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CYES Praxis

Critical Social Theory Related to Inequity

“You Run like a Girl”

By closely examining my life and my lived experience, I reflected on my educational experiences. Through this reflection process, I realized that one social inequity present throughout all of my schooling experiences was the effect of the lack of feminism and empowerment within my public school. Through going to an all-girls school for 9 years compared to my experience at co-ed institutions, I saw the differences of how I was treated as a girl. I truly began to understand the social inequity that is present within our society today in regards to gender inequity.

I would like to take a moment to reference a memory of mine from my elementary school years. During casual recess time, we were playing a game of kickball on the field. We were inherently split into girls versus boys as usual for recess games. One of the fourth grade teachers was observing the game and making sure all the rules for kickball were followed. It was finally my turn to kick the ball and make my run around the bases. After I kicked the ball to the left field, I began my run around the bases. I made it all the way to home base and when I got back to my team we all cheered in unison. I looked over to the teacher and he came over to our team. His first comment to us was that he was surprised we won since we run like girls. At this moment, I did not fully understand the meaning of his comment. Years later, I realized that the way he used “run like girls” was to insult me and the girls on the team. This comment stuck with me for years after the interaction and caused me to reflect on the way I was viewed as a woman.

Being socialized as a girl growing up, I was not always made aware of my gender. I was raised with two sisters and our gender was assumed as girls. It was not until I attended elementary school where I saw the way boys were treated versus girls. During recess games or even class times, boys were usually assigned to one team and girls to the other. This very often split within my classes made me realize the way that we were treated as girls within schooling. After my fourth grade year, I went on to an all-girls school where I saw a complete shift in my learning and treatment as a girl.

While attending an all-girls school, I saw the importance of being confident and using my voice. Within my fifth grade class, I had the opportunity to share a story of my own family. I shared my story with my classmates and was able to take pride in my family ancestry. Sharing from my lived experiences allowed me to use my voice powerfully. This first lesson of the school year set the tone of the next four years. Over my time at the school, I practiced using my voice and advocating for myself and others. The teachers at my school instilled confidence in me and gave me the tools to use my voice for my community. Through attending protests, student advocacy days, and leading community meetings, I graduated with having a great sense of identity as a girl.

Looking forward as an educator, I hope to instill confidence in all the children I interact with. Not only focusing on the girls, but also giving space for all genders to grow confidently into themselves and explore their identities. Within my classroom, I hope to create an environment where students can feel welcome and safe to explore their identities, such as gender. It is evident that the school system pushes forth larger structural issues such as gender inequity. Small comments such as “you run like a girl” truly affect the way that girls may view themselves and their skill set. Seeing the positive effect of empowerment and encouragement at my all-girls

middle school, I realized the importance of positive self-talk for girls. I hope in my future to work towards dismantling these systems starting with talking about the systems in place. Instead of being complacent and allowing these systems to exist, I will work to dismantle them alongside the children I teach.