



# Race, Gender, and Space in Canadian Secondary PHE: A Photovoice and Interview Study with Racialized Female Students

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## Abstract

**Background:** In Canadian secondary Physical and Health Education (PHE), racialized girls' participation is often read through individual motivation or skill level rather than through the spatial, racialized, and gendered conditions of schooling. Guided by Critical Race Theory, intersectionality, anti-racism education, and spatial justice (Crenshaw, 1991; Dei, 1996; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Soja, 2010), this study examines how PHE spaces and routines shape belonging and participation for racialized female students.

**Methodology:** This qualitative study used photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997) and semi-structured interviews with racialized girls in Grades 9-12 enrolled in western Canadian secondary schools. Participants photographed PHE spaces and objects, such as gyms, locker rooms, fields, and equipment rooms, and discussed how these sites shaped inclusion, exclusion, safety, comfort, and recognition. Individual interviews were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The study received institutional ethics approval from the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board before recruitment.

**Results & Conclusion:** Preliminary analysis suggests that belonging in PHE is produced through everyday routines of grouping, performing, assessment, and access to spaces. Participants' visual and narrative accounts show how practices and broader norms can make some bodies feel more visible, uncomfortable, vulnerable, or out of place, while also identifying relational supports from peers and families that can increase a sense of belonging. By centering racialized girls' interpretations of PHE spaces, this study challenges deficit framings and offers student-informed directions for PHE curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and space design. The research shows that equity requires attention to how learning environments organize belonging, bodily legitimacy, relationships to movement and health, and the normative frames that shape students' experiences.

**Keywords:** Physical and Health Education (PHE); racialized girls; intersectionality; photovoice; spatial justice



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