' social relations in the class. Two major concepts sustain the approach.

Differential didactic contract

The concept of didactic contract concerns the transactional dynamics underpinning any teaching-learning process which begins with students encountering education through an initial learning environment (the 'primitive didactic *milieu'*). The primitive didactic *milieu,* designed by the teacher, is defined as a system of tasks that encompasses material, symbolic,

and semiotic objects. It evolves through teacher and students' joint action and it changes continuously during the predominantly implicit transactions that specifically concern the knowledge content at stake (Ligozat, 2011). Schubauer-Leoni (1996: 160) states that the didactic contract 'is not implicitly negotiated with all the students of the classroom but with some groups of students having diverse standings in the classroom. These standings are related to diverse hierarchies of excellence and are partially attributable to *students' social backgrounds*' (our translation and emphasis). Verscheure (2005) demonstrates that gender, as a social and cultural construction of habits, plays a major role in the differential evolution of the didactic contract among girls and boys in a class. The need to pay attention to how students in their diversity (gender, attitudes, experiences, abilities, etc.) interpret the primitive didactic *milieu* set by the teacher, as well as her/his actions throughout the flow of interactions, has been pointed out (Amade-Escot et al., 2015). Thus, the dynamics of the differential didactic contract (DDC) is unique to each student observed. In investigating the intersection of gender and cultural/ethnic backgrounds in a multi-ethnic class, we aim to shed new light on how slight inflexions or radical differences in student learning can be informed by in-depth analyses of the DDC during didactical transactions.

Student epistemic gender positioning

Inspired by the 'positioning theory' of Harré and van Langenhove (1999), the concept of gender positioning helps to understand how gendered contents are enacted in classrooms. Students' participation in PE classrooms is constrained by the traditional and the prevailing forms of sport practices associated with gendered social norms. Previous research in didactics has pointed out that students' epistemic gender positioning evolves through the many interactions they have with peers, the teacher, and the successive learning environments in which they act (Amade-Escot et al., 2015; Verscheure and Vinson, 2018). That is why

positioning changes from one moment to the next, depending on how students draw meaning from the interactions. Assuming that students' participation in PE is plural and accounts for the transactional dynamics of day-to-day classroom life, the research purpose is to describe the differential construction of PE students' gendered learning.

To summarize, this chapter focuses on how teacher's and students' didactical joint action produces students' gendered learning in a multi-ethnic class. This didactical study has links with work in the Anglo-Saxon tradition that studies gender issues in PE using an intersectional approach that considers that social categorizations, such as ethnic backgrounds[i], social class and gender, should be regarded as interconnected since they function as overlapping, interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage (Azzarito, 2009; Stride, 2014). By integrating gendered and ethnic analysis and considering their combined effects, this chapter contributes to a better understanding of the interconnection of gender and ethnicity in the dynamics of the DDC.

Materials and methods

The research design – a case study at a deprived working-class middle school – combines video and audio recordings of lessons, and interviews with the teacher and students, to which parents had given their consent and the university ethics committee its approval (Verscheure and Amade-Escot, 2007). Since it includes a focus on both gender and students' cultural/ethnic backgrounds, it comes within the scope of observational qualitative research using intersectionality as an analytical strategy.

Research setting, participants and data collection

The research was conducted in a suburban multi-ethnic middle school located in a low-SES district of a southern French town with high levels of unemployment. The school, comprising 14 classes, belongs to a government pedagogical programme sustaining education in underprivileged areas: 71% of students hold scholarships from the French Government. The school has a high level of academic failure and student dropout. Most students live in the nearest working-class district, which is known for its high rate of youth delinquency. The school mainly serves Muslim students from various African migrant backgrounds (96%). Nearly all were born in France and speak French, and some also speak their family's first language at home.

A teacher, Pierre – all names are pseudonyms – and 27 students: 16 girls and 11 boys, 13-14 years old, were observed during 8 lessons of a unit devoted to handball, a game widely taught in French secondary schools. It is worth noting that, in this class, male students always want to play football. Nevertheless, Pierre, who is an experienced teacher but not a handball expert, privileged this game because he says 'handball is easier to teach in co-ed classes than football'. Handball is a team sport that values muscularity and strength less than football does (Griffin, 1985; Skelton, 2000). The data collected were drawn from: i) an initial interview with the teacher about his pedagogical values and objectives; ii) teacher's pre-lesson and post-lesson interviews; iii) video and audio recordings of all lessons; iv) short, in-task interviews with students.

Data analysis

Three analyses were performed using different time-scales successively. The first identified the content of learning environments over the unit in order to characterize the progression of

the knowledge taught to girls and to boys. The second concerned the content development through the teacher's verbal supervision in each lesson. The third pinpointed the evolution of the DDC on a micro-didactic scale, paying special attention to participants' epistemic gender positioning during specific episodes of didactical transactions. According to the principles of a didactical investigation, we first performed an *a priori* analysis of the primitive didactic *milieu* of each episode to characterize in detail what the knowledge content embedded in the *milieu* provided by the teacher was. Then, didactical transactions were systematically analysed. To provide a narrative of the teacher and students' joint action, we described their embodied actions as contained in the video-recordings and all associated verbal utterances. To document participants' gender positioning, we triangulated the teacher and students' discourse during the on-going classroom interactions, the discourse from interviews, and participants' actions.

Sport sociologists have shown that ways of performing traditionally associated with femininity or masculinity pervade sport practices and sport discourses (Whitson, 1994). 'Dominant discourses of fitness, health and sports are institutionalized in schools and function to "normalize the body" by promoting (…) ideals of the feminine body associated with thinness (…) and ideals of masculinity linked to muscularity and strength' (Azzarito 2009: 21). The themes driving the analysis were thus connected with the following questions: Are sex-stereotypes, as traditional ways of performing in games, valued and promoted by the participants (or not)? Do students (girls and boys) engage (or not) gendered forms of performing? To what extent are these forms of engagement influenced (or not) by any cultural/ethnic backgrounds? If gendered facets of knowledge are involved which does the teacher privilege?

To sum up, the three successive scales of data analysis were aimed at identifying the evolution of gendered learning across time and the interplay of epistemic gender positioning and ethnicity in this process.

Enactment of students' differential gendered learning through the three scales of analysis

Learning environments and content delivery over the handball unit

Each of the eight lessons of the unit were organized in three phases: i) a warm-up phase of 5 to 10 minutes, ii) a learning phase of two to three tasks, lasting between 15 and 20 minutes, and iii) a series of handball matches during 20 to 30 minutes. Over the unit, we observed various forms of student groupings. Most often, during the second, learning phase, the teacher let the students choose their groups freely. In that case, students always chose to work in single-sex groups. However, Pierre sporadically imposed mixed groups (lessons 2, 3, 4 and 5). During the phase of handball matches, he always chose the teams, sometimes mixed (lessons 3, 4, 5 and 8), sometimes single-sex (lessons 1, 2, 6 and 7). Through Pierre's interviews, we found that coeducational working-groups are not easy for him to set up, particularly in this multi-ethnic middle school:

> 'In addition, the relationship between girls and boys here [in this school] ... is very complicated. Umm … when I make them sit down [to listen to my instructions] the girls sit together, the boys sit together. In sport activities where there is body contact … like judo, it is blatant: boys do not want to work with girls. So ... it's age-related [I think] but … it's also related to ... I would say… culturally a bit complicated [both in terms of bodily norms and

> power relationships]: the place of the girl, the place of the boy here [in this multi-ethnic school]' (Teacher's prior interview).

Concerning lesson 4, when Pierre made up mixed teams for the matches for coeducational purposes, he said in the post-lesson interview: 'I wanted to favour mixed teams, but boys see this assignment as a sanction if I ask them to play with girls', whereas, in lesson 5, he felt happy to have imposed mixed teams on them: 'It works pretty well, as the game goes on … they're [boys and girls] caught up in the game' (post-lesson 5, teacher's interview).

Although students' groupings were not the same over the unit, this scale of analysis suggests minor differences in terms of the learning environments provided to girls and boys. All stated tasks were the same for all students; most were related to exacting tactical and technical knowledge and know-how aligned with Pierre's gender-aware pedagogical purpose: 'girls and boys can play games together'. Pierre is not a teacher who has the same 'passion for football' as the two male teachers described by Skelton (2000) and sport hegemonic masculinity is not publicly celebrated in his class (Whitson 1994). For example, the objective of the unit: 'reach the goal area collectively in good tactical conditions' (teacher's prior interview) does not privilege power shots but looks at how to create open spaces, a tactical purpose that can be achieved using different forms of practice less marked by muscularity and power. Most of the learning environments privilege collective knowledge and value wisdom over individual strength. The focus on tactical knowledge aims to empower girls (and boys) in ways less traditionally associated with dominant masculinity in sport (Skelton 2000, Whitson 1994). Nevertheless, over the unit, the analysis showed differentiated achievements among students in terms of learning trajectories. Some girls and boys did not improve much in their practice. They were often disengaged from the task, staying away from collective actions in bystander roles. Certain boys evolved little in their competencies. Among them, the most highly skilled

continued to systematically perform inefficient power shots whatever the tactical conditions, whereas less skilled boys avoided the learning (as we will see below with Adel). Abir was the student who progressed the furthest in tactical content over the unit. According to the teacher, she needs to 'improve technically to gain in efficiency and to stabilize her learning in handball' (post-lesson 7, teacher's interview).

How did the teacher and students co-construct these differentiated learning trajectories? To document this question, we need the second and third scales of analysis, which delve into the details of the content taught in a particular lesson. We choose lesson 7 as an illustration of the gendered interactions observed during the unit because it exhibits significant patterns that characterize the functioning of this didactic system.

Gendered content embedded in the teacher's verbal supervision

This second time scale of analysis gives some understanding of how unbalanced and gendered content delivery is in relation to the teacher's supervision in a lesson. It focuses on the knowledge content conveyed through Pierre's utterances to boys and girls, particularly during the learning tasks related to the overarching objective of the unit. In this part of the lesson, students spontaneously chose to work in single-sex groups. Two tasks consisting of handball play-practices with a goalkeeper were set up successively: 3 players versus 1 defender (3*vs*1), then 3 players versus 2 defenders (3*vs*2). Pierre's intended knowledge content in these tasks concerns how to play collectively to reach the goal in good tactical conditions. When supervising the single-sex groups, he first maintains two ideas in the content delivered: 'go forward if no defenders' (tactical instruction), and hints on 'how to shoot' (technical instruction). These instructions are balanced among boys or girls. Nevertheless, the tactical notion of 'pass the ball if no defender' is more frequently addressed to boys than girls at the

end of the first task. During the post-lesson interview, Pierre says that in this multi-ethnic school boys need ‘to be supported and appraised in their performances to keep them engaged in the tasks’. Moreover, when interacting with the boys, Pierre puts more emphasis on speed (5 occurrences, versus only 1 for the groups of girls) and active defence (4 occurrences for boys and 2 for girls), thus publicly celebrating these forms of masculinity. Pierre’s supervision indicates what counts for boys as appropriate masculine ways of playing this game. It is noteworthy that ‘speed’ as a facet of the knowledge taught is less privileged for girls.

Later, in the second learning task with 2 defenders, Pierre provides spatial clues to girls. He asks them to distribute their group over the play area. He never gives such instructions to boys, who, collectively, do not appear to distribute themselves more widely over the space than girls do. Conversely, this marks what counts as appropriate knowledge for girls even though Pierre is not aware of his stereotyping of girls’ spatial abilities in games. His supervision shows how gender ‘inequalities [are] re-embedded within the space of classroom’ (Taylor, 2013: 689). In addition, this analysis gives an example of how, over time, the tactical dimension of the knowledge taught, which was the core aim of the course, faded for both boys and girls, while the teacher’s expectations evolved toward simple, closed feedback, favouring gendered forms of bodily actions like ‘speed and defence’ for boys and ‘better use of space’ for girls.

Variations and resistance in the enactment of gendered learning

Because of length limitations, the third, micro-didactical analysis focuses on only three participants (Pierre, Abir and Adel) during an episode of the 3*vs*1 play-practice. Pierre considers Abir as a high achieving female student and Adel a low achieving male student:

‘Abir has a good level, she is very willing, but... not always successful… she can miss her shot, she can miss her pass […] but on the other hand, she is very willing’. According to Pierre, Adel encounters difficulties in being included by his classmates: ‘Adel is low skilled in PE, he also has poor academic results […] he is a lonely little boy’ (Teacher’s interviews). These two students, whose handball learning experiences are the focus of this section, have family roots in South-Morocco. Their grandparents arrived in France in the 1960s for economic reasons. Like most students of the class, Abir and Adel are embedded in ‘cultures of hybridity’ (Stride, 2014) in terms of social class positioning, degrees of religiosity, new forms of ethnicity, and common teenage behaviours, all of which intersect and produce heterogeneity within the class. These dimensions need to be taken into consideration when analysing didactical transactions. The analysis begins after Pierre has asked the students to get into groups of three people and has set up the 3*vs*1 play-practice. As students have chosen to group in single-sex teams, he distributes the groups outside the handball half-court sidelines: all-girl groups on the left side of the court; all-boy groups on the right.

Pierre’s assignment at the beginning of the task is the same for all groups: ‘When in possession of the ball, go forward if no defender; if defender present, find a partner to pass the ball to … so he can reach the goal area line to take a shot’. The *a priori* analysis of this primitive didactic *milieu* points out the combination of tactical and technical knowledge required as: get away from defence and collectively create open spaces, create advantageous position to shoot by passing to the open player or going into open spaces.

Girls and boys work alternately on the same play-area under Pierre’s supervision. Pierre launches each attack calling alternately ‘*girls*’ then ‘*boys*’. It is the signal for Adel, who chooses to stay in the role of the passer, to perform the baseline throw-in for each work-group

attempt. At the same time a defender (girl or boy depending on which team is playing) enters the court at the free-throw line. In the excerpt below, we report the teacher's and students' joint actions in terms of what they say and how they act in relation to the content at stake. We particularly focus on the didactical transactions involving Adel as a passer and Abir. The episode concerns all five attempts of Abir's team, during which a girl volunteers to be goalkeeper.

1. On the 1st attempt, Abir and her teammates, Anissa and Iptissame, move forward into the court. Adel throws the ball in the direction of Iptissame. Another girl, the defender at the free-throw line, runs towards Iptissame while Anissa comes closer to receive the ball. Abir takes the opportunity of the open space to move forward towards the goal area. Anissa dribbles and makes a two-hand long pass to Abir. Pierre tells Abir: 'you have to score now'. Annissa's pass is not accurate enough and the ball is lost. Pierre comments: 'lost-ball'. Then, turning his head to the boys who are playing, he shouts: 'faster … more speed please'. One of the boys shoots on the goalkeeper, he calls out: 'Hey, guys, when a girl [is goalkeeper] you should shoot toward the ground... as I have already told you'. Then, to the next girls' team 'Come on! ... Keep on playing!'
2. During the 2nd attempt by Abir's team, Adel deliberately throws the ball on Iptissame's feet, without any comment from Pierre. Adel never does this when initiating the baseline throw-in to any group of boys. While Iptissame cannot catch the ball rolling between her feet, Anissa says loudly enough to make Adel grasp her comment: 'Him too, he's a weak player!' At the same time, a girl defender moves to Abir trying to prevent her from receiving the ball. The defender succeeds in intercepting Iptissame's pass to Abir.
3. Adel initiates the 3rd attempt by throwing a slow bounce pass towards the three girls. Anissa catches it, dribbles and passes to Abir. The girl defender does not move closer to the ball carrier but stays between the two girls, near Abir, with the purpose of intercepting the ball again. Abir receives a fair ball from Anissa. Pierre to Abir: 'Go! Go! Pass and then shoot!' Abir dribbles to find a path to the goal area: she cuts around her defender, and

thus gets into the open, which permits her to perform a nice shot. Her action is tactically relevant even though the ball hits the horizontal beam. Pierre's comment goes to the female defender: 'Let's get defending!'

4. On further attempts, Adel disengages from the task of passer. He runs slowly to pick up the balls and no longer performs proper baseline throw-ins. He stays far from the groups, throwing balls inappropriately, particularly to girls. Pierre comments only on boys' actions telling them to play 'faster'; 'with more speed'. As for Abir, she plays the role of defender against other girl teams. Then, before their 4th attempt, Abir, Anissa and another girl exchange on the strategy for good collective play while Pierre is supervising a boy: 'when defending you should raise your arms'.
5. On her 5th attempt, Abir receives the ball from Anissa. She lets the defender come to her, allowing the third teammate to become an open player in a very good tactical position as the only defender is behind her. Afterwards, Abir gives her an assist, allowing her to shoot and score a goal. Pierre appraises the team 'Good job, girls'. A few seconds later, he closes the current task to set up the 3vs2 learning task.

This episode highlights that students' learning opportunities differ depending on how they are physically and discursively involved in the didactic contract and how the teacher's and students' gender positioning contributes to this process. Adel, who deliberately chooses to stay in the role of passer over time, does not enter into the didactic contract. Notwithstanding, he is somewhat 'protected' by Pierre who never asks him to participate in collective work. Over the episode, Adel's social relationships with his peer students progressively evolve: his baseline throw-in privileges long and fair balls to boys, and 'offloading' unfair balls to girls (2nd attempt). What is significant here is how Adel seeks to exclude girls from handball success by giving them poor passes. Adel's positioning is more than less marked by some salient features of gendered habits. During the short interviews with the second author of this chapter he was evasive about how nicely he played and if he succeeded. 'I don't know' he

repeated. Adel's bodily actions during the task completion and his near silence or evasive answers during interviews support the interpretation of his frustration at not being recognized by his male peers as a good player despite his efforts to pass them 'good balls'. Paradoxically, Adel, who plays football outside school, says he 'prefers to play in mixed groups [in PE]' confirming his feeling of being marginalized by the boys of the class, as pointed out by Pierre. Conversely, when playing with girls, he feels gender-demoted in his traditional masculine identity – even more so when Anissa resists, saying quite loudly that not only girls are poor at games (2nd attempt). Finally, as Adel cannot be clearly identified as a relevant teammate by either side of the court, he progressively goes off-task (4th attempt), while the teacher gives him no feedback to re-engage him in the work.

As for Abir, who progresses significantly during the unit despite the little content-based feedback she receives from the teacher, she decodes the implicitness of the didactic contract through her successive attempts. She relies on the situational context to construct tactical knowledge, such as creating open spaces; attracting the defender to help her teammate become an open player; cutting around the defender and so on. The micro-didactic analysis points out how Abir's and, to a lesser extent, Anissa's epistemic gender positioning resist Pierre's expectations in terms of appropriate knowledge and benevolence to girls (Larsson et al., 2009). Abir gives examples of being active as a resourceful player in her team. She plays the different roles assigned (player, defender, goalkeeper). She likes to 'work collectively with a team' (Abir's interview). Her positioning and repositioning throughout the transactions with her peers allow her to construct independence with respect to the symbolic masculine hierarchy of excellence that implicitly underlies didactical transactions and peer relationships. An altercation with Adel (monitored by Pierre in lesson 4) about her role as goalkeeper shows that she resists being reduced by Adel to a 'girly player':

Pierre: ‘What did you say Adel?’

Adel: ‘Nothing’

Abir: ‘Nothing? Take responsibility for what you just said ... I’gonna break your teeth if you speak to me [like this] again’.

This altercation, within the cultures of hybridity of these Muslim teenagers, shows what it means to be a male or a female student in the context of coeducational PE in this multi-ethnic school. Despite all this, Abir finds a path to empowerment in terms of embodied knowledge construction through disciplinary engagement and incipient feminist resistance.

These student narratives show that girls’ and boys’ social relations are tightened up within didactical transactions in which gender positioning and repositioning concerns both the content to be learnt and the construction of identities that may be conflictive. In these contexts, unlike Anissa and Abir, not all students have the capacity to find enough resources to construct embodied forms of game practices that challenge ordinary sexism and the gender order in the class.

Doing and undoing gender in multi-ethnic PE class: Discussion

The purpose of this chapter has been to use a didactical study to scrutinize how gendered learning in PE emerges as a by-product of classroom interactions at various time-scales. Over the longer time span of the unit, the analysis suggests that differences among girls and boys are minor, thanks to the special attention the teacher pays to the setting of mixed and single-sex groups and of learning environments aimed at delivering the same content to all students. However, the other two time-scales, one focusing on the teacher’s verbal supervision in a lesson, and the other at the micro-scale of an episode, highlight unbalanced, gendered learning trajectories due to the differentiated ways in which didactical transactions evolve. The holistic

contents tend to fade away as the teacher's supervision privileges power and speed for boys, while being less precise and more benevolent concerning what is expected from girls. In the context of a multi-ethnic school, where the teacher has to struggle with boys' disengagement, off-task behaviour and sexism, and difficulties in the social relations between students, it is certainly not easy to maintain high quality physical education and it is probably easier to obtain peace through straightforward strategies (Debars and Amade-Escot, 2006, Kherroubi and Rochex, 2004; Larsson et al., 2009; Öhrn, 2009). Even within the limits of this case study, it is clear how the three layers of analysis highlight the need for fine-grained investigation of teacher's and students' transactions and the social relations between peer students to account for the co-construction of differentiated academic expectations that (re)produce the dominant gender order in the class. On the other hand, gendered learning among students, girls and boys alike, goes through a complex process that intersects participants' epistemic gender positioning with their cultural/ethnic backgrounds through micro-social interactions related to particular curricular contents within a particular context. The fine analysis reveals that not all girls are dominated when playing games, and not all boys reinforce hegemonic masculinity in the class. Each student occupies a specific niche in relation with the meaning she/he gives to the teacher's expectations and how she/he negotiates the meaning of her/his practice within the peer group.

Finally, our study suggests some implications in terms of feminist emancipatory pedagogies, particularly for schools located in underprivileged areas. Student grouping is not a single, straightforward norm but a pedagogical means that should not be reduced to a way to establish peace in the class. Another issue for in-depth consideration is the time required to obtain real enhancement of students' learning without neglecting the interplay of gender and the various cultural hybridizations of teenagers' ways of life in multi-ethnic schools (Larsson

et al., 2009; Stride, 2014). The design of holistic learning environments deserves some thought because simple, closed tasks produce the illusion of enhancing immediate achievement while maintaining disciplined behaviours through body control, most often at the expense of the construction of emancipatory contents. This issue is critical, as it engages the epistemological dimension of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge. That is why a teacher's awareness of her/his own contribution to student learning through the dynamics of the DDC can enhance inclusive pedagogies that offer gender sensitive forms of knowledge construction, respectful of various students' positioning. All students, girls and boys, high and low achievers, need constructive emancipatory knowledge, not only benevolent support!

Paired Dialogue

Sport, Physical Education and Gender: Analysing Complex Pedagogic Encounters

Andrea Abbas

The analysis of the physical education class presented in this chapter provides valuable insights into the way that gender inequalities are produced through complex mechanisms. The empirical focus on phenomena that operate over different time scales give a rich sense of the multi-textured and contradictory processes of gendering in multicultural contemporary contexts. The illustrative examples bring this to life. I appreciated the way that the approach focused on practices and discourses that both contested and reinforced prevailing gender and ethnic stereotypes in the process of trying to counter them.

The chapter relates to several lines of literature in the Anglophone tradition that I am familiar with. One of the authors I have added to the bibliography (Weiler, 2000) has explored how the contradictory processes of curriculum in the schools play out in the lives of thirty young working-class young-women from five different ethnic groups who attended a school for 'at risk' pupils. Where I would see this US-based study as representing something that I think is distinctive to critical sociological approaches, is that is bases its understanding of pedagogy and curricula in the context of the students' wider lives and connects the analysis and findings to the social structures of society. This allows the author to use focused analysis like Ingrid's and Claire's to understand what aspects of injustice are best tackled in the classrooms by teachers and which aspects require broader social policy changes. The critical sociological approach also encourages researchers to specify what social justice is envisaged by the author, which I think provides a stronger ethical orientation to the work. Weiler (2000) uses several theories to explore the intersecting influences of class, gender and ethnicity (which tends to be termed race in the US and variably race and ethnicity in the UK). Ingrid and Claire are also grappling with the sticky problem of intersectionality. I pursue this line, drawing on Basil Bernstein, in my own chapter for this book (Chapter 6).

The second reference I have added, then, relates to the sociological theorising of pedagogy and curricula, inspired by the work of the sociologist Basil Bernstein (2000). This body of work is interested in what ways pedagogy and curricula contribute to inequalities and their potential to interrupt these processes. Interest in 'interruptions' appear to be a key feature of work in both the Anglophone and didactics traditions, and I appreciated the chapter's detailed focus on the practices and discourses that both contested and reinforced prevailing gender and ethnic stereotypes in the process of trying to counter them.

More broadly, this research connects well with things that I, as a critical sociologist with an interest in social justice, have valued in terms of good pedagogic research in the Anglophone education literature. For example, I found the way that theoretical tools were developed and used to produce insights into practices for increasing social justice to be of particular interest. I liked the use of the use differential didactic contract (DDC) to analytically separate what the teacher provides from what the students get. I aspire to do this in my own work in higher education. The need to orient pedagogy to social justice reminded me of some of the work by American feminist pedagogues, such as, Patti Lather and bel hooks who have explored these processes through their own attempts at teaching focused on emancipation. In this context, readers might find Sarah Amsler's (2015) work on efforts to generate pedagogic and curricula approaches to increase democracy interesting. I would be interested to hear from Ingrid and Claire about how their own very detailed pedagogical research that works to generate equality through teaching and learning fits within this longer tradition of radical education and to engage with them in debates around intersectionality within this context.

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